STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF TEACHER EXPECTATION BIAS

ON CLASSROOM COLLEGE READINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Kristen S. Wellman

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APPROVED:

Jane B. Huffman, Committee Chair
Miriam Ezzani, Committee Co-Chair
Frances van Tassell, Committee Member
Wendell Brown, Committee Member
Jim Laney, Chair of the Department of Teacher
    Education and Administration
Randy Bomer, Dean of the College of Education
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse
    Graduate School

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As increasing emphasis is being placed on student college and career readiness, instructional approaches seek to develop content and skill proficiency. I gathered student perspectives on teacher expectations and instructional opportunities in core content classes in order to determine if expectation bias influences college readiness preparation in the classroom. Student academic self-concept and college readiness were examined alongside beliefs about teacher expectations and instructional opportunities in a conceptual framework for student perceptions. In this qualitative study, I utilized four focus groups of high school students from two cohorts to analyze perceptions across students from mostly on-level core classes and those from mostly advanced core classes. Findings showed students held high expectations of their own current and future performance, as well as perceived teachers generally hold high expectations, though this was shown through the development of relational capacity rather than instructional opportunities to develop college readiness skills or connect to students' future ambitions. The results of the study provide insight to educators seeking to create stronger connections for students between current educational experiences and future postsecondary opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Increasingly, educators and policymakers are placing heightened emphasis on college and career readiness. This is evidenced by the introduction of state and national college and career readiness standards, as well as the growing use of college entrance exams, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT), to measure high school students' postsecondary (after graduating from high school) potential (Achieve, Inc., 2015; ACT, Inc., 2016; Bragg & Taylor, 2014; Camara, 2013; Conley, Drummond, de Gonzalez, Rooseboom, & Stout, 2011; Conley, Hiatt, McGaughy, Seburn, & Venezia, 2010). There is a growing demand for students to be prepared to problem-solve, collaborate, and think critically in their postsecondary experiences.

Unfortunately, state and national assessments indicate students are not ready for rigorous and demanding postsecondary work (ACT, Inc., 2016). As schools and districts struggle with persistent achievement gaps, adding college readiness efforts may seem like an additional and daunting task. However, preparing students for postsecondary success may assist in addressing certain expectation and/or opportunity gaps that lead to achievement gaps among student groups, such as having high or low expectations for student achievement or only paying for pre-collegiate assessments for students in advanced courses. Schools and districts with diverse populations may find it helpful to develop clearly articulated and aligned college readiness systems in order to close persistent achievement gaps. These efforts may also increase the likelihood of postsecondary success for the students from their local communities.

Leaders in district and schoolwide systems may find it necessary to not only develop understanding among educators and implement college readiness efforts, but also to create

school cultures of college readiness (Conley, 2007). In such a school culture, there are high

academic expectations for all students, along with support for achievement in rigorous courses.

High expectations may also foster instructional practices aligned with academic skills and

behaviors associated with college readiness, such as building skills in critical thinking,

developing problem-solving strategies, and supporting student ownership of learning.

Statement of the Problem

Current educational reform efforts focus attention on not just student achievement in high

school but college readiness as well (Achieve, Inc., 2015). From the Texas College and Career

Readiness Standards (Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2009), the Common Core State

Standards (2018) movement, and President Obama's Race to the Top (U.S. Department of

Education, 2009) initiative, to ongoing conversations about Congressional reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015), college readiness

is a priority for legislators, educators, community members, parents, and students.

Measurements of college readiness include indicators such as student grade point average,

college admissions exam scores (such as the ACT and SAT), and end-of-course exam scores.

Although some of these measures have shown to be predictors of college success in the past

(Adelman, 2006), there is less agreement today about what constitutes college readiness and how

it should be measured (Conley, 2007). Current reports on college readiness indicate the nation is

far from achieving universal college readiness, and they paint public secondary education in a

poor light by implying the system is inadequately preparing students for life beyond high school

(Achieve, Inc., 2015).

The focus is no longer on college eligibility, but rather college persistence and success. According to some estimates, 40% of students take at least one remedial course upon entering college (Adelman, 1999). Conley (2007) stated, "Students who must enroll in remedial courses or who fail entry-level courses find it much more difficult to graduate from college" (p. 10). ACT, Inc. (2016) recently released a report stating the proportion of graduating seniors taking ACTs who are *college ready* in all subject areas barely increased from 25% in 2012 to a still-low 26% in 2016. Legislators have responded to such reports with increased assessment and accountability mandates, focusing on proficiency in mathematics, writing, and reading. Yet, educational experts are saying that these assessments are not in alignment with measuring the important components that make up broadly accepted definitions of college readiness (Conley et al., 2010).

College readiness gaps are distinctly apparent on campuses with large percentages of minority and economically disadvantaged students. Through a secondary analysis of high school student survey data provided longitudinally by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, differences were found between the genders and races, and first-generation students were generally more disadvantaged, scoring lower in the college readiness measures examined (Strayhorn, 2014). According to a study conducted by Barnes and Slate (2014), only about one-third of high school graduates in Texas were determined to be college ready during the 3 years studied, as measured against criteria determined by the Texas Education Agency. Furthermore, college readiness gaps between White and minority students were in the double digits, with a 17% gap between White and Hispanic students and a 21% gap between White and Black students (Barnes & Slate, 2014). ACT, Inc. (2016) found only 26% of students met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, a decrease of 1% from the previous year.

White students had an average score of 23.2, compared to 18.4 for Hispanic/Latino students and 17.6 for African American students. Ultimately, these studies highlight an imperative for preparing both underrepresented minorities and all students for college readiness.

Thus, the problem for this study was teachers' expectations of students and whether or not the expectations influence teachers to teach in a way that does or does not develop college readiness skills, regardless of the students' postsecondary goals. Teacher expectation bias is a well-researched phenomenon in K-12 education (de Boer, Bosker, & van der Werf, 2010; Friedrich, Flunger, Nagengast, Jonkmann, & Trautwein, 2015; Gregory & Huang, 2013). High expectations of all students may result in the use of instructional practices aligned with preparing students for successful postsecondary experiences.

Conceptual Framework

In the current study, I examined student perceptions formed from several conceptual inputs. The student perceptions were viewed as the intersection of teacher expectations, college readiness, classroom instruction, and academic self-concept. In combination, the variables led students to draw specific conclusions about the influence of teacher expectations on classroom college readiness opportunities, as shown in Figure 1.

Academic self-concept generally has been defined as "a student's self-perception of academic ability formed through individual experiences and interactions with the environment" (Rosen, 2010, p. 118). This definition can apply globally to the student as a learner or can be subject-specific. Rosen asserted the relationship between academic self-concept and student achievement is causal and dynamic as a student advances through his or her schooling.
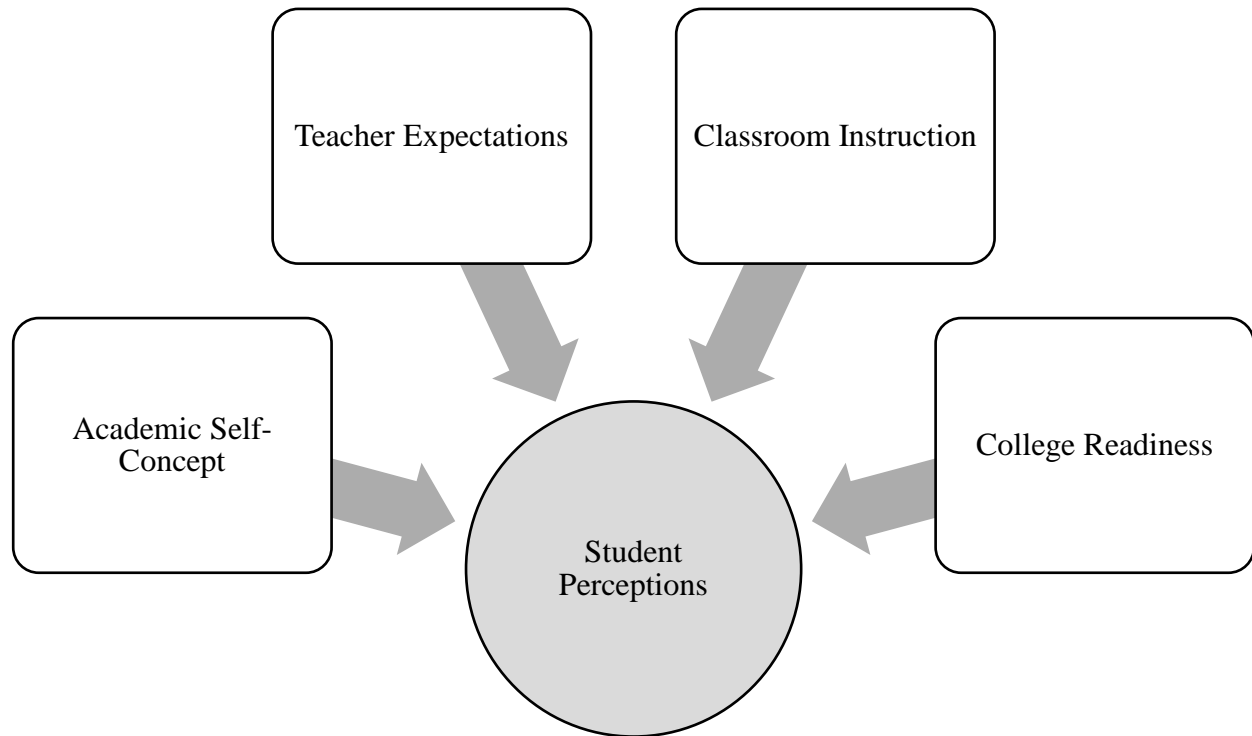
Figure 1. Input variables informing student perceptions about classroom college readiness opportunities.

A student's environment includes perceived or actual teacher expectations "defined as beliefs teachers hold about their students' academic capabilities and subsequent levels of achievement" (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016, p. 123). Teacher expectations may be influenced by a variety of factors, such as prior achievement or demographics, including gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Students are able to distinguish between teachers with high and low expectations.

Classroom instruction consists of the strategies a teacher uses to facilitate learning, including any feedback informing the student of progress toward mastery of learning goals. Teachers who hold high expectations for student academic performance utilize learning strategies that promote higher achievement (Rubie-Davies, 2007). Classroom instruction is a component of a student's environment, informing academic self-concept, and includes assignments, tests, and learning tasks.

Environmental factors related to college readiness can include whether a teacher discusses alignment of classroom activities with postsecondary outcomes, classroom information about being eligible for college, and connections between academic behaviors (such as note-taking or time management) and postsecondary success. The extent to which college readiness is included in classroom instructional opportunities may be dependent upon the teacher's expectations for student achievement. The inputs of academic self-concept, teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness opportunities are all intertwined as students form perceptions about the influence of teacher expectations on postsecondary readiness.

Purpose of the Study

Studies in college readiness tend to focus on student college readiness rates and the effectiveness of various programmatic efforts. What is less conclusive is how teachers view student aptitude for being college ready and how that affects instructional opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success. The purpose of the current study was to gather student perspectives on teacher expectations and instructional opportunities in core content classes in order to determine if expectation bias influences college readiness preparation in the classroom. In the present study, I examined how teachers' instructional facilitation and classroom college readiness opportunities were perceived by their students, when weighed against the need to prepare for postsecondary success.

Research Questions

With the current study, I examined student perceptions on how teacher expectation bias influenced college readiness opportunities in their classrooms, answering the following questions:

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1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because of the moral and ethical need to provide all students with instruction derived from high expectations for student achievement. For students to be prepared for the demands of college and career, they need to be afforded high school experiences that provide support for success in rigorous content classes and demonstrate mastery of content by developing proficiency in skills critical to meeting postsecondary expectations. Educational gaps apparent through repeated publication of assessment results are also indicative of college readiness gaps among minority students who are already underrepresented in 2- and 4-year institutions.

By introducing student voice to the conversation about this phenomenon, educators will know first-hand whether students perceive their educational experiences to be preparing them for postsecondary success. Student voice will lend authenticity and personalization to the phenomenon in a way that statistics cannot. There is incredible value in hearing from the students themselves about their beliefs regarding the influence their current classroom experiences will have on their future outcomes. Information will be shared about the value of communicating high expectations to students, coupled with instructional approaches that also communicate expectations for college readiness. Students' voices may be valuable when discussions concerning college readiness take place.

Delimitations

Delimitations for the current study narrowed the scope of the research and provided focus for the data gathered. The current study was conducted in both a suburban and a rural high school located in the Dallas metroplex. Interviews of students in their junior or senior year of high school took place in the spring and fall of 2017. The focus group format allowed for student perspectives from a variety of classroom schedule configurations to determine if teacher expectations influence classroom college readiness opportunities.

Assumptions

In the current study, I assumed students are able to analyze classroom instruction to determine a teacher's expectations. I also assumed students are open and honest when discussing their perceptions. Finally, I assumed teachers make instructional choices based on expectations for student achievement, which may or may not include classroom opportunities to develop college readiness skills and behaviors.

Definition of Key Terms

- College readiness. Conley (2012) defined a college-ready student as one who "can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (p. 1). Conley also developed a model of college and career readiness and purports there is no longer a distinction in skills associated between the two. In Conley's model, students are ready for college and career to the degree they have mastered each of four key categories: Key Cognitive Strategies, Key Content Knowledge, Key Learning Skills

and Techniques, and Key Transition Knowledge and Skills. Formally measuring these
categories is vastly different from administering a standardized assessment and requires more
comprehensive, complex, and authentic forms of assessment of both student performance and
teacher behaviors to obtain an accurate picture of college readiness.

- Postsecondary. Postsecondary (2014) describes any education or training completed
after high school graduation at an institution of higher education (2-year, 4-year, or technical
college, or university).

Organization of the Study

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the problem necessitating the
study, the purpose of the research, the research questions, boundaries of the study, and possible
significance of the findings. Chapter 2 is a review of related literature in the areas of college
readiness and teacher expectation bias. In Chapter 3, I discuss the chosen methodology for the
study, including the research design, population sampling, and data collection procedures.
Chapter 4 includes an analysis of the data and a summary of the major findings in the study.
Chapter 5 consists of a discussion, conclusions of the study, implications, limitations, and
recommendations for areas of future interest. I close the study with a list of references and
appendices to support the chapters.

Summary

Students are increasingly expected to demonstrate college readiness; yet, assessments
indicate this expectation is far from being realized. Additionally, assessment results expose
college readiness gaps similar to other educational achievement gaps. In this study, I examined

student perceptions of the influence of teachers' expectations on classroom college readiness opportunities, taking academic self-concept and classroom instructional practice into consideration. In this study, inclusion of student voice lent significance to the findings and may inform school leaders' efforts to develop inclusive cultures of college readiness stemming from consistently high expectations of all students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The field of college readiness research is relatively young, emerging along with an increased focus on postsecondary readiness by educators and policymakers alike (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Studies in this area tend to focus on student college readiness rates and the effectiveness of various programmatic efforts. What is less conclusive is how teachers view student aptitude for being college ready and how that affects instructional opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success. According to Tierney and Sablan, "the topic of college readiness deserves attention beyond just a high school transcript, and current definitions of and policies regarding college readiness warrant scrutiny" (p. 944) in order to achieve a full understanding of college readiness and inform potential solutions to existing college readiness gaps.

This chapter includes highlights of the relevant literature, including the main categories of college readiness, teacher responsibility for developing college readiness, and teacher expectation bias as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The influence of teacher expectation bias on instruction and educational gaps is included. Additionally, student academic self-concept and the aspect of student perceptions of teacher expectations are addressed. The chapter concludes with a link between the research and the current study.

Understanding College Readiness

In outlining the past 25 years of education reform, Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, and Pittenger (2014) traced the broad developments that led to a new vision of learning, from Clinton's Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 to Bush's No Child Left Behind of 2001

(2002). Outcomes of these policy initiatives included assessed learning standards, higher

expectations, and an emphasis on placing a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2014), students need to possess deeper learning

outcomes, including the abilities needed to "foster critical and creative thinking, problem

solving, collaboration, multiple modes of communication, uses of new technologies, the capacity

to learn, and the social-emotional intelligence that fosters a growth mindset and supports

resilience and resourcefulness" (p. 4). These authors called for a new paradigm of school

accountability to support elevated learning outcomes in order to support the creation of

educational opportunities for all students, in preparation for today's world. Darling-Hammond et

al. advocated for a more comprehensive view of student learning outcomes to determine the

extent to which students are developing college and career readiness skills.

The success of a college-ready instructional initiative is in large part dependent upon all

stakeholders having a common conceptual understanding of the term college readiness. Arnold,

Lu, and Armstrong (2012) presented an ecological model to describe the interactions between an

individual and multiple environmental systems that lead to college readiness, such as the

influence of poverty, neighborhood violence, and even globalization, on the opportunities a

student faces. According to Arnold et al., college readiness encompasses elements and

characteristics that are both within and outside of a student's control, such as academic skills and

strategies, motivation, future aspirations, financial aid knowledge, and knowing how to select a

college. Essentially, "the ecology of the individual student determines whether that student

acquires the constellation of aspirations, dispositions, and academic and practical knowledge that

constitute college readiness" (p. 94). The model assumes student strengths, as opposed to a

deficit model, and indicates that individual characteristics are influenced by interactions with

various environmental situations. From the authors' ecological perspective, college readiness programs and policies need to be designed to connect to the lived experience of the student. In a more concrete approach, Conley (2012) defined a postsecondary experience as an instructional experience after high school, including "two- or four-year degree programs, certificate or licensure programs, apprenticeships, or training programs in the military" (p. 1). This definition applies to a broader section of high school students and implies a high degree of readiness to be developed in the high school classroom. According to Conley, "a student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (p. 1). In alignment with the previous ecological model, Conley argued the instructional program should develop the required knowledge and skills in all students, as a foundation for the desired postsecondary experience.

In a 2007 study of college readiness practices at 38 high schools across the country, researchers found "a high school curriculum aligned with college readiness emphasizes key cognitive strategies such as reasoning, problem solving and research, and is aligned with the content requirements for entry-level college courses" (Conley, McGaughy, Kirtner, van der Valk, & Martinez-Wenzl, 2010, p. 20). Additionally, Lombardi, Conley, Seburn, and Downs (2013) stressed how college readiness should not be confused with college eligibility, as readiness encompasses the range of knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to succeed.

Conley and French (2013) provided a conceptual model of college and career readiness, including four keys: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills. Each key consists of skills and strategies that can be developed in students and is not reliant on personal innate ability. The authors

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argued that college readiness encompasses much more than content knowledge and they identified key learning skills and techniques as critical to postsecondary success. This category of the model breaks down into specific learning techniques, such as time management or study skills, and student ownership of learning. The authors pointed out that, although crucial to student achievement, these skills are difficult to assess, causing educators to rely on and draw inferences from student academic performances to judge this aspect of aptitude for postsecondary success. Certainly, other models of college readiness have been proposed, though "Conley's model is unique in that it is multidimensional, comprehensive, and addresses cognitive and noncognitive factors" (Lombardi et al., 2013, p. 2). Schools and districts without a defined college readiness initiative would still benefit from faculty possessing a conceptual understanding of college readiness in order to facilitate learning experiences intentionally that provide students opportunities to develop skills in the categories of the four keys, instead of just focusing on key content knowledge in a specific content area.

Even where there are well-defined college readiness initiatives being implemented, it is not always evident if a solid foundation of conceptual understanding of such readiness exists amongst stakeholders, sufficient to support the initiative. In 2007, Illinois passed a law to fund five partnerships between community colleges and local high schools to develop college and career readiness pilot programs in order to strengthen vertical alignment in mathematics and English and to increase college readiness (Bragg & Taylor, 2014). It was recommended, but not required, that pilot participants examine David Conley's college and career readiness framework prior to recruiting students, providing academic interventions and support services, and aligning curriculum at the secondary level with postsecondary requirements. In one partnership, the high school faculty began looking at the impact of curriculum alignment on all students, not just those

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recruited for the college and career readiness pilot, resulting in learning outcomes for high school students across the campus becoming aligned with postsecondary expectations. Had participants been required to have a solid foundation of Conley's keys of college readiness prior to the pilot program, they may have implemented the pilot components on a more global scale across the campus from the beginning, rather than just with the recruited students, as the efforts to integrate the rigorous academic skills, behaviors, and techniques identified by Conley could possibly boost the achievement levels of all students (Bragg & Taylor, 2014).

<div align="center">Teacher Responsibility for Developing College Readiness</div>

Once educators understand the main components of college readiness, it may be necessary to ensure that college readiness instructional efforts are implemented in classrooms in order for all students to benefit. District and campus leadership set the tone and expectations for planning, intentional implementation, and ongoing support with monitoring, as these are critical to the development of successful systems around instructional efforts (Conley, 2007), though these are not included in the context of the current study. Leaving implementation to the discretion of individual educators may not be a fail-safe way to make progress toward closing college readiness gaps (Conley, 2007).

An example of the need for careful planning and implementation to guide educator efforts can be seen in the following case story. A small group of teachers in the Texas Rio Grande Valley participated in focus group interviews of educational stakeholders regarding stakeholder responsibility for college readiness (Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010). Unlike the school superintendents and community members who also participated and expressed individual responsibility, the teachers felt a student's family was most responsible for college

readiness. Deeper analysis showed teachers did not express individual responsibility for being the primary person responsible for developing college readiness, but rather viewed their role as secondary and part of a system of educational stakeholders that included families, community members, other education professionals, and the students themselves. The researchers were limited by a small sample size of teachers, some of whom were also parents of students in the schools, which may have altered their perception of responsibility. Collectively, the 123 stakeholders interviewed understood the need for an expanded view of college beyond a 4-year experience and indicated all students should be academically ready, whether they were on the college track or not, in order to make individual choices concerning their futures.

The lack of consensus on responsibility for college readiness is reflected in other sources, as well. In a 2015 poll of 1,000 teachers, conducted by EdSource.org, 78% of respondents identified developing critical thinking skills as one of the top three indicators of student college readiness (Freedberg, 2015). Yet, 23% of teachers felt preparing students for college and career readiness was not very realistic or not realistic. Furthermore,

> . . . about 58 percent of teachers where fewer than 1 in 4 of their students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals believe that college and career readiness is a 'very realistic' goal. But 20 percent of teachers in schools where more than 3 in 4 students qualify for federally subsidized meals have similar attitudes. (para. 2)

These results reveal that conceptual awareness of college readiness does not always translate into teacher ownership of developing the necessary components of readiness in all students. In a 2011 administration of the CollegeCareerReady™ School Diagnostic, which measures Conley's four keys of college readiness schoolwide, participants included administrators, counselors, and teachers (Liebhart, Gilkey, Seburn, & Conley, 2012). Respondents "across all schools most frequently selected 'Teachers' as the group primarily responsible to help students develop the Key Learning Skills and Strategies" (p. 7). Teachers

were also the most frequently selected as responsible for developing key cognitive strategies. However, "while all groups as a whole agree that the burden of developing these skills seems to fall primarily on teachers, only slightly over half of the teachers acknowledge that this is their responsibility" (p. 9). In fact, 21% of teachers indicated uncertainty about who is responsible for developing in students the domain of key cognitive strategies. The results implied that schools identify the classroom as the appropriate place to develop college readiness, yet teachers still are not supportive of this goal.

Though teachers may know what students need to know and be able to do to be college ready, often outside influences contradict what they know they should be doing to support students long-term. Welton and Williams (2014) examined the pressures that teachers face when forced to choose between accountability rating efforts (i.e., test preparation) and creating a culture of college readiness for students. In the era of No Child Left Behind, with its emphasis on high-stakes testing of all learners, "schools have engaged in practices that give the illusion of rapid student achievement which undermines student learning" (p. 181). Some of the unintended consequences of the federal legislation most negatively affected schools with higher concentrations of students from poverty and minority backgrounds. Yet, today there is also a push from all directions for schools to graduate students who are college and career ready. The dual goals of accountability and college/career readiness are often at odds with each other and school leaders are left in a position to choose an area to concentrate on: short-term testing results versus long-term student skill-building. These researchers focused on the importance of developing a college-going culture in schools, which influences everything from expectations to student-teacher relationships.

Through a high school case study, Martinez and Welton (2014) showed accountability

pressures are barriers to college readiness in schools with diverse demographics. For example, at the school examined in the study, advanced placement mathematics course offerings were reduced in order to offer additional sections of test preparation for the state exit exam, thereby limiting opportunities for students to be college ready through exposure to rigorous coursework in high school. Martinez and Welton reported that a focus on passing the high school exit exam in south Texas secondary schools "meant that teachers ultimately were not 'thinking college' in their instructional planning" (p. 821). Even the advanced courses suffered from reduced expectations due to the focus on state accountability. College readiness efforts must be integrated into and aligned with other existing instructional goals, so educators are working to close achievement gaps, which should also serve to close standardized testing gaps.

<div align="center">Teacher Expectation Bias as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy</div>

Teachers' expectations are derived from beliefs regarding students' academic aptitude and subsequent achievement (Peterson et al., 2016). Previous research centered on the self-fulfilling prophecy (or Pygmalion effect) and student characteristics that are susceptible to teacher expectation bias (Jussim, 2013; Jussim & Harber, 2005; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rubie-Davies, 2007). Over 40 years of studies have contributed to the body of knowledge around the phenomenon of teacher expectation bias, which shows student and teacher demographics, as well as prior knowledge teachers may have about individuals, groups, or a class of students, influence teachers' expectations of student achievement (Jussim, 2013; Jussim & Harber, 2005; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rubie-Davies, 2007).

In the landmark study *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968),

the researchers conducted a controlled classroom experiment among public elementary school students and teachers, at all six grade levels. Over the course of a year, the researchers told teachers that some of the students were *growth spurters*, or late-bloomers, meaning the students had scored highly on the Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition. In reality, no such test was in existence and the students designated as growth spurters had been randomly chosen by the researchers in order to determine the extent to which student achievement might change as a result of changes in teacher expectation. The results showed the control group of children increasing in IQ by over eight points, whereas the designated growth spurters gained over 12 IQ points, with the advantage most clearly seen in reasoning IQ when broken apart from verbal IQ scores. Overall, students in the lower grades appeared to show the most dramatic score gains as a result of the study, indicating perhaps a greater degree of susceptibility to teacher expectations for a variety of possible reasons. In the discussion, the researchers propose the notion "that one person's expectations of another's behavior may come to serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 20), where if a teacher expected a student to make academic gains, then a student would grow. The researchers theorized that greater gains in the lower grades may possibly be attributed to the presence of more effective teachers at those grade levels, as rated by campus administrators. Though subsequent researchers questioned the study's findings, particularly the implication that teacher expectations have a large effect on IQ, the study sparked decades of research on teacher expectation bias. Researchers studied instances where expectation bias may occur and attempted to determine the degree to which a teacher's expectations of student achievement are predictive or result in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Jussim, 2013; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Jussim, Robustelli, & Cain, 2009).

　　　　According to Jussim (2013), teacher expectations can relate to a student's current or

future academic performance in three ways. Expectations show accuracy when they predict or reflect, but they have no causal relationship to a student's achievement. In other cases, teachers' expectations may indicate bias when they impact or distort evaluations of students' achievement. Specifically, expectancy bias influences a teacher's judgement about a student's performance, but does not influence the performance itself, though it can influence a student's apparent achievement through grading practices. In a self-fulfilling prophecy, the teacher's incorrect expectation leads to actual confirmation, possibly as a result of the teacher behaving differently toward students for whom there are high or low expectations, causing the students' achievement to change from what it otherwise might have been.

In a synthesis of literature on teacher expectations, teacher expectation effects were shown not to be particularly powerful because teachers are generally accurate in predicting a student's achievement, possibly because student performance is evaluated on a frequent basis (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Jussim et al., 2009). However, certain conditions exist which result in more powerful self-fulfilling prophecies, such as in Grades 1, 2, and 7 where younger students and students entering a new situation may be more susceptible. Additionally, teachers providing differential treatment between high- and low-expectancy students may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students belonging to a stigmatized group may also be vulnerable, such as African Americans or students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, it was determined that though self-fulfilling prophecies dissipated from one year to the next, they can have long-lasting consequences. It can be concluded from reviews of the literature that self-fulfilling prophecies are real, but they are generally weak and have a small effect size, though they can be exacerbated for at-risk groups and may last in a diluted form for years (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Jussim et al., 2009). The process by which a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs in the classroom

includes three steps:

1. Teachers develop erroneous expectations.
2. Those expectations lead teachers to treat high expectancy students differently than they treat low expectancy students.
3. Students react to this differential treatment in such a manner as to confirm the originally erroneous expectation. (Jussim et al., 2009, p. 361)

Teachers may form inaccurate expectations for a variety of reasons, including faulty memory of past achievement, changes the student undergoes that affects performance, or social stereotypes or other labeling. Differential treatment may be present in the form of a more supportive climate; clearer feedback related to academic performance rather than behavior; greater educational input, such as attention or material; and greater output opportunities, such as more rigor or time to respond to verbal questions for high-expectancy students (Harris & Rosenthal, 1985). Such behaviors may be subtle and even uncontrollable by the teacher (Babad, Bernieri, & Rosenthal, 1991). Other practices by teachers may affect a student's motivation, such as grouping, recognition, autonomy for learning tasks, or evaluation techniques (Jussim et al., 2009). From such differential treatment, student achievement is restricted through reduced opportunities to learn and through the erosion of motivation, academic self-concept, and possibly even identification with schooling (Weinstein, 2008).

What is known is teachers form expectations of students based on demographic characteristics. A mismatch between teacher and student ethnicity can lead to significant expectation gaps. Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2016) determined non-Black teachers are 12% more likely than Black teachers to expect that Black students will complete a high school diploma or less. In addition, their findings showed expectation bias also existed from teachers of a different ethnicity toward students from poverty. Additionally, the researchers found non-Black teachers exhibit expectation bias toward the likelihood that Black students will complete a

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4-year college degree. Fox (2015) examined teacher expectations for students' postsecondary success and teacher recommendations for advanced courses. Fox found an expectations gap exists for Black students. "Black students with a Black teacher are 14.3 percentage points more likely to be expected to complete more than high school than if they have a White teacher" (p. 11). Racial bias in teachers' expectancies marginalizes and reduces college readiness opportunities for students who already face educational gaps and are underrepresented in postsecondary opportunities.

Teachers' expectations may influence their perceptions, not just of achievement but of students themselves. Rubie-Davies (2010) studied 24 primary teachers in New Zealand by having them rate the students in their class across a variety of student characteristics, including student achievement, class level expectation, cognitive engagement, and motivation. The results were used to classify teachers as High Expectations or Low Expectations teachers. The researcher found teachers with high expectations also rated students highly on all characteristics. Low expectations teachers, though, had a negative correlation between expectations for student achievement and how the students were perceived. Rubie-Davies theorized that in such classrooms, students receive mixed messages, perhaps receiving praise for their effort while expectations for achievement remain low. Turner, Rubie-Davies, and Webber (2015) found, in a small mixed-methods study of mathematics teachers in New Zealand, secondary teachers based expectations on students' standardized test results. However, interviews showed teachers held negative perceptions of their Māori students, an ethnic group facing the highest achievement gap in the country. Teachers made negative comments about the students' behavior and home life, despite claiming not to notice ethnicity when teaching. Asian and White students were perceived to be high achieving with higher family expectations. In the study, 20% of Māori students had

above-average mathematics achievement. Additionally, teachers placed blame for achievement gaps on the students, families, and other teachers, rather than taking responsibility for their students' success. This indicates teachers' expectations of student achievement are not always based on previous achievement, but rather student demographics and other characteristics. Indeed, teachers cite a wide range of influences on student achievement and may even use lack of student effort or ability in order to place blame for lack of achievement (Peterson et al., 2011).

Expectations relate to additional college readiness facets aligned with student success, beyond content mastery. Blanchard and Muller (2015) found teachers are more likely to believe native English speakers possess college potential as opposed to immigrant and language-minority students. Wentzel, Baker, and Russell (2012) examined socially derived expectations (from teachers and peers) and student outcomes, focusing on Mexican Americans from an urban setting and students' ability to set goals for learning, an important college readiness skill. The authors examined various perceived expectations for goal pursuit and their effect on Mexican American adolescents' own social and academic goals. Teachers' social expectations (e.g., being responsible) predicted students setting learning goals and teachers' academic expectations predicted student pursuit of performance goals. Therefore, when teacher expectations influenced students' academic goals, students were better prepared for postsecondary success. However, when perceived caring was taken into account, only teacher academic expectations predicted performance goals. Cultures of college readiness incorporate high expectations for both academic behaviors and academic habits of mind.

Influence of Teacher Expectation Bias on Instruction

The structure of a school system may inadvertently set up conditions for teacher

expectation bias to exist. Middle and high schools may evidence differential treatment within classrooms and between classrooms, through academic tracking (Weinstein, 2008). In establishing a culture of college readiness, emphasis may be placed on facilitating learning in order to develop academic skills and behaviors associated with achievement in all classrooms, regardless of learning designations or labels. The practices of high expectation teachers are related to instructional strategies that foster student motivation, a supportive classroom climate, and student autonomy (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Sibley, & Rosenthal, 2015). These instructional practices can be applied at the classroom level so all students in the class benefit.

Teacher beliefs about both their own teaching efficacy and student achievement can influence approaches to instruction. Rubie-Davies, Flint, and McDonald (2012) found when teachers have low confidence as well as lowered expectations of students, then it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy through the use of lower-engagement teaching strategies and reduced rigor. When teachers assume students of a certain background will not achieve, they may not be spending instructional time teaching those students college readiness skills, despite student aspirations or actual aptitude. In a study in New Zealand, teachers of varied experience, from schools with varied socio-economic demographics, and from both rural and urban locations, were surveyed to examine teacher efficacy and expectations. Reading achievement data were then collected in order to analyze interrelationships, which showed teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy tended to use more structured instructional practices. Also, teachers in schools with low socio-economic demographics tended to have lower whole-class expectations of achievement that directly affected student outcomes. Structured instructional practices orient control with the teacher, providing fewer opportunities for students to take ownership of learning. When teachers are not confident about their own skills and have poor expectations of

students, the result may be reduced use of new and innovative instructional practices. The results of the study imply teachers in all classrooms should be supported in utilizing strategies that not only promote content mastery, but also develop students' literacy skills that align with definitions of college readiness.

In order for college readiness efforts to succeed, educators may benefit from understanding the link between teacher beliefs and the instructional consequences for students. Welton and Williams (2014) discovered that, "although teachers made instructional decisions they felt were in the best interest of economically disadvantaged students, by lowering academic expectations they ultimately deemphasized college academic preparation" (p. 196). According to Kumar, Karabenick, and Burgoon (2015), most teachers in America are White, middle-class, and female with little experience with cultural diversity, which results in biased attitudes toward minority students and students from poverty. In their study, 12 mid-western middle schools with large populations of Middle Eastern immigrant students were chosen and White teachers from those schools were surveyed, through an Implicit Association Test, to measure associations with different groups of students, which was then analyzed against responses indicating instructional practices focusing on mastery or performance. The authors found teachers' instructional practices are a result of a combination of conscious and non-conscious processes. Teachers who were not motivated to hide stereotypical beliefs of students also tended to gravitate toward instructional practices that socially compared students (high achievers versus low achievers) and were less culturally responsive. These teachers felt less responsible for culturally responsive teaching and student success due to their stereotype-driven beliefs about students, such as that certain students are less interested in schoolwork and do not value education. Even unintentional, nonconscious beliefs can potentially result in teachers providing less rigorous

instruction or making fewer college readiness opportunities available to certain groups of students, thus exacerbating the achievement gap. When these beliefs are pervasive across a campus, the long-term consequences for students can be dire.

Positive beliefs about students can be cultivated prior to teachers ever entering the classroom. Kumar and Hamer (2013) studied preservice teachers to find out if their biases and beliefs about minority and poor students affected their instructional practice. Teacher education students and the achievement goal theory were utilized to differentiate between the instructional practices in a mastery-focused learning environment versus a performance-focused learning environment, through the data collection process of a longitudinal survey of over 800 White preservice teachers in the Midwest. The surveys measured preservice teachers' beliefs about minority and low socioeconomic students, the teachers' level of comfort with diverse students, and the teachers' beliefs about whether diverse students should assimilate to the majority culture. Using the achievement goal theory, the researchers found preservice teachers were more positive toward culturally diverse students and more likely to adapt instruction for culturally diverse learners by the end of their preservice program. However, the use of critical thinking and self-reflection diminished when teachers entered their field experiences, with the stress and pressure inherent in experiences in field settings. Over a quarter of the teachers endorsed stereotypes about poor and minority students and many felt uncomfortable with student diversity. Preservice teachers with positive attitudes about the potential of all students to learn were more likely to utilize mastery-focused learning goals. On the other hand, preservice teachers who held biased beliefs were more likely to indicate a desire for performance-focused instructional goals, which results in an environment that compares students against their peers, does not value academic risk-taking, and does not recognize students for engaging in challenging tasks. Students in a

mastery-focused environment are better prepared for postsecondary success through an environment that promotes student potential rather than comparing students against each other to determine superiority. In order to cultivate such a positive learning climate, teachers must hold beliefs about student potential that result in high expectations of all learners.

Educational research supports the following idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy: when teachers have high expectations of students, they facilitate learning in a way that yields higher student achievement (Rubie-Davies, 2007). Therefore, if teachers have high expectations of all students, they will prepare them for postsecondary readiness based on those expectations of student success. Rubie-Davies et al. (2015) studied two groups of teachers to show that instructional practices aligned with high expectations result in improved student achievement. The study differed from previous educational research in that it involved an experimental group and a control group, rather than being designed as a descriptive study. The authors designed an experiment to influence teacher practices and beliefs in order to imitate those of high expectation teachers and hopefully yield greater student achievement as a result. The study was based on the hypothesis that teacher participation in the intervention would predict increases in student achievement. For the study, a group of 90 teachers, representative of 12 diverse suburban elementary and middle schools from the Auckland area, teaching Grades 3-8, was divided into the teacher expectation intervention group of 46 teachers and a control group of 44 teachers who participated in regular campus professional learning. The treatment group participated in four separate workshops, self-analyzed video data, implemented workshop practices in their classrooms, and had meetings with the researchers. The practices were teaching behaviors of high expectation teachers, such as focusing on mastery goals, evaluation, feedback, and enhancing student autonomy.

In the study, student achievement was measured by standardized tests in reading and mathematics, which showed students in the intervention classes had increased mathematics scores over the year, resulting in gains 28% higher than students in the control group (Rubie-Davies et al., 2015). There were no gains in reading for the intervention group, which is perhaps explained by the teacher implementation data concerning the workshop instructional practices. Further meta-analysis showed students benefited in mathematics achievement from intervention teachers across the categories of school, ethnicity, grade level, gender, and socioeconomic status (Rubie-Davies & Rosenthal, 2016). As students in all categories benefitted, even to a small degree, the results implied a similar intervention in beliefs and behaviors across a campus or school system may improve instruction and classroom climate for a large number of students.

Using a similar approach, McDonald et al. (2016) recently taught specific pedagogical practices of high expectations teachers to an intervention group of teachers to show that the prophecy does not need to be self-fulfilling; behaviors and practices can work to change teacher expectations and beliefs. In cultivating a classroom culture of college readiness, specific instructional practices proven successful in increasing student achievement should be implemented. McKown and Weinstein (2008) recommended creating equitable, high expectations classrooms with opportunity, choice, and constructive feedback, regardless of ethnicity or achievement. According to Weinstein (2008), "expectancy change rests upon increased individual and organizational capacity to challenge and support the talent development of a diversity of all students" (p. 89). Beliefs about what is possible and behaviors to support skill development are required for this shift.

Linking Teacher Expectation Bias to Educational Gaps

Expectation bias influences instructional opportunities in the classroom, which could worsen pre-existing educational gaps. McKown and Weinstein (2008) succinctly described how teacher expectation bias could contribute to educational gaps. Teachers sometimes form achievement expectations based on student ethnicity, with reduced expectations being applied to African Americans and Latinos. This may cause teachers to provide more rigorous and engaging instruction to students from whom more is expected, which benefits these children. Students form perceptions about teacher expectations, which can affect motivation and consequently achievement. Children from groups typically facing achievement stereotypes may be more susceptible to the effects of negative teacher expectations. The authors found teachers' student achievement expectations were formed by ethnicity, regardless of a record of students' previous achievement. According to the meta-analysis, the average effect size of teacher expectations on student achievement was $d = .43$, just above the threshold of making an actual difference (Hattie, 2009).

The influence of teacher expectation bias can be seen in short-term as well as long-range achievement. Friedrich et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study of 73 mathematics teachers with 1,289 fifth-grade students in Germany and found teachers' expectancies had a positive association at the end of the school year, with mathematics achievement. Through a survey of individual student and class-level expectations, Friedrich et al. found nonsignificant relationships from average class expectancies but did find a positive relationship between expectations of individual students and mathematics achievement. In 2010, de Boer et al. examined expectation bias against student prior achievement, IQ, and achievement motivation over 5 years, with a field of 11,000 Dutch students. In the Danish educational tracking system, teacher expectations were

indicated by the track recommendation made by the teacher, establishing bias by determining the difference between observed and predicted teacher expectation. Teacher expectation bias was then related to student characteristics, including achievement level, IQ, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, achievement motivation, parents' aspirations, and primary school grade repetition, with the effect of teacher expectation bias, then was examined over a 5-year period to determine the effect on student performance. The authors found students for whom the expectation bias was positive were tracked for secondary school at a higher level, with students for whom the expectation bias was negative started secondary school at a lower level. The results also showed that educational performance through 5 years was higher with positive expectation bias and lower for negative expectation bias, as students in the lower track were offered less rigorous curriculum, with fewer learning opportunities, than the higher track. Students were able to make up for this disadvantage to some extent, but not fully. Teachers identified programmatic practices, such as tracking, led to expectation gaps for student achievement and effort (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010). Lower expectations of certain student groups contributed to the achievement gap, despite the potential for student performance.

In an intervention study, 277 middle school students were studied in two consecutive cohorts from a middle- to lower-middle-class public school (Yeager, Purdie-Vaughns, Hooper, & Cohen, 2017). The school population was divided evenly between White and African American students. In each cohort, a subgroup of students with B or C grades were messaged that they could reach a higher standard in their social studies classes, all of which had White teachers. Students were surveyed about school trust throughout middle school, discipline data and grades were collected, and college enrollment data were reported. All students wrote a social studies

essay and received feedback, though the intervention students were told the purpose of the feedback was to support them in reaching the high expectations the teacher had for them. This treatment increased the likelihood that the African American students would revise their essays with improved revision quality. Receiving the treatment feedback resulted in a significant reduction of discipline referrals for the African American students in the following school year, with no effect reported for the White students. The researchers concluded, "the damage to African American students' trust by the end of seventh grade or the beginning of eighth grade significantly predicted whether they made it to a 4-year college the year after high school" (p. 668), which held true after controlling for pre-middle school academic performance and other predictors of college enrollment. Similar trust scores were not associated with college enrollment for the White students in the study. Though this study was conducted at one school and the treatment subgroups were relatively small, the findings indicate the importance of seemingly small interactions between teachers and students that convey expectations and may have lasting consequences.

Critical college readiness content areas should be an important focus of efforts to establish a culture of high expectations. Gregory and Huang (2013) examined the relationship between postsecondary expectations and actual postsecondary education status of students, in a longitudinal study where expectations of English and mathematics teachers, students, and parents were studied. Utilizing data from the 2002-2006 Educational Longitudinal Study, the 4-year effect of expectations in a student's 10th grade year on postsecondary status was established. The research addressed academic performance and course level to isolate the effect of positive expectancies, the term for the belief in student potential for later postsecondary educational attainment, including the effect on students from poverty and ethnicities underrepresented in

college. Positive expectancies were found to be *promotive,* in that they increased the probability of a positive student outcome despite risk factors associated with the individual student. According to the authors, previous studies found positive effects are greater for minority and poor students with college-going potential. There was a relationship between multiple sources of positive expectancies and students' postsecondary status 4 years later. It is possible that positive expectancies could lead educators to provide additional resources and opportunities for students, which can then build college readiness. Teachers in the study had the lowest expectations, but their beliefs were the most predictive about postsecondary education, perhaps creating a self-fulfilling prophecy situation. There are implications for intervention, as a result, to influence teacher expectations by focusing on student potential for postsecondary success. The researchers also found teacher expectations had the strongest relationship with postsecondary education for students from lower incomes. When teachers believed students could achieve, it helped to mitigate the effects of student background.

Similarly, Sciarra, and Ambrosino (2011) used the same Educational Longitudinal Study data to show Asian respondents had the highest expectations as well as the highest post-secondary enrollment, compared with other ethnic groups and with the greatest contrast to Blacks and Latinos. Teachers had the highest expectations for Asians, with decreased expectations for Whites, Blacks, and Latinos, in that order. According to the researchers, as teacher expectations rose for student achievement from less than a high school diploma to enrollment in a 2-year institution, the chances of a student never having enrolled in a post-secondary experience decreased dramatically. The implications for teachers and schools are clear regarding the importance of goal-setting with students and promoting academic achievement for all. This understanding is critical for building a culture of high expectations

across a campus, particularly in urban areas with high concentrations of minority students underserved in postsecondary education. Student Academic Self-Concept

Academic self-concept is a student's perception of his or her own academic ability and is largely considered to be a factor that contributes to educational achievement; theoretically, these two variables are positively correlated, though the direction of causality differs in various models (Rosen, 2010). The perception may be global or subject-specific and may vary depending on the student's interaction with significant others and the academic environment. For example, Rubie-Davies (2006) found students' self-perception dropped when in a class with a low-expectations teacher. Additionally, "self-concept is the way in which people perceive their strengths, weaknesses, abilities, attitudes, and values" (McInerney, Cheng, Mok, & Lam, 2012, p. 250).

When applied to academics, self-concept may motivate a student to adopt specific learning strategies. In a study of 8,354 secondary students in Hong Kong, McInerney et al. (2012) found students with high English or mathematics self-concepts also had increased use of learning strategies, such as attempts at developing conceptual understanding, application of new knowledge, and metacognition. Reciprocally, students with lower academic self-concept engaged in more shallow learning techniques, such as rote learning, in order to pass an exam. The researchers recommended the adoption of strategies to promote student metacognition, such as note-taking, self-questioning, analysis, and reflection, while simultaneously improving academic self-concept through embedded classroom practices, such as providing constructive feedback and reinforcement for positive self-talk. The relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement implies that both can be molded in the classroom.

Mueller and Winsor (2016) studied academic self-concept across high-ability students who were enrolled in various combinations of Advanced Placement® (AP) and non-AP

mathematics and English classes, in 1990. The 1,851 tenth-graders studied were considered to be high-ability due to having been labeled as gifted in eighth-grade and showed academic persistence by enrolling in one or more AP classes in 10th-grade. The students were asked to rate themselves using a questionnaire to determine mathematics and verbal self-concept, which were compared to standardized mathematics and reading achievement test data. Mueller and Winsor generally found, across all groups, academic achievement positively predicted academic self-concept. Though the study was limited by a relatively outdated data set, the findings support the relationship between achievement and individual academic self-concept in high-ability classrooms, which typically hold higher expectations for student achievement.

Using a data set of over 6,000 sixteen-year-old twins in the United Kingdom, researchers studied mathematics achievement tests, grades, and questionnaires to determine the relationships between perceived learning environments, mathematics self-efficacy (belief in the ability to perform a specific math task), academic self-concept, mathematics interest, and achievement (Tosto, Asbury, Mazzocco, Petrill, & Kovas, 2016). The findings revealed mathematics achievement was predicted by both learning environment and intrapersonal factors, though it was most strongly correlated with the latter. Of the intrapersonal factors, mathematics self-efficacy was the most closely linked to achievement. The researchers implied mathematics achievement may be influenced through classroom environment by increasing interest and self-concept in order to impact self-efficacy. There are implications for improving the classroom environment to boost academic self-concept and subsequently achievement. Similarly, in a different study, Gilbert et al. (2014) asked 979 middle school students to provide perceptions relating to their mathematics classroom environment, including teacher expectations and use of *reform strategies* designed to support students in mastering conceptual understanding, as well as report on

mathematics efficacy. The researchers found a significant interaction between efficacy and the students' perceptions of the use of reform strategies, especially for low-achieving students who then experienced achievement gains, suggesting such strategies are important for students with lower academic self-concept who also are low-achievers.

A synthesis of studies suggests a student's academic self-concept "is strongly influenced by the achievement of others in his or her school and that this frame of reference effect also applies to students' interest, course choice, and educational aspirations" (Trautwein, Lüdtke, Marsh, & Nagy, 2009, p. 853). While individual achievement informs academic self-concept, as indicated earlier, academic self-concept is partly a consequence of the learning environment. The researchers found a negative correlation between being placed in a class with high achievers and a student's self-concept, whereas students placed with low-achievers tended to have an increase in academic self-concept, though there is evidence to suggest the negative effects of placement in an academically selective environment, such as higher-track enrollment, may be lessened to a degree by individual perceptions about overall school status and achievement. In order to test students' perceived standing of the class or school against academic self-concept, three studies were conducted in Germany, where students are academically tracked starting around age 10, based on achievement. All three studies included students in the academic pre-college track, as other German students finish school at Grade 10. In the first study, the 5,016 student participants were in their final year of schooling, Grade 13, and enrolled in a pre-university mathematics class. The researchers collected information on individual mathematics self-concept, achievement, and perceived standing of the math class relative to other math classes in the school. The second study replicated the first approach, but with 1,502 students in their final year of schooling enrolled in general mathematics classes. The third study placed

focus on the school level as opposed to the class level, using data from 4,247 students in Grade 13 from randomly selected upper secondary schools.

Overall, the researchers confirmed that individuals with comparable achievement experience lower academic self-concepts when placed in high-achieving learning groups, which was reinforced when class-average achievement, as well as school-average achievement, were examined (Trautwein et al., 2009). Students shared perceptions on the standing of their mathematics class and school. Additionally, academic self-concept reflected position within the class as well as perceptions of the class's comparative standing in a positive association. The researchers generalized that, "students' placement in certain schools and classes can have major implications for their academic self-concepts" (p. 862). The studies' results suggested academic self-concepts of high-achievers was less influenced by a negative frame of reference than those of the lower-achievers, though more definitive research is needed to bolster the conclusion. According to the findings, students shared beliefs about other classes and their own classes, and "students think about the characteristics of groups of students and use this information to evaluate their own academic qualities" (p. 863). With a statistically significant relationship, perceived class or school standing and academic self-concept were linked; class standing also positively associated with achievement. These findings implied students are evaluating their own standing in relation to their peers and other classes and different perceptions of class standings within a school inform individual, academic self-concept in a way that may impact achievement in the class.

<div align="center">Student Perceptions of Teacher Expectations</div>

Students are aware of low expectations that educators may hold about their potential for

postsecondary success, which can impact academic self-concept. In some cases, teachers communicate expectations through explicit messaging and through implicit prejudicial attitudes (Peterson et al., 2016). The Pygmalion effect shows that students perceive teachers' expectancies (whether accurate or not) and react accordingly, resulting in reduced or increased learning outcomes (Friedrich et al., 2015). When asked, students identify that teachers' expectations can affect their academic motivation and subsequent achievement, especially when those expectations are low (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). In a follow-up to previous research, Babad et al. (1991) directed five groups of 151 judges to rate 10-second taped samples of unfamiliar teachers in the context of high- and low-expectancy students, using audio and video, both individually and together. The judges, who ranged from fourth-graders up to veteran teachers, viewed teacher behavior when talking to and about the unseen students. Instead of asking the judges to rate the teacher's behavior, the task was to evaluate the student's level of achievement from excellent to weak and rate the teacher's love for the student. The researchers found, from the detection effect sizes, that all groups of judges easily detected both categories, most strongly from the teacher's content and tone of voice when talking about the student. In the teacher characteristics portion of the study, the older judges observed the teachers speaking more warmly about the high-expectancy students, though the younger judges were mistaken at times, perhaps as a result of conflicting verbal content and facial expressions when the teachers were talking to the low-expectancy students. Overall, the findings indicated even brief observations of behavior can detect a more positive climate for the high-expectancy students, particularly when the teacher was talking to the student.

Pringle, Lyons, and Booker (2010) showed, from a student perspective, teachers were seen as having lower expectations for African American students, which resulted in reduced

opportunities for college readiness for those students. This not only contributed to the college readiness gap, but also the overall achievement gap amongst student groups in the population. The authors used semi-structured interviews of 48 African American graduating seniors from two high schools, one largely White and the other largely made up of minority students, in order to learn from the students themselves about the effects of teacher expectations on academic achievement. Participating students felt their teachers expected them to go to college, yet three-fourths of the students reported perceptions of lower teacher expectations, with over half of the students believing their race was a factor in teacher expectations. Several students reported comments from teachers and counselors, discouraging them or neglecting to provide information about honors or AP courses. Though conducted with a relatively small number of student subjects, the study provides insight about how educator expectations are perceived by students in consideration of their future academic goals. This is reinforced by Weinstein (2016), who found students were able to "identify teachers' choices of curriculum allocation and grouping, evaluation and motivational strategies, student agency, and climate as critical clues about expectations" (p. 136). Indeed, students are able to discern teacher expectations in a more sophisticated and nuanced manner than many might assume, even in the younger grades (Weinstein, 2002).

Research supports the notion that children improve at determining teachers' expectations and differential treatment as they mature (Bae, Holloway, Li, & Bempechat, 2008). Semi-structured interviews with 11 Mexican-American freshmen compared the perceptions of teacher expectations of high and low achieving students. Both groups of students described teachers' expectations of a *good student*, using academic behavioral characteristics, such as paying attention in class and turning in work on time, as well as social characteristics, such as having a

good attitude and being polite. The students indicated teachers thought good students did their work or worked hard, indicating achievement stems from effort as opposed to ability. Only two of the high-achieving students used aspects of intelligence or ability to describe good students. Nine of the 11 students said teachers perceived a *bad student* to be disrespectful and disruptive. All of the low-achieving students used absolutes when sharing their perceptions of teachers' expectations of a good student, as in, "they always pay attention" (Bae et al., 2008, p. 218), implying the belief of low-achieving students that good students always follow behavioral and social expectations, which may be perceived to be an unattainable goal for students with low academic self-concept. Though the study focused on a small sample size, the results showed the important role teachers can play in influencing student perceptions of treatment and achievement by utilizing instructional practices such as goal-setting (Bae et al., 2008). Martinez and Welton (2014) referred to student perceptions in a larger study utilizing a college opportunity framework at high-poverty secondary schools in the South Texas area. Students reported their AP teachers required them to think more critically. Additionally, "students enrolled in non-AP courses admitted that they did not need to study to make good grades, especially because the sole focus of these courses was preparation for the state high school exit examination" (Martinez & Welton, 2014, p. 819). Students also reported teachers of non-AP courses seemed less serious and had a decreased focus on academics. Students know when they are receiving instruction resulting from high expectations, or not.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In this chapter, I identified relevant and recent research in the areas of defining college readiness and the phenomenon of teacher expectation bias regarding potential student

achievement. Much of the research focuses on how teacher expectations are reinforced by implicit bias (Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair, & Shelton, 2016) toward individual students or groups of students, based on racial or economic demographics. Bragg and Taylor (2014), as well as Liebhard et al. (2012), maintained teachers do not consistently possess a clear conceptual understanding of college readiness nor do they have commonly accepted responsibility for developing college readiness skills in students. Teachers' expectations of student achievement can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, with both short- and long-term consequences for students' academic careers (de Boer et al., 2010; Rubie-Davies, 2010; Rubie-Davies et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2015). McKown and Weinstein (2008), along with Rubie-Davies (2007), suggested little is known about how the expectations teachers form about entire classrooms of students influence rigorous instructional opportunities. Finally, Martinez and Welton (2014), with Pringle et al. (2010), pointed out that students recognize when teachers hold high or low expectations for their achievement. The combined research indicated important links between teachers' expectations of student achievement, teachers' instructional behaviors, students' perceptions of the teachers and themselves, and ultimately the students' achievement (Bae et al., 2008). The established body of knowledge informs the design of the current study detailed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the components of methodology, including an explanation of the research design, population and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis plan, and limitations. Additional information about the methodology is presented in the form of a research design visual. The chapter components support the manner in which I address the research questions.

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to detail student perceptions of the influence teacher expectation bias might have on classroom college readiness opportunities. This approach allows a researcher to explore a phenomenon more thoroughly by asking probing questions of participants (Creswell, 2013). In the current study, I interviewed students in a small, focus group setting. By including significant statements regarding the lived experience of the phenomenon using participant voice, the phenomenon is authenticated and made personal for the reader.

I used a phenomenological approach in order to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

Research Design

Selecting the appropriate qualitative approach for a study should yield rich descriptions of experiences that add meaning to a phenomenon (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). The qualitative

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approach used for this study was phenomenological research. According to Creswell (2013),

with a phenomenological study, the researcher describes the lived experience of a shared

phenomenon in order to detail what was experienced and how, by the individuals included. The

goal of a phenomenological study should be to develop a description of the essence of the

phenomenon, rather than to explain or analyze the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In a

phenomenological study, a heterogeneous group of individuals who have all experienced the

phenomenon are identified in order to examine their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). This

was accomplished in the form of small focus group interviews of high school students. Figure 2

depicts the overall design for the study with a detailed timeline included in Figure 3.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   11th/12th Grade    │
                    │ Student Population   │
                    └─────────────────────┘
          ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
          │  On-Level Core   │      │  Pre-AP/AP Core  │
          │     Classes      │      │     Classes      │
          └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
    ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
    │ Focus Group A│ │ Focus Group B│  │ Focus Group C│ │ Focus Group D│
    └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
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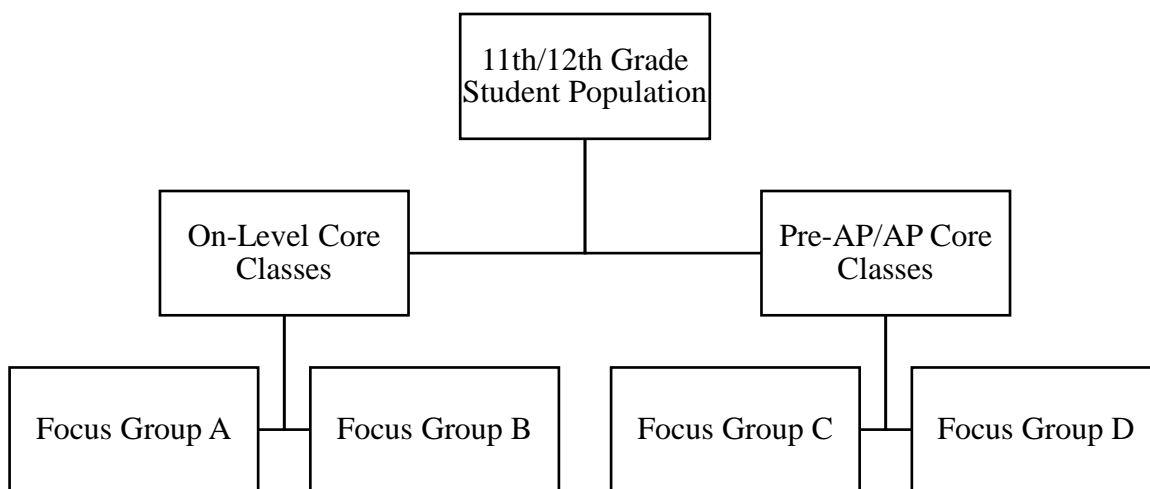
Figure 2. Phenomenological focus group interview design.

Moustakas (1994) described a transcendental phenomenology, "in which everything is

perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (p. 34). The researcher attempts to accomplish this by

setting aside any personal experience with the phenomenon in order to focus on the lived

experiences of the research participants, an approach Creswell (2013) refers to as bracketing.

Fischer (2009) further defined bracketing as:

> . . . an investigator's identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural
> factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's

data. For the sake of viewing data freshly, these involvements are placed in "brackets" and "shelved" for the time being as much as possible. (p. 583)
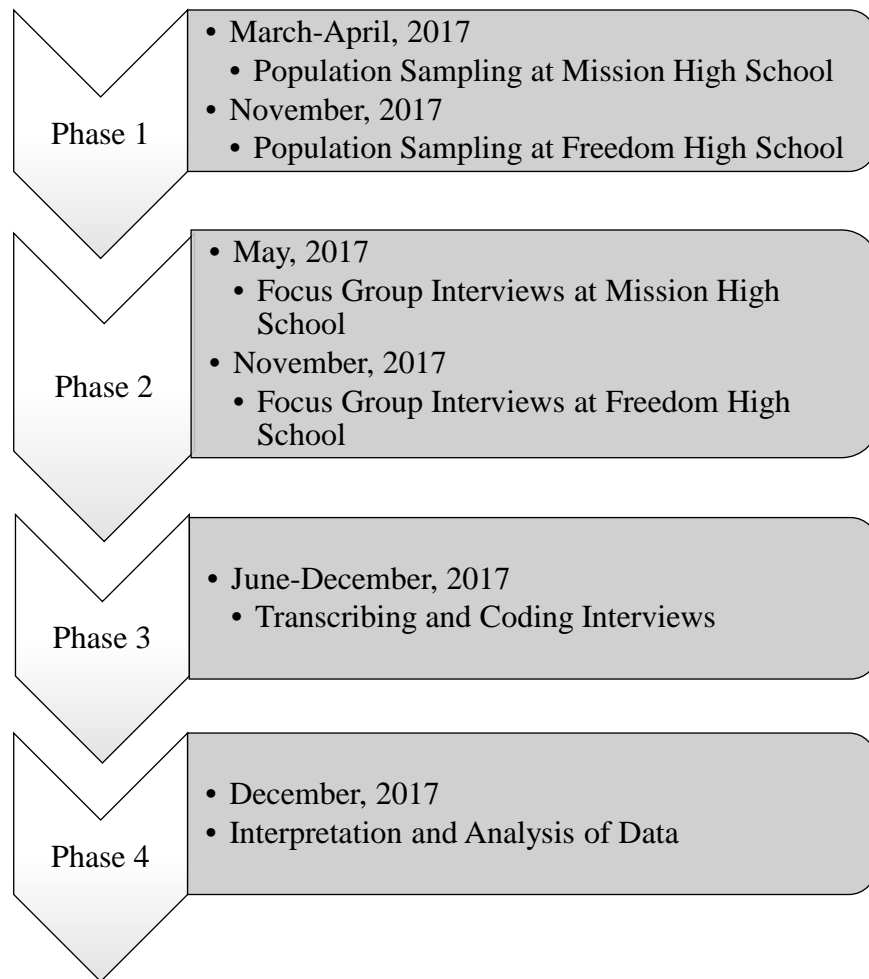
Figure 3. Phenomenological focus group interview timeline.

Fischer also stressed that bracketing should not just apply to the researcher's assumptions but should also be applied to emerging findings, as an ongoing reflective practice. Critiques of bracketing imply that the process has become somewhat superficial and perfunctory in qualitative research (Fischer, 2012; Gearing, 2004) and discrepancy exists on how to successfully conduct bracketing (Tufford & Newman, 2012). However, LeVasseur (2003) attempted to reconcile some of the confusion by clarifying that the act of becoming curious around a topic initiates the bracketing of prior understanding.

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We have to assume that we do not know or understand something in order to attain the philosophical attitude. When we begin to inquire in this way, we no longer assume that we understand fully, and the effect is a questioning of prior knowledge. (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 417)

With this clarification, bracketing is seen as less of a denial of experience or knowledge of a topic and more of an acknowledgement that there is indeed something to discover in the study of a phenomenon.

In the current study, my bracketing is included in Chapter 4, with a description of my experience with the phenomenon and an attempt to bracket out personal views prior to focusing on the experiences of the students interviewed. For the purposes of this study, the phenomenon of teacher expectation bias was explored as it relates to classroom college readiness opportunities. Student experiences with the phenomenon were gleaned from descriptions of perceived teacher expectations and classroom efforts, as they aligned with the development of college readiness skills and behaviors.

Participants

Qualitative data collection occurred at Mission High School and Freedom High School, pseudonyms used to maintain confidentiality. Both high schools are located outside of the city of Dallas; Mission High School is located in Mission, Texas, a fast-growing Dallas suburb, whereas Freedom High School is located in Freedom, Texas, a more rural area outside of another fast-growing suburb in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Of the 2,132 students in the 2016-2017 school year, 6.1% were African American, 13% were Hispanic, 7.2% were Asian, and 71% were White. In addition, 6.3% of Mission High students were economically disadvantaged and 1% were English language learners (ELLs). Compared to the rest of the school district, Mission High School is more affluent and has a slightly less-diverse student body. In contrast, Freedom

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High School had just 340 students and the focus groups included both juniors and seniors. The

school's demographics closely mirrored that of the district, with 1.2% African American, 15.6%

Hispanic, and 78.5% White students. In this more rural area, 40% of students at the school were

economically disadvantaged and 1.2% were ELLs.

Despite the demographic differences, both schools' achievement results were similar.

Both schools had a 2016 Texas Accountability rating of Met Standard, though Mission High

School also earned Distinction Designations in the areas of Academic Achievement in

Mathematics, Academic Achievement in Science, Top 25 Percent: Student Progress, and Top 25

Percent: Closing Performance Gaps. At Mission High School, data indicated achievement gaps

on the State Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) standardized assessments, with White

and Asian students scoring higher on most subject areas over African American and Hispanic

students. Additionally, results indicated 92.1% of White students and 96.8% of Asian students

were designated as College and Career Ready Graduates, compared to 77.1% of African

American students and 84.4% of Hispanic students. However, Table 1 presents a comparison of

subject-specific college-ready results across demographic groups, indicating achievement gaps as

well as overall low performance. The Mission High School Class of 2016 recorded 55.7% at or

above criterion on the combined SAT and ACT assessment results, with similar achievement

gaps across demographic groups.

Table 1

2015-2016 Mission High School Postsecondary Readiness

College-Ready Graduates	African American %	Hispanic %	White %	Asian %
English Language Arts	48.5	70.6	77.3	83.9
Mathematics	42.4	58.8	71.4	80.6
Both Subjects	39.4	58.8	69.4	77.4

Due to its small size, Freedom High School's achievement data only included results from Hispanic and White student groups, though achievement gaps varied between the groups in the STAAR standardized assessments, most notably in English, though Hispanic students scored higher than White students in Algebra 1. In the area of College and Career Ready Graduates, 75% of Hispanic students earned the distinction, compared to only 54.3% of White students. Table 2 compares both demographic groups in subject-specific college-ready results, with dismal results for both groups. Only 20% of Freedom High School graduates in 2016 scored at or above criterion on the combined SAT and ACT assessment results, though Hispanic students did not make up a large enough number of tested students to factor into the results.

Table 2

2015-2016 Freedom High School Postsecondary Readiness

College-Ready Graduates	Hispanic %	White %
English Language Arts	40	38.3
Mathematics	40	34.0
Both Subjects	20	23.9

Creswell (2013) described possible phenomenological research design as ranging from anywhere between one and several hundred participants, though references included recommendations of participants consisting of three to 10 individuals. In determining the number of participants for this research design, I was mindful that, "The important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it" (p. 161). Marshall and Rossman (2016) described focus group size as typically consisting of seven to 10 individuals, though groups may be as small as four. They indicated the possibility of conducting several focus groups with different participants to recognize trends in the expressed perceptions. For the purposes of this study, there were two sets of possible

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participants, with the intended outcome of four to seven focus group participants in each of the four interviews, for a total of 16 to 28 participants across both sets. The two sets were made up of those students who took on-level core classes and those who took a minimum of two pre-advanced placement (Pre-AP) and/or AP core classes their junior or senior year. By utilizing participants from two data sets, I was able to compare the two collective experiences in order to describe the relationship of teacher expectation bias on classroom college readiness opportunities. Random purposeful sampling was employed in the current study, with assistance from school counselors to filter current 11th or 12th grade students into groups of students described above. By separating students into the data sets, it allowed for participants to be chosen who have experienced the phenomenon intensely, either in on-level classes or advanced classes. From each of the two data sets, student names were randomly selected to be invited to participate in the study, with a larger number of students invited than needed for the sample size to counter any difficulties in securing student participation. The random sampling was not guaranteed to result in a balance of participants by gender. Of the students who returned signed consent forms, focus groups were established and group interview dates, times, and locations were determined. A copy of the informed consent form is in Appendix A.

In Mission ISD, students have open enrollment access to advanced courses. The district leaders believe if students desire the challenge of rigorous courses, then they should be considered for admittance into the course. The course catalog lists no prerequisites for enrolling in Pre-AP or AP courses. In Freedom ISD, students must meet criteria in order to be eligible to enroll in Pre-AP and AP courses in high school, specifically prior completion of an advanced course or an 85% or better score on a prior related course, as well as a score of 85% or higher on an assessment. The College Board (2016), the organization that offers the AP program, released

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a statement on enrolling in AP classes, which is reflective of its position on Pre-AP enrollment as

well:

> The College Board strongly encourages educators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP for students from ethnic, racial and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. Schools should make every effort to ensure their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population. The College Board also believes that all students should have access to academically challenging course work before they enroll in AP classes, which can prepare them for AP success. It is only through a commitment to equitable preparation and access that true equity and excellence can be achieved. (p. 8)

Though the College Board's position on equity and access is clear, districts and schools

are able to set separate eligibility and enrollment criteria.

Freedom High School also partnered with the University of Texas at Austin

OnRamps (2016) program, which is a dual-enrollment partnership with districts. The

program provides over 80 hours of university-designed professional learning, curriculum

and support to high school OnRamps teachers, who in turn teach a rigorous, college-credit

bearing course; passing students are guaranteed credit to UT Austin that will also transfer

to any public institution of higher education in the state of Texas. The courses are

designed to provide key content knowledge, in alignment with high school standards, as

they develop cognitive skills necessary for post-secondary success. In order to enroll in an

OnRamps course, a student must qualify through university-determined coursework and

standards or through a qualifying score on the Texas Success Initiative exam. For this

study, OnRamps courses were included as advanced courses, along with Pre-AP and AP

courses, when determining focus group participation at Freedom High School.

Ethical Considerations

The idea for this research topic stems from my experiences as an educator. I am currently employed by AVID® Center, a not-for-profit organization that promotes college readiness for all students. In this position, I advocate for and train other educators in providing college readiness opportunities for all students across a campus. In order to prevent bias, I attempted to bracket my personal experiences prior to analyzing the data gathered during the focus group interviews. I also included a third-party observer to record and make notes during the interviews at Mission High School, who also reviewed my conclusions to detect potential bias. Prior to conducting this interview, I obtained approval from the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board. A copy of the approval is in Appendix B.

Data Collection

For this phenomenological study, data collection consisted of in-depth semi-structured student focus group interviews in order for participants to describe their lived experience. According to Creswell (2013), "focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other. . . and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information" (p. 164), thus the individual focus groups needed to contain an adequate number of participants to interact with each other in the conversation. A table microphone attached to a recording device was used in order to make an audio recording of each interview session, with permission of the participants. Collingridge and Gantt (2008) caution, "phenomenological researchers who investigate experiential phenomena must make sure that they facilitate a free-flowing and intensive discussion about events with participants to elicit

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experientially vibrant responses" (p. 391). The interviews followed an interview protocol

consisting of open-ended questions, developed from the literature related to college readiness

(Conley, 2007, 2012), academic self-concept (McInerney et al., 2012; Rosen, 2010), and teacher

expectation bias (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Rubie-Davies et al., 2015). A

copy of the interview protocol is in Appendix C. In addition to recording the interviews, the

interview protocol was used to hand-write responses as backup in the event of an audio recording

malfunction. Students were numbered in the group for identification purposes and were

prompted to state their participant number prior to responding, for transcription purposes. A

third-party observer sat apart from the focus groups at Mission High School in order to observe

and make notes, using an observation protocol on the social interactions, emotions, and attitudes

of the numbered group members, to add to the data analysis. A copy of the observation protocol

is in Appendix D. A third-party observer was not available to attend the focus groups at

Freedom High School.

The interview protocol was rigorously evaluated by a panel of five AVID Center

colleagues who are all experts in college readiness, including program managers, the Senior

Director of Professional Learning, a statistical analyst, and the Director of AVID for Higher

Education. Interview questions were then pilot tested by a small group of 10 students, all current

high school students in their junior year, none of whom participated in the current study. The

interview protocol was refined, based on the findings of this field-testing process.

The qualitative data were gathered during the spring and fall semesters of 2017.

Participant sampling, invitations, and focus group interviews took place in April through

November. Through the use of an interview protocol, open-ended questions allowed students to

describe their experiences, with follow-up probing questions as necessary to elicit additional

information from participants. Each focus group was labeled alphabetically, and students numbered off within the group to assist with transcription and coding. The interview protocol began with a description of the study. Interview questions were written to gather information regarding student perceptions of teacher expectations, as well as for students to describe classwork or classroom opportunities in alignment with college readiness skills and behaviors.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) outlined the phenomenological analysis approach used in this study. First, I described personal experiences with the phenomenon in order to focus on the participants and not my own lived experience, using the process of bracketing. Second, after employing the services of a professional transcription service, the transcribed interviews were reviewed thoroughly to find significant statements in the data about the individual experiences and to generate a list of non-repetitive statements. Interview transcripts were imported into Microsoft Excel to color-code and analyze responses. Third, significant statements were identified using a process called In Vivo coding, to amplify student voice in the research process. Then the significant statements were grouped into themes by organizing them into clusters of belonging (Saldana, 2016). Fourth, a description of the participant experience with the phenomenon was created, including quotations as examples. Fifth, a description of the setting and environment for the phenomenon's existence at the school site added contextual detail. Finally, all subsequent steps were used to develop a composite description, incorporating the participant and contextual experiences in order to drill down to the essence of the experience, thereby fulfilling the requirements of a phenomenological study. Cross-references of study research questions and interview protocol questions are:

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1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

    - Interview Questions: 2-6

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

    - Interview Questions: 1, 7-8

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

    - Interview Questions: 9-12

Limitations of the Study

A limitation to the study was the relatively small sample size consisting of students from two high schools in the Dallas metroplex. While the in-depth focus group interviews were expected to yield rich data about student experiences, the research design did not provide for a large number of participants. Another limitation on the sample size was my ability to secure student and parent permission for participation in the focus groups. The interview protocol asked about classroom experiences, so the perceptions of the few may be generalizable to the class as a whole but not to a greater audience. Additionally, the current study was limited by the utilization of one data collection instrument to collect student perspectives, in the form of the focus group interview protocol. The use of an observation protocol provided additional detail about the interview process at Mission High School.

Another possible limitation of the study was my ability to engage the student participants in open and honest conversation about their classroom experiences. I was unknown to the students, which may have made them more likely to open up to me or it may have caused them to be more reticent while being interviewed. A major aim at the beginning of each focus group

was to build rapport and trust with the participants as quickly as possible. Marshall and Rossman (2016) provided the warning to researchers to be mindful of power dynamics in a focus group interview setting; I needed to ensure all participants felt comfortable speaking in the group and no one person was dominating the conversation. Another aspect of power dynamics introduced through the research design could have been the relationship between the adult researcher and child participant. Mishna, Antle, and Regehr (2004) explained this interplay by saying, "While the intent of qualitative research interviews is to obtain the perspectives and experiences of child participants, paradoxically the very fact of the interview has an influencing and mediating effect upon the child's 'voice'" (p. 463). I needed to be sensitive during the interview to the amount of influence student participants may have been experiencing as a result of the process.

An additional limitation may have been my ability to bracket personal experiences successfully with teacher expectation bias and the development of classroom college readiness opportunities. It was undesirable to introduce personal bias into the study, so I needed to bracket as much as possible in order to focus on the lived experiences of the student participants. The interview protocol had scripted interview questions as well as scripted probing questions so as not to introduce undue influence in the form of a leading question. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explained how the researcher replaces a valid and reliable instrument in qualitative inquiry, so it was necessary to have personal credibility and trustworthiness when interpreting the data. This was accomplished through using strategies such as debriefing with peers to ensure the soundness of the data analysis.

Summary

A phenomenological approach allowed for student voices to describe the influence of teacher expectation bias on classroom college readiness opportunities. Through the use of small focus groups, student experiences were brought to the forefront in order to thematically distill down to the essence of the phenomenon. By including student voice, the phenomenon was made authentic in a way that addresses the overarching research questions. Chapter 4 is a detailed overview of the data collected, as well as a thematic analysis leading to the overall essence of the phenomenon for student participants.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the current study was to gather student perspectives on teacher

expectations and instructional opportunities in core content classes in order to determine if

expectation bias influences college readiness preparation in the classroom. Four focus groups

were conducted in the spring and fall of 2017 across several visits to two high schools, providing

qualitative data sets for analysis that included responses from juniors and seniors in suburban and

rural settings, and primarily on-level core content perspectives versus those of students in

primarily advanced core courses. Students were selected randomly and divided into focus

groups based on the composition of their core content schedule. The student selection process

was entirely anonymous and no identifying information was included. For this reason, the

number of senior students was determined based on the contents of their responses, such as

alluding to being a senior or discussing being close to graduation. Table 3 provides further

details on the composition of the focus groups. In total, 18 students participated in the focus

groups, with 10 in the on-level groups and eight in the advanced groups.

Table 3

Focus Group Composition

Focus Group	On-Level/Advanced	Gender		Grade Level	
		Male	Female	Junior	Senior
A	MHS On-Level	3	1	4	
B	FHS On-Level	1	5	5	1
C	MHS Advanced		2	2	
D	FHS Advanced	3	3	3	3
	Totals	7	11	14	4

This chapter begins with my researcher's bracketing prior to the data analysis, which is organized around interview and research questions. Interview questions were first analyzed and then aligned to the individual research questions in order to draw thematic conclusions. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

Additionally, a field note observation guide was used by an independent observer during Focus Groups A and C, which was used to debrief with the observer about the interview process. The data analysis is organized throughout the chapter by interview question, with further detailed analysis included by research question.

Researcher's Bracketing

For this phenomenological study, I used the process of bracketing in order to reflect on my previous experiences with the influence of teacher expectation bias on classroom college readiness opportunities. According to Creswell (2013), this allowed me to set aside my own experiences and personal bias as much as possible in order to concentrate on the experiences of the focus group participants. This reflective process was an attempt to decrease the influence of my past experiences on the data analysis. Creswell compares bracketing to a juror being instructed by a judge to consider a piece of evidence as inadmissible.

My formal reflections began as part of a class assignment prior to beginning the dissertation process. When asked what led to the study I was preparing to propose to my

committee, I admitted that the idea had been percolating in my brain for about a decade. I taught

high school juniors for several years, primarily on-level and AP United States history. I enjoyed

teaching both classes and the interactions I had with so many different types of students. Each

presented its own joys and challenges. Often, though, my colleagues who taught AP would

lament about being forced to teach *regular* students. One colleague stands out in my mind due to

the fact that she cried when she found out she was being *punished* the next school year with an

on-level class. When I reflect back upon those experiences, three students consistently come to

mind: Travis, Roxanne, and Maddy.

Travis was my student as both a sophomore and again as a junior in social studies my

first two years of teaching in Texas. I already had taught for two years in California and had

experience as an AVID elective teacher. Naively, I assumed my students would recognize the

benefit of learning Cornell Note-taking in history, so I proceeded to teach the strategy and hold

them accountable for my expectations. I remember one day, a student asked, "Ms., why can't

you just give us the fill-in-the-blank notes like everyone else?" I am ashamed to say I backed off

of Cornell Notes and lowered my expectations. But then, several years passed and I received an

email from Travis, who had been a lovable kid but the kind of student that frustrates teachers due

to his overall goofiness and lack of effort. Travis emailed me out of the blue several years after

graduating. He told me that he had hated Cornell Notes in my class, but he used them in

firefighter school, taught them to his fellow students, and claimed they all learned so much more

as a result. His email brought tears of joy and pride to my eyes.

Roxanne was intelligent, hard-working, quiet, and shy as a student in my on-level U.S.

history class. Deep into the semester, I asked her why she had not enrolled in Pre-AP U.S.

history and she replied, "No one ever talked to me about taking it." It broke my heart that a

student with such clear potential had never been encouraged to be an academic risk-taker and challenge herself. Maddy was a student in my AP U.S. history class. About three weeks into the semester, Maddy approached me with a drop form from the counseling office. She felt that the class was too hard, and she was not going to be successful, both in the class and on the AP Exam. I refused to sign the form and said, "Maddy, if you stick in here and we work together, I promise you can do it." I was so proud of Maddy when she did great in the class and passed the AP Exam.

Travis, Roxanne, and Maddy remind me of the power of high expectations and providing rigor with support. I am hoping this research allows other student voices to be heard, as their experiences and perceptions are shared and analyzed. Though I acknowledge the impressions that Travis, Roxanne, and Maddy made in my life, I am confident those experiences are separate from those of the focus group participants at Mission and Freedom High Schools. My goal is to learn through the perceptions of the focus group students and highlight their voices for the reader to see the connection between teacher expectation bias and classroom college readiness opportunities.

Qualitative Analysis Results by Interview Question

At the conclusion of the four focus group interviews, the recordings were submitted to a professional digital transcription service. I reviewed the finished transcripts for accuracy and then uploaded them into Microsoft Excel, where responses were then color-coded by on-level or advanced and sorted by interview question. Individual responses were then analyzed using InVivo coding, where the code is an actual participant quotation and could be used with other codes to split the data into smaller pieces (Saldana, 2016). According to Saldana, InVivo coding

is preferable for interview transcript coding because using the participants' own words provides much greater insight about the human condition. For this study, using participants' own words is critical to the goal of bringing forward student voice in describing their educational experience first-hand. Recurring codes were then analyzed for themes representing the classification of either the focus group, the student group (on-level versus advanced), the campus, or possibly the participants as a collective body.

To protect anonymity, focus group participants were each assigned a number at the beginning of the interview and were prompted to state their student number prior to giving a response. For the purpose of clearly reporting results and attributing statements, the students will be referred to in the analysis using the labels in Table 4.

Table 4

Focus Group Student Labels

Focus Group	Student Labels
MHS On-Level	A1-4
FHS On-Level	B1-6
MHS Advanced	C1-2
FHS Advanced	D1-6

Students were informed they could answer in any order they chose, and they should not feel pressured to answer each question unless they wanted to speak to the question. Only core content classes should have been considered when responding.

Each focus group took place on campus in a private conference room, lasting no more than approximately an hour per interview. The full list of interview questions and probes are in Appendix C. At Mission High School, the conference room was a small room located at the back of the library. In order to enter the library, I was required to register my presence in the

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welcoming and homey reception area of the front office. Both the library and front office area were adorned with school colors and posters or photographs of school athletic teams. I did not observe information displayed that was geared toward postsecondary experiences of any kind. Freedom High School was much the same, with the front office displaying elements of school spirit. The conference room was located inside the front office and there were no visual displays other than the master school calendar for the year. Students reported directly to each conference room for their respective focus groups.

Interview Question 1 Data

The first interview question was intended to ease students into the conversation and allow for a low-risk response: What is it like to be a student at this high school? Responses were coded as primarily positive, negative, or neutral. The recurring themes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Interview Question 1 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Academically competitive	Campus (MHS)
Small school benefits	Campus (FHS)

Of the six students interviewed at MHS, four responded negatively and two had neutral responses. MHS students overwhelmingly responded that the school was academically competitive, and several students emphasized the focus on getting good grades to be competitive for class rank and eventually getting into college. A1 described the environment as, "you're either going for the highest or you're not really in the conversation at all." C2 went even further to say:

I think going to school at [MHS] is kind of really competitive because ever since your freshman year, you've been told that the most important thing is your GPA and your class rank, and when it's not where you want it to be, it makes you feel kind of sad because you feel like you should be higher up, or you feel like you need to keep trying and pushing yourself harder and harder. So, it's really just competitive.

In contrast, students at FHS consistently extolled the benefits of attending a small school, with four positive responses, one neutral response, and one negative response from a student who felt the small town placed a greater importance on school sports rather than academics and other extracurriculars. The positive responses focused on the benefits of a smaller environment, where it is easier to get to know the teachers and other students. According to D5, "I certainly prefer the smaller school as opposed to a bigger school environment. Just kind of more relaxed, and you get to know teachers better, and better assistance just because it's smaller." This notion was reiterated by the response of B6, who said,

I think that in a class, it's better if you go to a smaller school because the smaller the numbers of students, the easier it is for teachers to help you when you need help instead of when there's like 30 kids in the class.

Across all four focus groups responses, the two themes emerged by campus breakdown.

Interview Question 2 Data

With this question, I explored academic self-concept by asking, "What are your expectations of your performance in your core classes?" Response themes are presented in Table 6.

Students across all focus groups stated they set high expectations for their academic performance, particularly in mathematics. Many students emphasized higher expectations of their own performance at this point in their education, as opposed to when they were freshmen or sophomores. As A3 stated,

This year I've expected more out of myself because it's getting closer to college and honestly with assignments I just expect to get stressed out over it and so for me it's like all or nothing. I'm either going to put minimal effort or just do everything I can for it.

Table 6

Interview Question 2 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
High expectations	Collective
Put in effort	Student Group (On-Level)
Benefits of smaller classes	Campus (FHS)

Several students in on-level Focus Groups A and B equated high expectations for performance with putting effort into the class. B6 responded:

I think that as long as you put in the same amount of effort you can expect to make good grades. There are hard classes with harder curriculum but if you study, I guess, then I expect myself to make good grades. That's not always saying I study but . . . if I did I could expect myself to make good grades.

While effort was referenced by many of the on-level students, the advanced students tended to expect excellence of themselves as a reflection of being in rigorous courses. D5 stated,

I don't know if I can speak on this in a way that the entire school can. I'm taking all AP classes, that kind of thing, so I guess I have high expectations in there just because I have to, just to get by.

Both advanced students in Focus Group C mentioned being competitive as a justification for having high expectations.

Across Focus Groups B and D at FHS, students discussed being at a small school as part of their rationale for having high expectations. According to D6,

In the small-town school, I expect myself to be really good at academics compared to a bigger school since I get the curriculum a lot better, since I have a personal . . . or a smaller, more tight connection with my teachers. So, I expect myself to excel.

This theme was reinforced by Focus Group B when B3 explained, ". . . when you have smaller classes, I guess, it's easier for the teacher to notice you." Though participants responded with the common element of high expectations for their own academic performance across all groups, there were different supporting reasons for those expectations.

Interview Question 3 Data

As a follow-up to the student responses about their own expectations, Question 3 asked, "Do your teachers expect you to get good grades on tests and assignments?" Response themes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Interview Question 3 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Some, most, or all teachers have high expectations	Collective
Effort matters	Collective
Relationships matter	Focus Group D

This question had more varied responses across campuses and student groups, though students collectively agreed that some, most, or all of their teachers held high expectations of their performance. As A2 stated, "I think every teacher kinda expects you to have good grades in a way. Some probably will try to push it a little bit more than others, but I feel like every teacher kinda wants high expectations of you." However, when students were probed about why they believed this, responses differed from group to group. Students in Focus Groups A, B, and C mentioned student effort as a factor in determining teacher expectations. A4 explained:

> I think that all of the teachers want their students to strive but something I've noticed, that if a student shows from the beginning of the year that they don't put in effort and that they don't care about the class, they kind of give up on that student. They're like, "Okay,

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I can't do anything to help." So then they push all the other ones that do get the good grades.

C1 described teachers as caring more about how hard a student is trying to learn the material rather than the grade the student is earning. C2 thought that it depended on the teacher; on-level teachers did not care about grades as much, but AP teachers were more willing to help out with tutorials, in her opinion. B2 indicated, "The teachers do expect a lot from you but you kind of have to help them with that. They can't just expect everyone to make good grades if everyone doesn't try or put effort forth in their work." All three student respondents in Focus Group D indicated the strength of relationships between teacher and student at the small school to be a factor. As D2 stated:

> I think a lot of our teachers, especially since we're AP and Honors students, believe that we should be able to handle all of the work that they give us, we should be able to handle anything that comes at us, especially since, again, we have a more personal relationship with them. They all know our names, they all know us. Basically, they know who we are because it's a smaller school, so they know what expectations to put upon us whenever they're closer to us. And they all have high ones because they do believe in us and they all want us to excel to the best of our ability.

In general, the advanced students in Focus Groups C and D seemed to feel that teacher expectations were more a reflection of effort put into the learning rather than a focus on effort put into earning a grade, which was mentioned more by the on-level students.

Interview Question 4 Data

With this question, I sought to probe teachers' postsecondary expectations of students by asking, "Do your teachers expect you to go to college?" Student response themes are summarized in Table 8.

Almost every single response indicated students believe teachers generally expect their students to go to college. Only D5 gave a negative answer, when he stated, "I have no idea if my

teachers expect me to go to college. Never, ever talked to a teacher about college or anything like that, so . . .”

Table 8

Interview Question 4 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
It's an expectation	Collective
It's mentioned but not pushed	Collective

When probed to discuss how it was they knew that teachers expected them to go to college, students felt that it was a general expectation, somewhat altruistically associated with a belief that teachers want to see students succeed. However, many students could only describe instances where college was mentioned in a general sense, such as a college essay writing assignment given to the class, as referred to by C2, or highlighting that a certain activity would look good on a college resume, as related by D2. Some students in the on-level focus groups felt that college was not pushed more by teachers because of the knowledge that not everyone may have college in their future. A1 stated,

> I would agree that they bring up college but they kind of do it underneath some other stuff. They'll bring it up like, "Okay, you'll need this if you're going to college." They won't focus on it specifically, but they'll bring it up with other subjects.

A3 then followed that statement with, "Most teachers, most of mine, don't bring up college much, but they just want to prepare us for the best they can, regardless of how much further we're going with our education." Students in the advanced focus groups felt the expectation existed in part because of the type of students who would sign up for a multitude of advanced classes. As C1 described:

I think that, especially from freshman year, you're conditioned to think that every step you take is towards college. And everything you do, every class you take, every homework assignment is going to be looked at in college. And if you don't go to college, then they don't really show you any alternatives of what else to do, or something else that you can do instead of going to college. It's like everything is pointing towards college and going to college out of high school.

Generally, students believed teachers possessed an intrinsic belief that students were going to college and a desire to prepare them for that future but without specifically stating personal expectations, applying pressure to students about attending, or clarifying regularly how content and skills being acquired were laying a college foundation.

Interview Question 5 Data

Using this question, I sought to understand teacher expectations about postsecondary attendance by asking, "Do these expectations apply to just you or to your class as a whole?" Table 9 presents the recurring themes.

Table 9

Interview Question 5 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
To the class	Collective
If a student cares	Student Group (On-Level)
Especially in the AP environment	Student Group (Advanced)

The students collectively agreed across the focus groups that teachers apply expectations of college across a class. These beliefs were again based more on a belief in a general expectation or altruistic thought that all teachers want to see every student succeed, as stated by A4. A2 then agreed, saying,

Cause the teacher never really brings you aside, alone, and be like, "This is how to plan for college." . . . You just never hear about a teacher bringing a student aside and talking about college, they talk about it to the whole class.

The on-level students tended to agree that teachers may start out with the expectation for the class but begin to focus it on students who show more effort or indicate more interest in their education. B4 summarized for her focus groups when she said:

I think when the teachers like the expectations, yes, they talk to the class and they want everyone to go to college. But, then once the kid . . . like one kid starts showing more and more that he does want to go to college, I think the teachers start really paying attention to them and helping them. Even though they will help everyone else, they start seeing the kids who actually want to go, and they want to help them succeed. I think the expectation gets higher with that student than it does other students.

Several students indicated if a student does not try as hard, then the teacher's expectation may fall.

In the advanced focus groups, students generally applied the expectation to the class as a result of being in an advanced environment. Many students felt that teachers expected college as a logical next step, as described by C1, to enrolling in so many rigorous high school courses. As D2 stated:

I think that the expectations do apply to the whole class since student six said, since we are in this class, do you have to meet a specific criteria. It's just a lot of the characteristics you find within students who are in AP and Honors classes, they keep high expectations for themselves, as well. They have at least an outline of, "I want to go to college, I want to be able to have this much education," even if they don't know specifically what they want to go into.

D1 then followed-up by saying:

I think it honestly depends on the teacher. Most of the time, I think it does apply to the whole class if it is an AP, Honors environment, but I think that there are certain teachers that take the time to get to know individual students on a more personal level to help them be more prepared for college. And I think when teachers do that, when they take the time to get to know their students more, and get to know how they learn best, I think that's when it's more personal. They expect you, personally, to go to college. I have some teachers that are like that, and then again, I have some teachers that . . . It applies to

the whole class and they have absolutely no interest in getting to know the individual student personally.

For the advanced students in particular, general expectations of the class stemmed from the nature of students in advanced courses. However, many students across the focus groups indicated when teachers get to know students better or see a student putting forth more effort, then the expectations become more personal rather than directed to the class as a whole, though the general expectation persisted.

Interview Question 6 Data

This question sought to examine the source of students' perceptions by asking, "How do you know if your teacher has high expectations of you and your achievement? Of your class as a whole?" Students were probed to provide concrete details. Responses are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Interview Question 6 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Teachers show they care	Collective
Teachers push learning more	Collective

The general perception among students was teachers demonstrate that they have high expectations of students when they show they care about the class and about the students individually. This was demonstrated for the students by teachers who do more to help students learn and have a passion for the class. As A4 stated:

I think when the teachers show that they care about the class themselves and they push you to do the work, they don't just go, "Okay, so you didn't do the work. Oh, it's fine,

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it's fine." They don't just brush it off, they actually care and have a passion for the class and show that they care about you, then it kind of shows that.

Other students in Focus Group A agreed a teacher helps students more when expectations are higher. Students in Focus Groups A and C mentioned the opportunity to redo tests or assignments as well as the re-teaching of information that was missed, as an indication of teachers caring, rather than just moving on to the next unit. C1 explained, "So, a lot of times they push you to be better and they express an interest in your education, not just getting through the day, and getting the material taught so they can get a paycheck." Several students across the focus groups used the phrase "push you" as an indication that a teacher with high expectations attempts to support students in meeting their potential. As D5 explained:

> I think, when a teacher has high expectations of you, when they can balance a good balance of workload and just a relationship with you. When you can afford to joke and have fun with your teachers, but at the same time, they're not slacking and acting like teaching is something . . . You know, you're still learning, you're still having fun with them. I think that is when they have good expectations of you.

This statement was a consistent theme across the focus groups, though B6 did specify that there was a difference in the expectations between on-level classes and advanced classes, stating:

> Regular core classes you have to take those, you don't really have an option. With the advanced classes, you have to sign up so they want to see you doing the extra work and all the homework that they assign. They expect a lot more of you than if you were just in one of their regular classes.

For several of the students in Focus Group D, teachers show high expectations by designing work that students are capable of by working hard and accomplishing. This was a continuation on the general theme of pushing students to do well that was echoed across the focus groups.

Interview Question 7 Data

As a follow-up to elicit detailed information from students, they were asked, "What do your teachers generally say or do to convey high or low expectations?" This question resulted in additional support for the themes from Question 6, as summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

Interview Question 7 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Teachers make more effort with higher expectations	Collective
Teachers treat students differently	Focus Group B
Teachers motivate	Student Group (Advanced)

Students in the advanced focus groups, C and D, did not have as much to add to this question as the students in the on-level focus groups did. The advanced students seemed to connect high expectations with ways their teachers motivate them to do well. For the two students in Focus Group C, this centered on encouraging competition among the students in the class, as well as on teachers making themselves available to help students. As C2 stated:

> I have the same teacher that puts the grades up on the board, and it makes everyone feel really competitive in the first place because we're already going to competitive schools, so now that we're being competitive against each other, it's more of an incentive to do hard work and everything like that. And there's also a lot of teachers who are very open about the fact that we have tutorials available to us, and so they remind us throughout the class. Like, you know, "Oh, if you don't understand this, please come in for tutorials." And they really do want kids to come in and do that. So, I think making themselves available and then also making us feel competitive.

For students in Focus Group D, expectations were described by the teacher on the syllabus, but then students were motivated with verbal encouragement as well as the reminder that they were expected to do college-level work in the course. The advanced students equated these tactics to teachers having high expectations for student academic performance.

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The students in the on-level focus groups, A and B, had more detailed responses on this question and seemed to have more to say about the topic, as indicated by the number of responses. In Focus Group A, the student responses detailed how teachers show high expectations by making more of an effort to help students with their grades and their learning, as well as by being specific about what students should study to be successful. A1 reinforced that teachers with high expectations allow students opportunities to make up poor test grades and helped students understand what was missed rather than moving on to the next unit of study. A4 built on the statements of others, saying:

> I'm kind of repeating a little bit what two said but I think when a teacher will help you, I know I have a couple teachers that if I need help, I'll go in and I'll be like, "Hey, are you available at this time on this day before or after school, or during advisory, or a different class?" And the teachers that really want you to succeed and not only just know the information for the test but really retain it, they'll stay after as long as they need to. But there are some that are like, "Oh no, I'm going home afterwards, I don't want to stay." And you're like, "Okay, well, alright then, I'll figure it out myself." So I think the teachers that will give up their time, it really shows that they actually care about every student.

B6 also linked high expectations with opportunities to go back and learn material or improve grades. Students in Focus Group B also described how teachers treat students when they have low expectations. B2 described a class where a few students sit on the floor and do not put in a lot of effort. According to B2,

> Somebody said something about them having to sit on the floor because their phone was plugged in. [The teacher said], "I don't see why you need your phone because you're not using it for your essay but you're not going to do your work anyways because you never do."

B4 supported the statement by describing how a teacher will allow a few extra days of late work for a student of whom there are high expectations but not accept late work from a student for whom there are low expectations. Students B4 and B3 both agreed that it is possible to tell a difference between the groups of students for whom there are high and low expectations, based on

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how the teacher treats that group and what is said by the teacher to that group of students. B6

described a class by saying:

> In my Algebra 2 class, he kind of has low expectations for us all. The only reason why I
> took that class is because I didn't think I was prepared yet for AP. I guess you could say
> I was one of the people that would work hard in that class. But, since he really doesn't
> have high expectation for any of us, he's just kind of like, your work is in the folder; it's
> due. He doesn't really go up to the board or show us because he doesn't think we will
> actually do it or we'll probably just use our phones to do it. That's an example of him
> having low expectations for us.

For students in the focus groups, teachers indicated high expectations by their actions,

which included showing care for students by offering opportunities to re-learn material as well as

making themselves available to help. Teachers also indicated high and low expectations through

the things that they said to students and groups of students, which students perceived to be

influenced by how much effort a student put into the class.

Interview Question 8 Data

This question explored student perceptions on the rigor of coursework assigned.

Responses are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Interview Question 8 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Busy work does not test your potential	Student Group (On-Level)
Rigor depends on the class	Focus Group B and C
The workload is the challenge	Focus Group D

Many students felt the answer to this question was dependent on the class being discussed.

For students in Focus Group B, responses indicated that being in advanced classes provided more

opportunities to test potential against the work assigned. According to B3, "You can tell who is

giving the work, that is, because you're going to get in college and who's just kind of giving you work to pass the time." B6 built on this statement, saying:

> I think that in certain classes if you're more educated than some of your other peers and you're in an easier class, then the homework and the assignments for you aren't really showing your potential because you already know everything. You're not really having to put much effort out or anything to just get it done and turn it in.

These thoughts echoed those of Focus Group C, where the students felt some classes required a student to work harder, but student aptitude played a role in which classes were more challenging than others. Both students agreed though that certain assignments were more designed to develop deeper understanding than others. C1 stated:

> I think some assignments push us more than others. Like, in physics right now, we're having to do a big end-of-the-year assignment, and a lot of people talk about how it's not very physics-y. It's more arts and crafts and can you work power tools without cutting off your fingers. So, I feel like some projects are more directly correlated with the subject and make you work harder, like in math, where you have to do a bunch of different formulas and know what you're talking about versus going to Michaels and buying Popsicle sticks.

C2 followed up, saying, "I had to make a poster board for a class, and making a poster board didn't teach me anything about what I was supposed to be learning. I was supposed to be learning about orthodontics in my class, and we're making poster boards. And that doesn't teach me anything that's useful." The students recognized when work was designed for learning as opposed to some other objective.

In general, the on-level focus groups agreed their potential was not tested with busy work, which some felt was assigned more to pass the time or to provide the teacher a grade for the gradebook. A3 described busy work as,

> . . . things that don't require that much concentration, or that much . . . It's just writing things down and just not being able to do anything else with it. And there's nothing you can do to bring it to the next level.

A4 admitted that projects allow more opportunities for challenge, saying,

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It might be a class that I don't exactly like, but once you tell me that I have a project and I have room to find things myself, then I'll get into it, and I'll do research, and I'll probably end up learning a bunch of things I didn't know that really interests me.

In Focus Group A, there was a general distaste for busy work, which was attributed by several students to a need to put grades in the grade book. As A2 said:

. . . sometimes you can tell when some homework is a lot more kind of testing your potential than others cause you can kinda tell like, for example, in math, you can get a giant packet with like 30 questions but it's really just kind of like the same question, repeating over and over with different numbers. Or sometimes they'll give you a single page and it has like five questions, but you spend like an hour on it cause it's really hard and you're trying really hard on it. So you can kinda tell when sometimes it's looking for your potential, sometimes it's not and usually most of the time, it's not. It's kinda just something for the grade than it is for learning.

Students in Focus Groups A, B, and C agreed the challenge associated with rigorous work stemmed from the objective of pushing them to think critically, rather than taking up time. However, Focus Group D associated assignments testing their potential with the amount of work being assigned as the challenge. According to D1,

I think it definitely is the workload because I, personally . . . I'm not challenged, like really challenged in any of my classes this year, but I have to keep up writing essays, I have to keep up doing worksheets. I think that the amount of work is definitely the challenge rather than the work itself.

For these advanced students, the challenge came from keeping up with the work being assigned rather than the rigor of the work that was assigned.

Interview Question 9 Data

With this question, I asked the students, "What do you expect to do after graduating from high school?" This question focused on students' expectations for their postsecondary experiences. Response themes are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Interview Question 9 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
College	Collective

Universally, students identified college as their postsecondary goal, though there were varied responses about how exactly that would happen and what career goal it was in support of. Three students in Focus Group D stated their intent to attend college through enlistment in the military, in order to receive a free education. Three students in Focus Group B intend to enroll in community college first, to save money. Only A2 stated a plan of getting a job first to save money and then attend college; all other students indicated a desire to enroll right after high school. Motivations varied, with some students expressing interest in psychology, local government, orthodontics, veterinary medicine, nursing, and owning a personal business. Other students indicated the intent to attend college out of expectation rather than to suit a specific purpose, with C1 stating a hope that college would help her identify a career interest. B4 said,

> I want to graduate high school and college not only to make myself happy and have a better life for me, but to make my family happy. I will be the only sibling to graduate from college on my mom's and father's sides. I think that would be pretty awesome to go out there and achieve that.

D3 admitted,

> I've just spent so long focused on preparing for the future, and keeping my grades up, and preparing for what I'm going to do. I've never actually spent too long thinking about what it was that I actually wanted to do.

While the ambitions and motivations differed, all students had high expectations for their postsecondary experiences, which collectively included furthering their education at a college or university.

Interview Question 10 Data

Once future ambitions were established, students were asked, "Do you think the work being assigned to you in your core classes is preparing you for what you want to do when you graduate high school? Why or why not?" This question linked previous responses about assignments to students' postsecondary goals. Response themes are included in Table 14.

Table 14

Interview Question 10 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Some or no connection to future ambitions	Collective
Difference between on-level and AP	Focus Group C

With the exception of one student in Focus Group D, responses to this question were negative. Four student responses indicated only some connection between work being assigned in high school and postsecondary goals, with seven responses indicating no clear connection at all. While the one affirmative response in Focus Group D indicated the ability to connect what was learned in class about medicine and science with future medical ambitions, another student in that focus group disagreed. D1 stated,

> Several of the classes that I wanted to take that would help me in the career path that I am wanting to pursue now have been dropped from the whole school. I haven't been able to take them at all. And . . . then I've just had to replace them with classes that'll just get me credits just so I can graduate.

Some students connected certain skills, such as essay writing, with future college or career goals, but had very little connection with core content knowledge and postsecondary needs. A4 explained:

> I think if classes focused more on what colleges expect of you, like in English, you have to write research papers, and we had to write a college essay, but the other classes are just

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like, "Oh, the curriculum says you need to know this, so this is what I'm teaching you and they don't really think about what it would be like in college."

A2 and A3 built on that by commenting that much of what was learned was for the purpose of taking an exam and then was subsequently forgotten soon after because it was not needed. Focus group participants varied on which courses had clearer content connections than others, based on the career they intended to pursue. According to B4:

> Some core classes don't always go with what you want to go to college with or graduate from college with. I want to go for criminal justice forensics area, so I will focus more. . . . It depends on what the area is. It's most likely science and math, depending on both, either way I could go. A little bit of reading. The reading and the history doesn't really help with what I'm going to be doing in that career path.

The students who identified some connection were able to loosely connect the content area with a future goal, though many students were not able to. The only skill mentioned by two of the students was writing, which they felt would be beneficial in their future careers. D2 felt the connection was only evident in the experience of taking an OnRamps course, explaining the benefit of being able to,

> . . . see how I might be able to do in the future whenever I do take a college course. . . . I know more of what to listen to whenever someone is telling me what their expectations are, whenever I'll take a college class, but I don't know if I'll be 100% prepared to actually go forth and do that.

The students in Focus Group C had very clear opinions on the difference between the value of their on-level experiences and their AP experiences, in addition to expressing frustration over the constraints of course scheduling. C1 stated:

> Going off of that, having the two levels, AP and on-level, are really helpful, but the gap between them is so great that . . . I've been in one on-level class and I changed out of it in 2 weeks because it felt like I was grade levels behind. It was so vastly different. And the environment's different. The teachers seem to care less to me. They don't teach as well, they don't teach the material as well. I don't take classes that aren't AP because it won't push me as far. And also, I feel like there's not enough flexibility in what it tells you you have to do. Like, if you want to do biology, you still have to take physics, and you have

to take physics. I feel like it almost sets you up for failure. It's trying to well-round you out, but it's also not letting you play to your strengths.

She then elaborated, saying:

I feel they could better prepare us in our classes for catering what we want. . . . Or cater what we want to do for our specific education, and making it more unique instead of putting 35 people in a room and giving us all the same material because we're all different people, and we all learn differently, and are all going to probably go on to do different things.

Her comments prompted C2 to say:

I think the biggest issue I think in high school is the gap between the AP and the on-level. I have some classes that I'm in on-level and it's just mind-numbing to just sit there and just not learn anything. It kind of bugs me as who I am because I'm always wanting to learn something or do something more. And when I'm just not doing anything in class, it's kind of frustrating, when I'm like, "I can't do the AP work, but I need to do something, and I can't just sit here."

C1 agreed:

Touching on that, a lot of the on-level teachers also do other things. I know a lot of on-level teachers are coaches or do other classes, too, so I feel like my experience in on-level wasn't as focused, and I could finish the material faster because they weren't pushing the student at all. Especially for the students who are struggling, I understand that can be more helpful for them, but there's such a big gap that those people who are in the middle are either unable to keep up with AP or finish an entire day and a half's worth of work in 30 minutes in on-level and just sit there and waste time that we could be spending doing something more valuable.

C2 added to the previous statement and closed by saying, ". . . it's not their first interest. It's not what they're doing. They're teaching so they can coach, and not coaching because they're also a teacher." This exchange was a topic the two students elaborated on after the conclusion of the formal interview and was clearly a topic of passionate concern. Across the groups, students had difficulty drawing clear connections between their current high school experiences and the demands that would be placed on them at the postsecondary level.

Interview Question 11 Data

I designed this question to understand academic opportunities for reflection on learning

progress. Students were asked, "Do your teachers help you set learning goals and give you

feedback on how you are progressing in class?" Response themes are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Interview Question 11 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Sometimes through opportunities to improve grades or re-learn material	Collective
Connected to relationship with teacher	Student Group (Advanced)
Students needed to take initiative	Collective

Students interpreted this question as whether or not teachers provided opportunities to re-

learn material, improve grades, or fix errors on tests or assignments. Responses did not really

discuss learning goals in the context of course objectives but rather in terms of what was

produced in the class. Many students mentioned the need to take the initiative with the teacher in

order to receive feedback or the opportunity to improve. A3 explained:

> It's very very rarely that a teacher will go out of their way and tell you "Hey" . . . And
> talk about how you're doing. Maybe sometimes if you're not doing too well in the class,
> and they're concerned. But you either have to go up to them and talk to them about it,
> otherwise they're probably just gonna . . . Cause they want you to be more independent
> and learn how to deal with things yourself, and if you do need help, you go to them. And
> so I think they kinda expect you at this point in high school.

To this, A2 stated, "They probably have ideas on where they want you to be at certain

points in time" but the rest of his response indicated that teachers will proceed with teaching and

not check for understanding along the way. B4 reinforced the idea that feedback comes from

being shown what was done wrong and often needing to take initiative, saying,

I would say English would be the biggest subject that they really show you what you need help on. Other teachers that I've had in other subjects, they don't really show you what you did wrong. In math especially. That's when you can also see where they can help you.

Other students agreed that it was necessary to take initiative if a student desires feedback but that usually a teacher then was willing to offer assistance. B6 added, "I don't feel like they're really going to give you feedback if you did really well or if they notice that it's something that you just didn't really try on." Taking initiative was mentioned in all four focus groups by at least one student.

Students in the advanced focus groups connected learning goals to a teacher putting forward effort to help students and indicated this was often a result of having a relationship with that teacher. According to D1:

Like I said earlier, it depends on the teacher. Going back to if they take the time to get to know you individually and what you . . . Like, how you learn best and where you're at personally, then I think, yeah, they take the time. But I think that . . . I personally have teachers that could care less where you are in the class, as long as we're moving forward to the next unit. And then again, I have teachers that will come on weekends if I need extra tutoring and help me in any way possible to succeed how I need to succeed.

C2 made a similar statement:

I have certain classes where my teachers will make a point to sit down with me and actually go over what I'm doing wrong. And that's always really helpful because I always see my grades improve. But then I have a different teacher who just learned my name last week and it's almost the end of the school year . . . My physics teacher didn't know my name. And it's almost the end of the school year, and for her to show that little interest in her students is . . . It's a big difference between someone who actually does sit down with you, and cares about your grade and about who you are as a person.

For these students, a teacher who connected with them personally, was willing to take the time, and made the effort to help them learn was another way of showing care for students and their future.

Interview Question 12 Data

In this final question, students were asked, "Do your teachers instruct you in strategies such as note-taking, time management, goal setting, or organization?" This question elicited many student responses across all four focus groups. Themes are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Interview Question 12 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification
Success skills not taught	Collective
Encouraged and expected but not reinforced	Collective
Too much content to get through	Student Group (Advanced)

Overwhelmingly, students agreed it was expected that they knew how to take notes, set goals, and stay organized and they were encouraged by teachers to do so, but the majority of students were not actually taught by teachers how to master these skills successfully. Many students mentioned the expectations being stated at the beginning of the year, often on the course syllabus, but then reported little to no follow-through during the rest of the school year for enforcement of the expectations. Only one student mentioned binder checks, but clarified it happened in only one out of her eight classes. As stated by A4,

> I'd say the majority of the teachers encourage you to write notes, but I kinda think that's as far as it really goes. They always say, "Oh, be organized! Manage your time!" But they don't really tell you how or help you, they expect you to figure it out.

> C2 moved from another district where she was taught the skill of note-taking. She compared her skill set to that of her friends, saying:

> We have about 15 pages of textbook to read, and since I have these better skills, I'm able to maybe take six pages of notes. But then, I have a couple of friends who have been through five actual notebooks. They take 20 pages each time. And it's because they were never taught, like, "Oh, what is the relevant information in this paragraph?" And they just pick at everything because they don't realize what's important and what's not.

Student responses indicated the perception that teachers expected them to either know how to do these things or to be able to figure it out as a product of being an older high school student, though many students admitted to lacking strategies to take notes effectively, stay organized, or manage time. D2 described the experience, saying:

> I have had one or two teachers in the past who have encouraged note-taking, encouraged organization, but they've never really elaborated on how to do that. So, for the most part, it's just been trial and error for me. Say, like, at the beginning of this year in one of my classes, I tried to take notes on a computer instead of notebook. For me, I had to find out that wasn't the way that it really was the best taken. It's better to do it handwritten and just to figure that out. So, no, not really, but I have had one or two teachers encourage it.

Another student, D1, talked about a dual credit course she took at the local junior college where she was taught specific student success skills that she found to be beneficial to her academic career. She added:

> But unfortunately, not every student had access to that class. And so, I think a lot of students are like student 2. They're just walking blindly, trying to find their way, trying to find exactly how to take notes. And you know, when we're so close to graduation, I think it's kind of useless at this point. If we don't know how to take notes at this point in our student career. And it's sad that teachers, they don't really teach us exactly how to do that, or give us points, or advice, or anything like that.

When probed on their beliefs as to why these skills were not being taught, students reinforced the idea that it was expected of them already and also discussed that there was too much content for teachers to get through for them to also teach the skills. C1 explained:

> A lot of times we have to get through so much material in one year that they just jump straight in. They do, generally, at the beginning of the year say, "Here's how I would suggest doing this," but then it's not enforced, so if you want to do it a different way, it gives you the flexibility, but then also, if you don't have the direction or that doesn't work for you, you kind of have to sample around and figure out what works for you, which can take some time.

D3 expressed a similar sentiment, saying,

> I feel like it's because they're more focused on getting the information down than us . . . Like, sitting there teaching us how to take notes, how to be organized, how to keep up with all that stuff. They just want us to get through with the unit and then we're done.

D2 agreed there was so much in the curriculum that teachers did not have time to stop, though they might like to do so in order to teach success skills. B6 noticed a difference from earlier in her high school career. She explained:

> I think that when you're a freshman and a sophomore, they're more focused on goal setting and time management because they have to prepare you for the state administered tests. They're not more focused on teaching this. You only have so many weeks to teach everything and get certain assignments done. They're more focused on that and trying to get you through every subject. That way, whenever you take the test, you get a higher score so they have a higher passing rate.

Students seemed to believe teachers wanted them to possess certain skills, but responses indicated teachers did not take ownership for ensuring these skills were developed. Many students felt that it was up to them, rightly so or not, to acquire the skills.

The responses of Focus Group B were the exception to these themes. These students described being taught how to take Cornell Notes, but largely expressed frustration with the format and perceived lack of freedom in how they would actually take the notes. Some students indicated teachers had already stopped enforcing the Cornell Notes while others were rigid about the format. B2 stated:

> We're not going to have that Cornell paper when we get to college. It doesn't make sense to most kids to use it and it's harder to use if you've already had this certain way. If you like to use colors, it's easier for your brain to understand, and you have to use black ink on those things, it's just not cool for most people.

Students felt constrained by the size of the boxes on the notes handout and confused by what to write in each box. They perceived Cornell Notes to be about the format on the paper rather than the process of how to interact with notes over multiple repetitions with the material. Students from Focus Group D, at the same school, did not report having been taught Cornell Notes.

Secondary Analysis Results by Research Question

To conduct a secondary analysis of the data, interview question response data were organized by research question to further distill themes and drill down to the essence of the phenomenon. Interview question themes from the initial analysis are presented by research question.

Research Question 1 Analysis

This question asked, "What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?" Interview Questions 2-6 are correlated with this research question. The related interview question themes are presented in Table 17, organized by the frequency of the response, as indicated by the classification.

What emerges from Table 17 is students collectively held high expectations for their academic performance and believed teachers, for the most part, did as well. Students believed they and their classmates were expected to pursue a college education, especially in the advanced classes, though this expectation was not formally discussed or addressed in a comprehensive, direct manner.

Table 17

Research Question 1 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Interview Question
High expectations	Collective	2
Some, most, all teachers have high expectations	Collective	3
Effort matters	Collective	3
It's an expectation	Collective	4

(table continues)

Theme	Classification	Interview Question
It's mentioned but not pushed	Collective	4
To the class	Collective	5
Teachers show they care	Collective	6
Teachers push learning more	Collective	6
Benefits of smaller classes	Campus (FHS)	2
Especially in the AP environment	Student Group (Advanced)	5
Put in effort	Student Group (On-Level)	2
If a student cares	Student Group (On-Level)	5
Relationships matter	Focus Group D	3

Many students, especially in the on-level focus groups, felt they needed to support their teachers in holding high expectations by putting forth effort in the class and giving the appearance of caring about their education. On the other hand, students knew teachers held high expectations of them when teachers showed they cared as well by putting effort into teaching the class, getting to know students on a more individual basis, and supporting students in being successful in learning class concepts. Focus Group D, in particular, emphasized the importance of strong relationships between teacher and student for academic success.

Research Question 2 Analysis

With this question, I sought to answer, "What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?" Interview Questions 1, 7, and 8 are correlated with this research question. Related interview question themes are presented in Table 18, organized by frequency.

Table 18

Research Question 2 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Interview Question
Teachers make more effort with higher expectations	Collective	7
Small school benefits	Campus (FHS)	1
Academically competitive	Campus (MHS)	1
Teachers motivate	Student Group (Advanced)	7
Busy work does not test your potential	Student Group (On-Level)	8
Rigor depends on the class	Focus Group B and C	8
Teachers treat students differently	Focus Group B	7
The workload is the challenge	Focus Group D	8

There were fewer collective responses for this research question. Students again believed teachers made more of an effort in teaching the class and providing instructional opportunities to learn or re-learn material when they had higher expectations. For students in the advanced focus groups, teachers used competition and other forms of motivation to encourage students to work to their potential. Students in the on-level group consistently reported busy work assigned to them did not test their potential because it did not provide opportunities to expand their thinking or learning about a subject. Focus Groups B and C reported inconsistent approaches to rigor, depending on the class, and Focus Group B explained how teachers may treat the assignment or acceptance of work differently, depending on their expectations of students. For Focus Group D, their potential was challenged, not as much by the rigor of the work assigned but rather the workload given to them across their advanced classes.

Research Question 3 Analysis

This question asks, "What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?" Interview Questions 9-12 correspond with this research question. Individual interview question themes are presented in Table 19, organized by frequency.

Table 19

Research Question 3 Recurring Themes

Theme	Classification	Interview Question
College	Collective	9
Some or no connection to future ambitions	Collective	10
Sometimes through opportunities to improve grades or re-learn material	Collective	11
Students needed to take initiative	Collective	11
Success skills not taught	Collective	12
Encouraged and expected but not reinforced	Collective	12
Connected to relationship with teacher	Student Group (Adv.)	11
Too much content to get through	Student Group (Adv.)	12
Difference between on-level and AP	Focus Group C	10

Note. Adv. = Advanced

Students universally reported college as a desired postsecondary experience, though they reported different goals for attending 2-year versus 4-year colleges and universities and how they would pay for their future education. The majority of students saw some or no connection between their current high school experiences or curricula and their postsecondary goals. Students perceived there to be opportunities to improve grades or re-learn material to support current academic success but felt it was often incumbent upon them to take the initiative to pursue those opportunities. Again, relationships between teacher and student emerged as a factor,

particularly with the advanced students, in their perceptions. While students believed their teachers encouraged and expected the use of student success skills such as note-taking, organization, goal setting, and time management, most students reported these skills as not being taught, or not taught in a way that supported the development of the skill. Advanced students attributed this to teachers not having enough time to teach these skills, in addition to teaching content associated with the course. Students in Focus Group C highlighted a large contrast in academic rigor between on-level and advanced courses.

Observation Protocol and Interview Debrief Analysis

An independent district employee not associated with the campus was utilized to observe Focus Groups A and C as part of the data collection and in agreement with the school district. She and I debriefed after each interview to ensure I was clear on her observation protocol notes. For both observations, she noted students shared openly about their perceptions, often citing specific examples in support of their responses. Her opinion was students felt comfortable because the anonymity of responses was guaranteed at the beginning of the interview and no names were used to identify students. She observed students possessing relaxed body language and positive attitudes during the interviews. For both groups, she noted students seemed to connect with me as the interviewer. Students also connected with each other before and during the interviews. In both focus groups, students were observed expanding on each other's responses and asking for questions to be repeated by the interviewer, if necessary. During Focus Group A, the male students were not as talkative initially until the female student began sharing, which then prompted the other participants to engage with the questions and each other more. In Focus Group C, the two female participants were very fluid in responding to the questions as well

as building upon what the other participant had to say. There were no recorded protocol breaches or concerns in either observation.

Summary

Four focus groups were conducted at two campuses with students who were primarily in on-level core content classes and students primarily in advanced core content classes. Many students were consistent in their perceptions about their future ambitions, their teachers' expectations, and the relevance of their current coursework. Relationships between teacher and student were repeatedly cited as a factor in supporting academic success, with students attributing responsibility for making an effort to develop those relationships to both themselves and their teachers. Students reported a desire for relevant coursework that required them to work at or near their potential in order to prepare them for future ambitions. Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations concerning this analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, SIGNIFICANCE, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND OBSERVATIONS

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the study, a discussion of major findings, and significance based on the findings from the data gathered in Chapter 4. I also include recommendations for future actions that educators at all levels may consider, as well as final observations related to the current study.

Overview of the Study

Student performance is increasingly being scrutinized by educators and policy makers to examine college and career readiness. Currently, the majority of children in the United States are falling short of targets set to predict postsecondary success, particularly minority children and those from low-income households (Achieve, Inc., 2015; ACT, Inc., 2016; Adelman, 1999; Barnes & Slate, 2014; Strayhorn, 2014). Teacher expectation bias, a well-documented phenomenon (de Boer et al., 2010; Friedrich et al., 2015; Gregory & Huang, 2013), may be playing a role in the postsecondary readiness gaps apparent today. The problem guiding the study was whether or not teachers' expectations of students influenced classroom opportunities to develop college readiness skills, regardless of what a student's postsecondary goals might be. The study was designed to examine student perceptions from the conceptual inputs of student academic self-concept, teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness, in order to answer the research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

A qualitative phenomenological research design was chosen in order to showcase student voice as perceptions were explored in order to authenticate the student experience. The research format was small focus group interviews, where high school students were divided into groups based on their school schedule, with two groups having a majority of on-level core classes and the other two groups having a majority of Pre-AP, AP, or OnRamps core classes. InVivo coding was used to amplify student voice, through a process of coding and grouping into themes through both an initial and a secondary analysis (Saldana, 2016).

Discussion of Findings

In this section, I present the major findings and discuss each component of the conceptual framework (academic self-concept, teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness). These findings relate to each component in order to fulfill the phenomenological research goal of detailing the essence of the experience for participants (Creswell, 2013). This information addresses the three research questions guiding the current study. I present the major findings in Table 20 and expand upon those findings in the sections following the table.

Previous research supports the design of the current study in that students are aware of expectations their teachers hold for them, through both subtle and explicit messaging (Babad et al., 1991; Peterson et al., 2016; Weinstein, 2002). Students can also describe the effect these expectations have on their motivation and subsequent achievement (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Also, students perceive differential treatment based on expectations (Bae et al., 2008; Martinez & Welton, 2014).

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Table 20

Major Findings by Conceptual Framework Component

Finding	Conceptual Framework Component
Students have high expectations of their own performance.	Academic Self-Concept
Students have postsecondary ambitions.	Academic Self-Concept
Students perceive teachers to have generally high expectations.	Teacher Expectations
Teachers convey high expectations through effort and caring.	Teacher Expectations
Teachers do not speak with students individually about postsecondary plans.	Teacher Expectations
Classroom instruction conveyed high expectations when effort was put into design.	Classroom Instruction
Students perceived certain instructional methods as requiring low cognitive effort.	Classroom Instruction
Students did not perceive a clear connection between current academic experiences and postsecondary goals.	College Readiness
Academic success skills were expected but not taught.	College Readiness

Academic Self-Concept

Students across the focus groups all shared perceptions on individual academic ability.

This construct was explored globally, and the interview questions did not seek to link

perceptions explicitly to specific classes and teacher expectations, as past research included

(Gilbert et al., 2014; Rubie-Davies, 2006). The consistent beliefs pervasive across all focus

groups were that students had high expectations of their secondary academic performance and all

desired to attend college or university at some point after graduation from high school. Student

performance or achievement data were not gathered in order to determine a relationship between

academic self-concept and classroom success, which previously has been shown (McInerney et

al., 2012; Mueller & Winsor, 2016). In particular, the advanced students felt that high

expectations of students and teachers were natural in an advanced environment, which is consistent with earlier findings (Trautwein et al., 2009). The current study results reinforced previous research on student academic self-concept. New insights from the focus group interviews show students believed highly in their own abilities to be successful in high school and go on to postsecondary education. They also believed they had the potential to perform well on more rigorous work in their classes and expressed the desire for work designed to challenge them to think critically about class content. Students also expressed a need for coursework that is relevant to future postsecondary experiences and opportunities to develop skills to ensure they are equipped for future success. Ultimately, students overwhelmingly believed they were capable of achieving at high levels, both in high school and in a postsecondary education, and wanted their high school academic experience to be reflective of their goals and their potential.

Teacher Expectations

Decades of research support the phenomenon of teacher expectation bias toward individual students, groups, or even a class of students. Teacher and student demographics were not collected as part of this study, and so expectations formed from demographic factors could not be determined. The focus group interviews revealed students believe some, most, or all teachers had high expectations for student performance, but student effort mattered in forming that expectation. Students formed their perceptions from their beliefs about a teacher's desire to build relational capacity and the effort put into teaching the class, rather than from a body of evidence based on what a teacher specifically says regarding expectations. Students believed it was expected they will go to college, but this was not an overt expectation and more of a general belief based on generic statements made to the class. It was not reported that students had

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individual conversations with teachers regarding expectations for current or future performance. Rather, high expectations were demonstrated by the teachers by showing they care about students through developing relationships with students and encouraging learning more with students in their classes.

A few examples were given where students could tell when teachers have high versus low expectations for individuals or groups of students, or even the class, by the way they treated and spoke to them, which research shows can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Jussim et al., 2009). In the examples cited by the students, this differential treatment for students of which little was expected was obvious and clear to other students. I expected students to say the classwork assigned by teachers conveyed expectations based on the level of rigor, but they focused more on teachers showing they cared to demonstrate high expectations. Conversely, when students or teachers demonstrated they did not care in a variety of ways, teacher expectations for student performance were perceived to be low. In essence, student perceptions were formed in some part from what teachers said and did, but mostly through the effort made to develop relational capacity with students and engage them in the learning process, with some expectation that students would reciprocate that effort.

Classroom Instruction

Students repeated throughout the interviews the belief that teachers put more into classroom instruction when they care about the class and the students. There was not a clear connection through the student responses of expectations and the types of classwork assigned, with the exception of a few examples given. The focus groups seemed to interpret putting effort into the class as developing relationships with students and designing work that was respectful of

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students' abilities and ambitions. Classwork that did not stretch students to work at or near their potential was perceived as busy work; it required very little cognitive effort to complete. The fact that this was described consistently by on-level students reinforces research around differential treatment of classes due to academic tracking (Weinstein, 2008). A few students also identified the difference between on-level and advanced courses, where on-level teachers were perceived to sometimes not put as much effort into teaching the class in a meaningful way as teachers of advanced classes did. Advanced students equated challenging classwork with a challenging workload and as a product of being in advanced classes, which was aligned with research regarding practices of high expectation teachers that foster motivation and student autonomy (Rubie-Davies et al., 2015). In short, classroom instruction conveyed high expectations when teachers took the time to get to know students and then thoughtfully design instruction that challenged students to think critically about the content.

College Readiness

The collective belief among students was that classwork held only some or no connection to their future ambitions, either in a postsecondary education or career. To my surprise, students interpreted the question on feedback toward learning goals as whether or not they had opportunities to improve grades or re-learn material in class, rather than opportunities to answer essential questions about the content or satisfy larger learning objectives. While not what I expected, the correlation of learning opportunities with perceived high expectations is supported by research that indicates teachers with high expectations facilitate learning to yield higher student achievement (Rubie-Davies, 2007). Additionally, students believed it was often up to them to take the initiative to seek out such opportunities if improvement was desired. Academic

success skills were largely expected, but not taught or reinforced to support students in meeting expectations or equipping them for success. Many students attributed the fact that skills were not taught to the struggle teachers had with needing to cover large amounts of content material, which contradicts research that suggests college readiness requires key learning skills and techniques, in addition to content knowledge (Conley & French, 2013). Teachers' perceived lack of ownership in equipping students with college readiness skills was reflective of research indicating teachers' beliefs that responsibility for developing college readiness rests with other stakeholders and not themselves (Freedberg, 2015; Liebhart et al., 2012; Yamamura et al., 2010). For the participants in the current study, the facets of college readiness were not clearly related to their current academic experiences.

Significance of Major Findings for Practice

The major findings presented previously consist of the collective responses from the four focus group interviews, with additional detail provided from specific responses. Despite differences in grade levels and school settings, consistent themes emerged across the interviews with all students, providing insight for campus and district educators around possible actions that may prove beneficial in creating cultures of high expectations for college readiness, with support for all students. Educator leaders can also consider designing systems of professional learning, feedback with coaching, and monitoring to ensure all educators are conveying high expectations for college readiness through words, actions, and classroom instruction. These strategies could provide support for students on the journey to their postsecondary goals, no matter what that journey may look like at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The conceptual framework

guiding the current study is presented in a revised format in Table 21, to include the

recommendations for interactions with each and every student on campus.

Table 21

Significance of Major Findings for Practice

Finding	Significance for Practice	Conceptual Framework Component
Students have high expectations of their own performance.	Avoid differential treatment	Academic Self-Concept
Students have postsecondary ambitions.	Encourage future education	Academic Self-Concept
Students perceive teachers to have generally high expectations.	Express belief in student success	Teacher Expectations
Teachers convey high expectations through effort and caring.	Develop relational capacity	Teacher Expectations
Teachers do not speak with students individually about postsecondary plans.	Utilize relational capacity for personalized conversations	Teacher Expectations
Classroom instruction conveyed high expectations when effort was put into design.	Utilize high expectation strategies	Classroom Instruction
Students perceived certain instructional methods as requiring low cognitive effort.	Utilize high expectation strategies	Classroom Instruction
Students did not perceive a clear connection between current academic experiences and postsecondary goals.	Develop cultures of college readiness on campus and in classrooms	College Readiness
Academic success skills were expected but not taught.	Link instruction to college readiness skills	College Readiness

Academic Self-Concept

Focus group participants saw themselves as capable of achieving success in their current

and future experiences. Educators can reinforce and even boost this perception considerably by

simply giving encouragement to students to continue with their education. While the focus

group participants had strongly-formed perceptions, teachers may want to consider being more explicit in encouragement with each student in order to potentially boost achievement. Alcott (2017) examined data from the United Kingdom Department of Education, where thousands of students were sampled between 2003 and 2010. Part of the study included whether or not students reported receiving encouragement from teachers to continue their education past the final compulsory year. The results suggested teacher encouragement yielded positive effects on future enrollment, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic status. Thus, teachers have more influence over students' ambitions and eventual educational attainment than they might realize and providing positive cues to students about their potential can make a difference in the long-term. The results of the current study suggest students sense this expectation from teachers in a general manner yet do not have personalized conversations in which this encouragement might be expressed.

The findings suggest avoiding differential treatment of individuals, groups, or classes as much as possible, as this can have deleterious effects on academic self-concept (Weinstein, 2008). Possible areas to be mindful of to avoid differential treatment include the way students are grouped together, the materials and activities provided to students, how students are treated in the class, and how students are evaluated. Students in the focus groups were very perceptive about the differences in the way individuals and groups of students were treated by the teacher. While the students acknowledged individual determination played a role, teachers as education professionals may choose to focus on providing consistent interactions with all students in order to avoid perceptions of bias. School and district leaders may also consider reducing or eliminating systems of tracking, or ability grouping of students, in order to provide equal access to rigorous opportunities, along with equitable support structures for success. As Rubie-Davies

(2015) found, "High expectation teachers appeared to be aware that placing students into within-class ability groups could damage students' self-esteem, particularly that of the low achievers, and was also restrictive in terms of potential progress" (p. 124). When students perceive that teachers believe in their ability to succeed at high levels, they may be more willing to accept challenges and take academic risks.

Teacher Expectations

Schools with diverse demographics may consider beginning difficult conversations about how to cultivate excellence through equitable approaches to teaching and learning in all classrooms. Students in the focus groups believed their teachers held high expectations for their success and cited strong relationships as indicative of high expectations. Teachers may reflect on introducing strategies and structures in the classroom on a regular basis that seek to build relational capacity, not only between students in the class but between the teacher and students, both as individuals as well as a class. Systems may be considered for development inside the classroom for teachers to learn about students' interests and aspirations so more personalized and individual conversations about a student's future can take place. Rubie-Davies (2017) stated, "Making personal connections with students can help foster this sense of belongingness and teacher care" (p. 44). This helps students feel welcome in the classroom, valued as individuals, and included in the academic family of the school. Rubie-Davies (2015) recommended strategies such as regular student questionnaires or class climate surveys, as well as teacher modeling of positive classroom climate behaviors, with all students.

Just as low expectations can result in reduced student achievement, positive expectancies may yield a self-fulfilling prophecy (Gregory & Huang, 2013). Teachers should genuinely

believe students are capable of achieving high expectations, provided they are supported in doing so. For the focus group participants, this looked like multiple opportunities to learn and re-learn material without simply moving on to the next unit. It also included teachers making themselves available to students outside of class hours for tutorial and additional learning opportunities.

Classroom Instruction

District and campus leaders may provide professional development in high expectation strategies to yield self-fulfilling prophecies of high student achievement (McDonald et al., 2016; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Rubie-Davies & Rosenthal, 2016). Built into the system of professional learning could be ongoing coaching, monitoring, and support for sustaining critical practices in the classroom. Educator leaders might also consider systems that support expecting these strategies of all teachers in every classroom, to the greatest extent possible, in order to support a culture of high expectations across a campus.

The practices of high expectation teachers are related to instructional strategies that foster student motivation, a supportive classroom climate, and student autonomy (Rubie-Davies et al., 2015). These instructional practices may be applied at the classroom level so all students in the class benefit. Rubie-Davies (2017) identified key areas in which teachers can apply high-expectations strategies to the entire class, such as with flexible grouping that is changed frequently, varied learning activities, providing open-ended question opportunities to all students with supportive teacher responses, and extended conceptual explanations prior to task assignments. Goal setting was also identified as an important strategy. Rubie-Davies described a teacher who set very clear learning goals with students around choices available for their learning experiences and conducted individual conferences with them regularly to discuss their

learning achievements in the context of additional goal setting. This strategy also promoted

student autonomy and motivation, as students had a level of choice in how to facilitate their own

learning. Coupled with positive relational capacity in the classroom, regular monitoring, and

specific feedback, these strategies can convey high expectations for all students and promote

increased student academic success.

College Readiness

School system leaders may consider cultural initiatives aimed at developing and

sustaining campus cultures of college and career readiness that convey high expectations for all

students. This may include hiring faculty reflective of campus demographics, increased visibility

and availability of information about colleges and universities, professional guest speakers, and

opportunities for families to learn about the many resources for postsecondary financial aid. In

hallways and inside classrooms, information about colleges and college preparation activities

could be highlighted and rotated on a timely basis to continue contributing to the culture, such as

college corners, pennants, upcoming college visit announcements, and even college shirt days.

Continuously changing college information may serve to encourage students to achieve at the

levels necessary to pursue postsecondary opportunities. Rubie-Davies (2015) explained, "A high

expectation school is going to be far more powerful than a high expectation classroom" (p. 219).

Such a school promotes the creation of a community of learners at all levels where all educators

share responsibility for the success of each student.

In the classroom, teachers could reflect on how to be explicit about developing college

readiness skills through classroom instruction and how assignments are designed to support

postsecondary success whenever possible. Educators might choose to collaborate with each

other to teach skills through a systematic, scaffolded, and vertically aligned curriculum, perhaps in an advisory time so all students have equal access to the lessons, and then consistently reinforce expectations and the acquisition of skills in classrooms across content areas. Working as a team on campus and across grade levels means no one teacher needs to take responsibility for developing all critical postsecondary success skills in students during a given class in a given school year. As students develop key content knowledge and skills, teachers could consider ways to provide clear and consistent feedback around student progress toward identified learning objectives. The objectives could be phrased to state the intended outcomes specifically related to both content knowledge and skill mastery, such as in using the frame, "I can . . . by . . . ." This intervention may support students in quickly targeting areas for improvement as well as understanding what they are doing well so the skill can be replicated or deepened in future assignments or opportunities. Rubie-Davies (2015) suggested regular practices such as supporting students in developing SMART goals that identify specific, attainable, and results-oriented goals within a time period as well as the maintenance of student-created portfolios. It should be noted the practices of high expectations teachers described above are also practices that promote key aspects of college readiness, as described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2014), including critical thinking, collaboration, and a growth mindset, among others.

Student Perceptions

Educators may also consider the practice of interviewing focus groups of students to learn the extent to which district and campus initiatives in the different input areas are progressing. It was difficult for me as an outside researcher not affiliated with the school system to have the connections with the school and community necessary for conducting research

successfully with student subjects requiring parent permission. School and district leaders can consider opportunities to replicate this with their own students by forming focus groups, following the research design of the current study and using the Interview Protocol. There is much insight to be gained when educators speak with their own students in-depth around the important topics presented in the current study. Campus leaders could even reflect on bringing in a neutral district employee unknown to the students in order to provide an environment where students feel comfortable speaking freely to someone objective.

District and school leaders may also introduce a formal structure for student voice, such as a principal's panel, to provide regular opportunities for students to share about their experience in the classroom and on campus. In doing so, educators may find it beneficial to ensure that participation reflects campus demographics to the greatest extent possible. Conversations with students that seek to understand their perceptions must be intentional and systematically designed in order to gain the valuable insight students possess.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study could be expanded upon in a variety of ways through future research. It would be beneficial to explore teacher expectations and self-efficacy to see if the classwork designed is a result of expectations of students or self-efficacy in the classroom. This knowledge would allow for targeted intervention with individual teachers, based on area of need. The current study could be replicated with different student groups as well as a larger sample size to get increased focus group participation. Larger numbers of participants on a campus would also enable researchers to consider conclusions implying generalizations across classes or even grade levels. Future studies could also consider triangulating the student perceptions with document

analysis of student work, instructional observations, and/or teacher focus group interviews in order to draw conclusions about the impact of teacher expectations on classroom college readiness opportunities. A longitudinal study could interview the same cohort of students each year of their high school experience in order to understand how the interaction of academic self-concept, teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness are perceived over time as students mature in their educational experiences. In addition, a future study could be framed around the instructional and achievement outcomes associated with clear expectations as opposed to those from high expectations, as the latter phrase might be ambiguous for educators designing or participating in instructional initiatives. Lastly, a future study could replicate the current study, but seek to gather additional data around teacher and student ethnicity and gender in order to contrast results and provide additional analysis.

Observations

The study results highlight shared perceptions across four focus groups of students representing different backgrounds and points of view. Students shared personal experiences on campus and in the classroom to provide details on teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness. They were honest about their ambitions and if they felt prepared to pursue their goals. These perspectives provided valuable insights about unique as well as common lived experiences of the participants, which can be useful in designing classroom, school, and district approaches to promote high expectations in cultures of college readiness for all students.

Through the data analysis, discussion of findings, and significance of findings for practice, I was struck by the interaction of the conceptual framework inputs the student perceptions described, and that past research explained. What I learned is that simple yet

effective practices in the classroom and on campus cannot only promote high expectations for all, these practices can also develop college readiness, increase the rigor of classroom instruction provided to all students, and boost academic self-efficacy in individual students. When intentionally incorporated into instructional systems where teachers are provided professional learning opportunities, support, and coaching for implementation, and monitoring and feedback of progress, these high-yield strategies have the potential to change classroom and campus climates, boost academic achievement, and promote future educational attainment for all students to achieve postsecondary goals. Leadership holds the responsibility for designing such instructional systems while setting the tone, vision, and expectations for the initiative, while also providing coaching for implementation success. The conceptual framework inputs do not need to be seen as individual initiatives, but rather can be a comprehensive instructional system designed to promote support for high expectations for all.

Additionally, student perceptions are invaluable in informing educators if the initiatives are making the desired impact and are a valuable form of data to consider alongside the quantitative achievement results typically scrutinized by educators. Involving students in evaluating their own learning experiences is a process in which all educators can find value and insight.

The phenomenological process of the current study enabled the students' voices to serve as the data informing me of the intersection between their academic self-concept, classroom experiences, teacher expectations, and college readiness. These constructs could have been measured in other ways; however, hearing from the students themselves brought authenticity and immediacy to their personal lived experiences. The students clearly described their experiences in a way that studying student achievement data or survey results could not have conveyed. The

current study highlights the importance of including student voice as a critical piece of data when examining school or district systems.

Summary

A qualitative phenomenological approach to determine student perceptions on the influence of teacher expectation bias on classroom college readiness opportunities was used in this study. The focus groups revealed key findings relating to academic self-concept, teacher expectations, classroom instruction, and college readiness. Clear implications for professional practice include simple yet effective approaches, such as the avoidance of differential treatment, use of high expectation strategies, and developing cultures of college readiness. Future research may include larger numbers of participants or investigating the impact of clear expectations on educational achievement. Student voice is one of the most powerful data sources a researcher, school, or district may access when evaluating the effectiveness of instructional efforts.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

[Anonymous] ISD has given permission for the research study detailed below. Before agreeing to your child's participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Students' Perceptions on the Impact of Teacher Expectation Bias on Classroom College Readiness Opportunities

Investigator: Kristen Wellman, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education & Administration. **Supervising Investigator:** Dr. Jane B. Huffman

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study which involves talking to students about instructional experiences in core classes (math, science, English, social studies). The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers' expectations influence classroom college readiness opportunities for high school students in Texas. This study will examine student perceptions of teachers' expectations for achievement and postsecondary experiences, the degree to which classroom instruction requires them to work at or near potential, and if classroom instruction is preparing them for college readiness.

Study Procedures: Your child will be asked to participate in a small focus group interview that will take about one hour of your child's time during non-instructional time. The focus group interview will be audio recorded, though no student names or identifying information will be collected or used. Information from the interview will be used to describe student perceptions in the study, including quotations and themes of discussion. Interview transcripts will be stored in a password-protected cloud server maintained and accessed solely by the Investigator and will be deleted permanently after three years.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to

your child, but we hope to learn more about how teacher expectations prepare students for

college and career readiness.

Compensation for Participants: None

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: No identifying information will be collected by the researcher. Participants will remain anonymous. The

confidentiality of your child's individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Kristen Wellman at KristenWellman@my.unt.edu or Dr. Jane Huffman at Jane.Huffman@unt.edu.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Kristen Wellman has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child's participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child's participation in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

_____   _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian   Date

For the Student Investigator or Designee: I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the parent or guardian signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the parent or guardian understood the explanation.

_____   _____
Signature of Student Investigator   Date

Child Assent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by the University of North Texas Department of _____.

This study involves talking to students about instructional experiences in core class (math, science, English, social studies).

You will be asked to participate in a small focus group interview that will take about one hour.

If you decide to be part of this study, please remember you can stop participating any time you want to.

If you would like to be part of this study, please sign your name below.

_____
Printed Name of Child

_____   _____
Signature of Child   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Student Investigator   Date

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE

May 5, 2017

Dr. Jane Huffman
Student Investigator: Kristen Wellman
Department of Teacher Education & Administration
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 17-061

Dear Dr. Huffman:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled "Students' Perceptions on the Impact of Teacher Expectation Bias on Classroom College Readiness Opportunities." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. **Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, May 5, 2017 to May 4, 2018.**

Enclosed are the consent documents with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and **use this form only** for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications. **If continuing review is not granted before May 4, 2018, IRB approval of this research expires on that date.**

Please contact The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,
Chad Trulson, Ph.D. Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

CT:jm
1155 Union Circle, #310979   Denton, Texas 76203-5017   TEL: 940.369.4643   FAX: 940.565.4277
TTY: 940.369.8652   http://research.unt.edu

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place

Description of the Project: *The purpose of this research is to describe how teachers' expectations influence classroom college readiness opportunities for high school students. For this interview, please only consider your core content classes (mathematics, science, English, history) as you answer the questions. This interview is being audio recorded so that it may be transcribed later. Please state your participant number prior to responding to a question.*

Questions:

1.   What is it like to be a student at this high school?

2.   What are your expectations of your performance in your core classes?

Probes:

a.   Do you expect to get good grades or poor grades in each of your core classes?

b.   For which courses do you have the highest expectations and why?

c.   For which courses do you have the lowest expectations and why?

d.   Do you expect to do well on homework? Why or why not?

e.   Do you expect to do well on tests? Why or why not?

3.   Do your teachers expect you to get good grades on tests and assignments?

Probes:

a.   Do your teachers believe that you will do well or poorly?

b. Why do you believe that? Is your belief based on something that was said or done, etc.?

4. Do your teachers expect you to go to college?

Probe: How do you know?

5. Do these expectations apply to just you or to your class as a whole?

Probe: Why do you believe that?

6. How do you know if your teacher has high expectations of you and your achievement? Of your class as a whole?

Probe: What did the teacher say or do that led you to that conclusion for you personally? For your class as a whole?

7. What do your teachers generally say or do to convey high or low expectations?

8. Does the type of class work and homework assigned require you to work at or near your potential? Why or why not, based on the type of assignments?

Probe: Do you find the work assigned to be challenging? Why or why not?

9. What do you expect to do after graduating from high school?

10. Do you think the work being assigned to you in your core classes is preparing you for what you want to do when you graduate high school? Why or why not?

11. Do your teachers help you set learning goals and give you feedback on how you are progressing in class?

Probe: How do teachers do this?

12. Do your teachers instruct you in strategies such as note-taking, time management, goal setting or organization?

Probe:

    a.   Does this happen in all of your core classes or just certain ones?

    b.   Why do you think teachers do or do not instruct you in these strategies?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses will remain confidential and your identity will be anonymous.

Cross-references of study research questions and interview protocol questions are:

1. What are students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations for student achievement and postsecondary experiences?

Interview Questions: 2-6

2. What are students' perceptions of whether classroom instruction requires them to work at or near their potential?

Interview Questions: 1, 7-8

3. What are students' perceptions about whether instruction and assignments are preparing them for college readiness and other postsecondary experiences?

Interview Questions: 9-12

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Team Member Initials   Date

Time   Event

OBSERVATIONS (objective descriptions)	COMMENTS (personal reactions)
Incidents	
Comments	
Body language, moods, attitudes	
Environment/Ambiance	
Interactions	
Other	

Methodological/Logistical Issues

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