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Student Voice: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations Among First and Second Generation Vietnamese and Mexican Students

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STUDENT VOICE: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS AMONG FIRST AND
SECOND GENERATION VIETNAMESE AND MEXICAN STUDENTS

By

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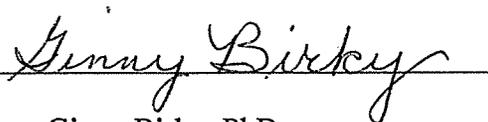
“STUDENT VOICE: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS AMONG FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION VIETNAMESE AND MEXICAN STUDENTS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by Sara Gandarilla in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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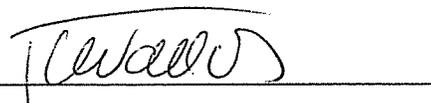
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study explored the perceptions first and second generation Vietnamese and Mexican high school students hold on teacher expectations based on their racial identity. Specifically, this study explores the critical concepts of stereotype threat, halo effect, and self-fulfilling prophecy. The primary purpose of this investigation was to enhance the understanding of how the perception students have impacts success or lack of success for two different student groups. This study utilizes interviews with student focus groups to examine student perceptions of teacher expectations among Vietnamese and Mexican students and its impact on student academic performance, the general nature of the perceptions among students, whether or not students of the two races have different perceptions, and what students perceive to be the major implications for teachers based on these perceptions. Results revealed that participants perceived significant differences on what teachers expected of them. In addition, this research also found significant differences on how students perceived they were treated depending on their race. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance strong relationships play in order to enhance student performance as well as how important it is for educators to constantly be cognizant of their non-verbal communication. Furthermore, the results also point out the importance of developing one's own racial consciousness in order to eliminate implicit biases and stereotypes that cause people to have conscious or unconscious behaviors that can be harmful to students. These behaviors cause students to give up and drop out of school which in turn widens the academic achievement gap. The results highlight important implications for education in general. Additionally, this study examined the results associated with three ethnic identity theoretical perspectives: ethnic identity theory, cultural ecological theory, and transculturation theory.

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This dissertation portrays the thoughts and in a way validation to the experiences I have personally encountered throughout my life as a Mexican student in the educational system of the United States. Furthermore, it has allowed me to complete a cycle of my life that otherwise would have not had closure. It also served as a healing process as it renewed my commitment to advocacy in my quest for social justice and educational equity. While I faced many challenges in completing it, such as: barriers in getting approval for the research from the district, illness, three new job placements, and working full time as I was trying to be a good mother, wife, and daughter; I have enjoyed writing about a topic on which I am very passionate, that motivates and pushes me to reflect and interrupt my own biases on a daily basis. Looking at ones biases and interrupting them is the underlying purpose of this work.

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This dissertation does not fulfill an academic program. Instead it is my hope that it will be used to develop racial consciousness so that all of the students have access to a biased free learning environment in which each student is seen as a capable individual so that they may fulfill their hopes and dreams.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The achievement gap between Latino/a and Asian students is significant. In many school districts, Asian students outperform not only Latino/a students but other ethnic groups including White students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Schools are challenged by perplexing achievement gaps and are constantly trying to understand these phenomena. Many students in both ethnic groups (Latinos and Asians) have English as their second language. Among Latinos, Spanish is their first language and some participate in schools where they are taught in their native language. Among Asian students, numerous languages are considered as native language. As a result many Asian students are enrolled in schools that cannot offer bilingual instruction in many of their less commonly used languages. Thus, it is generally easier for schools to provide bilingual instruction for Latino/a students than it may be for them to provide such instruction for some Asian students.

Instruction in one's own language can be a critical factor in academic performance. According to Krashen (2004), "literacy transfers" occur when students are taught in their native language and, while gaining proficiency in that language, the literacy skills transfer into a second language. Thus, the student gains a double benefit. However, if literacy transfers occur for students who receive bilingual instruction, it begs an important question. Namely, although Latino/a students are more likely to receive bilingual instruction compared to many Asian students, why do Asian students consistently academically outperform Latinos and other ethnic groups? Obviously this is a highly complex question and the answer reasonably includes an equally number of complex sociological, economic, and cultural factors. Nevertheless, we

should not ignore the possibility that one of these factors could involve what students perceive regarding teacher expectations. Simply put, an important researchable question is, could a factor influencing school experience among these two student groups involve the perceptions young people hold on what their teachers expect of them based on their ethnicity? Put another way, do Asian and Latino/a students believe their teachers form expectations based on prevailing stereotypes of their ethnic group membership?

Steele and Aronson (1995) argue that “stereotype threat” is a serious barrier to academic success for minority students. Essentially, stereotype threat involves a situation in which a student is judged according to prevailing negative, prejudicial views about a racial or cultural group. Steele and Aronson refer to stereotype threat as a predicament in which a young person, subjected to the negative beliefs held by those making academic evaluations, may actually internalize perceived low expectations. Ultimately, such a predicament results in a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the student, regardless of real academic ability, performs poorly. They explain:

It [stereotype threat] focuses on a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one’s group. It is this: the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one’s features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one’s own eyes. We call this predicament *stereotype threat* and argue that it is experienced, essentially, as a self-evaluation threat. (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797, italics in the original)

Griffin (2002) found that GPA is a strong predictor of school attrition. Students with a high GPA tend to stay in school versus students with a low GPA who tend to drop out.

Furthermore, Osborne and Walker (2006) studied how negative stereotypes regarding the intellectual capacity of certain (stigmatized) groups, suffer aversive consequences such as student dropout. They state that groups that are most at risk for withdrawing from school are students of color. For example, Latino/a or African-Americans are believed by some to have lower intellectual ability; yet, many of these students were those who were highly invested in schooling. The research findings emphasize the importance of having a supportive environment that eliminates stereotype threat for all students regardless of color or their academic ability.

Contrary to the negative perception of Latino/a students, Asian students traditionally have been regarded as the “model minority” (Gao, 2009). While the predicament of low versus high academic performance as presented by stereotype threat may be a contributing factor in explaining the lack of performance for Latino/a students, its opposite effect may also assist to explain the positive academic achievement for Asian students. That is, if stereotype threat works against students victimized by negative prejudicial attitudes (such as Latinos), it is also reasonable to assume that a corresponding “halo effect” may function for students who are generally believed to be academically gifted or motivated (such as Asians) (Sue, Bucci, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007).

Ironically, while a presumed halo effect may seem to assist some groups such as Asian students, it can also create its own unique forms of stress and difficulties (French, Tran, & Chavez, 2013; R. Lee, 2003). For example, Gao (2009) argues that Asian students internalize prevailing perceptions regarding their ethnicity and academic achievement. As a result, many Asian students strive to live up to such existing perceptions. Based on his findings, Gao concludes that a positive stereotype representing an idealized picture of how students are expected to perform and behave enter into the lives of a large number of Asian students.

Furthermore, Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found that teachers and non-Asian students have higher expectations of Asian students and hold them to a higher standard. Being regarded as a “model minority” can come at a heavy emotional price. For example, Curry-Stevens (as cited in Korn, 2012) argues that not all Asian groups are successful and educators need to be cautious about labeling Asian students as the model minority. Furthermore, they suggest that due to the stereotypical belief about Asian students, many students are not being properly served in our educational system and are slipping through the cracks.

The goal of the research is to gain an understanding of how a sample of first and second generation Vietnamese and Mexican students perceive their teachers’ academic expectations of them. Research has demonstrated that students will rise to teachers’ expectations. However, many minority students are not academically successful. Therefore, an important question is: What are the general perceptions on teacher expectations that this sample of Vietnamese and Mexican students hold? Moreover, given the dangers inherent in stereotype threat, an equally important question is: Will a sample of Mexican students, a group traditionally vulnerable to stereotype threat, hold contrasting perceptions of teacher expectations compared to a sample of Vietnamese students, who may potentially benefit from a supposed halo effect? An additional extremely important question is: What do these different samples of students believe are the significant consequences of their perceptions based on the expectations held by teachers for them?

Statement of the Problem

This research explored the perceptions of two samples of students on teacher expectations. I used focus groups to examine and compare how a sample of first and second generation Vietnamese and Mexican students articulated their notions on teacher expectations on

academic performance. A goal of the investigation was to gain an understanding on the nature of the students' understanding of the impact of teachers' academic expectations and the role this perception played in their schooling experience. Further, this study included both applied and theoretical potential. As a practical matter, insights into the personal perceptions and experiences of Vietnamese and Mexican students on how they view the expectations of their teachers can only assist educators in serving these groups better. Additionally, I use the findings resulting from this study to consider the fundamental premise and assumptions of several major theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and the educational experience for minority students. Up to this point, the intersection between student perceptions of teacher expectations and ethnicity have not been applied to these theoretical perspectives.

Research Questions

This investigation involved an exploratory, qualitative examination to compare the perceptions of two prominent cultural groups in our local schools. Little is known regarding these perceptions. As such, the research questions were designed to be global in order to gain a rather sweeping appreciation of the views held by the participants. As with any exploratory research study, the research questions were evolving and became more specific as the investigation unfolded. With that said, the following primary questions guided the initiation of the research:

Research Question #1

What is the general nature of the perceptions on teacher expectations among the sample of Vietnamese and Mexican students?

Research Question #2

Do the samples of Vietnamese and Mexican students articulate differing perceptions of what teachers expect of their academic performance?

Research Question #3

What do the samples of Vietnamese and Mexican students perceive to be the major implications of the perceptions held by their teachers on their school experiences?

Ethnic Identity Theoretical Perspectives

Beyond the attempt to answer the three primary research questions, a secondary objective of this research was to explore whether three prominent theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and education can assist in understanding the experiences of the participants. More specifically, I examined whether or not the findings of this investigation relate to the fundamental premise and assumptions found in the prominent theoretical frameworks found in the literature on ethnic identity and education. Each of these major theoretical perspectives offer a different premise on the nature of minority education and mainstream cultural education. These perspectives include *ethnic identity development theory*, *cultural-ecological theory*, and *transculturation theory* and are discussed in chapter 2.

Key Terms

There are many terms fundamental to any research investigation. The following are a number of key terms that are certainly significant to the study.

Affinity Groups – is a group that is formed and shares the same interest or goal. For the purpose of this research, affinity groups are formed primarily on the basis of ethnic/racial identity. Therefore, Latino/a participants will constitute an affinity group and Asian participants will constitute another affinity group.

Asian – as used in this research, the term Asian is at times used interchangeably to refer to students who are of Vietnamese descent. Simply, the Asian participants for this research were of Vietnamese ancestry. While I use the term “Asian” in a more generic and global sense to refer to various groups of Asian descent throughout the dissertation (but most notably in chapters 1 and 2), when discussing the findings of this specific investigation I refer to the participants as either Vietnamese or Asian .

Cultural-Ecological Theory – is a theoretical framework developed by anthropologist John Ogbu (2003). This theory attempts to account for why some minority group students do well in school while others do not. Its fundamental premise holds that the historical, economic, political, and social circumstances of each minority group attribute to the nature of the educational experiences of its members.

Ethnic Identity Development Theory – is a theoretical framework offered by psychologist Jean Phinney (1989). This theoretical perspective asserts that ethnicity is a critical component of an adolescent’s self-image and self-confidence. Phinney conceives ethnic identity as emerging through three stages of development.

Groupthink – is defined as a psychological phenomenon that happens amongst a group of people. Specifically, people within the group desire harmony or tend to conform to others in the group. Therefore, decisions made may be incorrect or biased. Members of the group try to avoid conflict and consent to decisions without giving a true evaluation or their own ideas not taking into consideration outside influences. Groupthink is an important hazard to focus group research.

Halo Effect – first introduced by Edward Thorndike (1920), this concept relates to a cognitive bias in which an individual’s overall impression of another person is favorably

influenced by personal and/or social attributes. The halo effect is especially important in educational settings because it can lead teachers to favorably evaluate a student, not necessarily on true academic abilities, but on personal or social characteristics.

Latino/a – as used in this research, the term Latino/a is at times used interchangeably with Mexican. Simply, the Latino/a participants for this research were of Mexican ancestry. While I use the term “Latino/a” in a more generic and global sense to refer to various groups of Spanish-speaking descent throughout the dissertation (but especially in chapters 1 and 2), when discussing the findings of this specific investigation I refer to the participants as either Mexican or Latino/a. Further, I chose to use the term Latino/a rather than Hispanic. The Hispanic label can be understood as a person coming from Spain. Thus, this label could misrepresent the participants of this study.

Model Minority – is regarded as a myth that claims that Asian Americans are smart, quiet, assimilated and get by with little or no outside help (Li & Wang, 2008). The conception largely ignores the many challenges facing Asian American communities and creates a false ideology among the general population as well as among Asian cultural groups. Furthermore, it assumes all Asian cultures into one overly-generalized grouping ignoring the cultural differences within each country and ethnicity.

Stereotype Threat – as defined by Steele and Aronson (1995). It means the situational predicament in which individuals are at risk, based on their actions or appearance, of confirming negative stereotypes about their group in the minds of educators. Frequently these negative stereotypes are internalized by minority students and shape their self-concepts.

Transculturation Theory – is a theoretical perspective developed by sociologist Terry Huffman (2008). The premise of this theory is that a strong ethnic identity is fundamental to

educational achievement. Additionally, the more integrated an individual is in his/her native cultural background, the better equipped the person is to thrive in mainstream culturally dominated school settings. Originally established to explain academic success among culturally traditional Native Americans, this perspective is becoming more widely used to account for schooling success for other minorities in and outside the United States (Benton Lee, 2007; Lee & Champagne, 2014).

Limitations and Delimitations

This research is limited to data gathered through focus groups with high school students. The participants were recruited using a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy. Therefore, as a researcher, I cannot make the assumption that the focus groups speak for all students in the Latino/a or Asian student populations. In other words, using qualitative research methods with a non-probability sample prohibits me from generalizing the findings to the all Asian and Latino/a students (Daniel, 2011). However, that limitation should be balanced with the potential theoretical insights gleaned from such a research approach (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Maxwell, 2005). Thus, while the results are statistically generalizable, the insights could well be conceptually transferable to wider, more general experiences and, thus, have theoretical merit.

A second limitation is that focus groups can engage in groupthink in which group members tend to conform to one another and even if an individual disagrees with a prevailing perception, is reluctant to offer a contradictory voice (Greenbaum, 2000). Similarly, the voice of one dominant speaker can influence the voices of the rest of the group. Moreover, in group settings there is always the risk of having outspoken participants dominate the conversation and not allowing less vocal participants share their experiences. These group dynamic shortcoming can be partially mitigated by a trained focus group facilitator/researcher (Greenbaum, 2000).

There are a number of important delimitations that I imposed on the investigation. First, the research was bounded by focusing on only two high school student cultural groups: Vietnamese and Mexican. This parameter was intentional and important. The primary reason for this decision was that there has not been much study comparing the perceptions of these two contrasting student groups, one which has traditionally experienced a great deal of educational success and the other which has not evidenced that level of educational success. Most of the research that exists compares one or two minority student groups to white students. The research on comparing two minority groups, one traditionally under-achieving academically and one high-achieving academically could potentially yield significant findings. I felt that the potential scholarly and practical implications of this delimitation could be enormous.

Another delimitation was to ensure that half of the participants for each group were males and the other half females. The primary reason was to have a balanced sample in terms of gender. Intuitively, at least, this makes sense. Gender differences in perceptions are as important as ethnic differences in perceptions.

Lastly, this research was conducted in one high school in an Oregon school district. The reason for this decision was that this school reflects the student population needed for the research in that Asian and Latino/a students (more specifically Vietnamese and Mexican students) are the two largest minority groups attending the school.

Conclusion

This study attempted an examination of a crucial issue for minority education – student perceptions on teacher expectations. Namely, I used a qualitative study involving focus groups to document the perceptions and experiences among a sample of Vietnamese and Mexican students. To help accomplish that goal, I identified three primary, albeit initial, research

questions intended to guide and structure the investigation. The research questions were intentionally designed to be general. These types of questions are often referred to by qualitative researchers as “grand tour” questions and widely used for highly exploratory investigations (Creswell, 2013). Thus, such a global approach allowed for more flexibility in the investigative approach which I believed was necessary for this exploratory study.

Such a study as this cannot ignore the importance of ethnic identity for students. There are a number of important theoretical perspectives found in the scholarly literature on ethnic identity and the educational experience. A secondary objective of this study was to explore if any of those theoretical perspectives might assist in understanding the findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review addresses important issues related to the education of American minorities. I concentrate on several general areas connected to perceptions held by the general public, policy makers, and ultimately educators. The fundamental premise is that perceptions held by teachers are largely formed by larger socio-cultural conditions. In turn, these perceptions are explicitly and implicitly communicated to students. My intention is to explore how minority students, and in particular Asian and Latino/a students understand the expectations they believe their teachers have of them.

In particular, this literature review addresses five areas of intent: 1) stereotype threat; 2) the concept of the model minority; 3) the halo effect and Asian student achievement; 4) family factors that impact student achievement; and 5), major theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and the education experience. Although, these issues are generally relevant to all minorities, I will attempt to, wherever possible, focus the review of the literature primarily on Asian and Latino/a students and by extension the two specific groups included in my study, Vietnamese and Mexican students.

Stereotype Threat and Student Academic Performance

The review of literature suggests a number of important factors that have an impact on student performance. One of those factors is stereotype threat. As discussed in the previous chapter, stereotype threat involves what Steele and Aronson (1995) refer to as a “predicament.” What they mean is that stereotype threat creates a dilemma where a student must be subjected to

the prejudices and biases held by teachers and other educators who make academic evaluations. Such a situation creates great potential for those negative views to be translated into low expectations for academic success for minority students (Kellow & Jones, 2008; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). Thus, the term “stereotype threat.” Some contend that minority students frequently internalize these low expectations making stereotype threat a self-fulfilling prophecy (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000).

In a meta-analysis, Guyll, Madon, Prieto, and Scherr (2010) examined the relationships between several psychological processes, including stereotype threat, and student academic performance. They found evidence to suggest that stereotype threat can be a determining factor among Latino/as and their academic performance. Their work is consistent with other research in this area. For example, Griffin (2002) in his research on misidentification theory found that among racial groups that have a negative stereotype or an oppositional subculture, the dropout rate is greater compared to those who are not subject to such stereotypes. Specifically, this pattern was true for Latino/a and African-American students but not for Asian or White students.

Osborne and Walker (2006) conducted a two year study that tracked 9th grade students and found a significant correlation between students’ Identification with Academics (IA) and 9th grade GPA. They also reported significant correlations between 9th grade IA and absenteeism. The research further indicated that the more students of color invested in academics the greater their likelihood to withdraw from school. Although this finding may seem counterintuitive, the authors reasoned that because school was less attentive toward them or their needs, these students experienced greater frustration. In other words, the most dedicated students are also the ones who are more likely to fall victim to the effects of stereotype threat.

Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, and Duinn (1998) used an experimental design to examine a person's motivation and interaction based on another person's physical appearance. The study consisted of having people fill in the blanks to words that could be stereotypical of a particular group. The findings suggested that automatic activation of stereotype threat toward minorities occurs when people experience self-image threat, but it is not automatic when people don't experience self-image threat. In other words, if people feel like they need to defend themselves in some way or for some reason, they are more likely to stereotype minorities. This finding suggests that stereotype threat might be greater and especially prevalent in inner-city schools where school violence is greater than in rural and suburban school settings (Handzel, Brodsky, Betacourt, & Hurt, 2012; McIntyre, 2000).

Van Laar, Levin, and Sinclair (2008) examined the effect of perceived affirmative action admission for college on academic performance during the first year of college among African American and Latino/a students. They divided the sample into high stereotype threat students (those who were highly concerned about stereotype threat) and low stereotype threat students (those who were less concerned about stereotype threat). Regarding the study and its findings, authors report:

[Our] longitudinal study of Black and Latino students at a large multiethnic university showed that perceptions of affirmative action admission negatively affected achievement among high stereotype-threatened individuals but not among low stereotype-threatened individuals. Furthermore, the results show that stereotype threat can have its effects because of concerns for the self (personal identity stereotype threat) or because of concerns for the group (social identity stereotype threat). As expected, social identity stereotype threat negatively affected the performance of individuals high in ethnic

identification, whereas personal identity stereotype threat negatively affected the performance of individuals low in ethnic identification. (p. 295)

Van Laar et al. (2008) further distinguished between two types of stereotype threat: personal identity stereotype threat and social identity stereotype threat. Personal identity stereotype threat includes an individual's self-perception and internalized stereotypes commonly attached to his/her cultural group. This variable was measured with such items as, "I think about whether the stereotypes of my ethnic group's intelligence are true of me" (p. 299). On the other hand, social identity stereotype threat involves how a person believes his/her performance will reflect on the impression of others about his/her cultural group. Social identity stereotype threat was measured with such items as, "I think about whether my academic performance will affect how others evaluate my ethnic group" (p. 299).

Van Laar et al. (2008) also found an interesting contrast on perceptions associated with personal identity stereotype threat and social identity stereotype threat. They report:

Those who experience higher social identity stereotype threat perceive more ethnic discrimination against their group on campus, identify less with Americans than with their ethnic group, and are more likely to perceive that students belong to different groups on campus (rather than being one group or being separate individuals). Students experiencing more social identity stereotype threat are also more interested in getting ahead through group mobility than individual mobility. Personal identity stereotype threat, meanwhile, does not relate to these group variables. The only unique correlate for personal identity stereotype threat available in our data set is that those high in personal identity stereotype threat feel less competent interacting with members of different ethnic groups. (p. 300)

Moreover, Owens and Lynch (2012) also conducted research in an attempt to understand the reasons for a gap in students' grade performance at the college level between immigrant students of color and White and Asian students. The study compared first generation immigrants to second generation immigrants. The researchers asked students to complete a survey in which they identified a connection to their culture and whether or not they had assimilated. The survey also contained questions regarding negative stereotypes and how these students coped with such social attitudes. The study found that although first generation immigrants had a stronger sense of identity which served as a buffer against the internalization of negative stereotypes; they still had lower grades than White and Asian students. The study also found that second generation immigrants were more likely to internalize negative stereotypes than first generation immigrants. Based on the findings from these studies, it appears that stereotype threat can be an extremely important factor in student academic performance.

Model Minority: Impact and Implications

In the mid-1960s, sociologist William Petersen introduced the term "model minority" to describe Asian Americans (Jo & Mast, 1993). The term was presumably presented as a compliment. Asian Americans were considered to be politically compliant, economically resourceful, educationally successful, and willing to culturally assimilate. Or so the idea went. But it is a deceptive label. For a variety of reasons, the educational and economic success among Asian American is exaggerated and hides significant social problems. Healey (1995) contends:

Asian Americans have also been stereotyped in so-called positive ways. The perception of Asian Americans as a model minority is exaggerated and, for some Asian American groups, simply false. This label has been applied to these groups by the media, by various politicians, and many others. It is not an image that the Asian American groups

themselves developed or particularly advocate. As you might suspect, those who apply these labels to Asian Americans have a variety of hidden moral and political agendas. (p. 430)

Healey (1995) points out that if Asian Americans are the “model minority,” then compared to whom? Historian Ronald Takaki (1993) claims that a popular image of Asian Americans as a model minority serves to challenge more socially and politically aggressive minorities; most particularly African Americans. He argues:

The myth of the Asian-American “model minority” has been challenged, yet it continues to be widely believed. One reason for this is its instructional value. For whom are Asian Americans supposed to be a “model”? . . . Our society needs an Asian-American “model minority” in an era anxious about a growing black underclass. Asian American “success” has been used to explain the phenomenon of “losing ground” – why the situation of the poor has deteriorated during the last two decades while governmental social services have expanded. If Asian-Americans can make it on their own, conservative pundits are asking, why can’t other groups? (Takaki, 1993, p. 416)

Gao (2009) used an ethnographic approach to examine a unique model minority experience. Namely, in China Koreans are considered a model minority because of their efforts to gain academic success. Gao examined the connection between student self-perception and attitudes toward schooling. The researcher studied 4th grade Korean students attending a bilingual school in China. Significantly, Gao did not find evidence that young Korean students internalized the general social stereotypes surrounding them. The research concludes that scholars and educational practitioners need to critically evaluate the validity of the model minority stereotype and use student voices as much as possible.

Despite the overall academic achievement Asian students might have, a study conducted by Parikh (2009) cautions educators to look beyond the “model minority” stereotype. He argues that not all Asian students perform well and that schools are not serving all Asian students. Parikh’s research is based on Asian Indian students who, according to the authors, are often overlooked in the school system because they are seen as a model minority. He urges school personnel to challenge the model minority myth.

Tran and Birman (2010) analyzed 45 research studies performed by numerous researchers within a time span of 1990-2008. They sought to understand if there is sufficient knowledge to dissipate what is currently known about Asian Americans as a model minority. Furthermore, they wanted to know if there is adequate evidence to correlate student performance with individual effort and cultural influences rather than expectations based on stereotypical beliefs. The researchers found out of the 45 studies, 20 mentioned that academic expectations, motivation or values toward education were predictors of academic success. Out of the 20, only 12 reported that Asian American parents and students hold higher expectations for academic performance. Therefore, the findings seem to suggest that expectations may not entirely extend from Asian cultures and but rather reflect the broader American culture.

Furthermore, Cho, Chiu, Chan, Mendoza-Denton, and Kwok (2012) conducted research to examine the impact and implications of being stereotyped as a model minority. They were specifically interested in assessing the notion that Asian Americans are diligent, high achieving, and submissive. The research consisted of three studies. Study one sought to investigate the prevalence of the model minority stereotype among Americans. Study two attempted to test the assumption that most people in the United States expect Asian Americans to conform to the model minority image. Study three tested the effect of exposure to the model minority in

intergroup perceptions. Cho et al. found that Americans share the knowledge of the stereotypical image of Asian Americans, that most people in the United States expect Asian Americans to conform to the model minority image, and that the media exposure on Asian American successes serves to strengthen the belief and perceived acceptance of Asian American when compared to other diverse groups. Taken together these scholarly efforts suggest that biases may be created if the model minority stereotype is used to evaluate other disenfranchised groups.

In an ethnographic study conducted by S. Lee (1994), teachers and administrators, were eager to share the academic achievements of their Asian students; thus, reinforcing the model minority stereotype. They insisted in taking Lee around the school to show her bulletin boards where Asian students' names were mentioned as being in the top ten of each graduating class. They also shared records of academic awards, enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, and Mentally Gifted classes. All of these displays were meant to demonstrate how successful Asian Americans were in school. As part of the deeper investigation, Lee divided the students into four different groups: Asians, Koreans, New Wavers, and Asian Americans. The Asian and Asian American groups included American-born Chinese, immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and Southeast Asian refugees. According to Lee, the Asian and Asian American groups displayed the model minority characteristics: quiet, polite, and hard-working. This was in contrast to the Korean group who simply saw themselves as smarter than everyone else or the New Wavers who did not appear to care about academics and did not display any of the characteristics typical of the model minority. Despite the difference in behaviors, teachers expected all Asian students to display the stereotypical behaviors of the model minority. Lee concludes that although many Asian students may be doing well, many are also falling through

the cracks. The study recommended that schools develop and implement systems that look at each child individually to ensure that all are being served appropriately.

In an article published in the *Portland Tribune*, Peter Korn (2012) cautions educators about the model minority stereotype. He argues it is a damaging myth that perpetuates institutional racism. Further, Korn contends that Asian-American students frequently do not get the services they need in the classroom, often as a result of this pervasive myth. Educators assume that because students are Asian they are doing well. Korn's warning is supported by research evidence. Shrake and Rhee (2004) found that the stereotype also leads to students' loss of identity which results in problem behaviors. These behaviors are associated with the perception of racial discrimination and student's lack of their own sense of identity. Therefore, Shrake and Rhee urge schools to develop programs that embrace multiculturalism in order to foster in students a strong sense of ethnic identity in order to minimize the internalization of problems including depression, anxiety, and withdrawal symptoms.

Nguyen (2011) too contends that the model minority stereotype serves to manipulate students and contributes to interracial tensions in schools. These dynamics in turn perpetuate the dominant status of Whites and diverts the attention from White racism. He also asserts that schools set up policies and structures that create an environment of insiders and outsiders. As a consequence, schools create a divisive environment. That is, the belief of the model minority among White educators can serve to play Asian American students against other students of color. Ultimately, this works to aggravate racial tension.

Chao et al. (2012) suggest that being a model minority could be considered by some as "glamorous." However, like others, they caution that this perception overshadows the needs of disadvantaged groups such as poor families living in single room occupancy in Chinatown and

Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian students who are Asian and struggling academically.

According to Chao et al., ultimately, the model minority stereotype hurts rather than helps Asian groups in the United States.

The Halo Effect and Asian Student Academic Achievement

Certainly related to the model minority myth is the potential for the halo effect. Whereas the model minority is a social conception, the halo effect is a social psychological phenomenon. Edward Thorndike (1920) first introduced the concept into the field of cognitive psychology and it has become an important theoretical notion in educational studies. Essentially, the halo effect refers to the tendency to judge an individual's performance based on preconceived ideas (Vohs & Baumeister, 2007). Generally, the halo effect is regarded as a positive evaluation and can lead a person to disregard contradictory evidence about another's ability. As it relates to Asian students, the halo effect may occur when a teacher is induced to accept the general social notion of the model minority and, therefore, assume that an Asian student is academically motivated, talented, and successful (Hamamura & Laird, 2014).

There is research evidence to support the assertion that some teachers operate from a halo effect in regard to their Asian students. For instance, Gordon and Cui (2012) found that teachers especially look to parental behavioral cues to ascertain how much academic ability students may possess. They also found teachers frequently believe that Asian parents are especially concerned with their child's school work. According to these researchers, if teachers believe parents are actively involved in their child's schoolwork, they tend to take a more favorable view of the student's academic work.

Similar findings were reported by Chen and Gregory (2009) and Yamamoto and Holloway (2010). In both of these studies, teachers reported using parents as a way to gauge the

academic proficiencies of students. Important to teachers were how actively parents engaged teachers and if the parents seemed to be concerned with the general academic progress of their children. Notably, both studies identified that Asian parents were generally considered to be especially attentive to their children's education. These studies suggest that the halo effect (reasonably connected to the model minority stereotype) works to create positive images of Asian students in the mind of some teachers.

Tenebaum and Ruck (2007) explored expectations among teachers of Asian, European Americans, Latino/a, and African American students. The findings of the study suggest that teachers hold higher expectations for Asian American and for European American students than for Latino/a and African American students. They also found that the speech patterns when teachers interacted with these groups varied. Teachers used more positive and fewer negative referrals toward Asian and European American students than toward Latino/a and African American students. Taken together, the findings provide empirical evidence that teachers hold lower expectations for African American and Latino/a students and propose that a halo effect frequently operates for both Asian and European American students.

Family Factors that Impact Student Achievement

One of the factors that can have an important impact on student achievement is parent or family expectations. While scholars have examined the family's influence on the educational experiences of students, curiously, this treatment seems one-sided. Namely, researchers have generally focused attention on Asian families with specific focus on the value placed on education in Asian homes. Noticeably absent are similar treatments on Spanish speaking families. Given the emphasis of family impact on education prevalent in the literature, one wonders how much the model minority stereotype has influenced the very way researchers

approach this topic. Reflecting the reality of the existing literature, my review will address the literature on family factors that impact student achievement largely among Asian homes.

Using personal interviews with Asian students, S. Lee (1994) discovered that most of the participants mentioned that their parents decided to come to the United States specifically because of the opportunities the educational system offered. Students also stated that they felt responsibility and guilt for their parents sacrifices and that they needed to work hard in school and do well so that they could get a good paying job to help their families. Many students also mentioned that their parents had taught them it was important to do well in school so they could be successful in this country. An example of how an Asian parent supported her students was by making school the student's chore and not giving the child any other responsibility at home; making it clear that school was the only responsibility the student had. Lee also found that among the participants, parents expected their children to be silent about their academic challenges. They considered school difficulties as an embarrassment. For example, one student mentioned that if his father found out that he was talking about his school problems he "would kill him." The significance of this study is that it powerfully documents the influence of parents and families in the academic lives of Asian students.

In a field-based study, Schneider and Lee (1990) found clear evidence that Asian parents have high expectations for academic achievement. This extensive study consisted of data collected from student census, review of school records, participant and nonparticipant observations, interviews with students, parents, teachers and administrators, and a collection of three essays. Comments made by parents and students during personal interviews speak of how high expectations are communicated verbally and behaviorally. For example, a parent told her son, "to study for two hours when White children study for one" (p. 370). Another parent

mentioned that her husband was not satisfied if their son was not first place in the class. Moreover, the students also commented on how their parents expected them to have good grades which they understood to mean only “As.” When they did not get good grades their parents were unhappy. Teachers also held Asian students to high expectations. One teacher commented that “Oriental minds easily grasp concepts and rules of mathematics and apply them to new situations . . . they are patient, very obedient, and cautious with their work” (p. 371). Parents also involved students in activities outside of the school that fostered learning, such as, music lessons, computer science, martial arts or languages. These activities required practice time at home in addition to school homework. The researchers conclude that Asian parents ensured their students’ success by structuring their out-of-school time rather than helping with homework or seeking involvement at the school level.

Peng and Wright (1994) analyzed data reported by 25,000 8th graders administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). They found that parents’ education level and family income were positive predictors of academic achievement. However, they further found that the highest correlation to student achievement was parental expectations. In other words, the higher the expectations parents had for their children, the better students performed in school. Moreover, Asian students reported the highest levels of parental expectations for school. Asian parents communicated these expectations to their children using both implicit and explicit messages. In addition to high expectations, other factors that influence student achievement include: participation in private schools, education level of the parents, two parent families, more time doing homework, and participation in extra-curricular activities. The authors claim their findings suggest Asian American children had more access to those facilitating factors when compared to White, African American, Hispanic and Native American students.

Furthermore, Desimore (1999) analyzed data from parent and 8th grade student surveys collected by the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study. She found that parent involvement has a positive outcome primarily for White and middle class students. She reported there is no significant relationship between student achievement and parents as volunteers among Latino/a, African American or Asian students or for students from families with a low SES. Another example of parental involvement is participation in Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings. Although, Desimore mentions that participation in PTO has a positive impact on grades for African American students, curiously this variable was not correlated with standardized test scores. A possible explanation could be that PTO allows for advocacy and decision-making. Desimore also suggests that the extent to which teachers support, encourage or oppose parent involvement may affect how they judge the child according to the students' race, income or other characteristics. This, in turn, may impact whether or not a parent makes an effort to get involved in school. For example, minority parents may not feel welcomed or effective in a middle class White school system. When comparing Latino/a and Asian American parent involvement, she found that the structure, interactions, and behaviors of Asian American parents are very different than Latinos/as. Asian Americans are influenced more by social standards and peer pressure than from participating in schools.

Using personal interviews with Latino/a immigrant parents, Poza, Brooks, and Valdéz (2014) found that “besides the well-documented resilience and adaptability of immigrant families...a remarkable concern on the part of the parents for their children's learning and academic success” emerged. According to Poza et al., this finding contradicts the notion that Spanish speaking immigrant parents do not care or are negligent when it comes to their student's academic achievement.

The research also revealed differences in what parents view as effective parent involvement versus what educators view to be effective. For the Latino/a parents in their study, schooling was seen as only one way in which children learn. The parents identified other skills that children need to be good citizens; skills, it should be noted, that are not always taught in schools. In addition, Poza et al. (2014) found that there are three ways immigrant Latino/a parents are involved in students' education. One way is by asking questions of teachers. This refers to when parents approach teachers or other school staff and inquire about their child's progress in school. These questions can be related to academics or behavior. In addition to asking questions about student's progress parents also ask questions about how to help their student improve. Another form of involvement is attending school events such as parent-teacher conferences, assemblies, or field trips. This also refers to parent participation in school workshops as well as other non-profit workshops offered by libraries or other organizations. The third form of involvement identified in the research refers to altering/augmenting. This form of involvement refers to the efforts parents make in enrolling their students in programs that will enhance their academic performance, such as summer school, after school programs, after school homework help, or English development classes. All of these programs have the intention of extending the learning and are learning opportunities that working parents cannot provide.

Poza et al. (2014) recommend that educators focus on the efforts made by Latino/a parents and to make an effort to understand the misalignment that can exist between parent understanding of parental involvement and what educators view as effective or acceptable parent involvement. They also urge educators to give parents credit for such involvement. They suggest educators need to understand the challenges that some Latino/a parents face due to language proficiency and lack of knowledge of the United States educational system.

Aldous (2006) also used data from the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Study to conduct a rather complex investigation on the connections between family characteristics, ethnicity, and immigrant status and educational achievement. Specifically, she examined immigrant youths' reading comprehension and mathematics' standardized scores as well as their parents' demographic characteristics and parent-child relations. Included in her analysis were comparisons among parents who had emigrated from Asian, Central and South America, and some European countries and their first and second-generation offspring. It appeared that Asian students did somewhat better than the other groups. However, regardless of ethnicity, parents' aspirations for their children to obtain more education as well as the children's own aspirations generally were positively related to their children's doing well in school. These research revelations suggest that parents' influence on the educational goals of their children is crucial. Her findings and essential conclusion deserves consideration:

With respect to family variables that appeared to be related to children's test scores, some results cut across ethnic groups. The study findings for both parents and children show the important role that family higher education aspirations play in children's test scores. Regardless of ethnicity and controlling for background factors, children who had parents with higher educational aspirations generally appeared to do better on reading and mathematics in general knowledge examinations. This was true among the children and the parents from all three groups, with just one exception. Only among European fathers and their children's mathematics scores did this finding not hold. Children having higher education expectations, regardless of ethnicity, also did better on the reading and mathematics tests. These results are understandable because succeeding in advanced

schooling depends on students' having a good grounding in the basics of reading and mathematics as well as the aspirations for higher education. (pp. 1662-1663)

Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Identity and the School Experience

Fuligni, Witkow, and Garcia (2005) examined the implications of ethnic identity among early high school students. Specifically, they conducted a study based on 9th grade Chinese, Mexican, and European student surveys that asked questions ranging from how students identified themselves, school use, value on education, self-concept, and respect. The authors found that if students identified themselves as Mexican or Chinese and had a positive attitude toward their ethnic identity they also tended to like school, found it interesting, and believed in the importance of education.

What the research conducted by Fuligni et al. (2005) demonstrates is the enormously important influence on academic achievement for minority students – their ethnicity. Identity development is critical for all adolescents (Marcia, 1980) but can be especially complex for racial and ethnic minority youth (Huffman, 2008). In fact, scholarly attention to this issue has resulted in a significant field of scholarship – ethnic identity and the school experience. The fundamental assertion of this line of scholarship is that one's personal ethnicity plays a critical role in the positive and negative ways in which minority students experience mainstream education.

Especially influential in this field has been *ethnic identity development theory* developed by psychologist Jean Phinney (1989, 1990, 1993, 1996). According to Phinney, ethnic identity formation proceeds through three stages of development. In the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, the adolescent does not engage in any meaningful exploration into his/her ethnicity. During this stage the young person simply accepts existing social assumptions about his/her

ethnicity and cultural group. Second is the ethnic identity exploration stage. At this point, the young person begins to actively investigate his/her ethnicity and shows a growing awareness of what that identity means. Third is the stage of achieved ethnic identity. At this stage, the young person has gained a confident sense of his/her personal ethnic identity.

Phinney (2007) argues that these stages are not necessarily sequential or linear. She contends a person frequently moves back-and-forth between stages until one stage becomes more or less consistent in an individual's life (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Also, Phinney does not make any explicit claims about how each of the stages of ethnic identity relates to educational success or lack of success. Her work is particularly helpful in that it conceives of a dynamic process in developing an ethnic identity. Thus, ethnic identity is not a "thing" but a "process." While Phinney's framework has been highly influential, it does not adequately explain why a person proceeds through three stages or what will be the likely academic consequences (Huffman, 2008). Important to my research project was whether or not students' display any of Phinney's stages of ethnic identity development, and how this relates to perceptions of teacher expectations.

Cultural-ecological theory developed by anthropologist John Ogbu (1978, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2003; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998) has become one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in the field of ethnic identity and academic achievement. Ogbu's seminal work has influenced an entire generation of thinking in this field of study (Foster, 2004; Huffman, 2010). The essential purpose of cultural-ecological theory is to account for how minority students experience education in mainstream institutions and explain differing rates of academic success. However, Ogbu argues that these phenomena can only be understood in their social structural and historical context. He describes his theoretical perspective in this way: "The

cultural-ecological theory of minority schooling takes into account the historical, economic, social, cultural, and language or dialect situations of minority groups in the larger society in which they exist” (Ogbu, 2003, p. 45)

Ogbu’s (2003) cultural-ecological theory has three fundamental components. First, Ogbu identifies two major types of social forces shaping ethnic identity and academic experiences: the *system* and the *community*. The system involves societal arrangements that structure minority education including persistent barriers to educational success. Examples of these barriers include the denigration or outright dismissal of native language, personal and structural discrimination, prejudicial attitudes, and, especially relevant to this study, low teacher expectations. The community involves the ways in which minorities respond to the system. Responses range from resistance to schooling (i.e., dropping out) to accepting the system and working harder to achieve (i.e., over-achievement).

Ogbu (2003) argues that the type of response taken by minority members depends on the historical context of their racial/ethnic group. This assumption leads to the second component of Ogbu’s theory, the idea that there are three types of minorities: *autonomous minorities*, *voluntary minorities*, and *involuntary minorities*. This component is likely the most familiar part of cultural-ecological theory (Foster, 2004; Huffman, 2010). It is also important to note that each of these types of minorities have very different historical, social, political, and economic experiences within the greater American society and especially with regards to education.

Autonomous minorities are groups that while holding a minority status, have not suffered overtly from a subordinate status in society, according to Ogbu (2003). These groups generally have enjoyed a higher social and political status compared to other minorities and have historically been able to direct their own affairs. This is the reason why Ogbu refers to them as

autonomous. Examples of autonomous minorities include American Jews, and the Amish.

Voluntary minorities are those groups that have freely of their own accord moved to the United States. While they may suffer prejudice and discrimination, they tend to be committed to taking advantage of the economic and educational opportunities available in the United States. As such their responses to the system tend to be one of acceptance and hard work. Examples of voluntary minorities include Asian ethnic groups and most recent East European and Latin American migrant groups. Also according to Ogbu, Involuntary minorities are groups that have the most contentious histories in the United States. These groups did not join the United States of their own accord. They were either forced into the United States by slavery, conquest, or colonization. Examples include Native Americans, African Americans, Native Hawaiians, Native Alaskans, and many Mexican Americans. These groups have displayed the most resistance to mainstream education. They have also demonstrated the lowest achievement rates.

The third component of the cultural-ecological theory involves three types of cultural discontinuities minority students experience in schools: *universal discontinuities*, *primary discontinuities*, and *secondary discontinuities* Ogbu (2003) Cultural discontinuities involve “the mismatch between the culture of the school and the culture of the home, which results in misunderstandings between teachers and students in the classroom” (Au, 1993, p. 8). That is, cultural discontinuities are the inconsistencies and contradictions between cultural expectations at home and cultural expectations at school. Ogbu (2003) refines this notion by identifying three types of discontinuities.

For Ogbu (2003), universal discontinuities are actually experienced by all children, minority as well as non-minority. These discontinuities occur when children merely move from the informality of their homes to the formal setting of school. However, cultural-ecological

theory is not overly concerned with universal discontinuities (Huffman, 2010). Primary discontinuities involve dissimilarities in cultural values, norms, and language between students and those common in schools. Primary discontinuities occur simply because minority students and White teachers are culturally different from one another. Ogbu argues that these primary discontinuities receive most of the attention from scholars and educators. To combat primary discontinuities, educators attempt to introduce culturally-sensitive teaching practices and curriculum, etc. Yet, Ogbu argues secondary discontinuities are the real concern for educators, scholars, and policy-makers. For Ogbu, secondary discontinuities are serious and long-term barriers that prevent minorities from fully participating in schools and American life. As described by Huffman (2010):

Secondary discontinuities are created by historic and enduring social inequalities built into a society's social structure. These forms of incongruence involve greater complexity than differences in language and behavioral patterns. They include institutional and personal discrimination and prejudice. Moreover, secondary discontinuities are produced *after* the dominant and minority groups come into contact. Historically, this typically meant that the dominant group deliberately and systematically erected social and political barriers to subjugate minority members. In contemporary America, secondary discontinuities take the form of the residual effects of its cultural history. Namely, secondary discontinuities involve what is sometimes referred to as "white privilege." (pp. 71-72, italics in original)

A strong ethnic identity is central to sociologist Terry Huffman's *transculturation theory* (1997, 2001, 2008, 2010). Transculturation theory was developed to specifically explain academic achievement for culturally oriented Native American students. He describes the

premise of this theoretical perspective in this way: “Transculturation theory asserts that American Indian students engage in the process of learning the cultural nuances found in mainstream education while retaining and relying upon their cultural heritage to forge a strong identity and sense of purpose” (Huffman, 2010, p. 170).

Emerging from a five-year grounded theory effort involving over 60 Native American students attending a predominately non-Native university, Huffman (2010) documented the critical importance of establishing a strong ethnic identity among the participants. In fact, he reports that contrary to much of the educational philosophy of the past, academic success arises from reliance on one’s cultural identity rather than cultural assimilation. Huffman (2010) argues:

Transculturation theory rejects the notion that American Indian students undergo some form of assimilation in order to succeed academically. Rather, many Native individuals successfully navigate the rigors of an academic endeavor in a non-Native cultural setting. . . . A strong cultural identity serves as an emotional and cultural anchor. Individuals gain self-assuredness, self-worth, even a sense of purpose from their ethnicity. By forging a strong cultural identity, individuals develop the confidence to explore a new culture and not be intimidated. They do not have to fear cultural loss through assimilation. They know who they are and why they are engaged in mainstream education . . . transculturated individuals do not academically succeed in spite of being American Indian, it is because they are American Indian. (p. 171)

The process leading to the appropriation of a cultural identity to facilitate educational success is difficult and challenging but also potentially highly rewarding. Describing what the transculturation process meant to the Native American college students in his study, Huffman (2008) explained:

Transculturation is a process of exploring evermore deeply into a cultural context, testing out another culture, realigning with what is learned, and transitioning into additional discovery. Therefore, it is also a journey into one's own culture. Each new discovery about a novel culture leads to a revelation about the complexities of one's own cultural world. Thus, an individual never arrives as an enculturated end-product. With the notion of transculturation, the individual is conceived as a social actor who is learning how to learn a new and old culture. . . . Interestingly and significantly, many of the culturally traditional Native students in this study did not add or subtract to or from their cross-cultural capacities (as implied by biculturation). Rather, they only expanded on their existing cultural skills. They underwent a process of transculturation. (pp. 149-150)

Important to transculturation theory is the notion that the acquisition of a strong cultural identity involves a deliberate process during which a student may encounter a significant number of challenges to both his/her personal identity and academic progress, Huffman (2010). A condition of transculturation occurs when the individual arrives at a point where he/she consciously decides to embrace and use his/her cultural identity to anchor and guide personal values, behaviors, and goals. Huffman (2010) refers to this point as a "transculturation threshold." He describes the transculturation threshold in this way:

If culturally traditional American Indian students could endure the pangs of the initial alienation, many arrived at a critical point in the transculturation process. At this junction these students began to realize they could compete academically and they could interact with American Indians and non-Indians alike. Most important of all, however, these students also discovered they had not been snared in a web of assimilation and did not need to lose their cultural identity. In short, transculturated students came to realize they

had not lost their “Indianness” and yet had survived academically. Thus, many of these culturally traditional students began a personal introspection and made a most curious discovery. The transculturated students came to realize they had succeeded because they were American Indian and had not attempted to be anything else. Most of the transculturated students in this study could relate a specific time in their academic career when they made a deliberate decision to push forward in their pursuit of mainstream higher education while at the same time utilizing their Native heritage as a personal and cultural anchor. This critical point in the transculturation process is referred to as the *transculturation threshold*. (Huffman, 2008, p. 158, italics in the original)

Transculturation theory has been subjected to empirical investigation and there is mounting scholarly support for the perspective (M. Lee, 2007; Lindley, 2009; Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2009; White Shield, 2004, 2009; Zywicki, 2013). Moreover, the notion that a strong ethnic identity enables academic success is not only supported by empirical evidence; it makes intuitive sense too. Summarizing the results of her findings on the cultural strengths of Native American undergraduate and graduate students, White Shield (2009) relates, “Congruent with Huffman’s (2001) theory, this sense of ‘Indianness’ was not transferred into them by external sources, but was a result of self-discovery within a Native cultural context” (p. 62). The basic premise of transculturation theory can reasonably be applied to the educational experience of other racial and ethnic minorities attending mainstream education (M. Lee, 2007). Thus, the central assertion of transculturation theory is potentially important to this research investigation.

Conclusion

The literature review identifies many factors that help explain the gap in student achievement between Latino/a and Asian American students. One of the factors that may have a

critical contribution is stereotype threat. A significant amount of the scholarly literature refers to the impact of self-identity and self-perception. Students can perceive how they are seen by others and these perceptions in turn are internalized. In addition to expectations, an added layer is that students can identify how these expectations are communicated. In other words, do teachers use negative or positive referrals when communicating with their students? Do they use material that is challenging for the student or do they water-down the content because they may think that students cannot perform?

In addition to expectations, another factor that can contribute to student academic performance is how students racially or ethnically identify themselves. For example, Latino/a students perform differently if they are first generation immigrants and consider themselves as Mexicans rather than Mexican-American. The same is true for Asian students. Some Asian students perform better than others; yet the assumption exists that all Asian students should perform at the same level at the same rate. The literature cautions school leaders about the model minority stereotype and urges them to develop a learning environment that is inclusive and that looks at each individual student rather than grouping them together into a single category.

Important theoretical perspectives have been presented in the scholarly literature to account for the dynamic relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement for minority students. Prominent among these theoretical perspectives are Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development theory, Ogbu's (2003) cultural-ecological theory, and Huffman's (2008) transculturation theory. Each of these theoretical frameworks is widely used among race and ethnic scholars and each has its own merit. One of the secondary objectives of this study, beyond the primary research questions presented in chapter 1, was to consider whether the

perspectives and experiences of the students involved in this investigation are consistent with any of these theoretical perspectives. Conversely, might the premise and assumptions of these theoretical frameworks assist in explaining the findings?

Finally, an important limitation in the current literature is a lack of research that addresses how teachers interact with students. More specifically, most researchers utilize quantitative methods, such as surveys, rather than seeking to document student voices through qualitative research. I contend that a qualitative research study that looks primarily at providing evidence of these important voices through student focus groups is critical in determining whether or not teacher expectations is a strong factor that determines student performance or lack thereof.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The academic achievement gap between Asian students and Latino/a students reflects a huge disparity. Previous scholars have suggested that stereotype threat in which minority students are subject to prejudicial perceptions held by teachers while internalizing those expectations is a serious barrier to educational achievement. Conversely, Asian students are unique among American minorities as they have been labeled a “model minority” and subsequently are generally expected to do well in school. This study attempted to investigate these very different social positions from the point of view of students.

Specifically, I sought to explore the perceptions voiced by a sample of first and second generation Vietnamese students and Mexican students regarding what they believe teachers expect from them and whether or not, in their mind, these perceptions play a role on their academic performance. I constructed three general research questions served to guide the investigation:

Research Question #1

What is the general nature of the perceptions on teacher expectations among the Vietnamese and Mexican students?

Research Question #2

Do Vietnamese and Mexican students articulate differing perceptions of what teachers expect of their academic performance?

Research Question #3

What do the Vietnamese and Mexican students perceive to be the major implications of the perceptions held by their teachers?

While these research questions were important to provide the necessary structure to the research, I have a secondary objective to this research effort. I wanted to examine if the premise and assumptions of ethnic identity development theory, cultural-ecological theory, and/or transculturation theory can assist in explaining the perceptions and experiences of the Vietnamese and Mexican students involved in this study.

Setting

The study was conducted at a High School in Portland Public Schools in northeast Oregon located in the greater Portland metropolitan area. The school demographics at the time this research took place consisted of approximately 1,077 students in the school of which about 22% were considered Latino/a, 17% Asian, 17% African American, 2% Native American, 2% Pacific Islander, 7% Multiple races, and the remaining 33% were of European descent. Furthermore, 34% were considered English Language Learners (ELLs). These students received additional support through Sheltered Instruction techniques. The district had allocated significant funding to have all the teachers in the district receive intensive training in Shelter Instruction strategies. The goal of this training is to assist in narrowing the achievement gap by giving teachers the tools to teach students whose primary language is not English. Moreover, the school had invested resources such as Step-Up, a program intended to help students experiencing academic challenges. The program does not only offer assistance in academics also serves as a place for students to embrace their identity. This program provides a place where students can share challenges they may have due to their race such as bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Despite all the monetary resources that had been used, the academic achievement gap between

Asian and Latino/a students have been significant. Asian students outperformed all racial groups (including White students), while Latino/a students struggle and drop out of high school at higher than average rates.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

Participants for this study were selected using a purposive sample of students attending a High School in Portland School District. Students were purposely selected and recruited through the assistance of an Assistant Principal and a Counselor. A purposive sample was necessary for several reasons. First, it was important to include participants who were willing to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives. By selectively recruiting students into the study, I was able to have a greater likelihood of including participants who could and were willing to provide the necessary voices. Second, since the study was focused on Vietnamese and Mexican students, it was important that these ethnic groups be deliberately invited to participate. Third, purposive sampling was appropriate if the researcher had theoretical reasons to recruit specific individuals into the investigation (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

I projected a sample size of approximately six Vietnamese students and six Mexican students. I accomplished this sampling goal. Additionally, I desired to have an even representation in gender composition. This goal was also achieved and half of the participants in each group were composed of female students and the other half male students. The reason for this sampling strategy was that I believe the voices of both males and female to be important. Additionally, since the experiences of students vary depending on their socio-economic status, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds were intentionally selected by making sure that some of the students included were on free and reduced lunch status. The socio-economic status of a student is confidential information. Therefore, the only people who knew which

students were from a low socio-economic background were the Counselor and the Assistant Principal. Additionally, I sought participants from a variety of academic standings and not merely all of whom were high performing students.

As I was not employed at the high school where the research took place, I needed the assistance of the Principal in identifying potential participants to recruit. I also needed assistance in scheduling the place and time for the interviews. This part of the research proved to be challenging. It was hard to get all the students of one race in at the same time at the same place due to their busy schedules. Also at the beginning of the study, the Principal of the school had assured me that the interviews could take place during the school day. However, due to district mandates, this was not possible and the interviews had to happen after school hours. This mandate limited student availability due to after school commitments. Despite all these challenges, the high school Principal was supportive and offered a designee which served as an important gatekeeper in the recruitment of participants and helping to legitimize the investigation (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Krueger & Casey, 2014). The primary reason for seeking the Principal's assistance was that she was the person who was obviously familiar with her school's students. However, as mentioned before, due to the Principal's many responsibilities, she asked one of the Assistant Principals of the school to assist me in this study. I gave both administrators a specific criterion based on race, gender, socio economic status, and academic proficiency (see Appendix A) for student selection and explained the need for gender and socioeconomic diversity in the sample.

Research Design

There are a number of appropriate research designs I could have chosen to accomplish the goals of this investigation. However, in order to gain an understanding of the perceptions

and experiences among Vietnamese and Mexican students I collected data through the use of focus groups. Focus groups were especially appropriate for this research for several reasons. Focus groups are considered to be a “social oriented” research method in that it helps to document realistic experiences and perceptions in a social setting that may be difficult to elicit using other research approaches (including personal interviews) (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Also, the group dynamic of a focus group can generate insights regarding experiences and perceptions that the researcher may not think to inquire about by only using personal interviews (Litosseliti, 2003). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013) state that focus groups can result in a “memory synergy” not present in other research methods. That is, this approach allows researchers to explore shared experiences unique to special social groups such as racial or ethnic minorities. They explain:

Another affordance of focus group research is to draw out complexities, nuances, and contradictions with respect to whatever is being studied. The intensely social nature of focus groups tends to promote a kind of “memory synergy” among participants, and it can motivate efforts to bring forth the “collective memory” of particular social groups or formations (e.g. African Americans, wounded war veterans, former cult members).

Because they emerge as a confluence of varied perspectives on similar experiences, focus groups often surface eclipsed or invisible connections between and among constitutive social, cultural, and political structures and forces. In other words, they are effective tools for making the invisible visible. (p. 40)

There were also practical reasons for using focus groups. Focus groups can produce a lot of data in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, I had conducted focus groups before and felt comfortable and confident in using this research methodology.

There are also a number of important disadvantages inherent in focus groups. For instance, the researcher has less control over the focus group session that he/she would have using personal interviews, the data derived from focus groups can be difficult to analyze, strong personalities can dominate group discussion, and to be effective a focus group needs to be conducted in a comfortable, safe environment (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Litosseliti, 2003). It was important for me to be as aware of these shortcomings as it was to appreciate the advantages.

The general research strategy conducted was focus group interviews in four-stages. I had intended to do only two sessions with each ethnic group but that was not possible due to scheduling challenges and the many commitments students had after school. Therefore, the groups initial affinity groups had to be divided in two which required that I meet with four different affinity groups: One consisting of three Asian males, another of two Latinos and one Latina, a third with three Asian females, and the fourth with two Latinas and one Latino. Each of this session consisted of a minimum of 90 minutes. I found that it took both of the Mexican groups a least a half hour longer than the Vietnamese groups. Latinos/as had more experiences they wanted to share. The reason for separate focus group session by race was that each affinity group had different and unique set of experiences and perceptions. Separate focus group sessions generated specific discussions over those unique experiences and perceptions related to their ethnicity. The discussions were centered on open-ended questions (see Appendix B) reflecting the nature of the three research questions. The general purpose was to gain an understanding of how the participants perceived teachers' expectations and how they believed those expectations impacted their academic performance. I had anticipated that I would need to have follow-up questions and probes that would serve to clarify or elaborate on the topic; for

example, I anticipated asking students to provide examples of an experience that may come up. This anticipation proved to be true and I was able to ask students to elaborate on the experiences they were sharing. I would ask them for permission to make them “dig a little deeper.” All the students were very gracious, honest, and willing to elaborate on their responses. At the end of each session, I passed out 3x5 index cards and asked students to write down any experience or perception they may wanted to share but where not comfortable sharing with the entire group. This gave students the opportunity to express in writing any final thoughts. Out of the 12 students, nine chose to write a message or an experience.

I had planned to do a follow-up focus group session with each of the affinity groups. However, due to the large amount of data that was collected in the first interview, it was not necessary to do any follow up focus group sessions. Students were very thorough in their responses.

In order to create an environment in which the students felt safe to share their perspectives and experiences, the focus group sessions were conducted in a comfortable, private room at the high school. I worked with the high school Assistant Principal to secure such an appropriate setting at the school. Furthermore, I facilitated the sessions using the four agreements used in courageous conversations by Glenn Singleton (2006). The four agreements were intended to help facilitate an open and honest dialogue. The four agreements are: 1) stay engaged; 2) speak your truth; 3) experience discomfort; and 4) expect and accept non-closure. Prior to beginning the interview, I had to do a mini-lesson of what these agreements meant and the purpose of each of these agreements. I assessed student understanding of these agreements by asking them questions related to their understanding of the agreement. In addition, I established a double confidentiality protocol. In other words I asked students to commit to the

following: a) Nothing shared in the meeting was to be shared outside of the meeting, and b) No one would walk to a person and ask him/her to elaborate on an experienced that was shared in the meeting outside of the meeting. I made sure students understood that what was shared would be respected and valued. I also explained to them that if for any reason, a student was in need of support that cannot be provided by me, (the researcher); I would connect the student to the school counselor or an adult at the school site to which he/she had a relationship and who the student trusted. Furthermore, in an effort to create a safe environment, I asked a colleague of Asian background to assist me during the interviews for Vietnamese students. She was a skilled educator who has conducted focus groups in the past. During these interviews, we both asked students questions and took notes in non verbal communication. It seemed that students related very well to her which helped me determine that having her assist helped with the purpose of creating a safe and trusting environment for Vietnamese students.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

I audio recorded each of the focus group sessions using a digital recorder. These recordings were later transcribed. In addition to focus group session transcriptions, I kept careful notes of the sessions. The notes included impressions on the nature of the conversations, emerging potential themes, and prominent experiences and perceptions as well as non-verbal communication. I was mindful to note any similarities and differences that seem to be articulated between the affinity groups. The audio transcriptions and the research notes were the basis for the data analysis.

Analyzing qualitative data is challenging; analyzing data from focus groups is even more challenging (Krueger & Casey, 2014). I used traditional qualitative data analytical methods for this research. As a general strategy, focus group conversations were analyzed using a three step

coding process (initial, focused, and thematic) in an effort to identify the most prominent themes that emerged. In the initial coding I simply identified all the individual experiences and perceptions the participants shared. At this stage I made no attempt to refine the responses into systematic categories. During focused coding, I sorted the open coding responses into themes. This process involved collapsing similar responses into logical categories and assigning them with a convenient label. I continued the refinement process until I believed that the categories were reasonably collapsed and refined. I then considered the categories as themes. In the final stage of the analytical process, thematic coding, I looked for patterns in the data. For instance, in what ways did the Vietnamese students and the Mexican students share similar experiences and perceptions and in what ways did they differ? This stage of the analytical process helped me answer the three basic research questions.

Finally, I reviewed the entire nature of the data (audio transcripts and research notes) in order to consider their potential theoretical contributions. Namely, I analyzed the data in order to see if the findings had any connections with the premise and assumptions found in ethnic identity development theory, cultural-ecological theory, and/or transculturation theory.

Research Ethics

Since the participants in the sample were minors, I needed to obtain an informed consent from the parents before they were allowed to participate. This consent was secured with a signed letter of consent that contained the information regarding the research (Appendix C, D & E). Once the consent form was returned, it was filed in a locked cabinet to ensure the information was kept confidential. In addition to the written consent, I needed to seek written verbal assent from the students prior to their participation in the research. I explained carefully the nature and purpose of the research and how the data would be used. I asked students if they had a clear

understanding and sought their verbal assent to ensure that their participation was voluntary and that they were making an informed decision.

All of the data gathered (notes, recordings, and transcriptions), from the interviews and student focus groups, are kept in a locked cabinet. In addition, to ensure anonymity, no names were used; each student was only referred to with a pseudonym. Research materials including signed letters of consent, student assent forms, and audio recordings will be destroyed or deleted three years after the research has been completed.

In addition, a request for research was submitted to George Fox University IRB for approval. The data were collected only after approval has been granted. Furthermore, I obtained permission from the district using the districts guidance and protocols by submitting an IRB different from the one submitted to George Fox University. I also obtained permission from the high school principal before conducting the research in order to gain the institution's cooperation and support (Appendix A).

Bracketing and Role of the Researcher

There are several reasons that compelled me to conduct this research. One of the reasons was a vested interest in fulfilling the research necessary to obtain a doctorate degree in educational leadership. Despite this vested personal interest, I was faithful to the integrity of the professional research process and the nature of the findings. In other words, professional integrity overrides personal self-interest.

Another interest for this research was related to my professional roles in education. Throughout my career, I have continually sought to understand the challenges many minority students face that prevents them from fully accessing the education to which they have a right.

Therefore, I desired to gain a deeper understanding on what could be some possible factors that impact success or might constitute important barriers.

Furthermore, as a mother of three Latino/a children and having lived many challenges that kept my children from reaching their full potential at times, I was motivated to dig deeper into what needs to change in the educational system of Oregon. A concrete example of a challenge I have had to face as a Latina mother has been the annual beginning of the year meetings with teachers to make sure they do not lower the expectations for my children. The few times I did not go into the school the first week of classes to have this conversation about expectations with my children's teachers, it seemed guaranteed that my children would come home with a story of an experience that involved a teacher telling them they did not have to complete the entire assignment. According to my children, the teacher would think that because they were Latino/a, they would not be able to complete a challenging task, that they needed extra time or help. The damage repair at home was emotionally draining. To this day, I still question how much of the self-esteem or confidence my children lost in each one of these experiences. I wonder how much better my children would have done if they did not have to perceive that teachers did not think of them as "smart enough." Personally, I can understand this feeling. I have been a student in the educational system of the United States. I can say first hand, that I too have experienced how some instructors perceive me as not intelligent. I know that because of such experiences I will need to be very objective in analyzing and reporting my findings.

Potential Contributions of the Research

There is a great deal of research that attempts to understand the challenges minority students face in the educational system. However, most of this research usually compares minority students to White students. Furthermore, the research is primarily focused on language

acquisition or influence of the parents and very little in terms of perceived teacher expectations. Yet, the expectations teachers consciously or unconsciously hold for each minority group is frequently based on stereotypes. Therefore, this research attempted to gain insight on the impact student perception of teacher expectations and their views on how these perceptions impact their academic performance. It was my desire that this research would provide new insight that can be utilized in educational institutions to develop and implement or make necessary changes in order to ensure equitable educational practices that are beneficial for all students.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, there are also scholarly and theoretical benefits to this research. Certainly any research effort that provides an opportunity for students to be heard is important. These voices are rarely documented in the scholarly literature. Additionally, this research investigation took a novel approach in that it connected the concepts of stereotype threat and halo effect to the unique perspectives of two important cultural groups – Asian students and Latino/a students. To my knowledge no other research has attempted to do this in the matter proposed in this investigation.

Finally, this research has a theoretical utility. I planned to use the findings to examine how they related to three important theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and educational achievement. This is a novel approach as well. If the findings suggest perceptions of stereotype threat for instance, how might this finding relate to the premise and assumptions of either ethnic identity development theory, cultural-ecological theory, or transculturation theory? The same can be said for the halo effect. At the outset of this research I pondered whether other important insights produced by the research reflect the theoretical assumptions of those theories? I discuss the theoretical implications in greater detail in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore student perception of teacher expectations and the impact these perceptions have on student performance. The research was conducted through student focus groups where six Vietnamese and six Mexican first and second generation students were interviewed in a focus group and asked general open ended questions regarding their perception on what teachers expected from them. I developed “student friendly” questions intended to elicit participant responses. As will be discussed later, the focus group sessions proceeded smoothly and produced a rich set of data.

The sample included an even gender mix with three Vietnamese females and three Vietnamese males, and three Mexican females and three Mexican males. Further, the participants included different academic skill levels. Some were struggling students while others were performing well academically. Some of the students participated in an after school tutoring program while others did not. The participants also came from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. An administrator from the high school and a school counselor where the research was conducted assisted in the sampling of students using the selection criteria provided (see Appendix A) prior to beginning the research.

Profile of Students

Every student in this research offered unique experiences, socioeconomic status as well as educational performance. Some came from a two-parent home, others from a single-parent home, some had parents that had completed high school in their native country or origin while

the parents of others had not even completed elementary school. Therefore, it is important to provide a short profile on each of the students who participated in this study. Consistent with the research ethics outlined in chapter 3, all participants are only identified in this research using a pseudonym in order to protect student identity and ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Kevin is a 17-year old Vietnamese student who lives with both of his parents. He was born in the United States and considers himself a second generation Vietnamese American. At the time of the interview, he was an 11th grader and in the average range academically.

Paul is a 17-year old Vietnamese student who lives with both of his parents. He was also born in the United States and too considers himself as a first generation Vietnamese American. He is also an 11th grade student. However, contrary to Kevin, at the time of the study, Paul was in the low performing academic range.

Frank is a 17-year old student who lives with both of his parents. He was born in the United States and considers himself a first generation Vietnamese American. He is an 11th grader. In terms of academic performance Frank is a high performing student.

Rose is a 15-year old student that lives with both of her parents. According to Rose, her parents do well financially. She was born in the United States and considers herself a first generation Vietnamese American. She is a high performing 9th grader.

Sue is a 15-year old and lives with both of her parents. She was born in the United States and considers herself a second generation Vietnamese American. Sue is also a high performing 9th grade student.

Olivia is an 18-year old who also lives with both of her parents. According to Olivia, her parents do not do well financially and have to work very long hours to get by. She was born in Vietnam and came to the United States as a little girl. Olivia related that her family did not come

to this country with all the financial benefits erroneously assumed by many people. She considers herself a first generation Vietnamese. Despite many hardships, she is very proud of her academic performance which is very high and she has been admitted into three Ivy League colleges. She has also received three coveted scholarships offering full college tuition.

Maria is a 15-year old student that lives with a single parent. She comes from a low socioeconomic family that struggles financially. She came to the United States as a little girl and because of her limited English language proficiency she struggled and other students made fun of her. She considers herself a first generation Mexican. Maria mentioned that her mother had limited schooling in Mexico and is just now trying to complete her GED. According to Maria, her mother is not able to help her with any of her school work because her mother does not know how. Maria is a 9th grader and not doing well academically.

Sandra is an 18-year old student and lives with both of her parents. She was born in Mexico and came to the United States as a little girl. She considers herself as a first generation Mexican. Although she believes that her family does reasonable well financially, she lives in what would be considered a poor neighborhood. Her grandparents live with her family because they would not be able to afford living on their own. Sandra is a 12th grader who has high academic achievement.

Leticia is 17-year old student and lives with both of her parents. She was born in the United States and considers herself a first generation Mexican American. Leticia considers herself to be economically disadvantaged. She believes she needs to work very hard and do well in school in order to go to college. She is an 11th grader that does well academically.

Jose is 17-year old student who lives with both of his parents. He was born in the United States and considers himself a first generation Mexican-American. He is in 11th grade and is considered average in terms of academic performance.

Pablo is a 16-year old student who lives with both of his parents. Pablo considers himself lucky to have a father that graduated from high school in Mexico. According to Pablo, his father is not only very supportive of his educational experience; he is able to help him with much of his work in mathematics. Pablo considers himself a first generation Mexican-American. Pablo has participated in a Spanish Immersion Program since Kindergarten. He believes that much of his academic success is because he was able to attend school with many students that look like him and speak his language. Pablo is a 9th grader that has high academic achievement.

Luis is a 16-year old student and is being raised by a single mother. He was born in the United States and considers himself a first generation Mexican-American. Luis comes from a low socioeconomic background. His mother works very hard to provide for his needs. He is a 9th grader who struggles academically.

It is important to note that the sample includes both first and second generation Americans as defined in any standard social and political definition. However, in terms of their own self-definition, only two students self-defined themselves as second generation. Moreover, both of these individuals were Vietnamese Americans (Kevin and Sue). It is noteworthy to point out that none of the Mexican American students self-identified as second generation Mexican. It is difficult to know what this pattern suggests. It could well be that it only means that the students do not have (or need) a precise definition of what first or second generation means.

Table 1 provides a summary profile of the 12 students who participated in the study.

Table 1. Summary Profile of Student Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Grade	Generation	Race
Kevin	17	11	2 nd	Vietnamese
Paul	17	11	1 st	Vietnamese
Frank	17	11	1 st	Vietnamese
Rose	15	9	1 st	Vietnamese
Sue	15	9	2 nd	Vietnamese
Olivia	18	12	1 st	Vietnamese
Maria	15	9	1 st	Mexican
Jose	17	11	1 st	Mexican
Pablo	16	9	1 st	Mexican
Sandra	18	12	1 st	Mexican
Luis	15	9	1 st	Mexican
Leticia	17	11	1 st	Mexican

Focus Group Sessions and Data Analysis

The focus group interviews lasted approximately between 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Due to difficulties in getting all the Vietnamese and Mexican students in one focus group session, four focus group sessions had to be conducted. Each of these focus group sessions consisted only of students from the same affinity group. Thus, Vietnamese students only participated in a focus group with other Vietnamese students and likewise for the Mexican students. It is also important to note that the Mexican focus groups lasted approximately 30 minutes longer than the Vietnamese focus groups. Simply, the Mexican students had a lot more experiences they wanted to share.

Group 1 consisted of two Mexican males and one female; group 2 included three Vietnamese males; group 3 involved two Mexican female students and one male; and finally,

group 4 consisted of three male Vietnamese students. All sessions took place at the student's high school. This arrangement helped in creating a safe and comfortable environment and facilitated students to express themselves in a non-threatening manner. In an effort to create this safe environment, a colleague of Asian descent was present and participated in the interviews with the Vietnamese students. She assisted me by asking questions and taking notes on non-verbal communication.

The focus group sessions were recorded and then transcribed. I kept notes relative to anything I believed pertinent to the study and research questions, such as body language, common expressions, nonverbal cues in reaction to speakers, etc. I also keep notes on what appeared to be prevailing common experiences and perceptions for later analysis to see if these emerged as research themes when I more thoroughly analyzed the data. This technique is sometimes referred as the use of sensitizing concepts (Hoonaard, 2013).

At the onset of the data analysis process, I read the transcripts two times to get a sense of the flow of the responses. In preparation for the third reading, chart paper stating the three major questions were posted on walls. Each question was formatted into two columns; one to record the Mexican student responses to the questions and the other to record the Vietnamese student responses. Quotes from students that answered the questions were selected and pasted on the chart paper. This process helped to identify themes by race and identify quotes that could be pulled directly from the transcript that would document the findings. This procedure also assisted in providing a visual reference important in identifying differences and similarities in student responses between the two groups of students. As themes were identified, they were jotted alongside the quotes as they appeared. This process was reiterative (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). That is, it required several repetitions until I was satisfied I had thoroughly

analyzed the data. While rereading different quotes, different themes were generated with each reading. Topics were then divided into major and minor topics, noting where participant statements overlapped on two or more different topics. By following this process I was ultimately able to answer the three general research questions that originally framed the investigation as well as identify additional important themes.

The next section will provide answers to the three general research questions used to structure the study. Following this discussion, I will identify several important additional themes that emerged from the analysis of the focus group data.

Results

The same series of questions were asked of all four student focus groups (see Appendix B). While I will discuss the findings in greater detail later, I offer some general observations about the focus group discussion as a way to establish some context. The findings indicated that all four focus groups wanted to make sure teachers made an effort to develop meaningful relationships and to have high expectations of them. Also all four groups wanted teachers to never give up on them and to motivate them even in challenging times. The Vietnamese focus groups did not see a difference in treatment between them and Latino/a students. Both Vietnamese focus groups believe that all students were treated the same way in a fair or equitable manner. However, some of the individual Vietnamese students did relate personal experiences that document that they were of unaware of unfair treatment by teachers of their Latino/a classmates. These experiences, while not universally expressed by the Vietnamese participants, suggest something of a contradiction in their perceptions and experiences with equal treatment of students by teachers based on race and ethnicity. They also agreed that if students were not performing it was because they were not putting in the effort it required to be academically

successful. When asked directly, the Vietnamese focus groups perceived the lack of academic success to be student's fault rather than teacher differentiated treatment in terms of expectations.

In contrast to the Vietnamese students, generally the Mexican students perceived differentiated treatment from teachers. Indeed, each of the Mexican student participants shared one or more experiences in which he/she perceived that teachers had lower expectations. In addition, all the Mexican participants shared an admiration for Asian students and their intellectual capabilities. This finding appears to provide some support to the concept of stereotype threat and the social identity threat found in the scholarly literature. Furthermore, all Mexican participants expressed frustration towards the education system. Four of the students believed that they needed to take care of themselves and do for themselves because no one else in the system cared for them. They had developed a sense of resiliency, due to the negative experiences they had had to endure in the education system.

Finally, all Vietnamese and Mexican students felt honored to be part of this research and participated in hopes of having their voices heard. Ten of the 12 students expressed that they never had the opportunity to participate in this type of conversation. I find it important to note that when students were asked why they agreed to participate in this research, the responses varied greatly. The participants in the two Mexican focus groups expressed that they wanted to participate because they wanted to help me personally or because they wanted their voices to be heard. They expressed that their parents had taught them to help others whenever possible. The Vietnamese participants expressed that they wanted to participate because they either wanted to share or explore their culture or they thought it would be a fun or cool thing to do.

Research Question #1: What is the general nature of the perceptions on teacher expectations among the Vietnamese and Mexican students?

The general perceptions of the Vietnamese students versus the Mexican students in terms of what teachers expect from them varied significantly. The Vietnamese students believed that teachers were there to help students and had the same expectation for all students. They believed that students' academic performance was based on the amount of work students were willing to contribute. For example, Rose stated, "I don't really think it's race. I think that basically what you do in class, how you act and basically how you perform on like assignments and tests is really what determines how they [teachers] perceive you. The first test you do a really good job, they start thinking, 'oh she's probably a good student who studies' or something like that. It's more your performance, I would think so." In similar fashion Sue related, "What it is, what we showed and what we did so far. The other part are done well and overachieved a little and that's what they expect from you. I don't think it's that much that has to do with race. It's more of what you did."

Likewise, Kevin believed, "My teachers they view everybody, in my perspective, they view everybody the same way, but they treat other people better if we made an effort to be their [teachers] friend." Paul also said, "They've [teachers] treated everyone the same. The only time they kinda mistreat each other is if like some students are trying harder than other students." Frank bluntly related, "I think it depends whether, if the student wants to learn or not, because you can say 'I'm going to do this' but if you don't, then you didn't go with your word and then that teacher will get a different mindset of you, on you."

These students suggest that the teacher has nothing or little to do with their success and race does not play a role on what teachers expect from them. Other claims that provide evidence to this conclusion are the additional comments made by these two students (Paul and Frank). Paul suggested, "I believe teachers, they don't care what race you are as long as . . . I just think

everyone has the potential to get farther.” Frank concluded, “I feel like racism died off. I feel they [teachers] don’t care about your race. They just want you to graduate and be successful in life.” Another Vietnamese student, Kevin, added, “They [teachers] put time and effort into what their lecture’s going to be and what they’re going to teach. And they try to make students pay attention as much as possible.”

Conversely, the Mexican students believed that teachers had some responsibility in the lack of academic performance among Latino/a students. They even went to the extent of calling some teachers racist. For example, in one of the focus groups, Maria stated,

Teachers I guess they are really racist because just because I guess I didn’t read really good and write and they would just treat me like trash. Like, they would call my parents and blame them that I started something and kids would push me around like I was their toy and they would blame me and my mom. Like, they [teachers] weren’t giving you the same attention to the same kids like to the other kids they would not give the same attention to me to others they would treat them well.

Luis also expressed this same perception. He said, “I got treated differently like because of my skin color and my teachers treated me differently, my classmates treated me differently, I got made fun a lot because of my skin color.”

Pablo related,

As a teacher, that it is as a teacher’s job to educate the student academically starting from kindergarten work their way up to high school . . . I am part of ASB leadership for this class and like part of that is like communicating with clubs and there are so many clubs here so many different race clubs there is German Club, Black Student Union, Latino Club there is so many but what I don’t get is like Latino Club has so much but it has like

three staff members in it, whereas German Club has like 12 staff members BSU has a little bit more than Latino Club but more clubs different ethnic clubs that exist have over 10 staff members enrolled in that club. I'm kinda of starting to think like if it is being biased. If it is pick and choose or preferring.

Another student, Leticia shared,

I tried going with her [a teacher] after school and asking her for help but I feel like she would only scream at me and tell me, "Well this is how you do it!" and then she'd leave and I'm not like that. I'm a visual learner. I need you to show me step-by-step. Don't just tell me and leave and it's been really hard. I don't know if I'm scared but I don't like asking her [teacher] for questions because she would raise her voice and get everyone else's attention, so I'd rather not. I'd rather keep myself on the safe side.

Another student, Sandra, shared, "I think it all comes down to looking down upon you. This person is brown probably won't turn it in [an assignment] on time that's the stereotype of an Asian person you know getting all A's and in all the assignments on time and stuff like that."

These general perceptions of these two different groups provide insight as to why some students may succeed and others do not. It is important to note that there was a lot of tension while the Mexican students were providing these statements. Students' voice tone changed and some even appeared seemed to bodily tremble. There was frustration in their voice as well as pain. Some students had teary eyes. Contrary to these demeanors, most of the Vietnamese students remained composed during most of the focus group sessions. Frequently, they even joked and appeared to enjoy the focus group experience. These contrasting emotional responses to the subject of the focus group sessions indicate a powerful difference in the experiences and perceptions of these two ethnic student groups on teacher expectations.

Research Question #2: Do the Vietnamese students and the Mexican students articulate differing perceptions of what teachers expect of their academic performance?

Inquiry into research question #2 generated a great deal of insight on the school experiences and perceptions of the Mexican students in this sample. Several themes emerged in regards to perceptions on differentiated treatment and expectations. All the Mexican students voiced experiences that evidenced how they were perceived and/or treated differently. They all indicated instances where they were made aware that teachers may have held stereotypical beliefs. The Mexican students felt that teachers often evaluate Latino/a students in comparison to Asian students. Specifically, the prevailing stereotypes associated with Latino/a students and Asian students work against them. This is a clear indication of stereotype threat. For example, when the focus groups consisting of Mexican students were asked if they perceived differences because of their race in comparison to Asian students, Pablo stated,

Yeah, definitely [sigh]. I think that teachers do think that Asians students are much more capable than Hispanic students. I don't think they think that they are much better than White students though. But I think that there is a thread a common thread. The academy is full of White people and Asian students, so a common thread when like a Asian student is misbehaving or they get a low grade on a quiz or on a test or they didn't turn their homework common thread is like, "Oh I will call your dad. I am going to call your parents." And, 'cause they know like Asian parents are always like you are going to do this. Two of my best friends they're Asian. They are always like, "Oh yeah, I can't get like all As and one B." And it's like teachers know from stereotypes that I know that stereotypes play a lot play a big role in education. Stereotypically it's like Asian students

are smart at math and Asian students have to make their parents proud. And Asian students have parents who don't let them hang out, so it's like they use those stereotypes, the teachers, as a threat to the Asian students. Whereas, when I don't turn in my homework, it's like, "Okay turn it in whenever you can" or you just don't get the points on that paper. I turn it in and everything but it's not like a threat to me but it's like I'm not going to call your parents because they think that. In my perspective they think that Mexican parents, Hispanic parents aren't there to push their children or their students...They blame it on the parents but for Asian students they do think they are much more capable.

Similarly, Luis stated, "I was treated differently, when I raised my hand it would take my teachers a while to answer my question or on things that I had to do or work that I had to do. Kids treated me differently. No one wanted to talk to me they made fun of my race. They called me a 'wetback' and they just said, they just said like racist jokes and stuff like that. I never got along with them and, and so I basically was bullied because of my skin color." When asked to provide an example of different treatment, Luis continued by explaining,

My English class. Like my teacher usually, when I ask for help, it takes her a while to come and answer my question and she just walks around class and looks to see what other kids are doing or if they are finishing up in their work then she comes and like then she comes and answers my question. And mainly...I skip that class. The way she looks at me and the way I feel like she is just treating me. It's just uncomfortable knowing that she is glaring at me or just like takes her a while to answer my questions when it's just a simple question. And, that is mainly one part why I skip class because I feel uncomfortable by the way she glares at me or looks at me.

Leticia related similar experiences. She stated,

For me, last year, there were two classes. I was really excited for AP psychology but you get that feeling, that energy from another person that it's not going to go well. He [the teacher] looked at me differently, and he focused a lot on a white girl that was sitting in front of me and through the school year. I would not like to go. I did not talk to him. It was my first ever AP class and, I don't know, I felt really small in there. I used to skip. I used to not go to the class and just like, I'll just like, if I get this grade then whatever and for my math class as well. I didn't learn anything. Every day was like a zoo in there.

Why would I go?

Maria explained,

I know of a student who had a disability and he couldn't focus and the teacher would like pull him out, tell him, yell at him, put him on the spot. Even in front of the whole school. Not the whole school, but the class and say "Oh yeah, you [the rest of the class] shouldn't be like him because if you do he is going to be dropped out; he is going to work at a fast food restaurant and if you guys want to turn out that way go ahead. The door is open for you." So, it kind of got me mad about that.

Sandra, expressed, "Yeah, it's more like do you need any help? Did you understand what I said? I don't think it's disrespectful. I don't take it that way at least. It could be represented that, like a sign, do you even speak English, but I don't take it like that. I take it more like they're doing their job asking questions. Maybe it's a bad thing that they come to us first but I see it as doing their job."

She also stated,

I don't know how to say it. It's like an on-the-spot thing, you know? Like right after the lesson is done, "Do you have any questions?" And everyone says "No." She [the teacher] passes out the worksheet and she comes to you first. I haven't even put my name on it [worksheet] yet. When they [teachers] come to you first, every once in a while I'm confused and I think there's only two Mexicans or Hispanics...I don't know if they are Mexican...and we are the only ones that can relate to each other since we are both brown or colored. But the teacher, comes to us first. I don't know if it's a sign of low expectations.

Jose also shared his experience, "Even though I've done it [class assignments] and left it at home, and let me give you this the next day. No trust whatsoever, it's like, 'Alright let me get you a new paper and I'll stamp that once you bring the other one then you'll get that grade.'"

Even some the Vietnamese students indicated perceptions of the different treatment Latino/a students received. It should be pointed out that this admitted awareness of mistreatment is a direct contradiction to the general view expressed in the Vietnamese focus groups that teachers largely treat students fairly and not based on their racial status. For example, Kevin who in the focus group expressed the view that "my teachers they view everybody, in my perspective, they view everybody the same way, but they treat other people better if we made an effort to be their [teachers] friend," also related an experience of how he witnessed different treatment of a Latino student. He stated,

Like there's this one kid, I won't say his name, he's Mexican, but he always likes to be on his phone and what she [teacher] would do is, she'd pull his chair and desk all the way up in the middle of the class, so he could pay attention...because he'd always get called out in class. He wouldn't ever listen. He'd just always be on his phone playing games

and we would laugh. We would laugh at him but we would know that he kind of deserved it because it was like the tenth time and she'd tell him to pay attention.

However, Paul did notice that Latino/a students were treated differently than Asian students for the same behavior. For instance, he shared this experience, "In [a class], there's this group of Mexican students that sit right in front of me and the teacher doesn't really mind that much if we're on our phones because really half the time I'm on mine...but if the other students, the Mexican students, they are for like two seconds on their phone to check the time or something, she's on them."

In contrast to these experiences and perceptions, the experiences related by the Vietnamese students were very different. The Vietnamese students tended to believe that teachers cared for them and believed in them. For example, Olivia related,

My teachers really kind of call me out. They like, "Oh Olivia, will you stay after class?" And when you first hear that, initially, it's like "What did I do?" But they actually just check in with me and they have a conversation and talk about, first, how I'm doing and they go from there. It's a lot of check-ins, a lot of that repetition, that relationship that they build upon in the classroom and also outside because that's really important as a teacher, to be there, to be present both inside the classroom and in the hallway. I can ask them a question. It's how I feel I've been successful is to utilize the office hours to really talk about whatever I want to talk about.

Paul stated, "I feel like teachers are really helpful. They're always want to help no matter how far behind you are. I believe that teachers are willing to help you." When asked to provide an example, Paul explained, "I think that if a teacher is checking up on you constantly, like every hour or so, or every day they see you." Frank shared Paul's perception. He related, "My teacher

from last year, he would always have a positive vibe about the class. He would always go in circles and share about our day, how we feel. If we ever needed anything, we would just ask him, like if we had a problem and he would just be there.”

When the Vietnamese focus groups were asked if they were ever ignored, experienced discomfort with seeking help, all the students said no. Kevin stated, “No, they don’t do that here. They are very supportive. Even if you don’t believe in yourself, they will find a way to help you. [Teachers even say] ‘If you do this, I’ll get you lunch.’” Similarly, Rose related, “The teachers help me, they are always willing to help me. If I ask them a question, they’re always there to support me and answer my questions and are determined to help me. If I don’t get it, they’ll continually help me until I get it so, because of that and all the support, their availability, that I feel that I can understand something. I feel more successful in that aspect.”

In fact student’s body expressions showed disbelief that a teacher would not be supportive or a student. Four out of the six Vietnamese students related that they had their teachers personal contact information including cell numbers and emails. The teachers had given them that information personally. These students also expressed that several times they would get a free pass in assignments or would not be penalized for turning in late assignments. For example Olivia stated,

One time I remember, I did really bad on the timed write. I did really bad, not super bad, but it was a B-. She [the teacher] said “Not at the usual level.” So she lets me rewrite it. Then, she was like, “I trust you enough for you to take this home.” So, I took home the assignment, just like a test, in a way. It’s like the expectations are there, the standards are high, but the standards are lowered for you, for me. I don’t know why. Maybe I can’t do it. I don’t know. I don’t know.

All the Mexican students denied ever having had such a privileged experience and expressed disbelief that teachers would provide their personal information to them, let alone give them a free pass to an assignment. For example, Leticia related,

I have to dig for mine [teacher information] and it just recently last week I went to my teacher and said, “Oh, I want to send this proposal.” She said, “Yeah, yeah. Send it to my email,” and she said it [email address] was really quick. I said, “Okay can you repeat that?” and she said it really quick. And she said, “Yeah, just send there.” And I’m just like, okay. I just went to the website and found it myself because I couldn’t understand it (laughs). And I’m like, “Okay, thank you but no I don’t think so!”

The Mexican students felt that they had to prove themselves and reaching a teacher in order to elicit support was a challenge for them. Leticia, explained, “Oh no I have to show my work [Sandra and Jose laughed and shook their heads in agreement]. I have to prove it. It’s like, ‘Oh, I’ve done that!’ and they [teachers] would be like, “Okay, then bring it tomorrow and show it to me.’ That’s the only way.”

Furthermore, most of the Vietnamese students indicated that teachers would tell them that if they did not turn in work they would call their parents as a way to motivate them. However, when the Mexican students were asked if teachers used this same strategy as a way to motivate them, they all answered “No.”

Lastly, students were asked to express their perception in terms of percentage of the amount of time teachers demonstrated that they cared about them by offering their support. For example, the amount of time students were acknowledged and not ignored by teachers. The results between the two different student races is significant and provides insight on how students perceive their teachers regard them. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Time Students Perceive Teachers Care and Support Them

Latinos	Percentage	Asian	Percentage
Maria	50%	Kevin	75%
Luis	50%	Paul	75%
Pablo	5-7%	Frank	80%
Sandra	60%	Rose	80%
Jose	50%	Sue	85%
Leticia	60%	Olivia	70%

The differences indicated by students from both groups provide insight in understanding how students perceive and internalize teacher expectations towards them. These statements and percentage data serve to emphasize the importance of self-reflection and self-exploration in order to identify and interrupt stereotypes and/or implicit biases that may harm some students and promote others.

Research Question #3: What do the Vietnamese students and Mexican students perceive to be the major implications of the perceptions held by their teachers?

The third research question generated data useful in understanding what students perceive that teachers can do or avoid doing in order to help students in their academic performance. However, even in this question important differences in the perceptions of the two affinity groups emerged. All students in both affinity groups explicitly expressed the desire for teachers to motivate them. Yet, they related different preferences and versions on what are the best ways for teachers to accomplish this objective. Specifically, the Mexican students indicated 1) the need for teachers to not hold and express low expectations and 2) that teachers need to avoid operating on racial/ethnic stereotypes. However, the Vietnamese students expressed 1) the need

for teachers to push them academically in a respectful manner and 2) they also desired that teachers hold high expectations of them.

The Mexican students expressed slightly different nuanced thoughts on the issue of teacher motivation of students compared to the Vietnamese students. Their perceptions indicate a different experience than Vietnamese students who also expressed the desire to be held to high expectations among teachers. However, for the Mexican students their desire was not be victimized by low teacher expectations – a clear indication of the experience of stereotype threat. To the point, some of the Mexican students articulated that a way for teachers to motivate students is *not* to hold low expectations. Frequently, their comments appear to indicate that teacher expectations had a condescending feature. For example, Pablo related, “Teachers having high expectations for me as a student sounds like checking-in, asking how the work has been for me, has it been hard, easy, etc. It also sounds like, ‘Pablo you can do better.’ Or, ‘Come on Pablo you should know the faster way of solving that problem.’ It also sounds like them [teachers] talking to me and sending emails to my parents about extra problems or extra homework. It looks like a lot of editing and writing on my assignments. To me it is constructive criticism.” Maria also expressed similar perceptions. She wanted her teachers “To be more open with us and that they should strive to push us like give us warnings and talk to us or help us and try to motivate us more and to tell us how they became who they are.”

Very similar to the desire that teachers not hold low expectations of them, the Mexican students also indicated that teachers not operate on prevailing negative social stereotypes when forming expectations of Latino/a students. For example, Jose related, “A thing that teachers should know about Latinos/as is that most do not have the right materials needed in order to achieve the class expectations. To push the Latino/a students you [teachers] have because I for

one need to know that my teacher doesn't think less of me. If I see that teacher thinks nothing of me, I will just give up on their class because I won't try if I know they won't think of my work."

Sandra contended, "Some teachers have a weird mentality. I feel like inside their heads they don't think we, Hispanics, can succeed so they have to show us that they do think that, which is sad because we're not realizing it. We're not realizing that we're getting lied to."

In contrast to the Mexican students, the Vietnamese students wanted teachers to push them in a respectful and caring way. When I asked students what motivation would look like, they expressed sentiments that reflected a desire to simply be respected. A Vietnamese student, Frank, related, "Last year, I was failing a class and this teacher she came up to me and said, 'Frank, you have a lot of potential. You should really put your work into this class.' This could be an example." Another Vietnamese student, Paul stated, "I think another example could be, if your teacher sees you doing something really well and said, 'Ah, you did that really well. What if you tried that hard when you are doing your work?'" Kevin, added, "I have a lot of instances where my teachers go up to me and are like, 'Kevin, I know you're a smart kid. I know you can do this, but I see you talking to your friends quite a bit and, I want you to succeed in this class and if it means that I have to move you then I will move you.' I think this counts as motivation."

The Vietnamese students also expressed the desire that teachers hold them to high expectations as they learn who they are as individuals. Rose said,

The main reason why Asian parents have such high expectations for their children is because they value education. My parents, personally were born and raised in Vietnam, and so education for them was not free. They had to quit school and work just to provide money for their family. Coming to America, my parents do not wish the same for me. They were not able to complete their education, and so they want me to be able to

achieve my goals and dreams, to do the things they could not do. They realize that because there is a free education in America, they want me to value it and do my best for my future, to not have do intensive labor. I understand that not everyone has the opportunity to go to school, and have access to books and resources. And, so because of that, I have valued education just as much as my parents have, and set high expectations for myself. I want to make my parents proud, and so that's why I am working hard for them.

Additional Themes

In addition to themes associated with the three general research questions that structured this investigation, five other themes emerged from analysis of the focus group session data. Two of these themes relate to perceptions and experiences shared by both affinity groups. These two themes include: Need for students to be viewed as individuals; desire that teachers hold accurate knowledge of students' cultural history. However, three themes appeared to be unique among the Mexican students. These three themes are: Teacher perception of parent involvement; lack of trust in teachers; and treatment by teachers can result in loss of self-esteem.

There are likely a number of reasons why the data generated from the focus groups sessions with the Mexican students resulted in more additional themes. Most basic, however, is that these students simply had more to say than the Vietnamese students. The Mexican students were more likely to specify negative experiences indicative of stereotype threat and, thus, had more experiences to relate and perceptions to express. As stated earlier, the focus group sessions with the Mexican students were approximately a third longer than the focus group sessions with the Vietnamese students.

Themes shared by both affinity groups. As mentioned, both groups shared in their perceptions on two additional themes. Namely, both Vietnamese students and Mexican students desired that teachers understand them as individuals rather than as members of a cultural group. Additionally, both affinity groups voiced a desire that teachers operate from an acknowledgeable understanding of their cultural history.

Need for students to be viewed as individuals. Stereotypes work in two ways. They can be used to reinforce negative notions of individuals who belong to a specific social group. As related to educational experiences of minority students this is essentially the notion of stereotype threat and potentially an important part of the educational experiences of the Mexican students who participated in this research. However, stereotypes can also include positive conceptions of individuals who belong to other social groups. That is, if positive attributes are frequently subscribed to a social group by the larger society, individual members of that group could benefit from those social conceptions. This is essentially the idea of the halo effect in schools and potentially a part of the experiences and perceptions of the Vietnamese students in this study.

Students from both affinity groups shared the desire that teachers take the time to get to know them as individuals. In essence, both Mexican and Vietnamese students did not want teachers to interact with them according to prevailing stereotypes – whether those be positive or negative social conceptions. For example, Sue, a Vietnamese student, stated, “Yeah, the stereotype of us being smart. I don’t really like that because I am smart but that’s not all that I’m about. There’s more than my brains and it just makes me kind of upset that people just think I’m smart and they don’t really want to know anything else about me.”

Likewise, Olivia, also a Vietnamese student, explained,

I think it's a whole different story for me because I'm not part of the majority. I'm this Asian girl, they're like, "Oh wow. She actually is not shy! She doesn't just read books!" For me, I'm a very people person. I'm outgoing, very loud. I really say what I have to say and a lot of people look at me and just, in a lot of my classes, as if I never could envision someone different. You don't see a lot of Asian Americans in a position of leadership...I have to work my way up. I have to say the things I want to say but I say it multiple times. That's why I often repeat myself sometimes. People constantly challenge me, constantly question, "What are you saying? You're not American. You're Asian-American. You have the hyphen. You're not American. An SAT score is something that's achievable for you because this is math. It's just reading and all that stuff." But you have to talk about stuff. A lot of the time people of color are not of wealth. You have to talk a lot about what family you're born into and so I talk a lot about that in my classes.

Similar views were articulated by the Mexican students during their focus group sessions. For example, Leticia asserted, "I want to be seen for me and not be treated differently. Not walk down the hallways at school and everyone is looking at you differently because you are Mexican. We need motivation as well. I don't want teachers to give up on us."

For Maria, comparisons between Asian students and Latino/a students made by teachers are especially unwanted. Her concerns clearly point out a perception of stereotype threat. She explained, "They [teachers] like compare them [Asian students] to us, like the work. Not always, but they like compare them to us, you know? They tell us you should be more like them. 'Why don't you guys just make friends or be friendly? They will help you with it.' Like yeah...I wish they did not do that and they saw me for me not someone else."

Sandra put her concern and perceptions more directly and powerfully. During the focus group she related,

I would like for teachers to see me as an individual and not in a stereotypical way because that means they understand, they understand where we come from, that we are smart just like all the other students, or where our immigrant families come from. A stereotype a Latina female can encounter is having the potential to do good academically but getting pregnant at fifteen. A typical stereotype teachers tend to hold about Mexican students is bad behavior and dropping out.

It is revealing that both groups demonstrated strong responses to what they considered to be prevailing stereotypes. Furthermore, the Vietnamese students were essentially responding to stereotypes they judged emerged from the halo effect. Conversely, the Mexican students were responding to stereotypes they believed were indicative of stereotype threat. The students may have been unaware their perceptions have academic/theoretical labels, but their experiences support the existing scholarly literature on this topic.

Importance of accurate knowledge of students' cultural history. The other theme that emerged was student pride in who they are because of their race and the need students have in having teachers learn their cultural history. They wanted teachers to learn their history so that they may create a safe space for them to share their struggles, experiences, perceptions, and desires. They also wanted teachers to teach the truth in terms of their history. Most students felt that many teachers simply recite information provided in books that were written by White writers. For them, these sources are unreliable and biased. Student from both affinity groups believed their cultural history is portrayed with false facts. They also felt that teachers want

students to share their cultural history but did not create a safe environment to do so. For example, Olivia, a Vietnamese student reported,

I was one of the students of color in my AP US History class last year. My teacher, a Latina, taught the class. She and I built a close relationship because the class and the curriculum painted American history in a very positive light when that is not the case. Therefore, it was hard for me to voice my opinions because I was not really an American, but my teacher pushed me to do so. When we were learning about the Vietnam War, a lot of students (predominantly White) did not understand the significance of the war on my birth country. I cried as I explained how it shaped my family and why we embarked on our journey to America. No one cared or expressed interest. My teacher contacted me after class to discuss it more because she was interested in my backstory.

Kevin, a Vietnamese student, also expressed how important it is to have accurate knowledge of cultural history. He stated, “History, to me, is just interesting in general. So, every time in class, it’s like, yes we get another lecture. When we’re watching movies, she’ll [the teacher] point out ‘That’s false. What they did there is false. What you see there didn’t really happen in history.’ And I say, ‘Oh I didn’t know that.’ So now she pretty much imprints something in me, and thinking in movies I think, “Did that really happen back then?””

Similar views were held by the Mexican students regarding the desire for accurate knowledge of their cultural history. Sandra explained, “I think if they [teachers] are going to talk about Mexican or Mexican history they should know the full story or at least a general background of what we have done. For example when they [teachers] talk about history and it somehow connects with your roots or family background, you want the teacher to be very careful

of what they say and how they say it because it might offend you or your people, because Mexicans are proud of our history and the changes we have accomplished.”

Regarding cultural history, Pablo asserted, “History is important because it’s all based on Latinos and Hispanics. So right now we are on the topic of immigration, like why did people immigrate, how people were treated when they arrived to the US, and just the four main reasons why people actually immigrate, and then we are [currently] covering *ninos imigrantes no acompanados* [immigrant children that are not accompanied by an adult].”

Themes unique among the Mexican students. The Mexican students articulated three themes not identified by the Vietnamese students. These themes involve faulty teacher perceptions on parental involvement in students’ education; the lack of trust for students; and a concern that how teachers treat students can lead to lowered self-esteem.

Teacher perception of parent involvement. An important theme that surfaced from the focus groups sessions with the Mexican affinity group was the impact perceptions on parent involvement play in the participants’ academic performance. Some of these students perceived that teachers blame their parents for their lack of performance and/or their behavior in general. For example, Maria stated, “They [teachers] would call my parents and blame them that I started something and kids would push me around like I was their toy. They would blame me and my mom thought I was mean. After that I got seriously injured. I got a head concussion, my head cracked. Then my mom got tired of it so she took me out of that school and moved here close to the new school.”

Luis, also was frustrated by the perceptions and lack of understanding some teachers had in relation to the struggles with which parents must deal. This lack of understanding leads to teachers making judgments about how involved or not involved parents are in their student’s

education. He stated, “I get angry mainly because the teachers don’t know what is going on at home; of the struggles that parents are going through. Like my mom, she grew up in Mexico. She came here when she was 23. And she had nowhere to go. My uncle was down here [meaning US] and somehow she contacted my uncle. And my uncle came and picked her up. What I am trying to say is teachers don’t know what the parents are going through like the whole situation there.”

Pablo contended that teachers frequently have no appreciation of the challenges facing Latino families and parents. He related, “A lack of moral support [from teachers] especially if you are Latino or from a different race because not a lot of people understand; not a lot of people have walked in your shoes. Like not a lot of people know that your parents immigrated from here and how that feels or how like how it feels to be afraid of living undocumented in this country. So it’s like they [teachers] can’t provide that kind of support to you.”

A surprising finding in this theme was that a number of the Mexican students had internalized the perception teachers had about Asian student’s parents. While talking about parental involvement exhibited by both affinity groups, Pablo stated,

When an Asian student is misbehaving or they get a low grade on a quiz or on a test or they didn’t turn their homework in a common thread it is like, “Oh I [teacher] will call your dad. I am going to call your parents.” And, because they [teachers] know Asian parents are always like, “You are going to do this.” Two of my best friends they’re Asian. They are always like, “Oh, yeah I can’t get like all As and one B.” And it’s like teachers know from stereotypes; that I know that stereotypes play a lot of play a big role in education. Stereotypically it’s like Asian students are smart at math and Asian students have to make their parents proud. And Asian students have parents who don’t

let them hang out so it's like they use those stereotypes, the teachers as a threat to the Asian students whereas when I don't turn in my homework is like, "Okay, turn it in whenever you can" or "You just don't get the points on that paper." I turn it in and everything but it's not like a threat to me but it's like I'm not going to call your parents because they think that, in my perspective they think that Mexican parents, Hispanic parents aren't there to push their children or their students as has been in previous statements or questions. They blame it on the parents but for Asian students they do think they are much more capable.

Student lack of trust in teachers. The students in the Mexican focus groups expressed frustration that teachers, in their view, are merely interested in doing their work to gain a paycheck and do not genuinely care for students. For example, Luis stated, "I got treated differently because of my skin color and my teachers treated me differently, my classmates treated me differently, got made fun a lot because of my skin color."

Maria also shared an experience that can result in students not trusting teachers. She related,

I know of a student who had a disability and he couldn't focus and the teacher would tell would like pull him out, tell him, yell at him, put him on the spot. Even in front of the whole school not the whole school but the class and say, "Oh yeah, you shouldn't be like him because if you do he is going to be dropped out, he is going to work at a fast food restaurant and if you guys want to turn out that way go ahead. The door is open for you." So, it kind of got me mad about that.

When asked about the student's race, Maria explained he was Latino. From their point of view, experiences such as this impact students' ability to trust or relate to teachers in a

meaningful way, thus, causing students to be disengaged. It also causes students to internalize a perception that teachers actually harm students. Moreover, if the student is not being treated with respect and empathy they can internalize the belief that they are inferior students. For instance, Pablo stated, “I guess teachers are just in it mainly for the money maybe not. I may be mistaken. Maybe they have a family to take care of at home so they got to leave, but teachers do lack moral support to students.” Similarly, Leticia, stated, “I think there’s only been one teacher, in elementary that really wanted to help me, compared to all my other teachers. Even my parents would go and fight with them because they would treat me differently than everyone else.”

Treatment by teachers can result in loss of self-esteem. Although most of the Mexican students did not explicitly state that their perceived treatment by teachers lowers their self-esteem, their comments indicate that a number of them lost some of their self-esteem and may doubt their own academic abilities. For example, Jose related, “I for one need to know that my teacher doesn’t think less of me. If I see that a teacher thinks nothing of me, I will just give up on their class because I won’t try if I know they won’t think of my work.” Luis related similar experiences. One can easily see in his experiences how the emotional toil exacted by his frustration would affect his feeling of self-esteem,

When I raised my hand, when I raised my hand it would take my teachers a while to answer my question or on like things that I had to do or work that I had to do, like kids treated me differently. No one wanted to talk to me they made fun of my race, they called me a wetback and they just said, they just said like racist jokes and stuff like that. I never got along with them and, and so I basically was bullied because of my skin color . . . [Teachers think] It is pointless to go and answer my question something like. Like when I say she glares at me. That what you just said I feel like when she does that it

means why go help him if he is going to like fall behind or he is going to come during tutorial and ask me how to do this and that. And, yeah, cause my race and my skin color, my skin color.

Maria's comments on teachers' treatment of her and other Spanish speaking students speak to all three research questions but have special relevance to the issue of self-esteem. Maria contended,

[Teachers] weren't giving you the same attention. To the same kids, like to the other kids, they would not give the same attention to me, to others they would treat them well. They would just be like, "What do you want? Like that, something like that . . . One of the teachers was like, "Oh yeah, I bet next year you are not even going to make it. You are not going to make the whole school year." Sophomore. But I blame myself 'cause I thought for me high school was going to be easy; to start fresh and all that, but so much stuff is going on I am going through that it just puts me out I don't want to do the work . . . One teacher, like she told me it's not my problem if you didn't learn or pay attention. If it's like the third time I am afraid to ask because they'll be like, "Oh yeah you are like that is not my problem if you don't pay attention or you didn't hear." It makes me feel so uncomfortable. I feel embarrassed. I don't want to go here. We go again. Why they might think something else even though I pay attention and try to learn and try to do it.

Focus group facilitator: "Do teachers think you are smart enough?"

Maria: "Sometimes, sometimes."

Luis: "Yeah, yeah."

Pablo: "Yeah."

While most of the Mexican students indicated experiences and perceptions that are clearly associated with lowering self-esteem in Latino/a students, Sandra explicitly addressed the issue of self-esteem and teacher attitudes and behavior. In pointed, powerful terms she asserted, I have definitely experienced loss of self-esteem. In the past I have experienced loss of self-esteem, not a lot, but enough to realize it. I think Latinos have a very strong and unique way of approaching challenges. I don't think Latinos are less confident in their intelligence because of that ganas [willpower]. Personally my ganas does not decrease with the times I am ignored or may be seen less of by teachers having low expectations. My ganas increase. I try hard because I think that no matter what they say I will prove them wrong and I am good enough.

In summary, the findings in this research offer insights that can be very valuable to any educator. They help us get a step closer in understanding how students perceive what teachers expect from them and the implications such perceptions have on student's educational experiences. Based on this understandings, educators can make appropriate modifications to their practice in order to help each student reach their potential.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Many school districts are challenged by the academic disparities among students from different racial backgrounds. They are constantly seeking to understand and find ways to eliminate the academic achievement gap, especially among students that have been historically underserved (Ronfeldt, Kwok, & Reininger, 2016). Prominent among this group of students are Latinos/as. In hopes of closing the existing achievement gap, some districts have implemented bilingual programs to help Spanish speaking students strengthen their literacy skills in their native language which in turn can transfer into the English language (Garcia, Woodley, Flores, & Chu, 2013). In addition to bilingual programs, other research based educational efforts have been implemented, such as: professional development for teachers in the area of English as a Second Language (ESL), Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Classroom Practices, and Development of Racial Consciousness (Aronson, & Laughter, 2016; Jaffee, 2016; Slaughter-Defoe, 2012). Despite these efforts, Latinos/as still continue to lag behind White and Asian students (Ochoa, 2013).

At its most basic purpose this research study is about perceptions. Namely, it is about the perceptions held by a small number of students on the expectations, attitudes, and ultimately, values held by their teachers. These perceptions are powerful and they tell us a great deal about how students, in this case a sample of Vietnamese and Mexican students, experience school. This research provides insight from the student's point of view rather than the adult's point of view. Perhaps more to the point, it offers insight on the students' point of view on what they

believe to be their teachers' point of view. This is what makes this research different and unique in many ways. All the participants, from both affinity groups, expressed the need for teachers to motivate them and to believe in them. They all mentioned the importance of teachers forming strong relationships with them in an authentic way. They perceived that when a teacher made an effort to form a real relationship or when the teacher regarded the student as a burden. Although the Vietnamese students did not express any experiences where they personally were seen to be a burden by their teachers and as a collective believed their teachers do not generally treat students unfairly because of race, a few of them did mention experiences where they personally witnessed a Latino/a student treated by a teacher as an encumbrance or worse ridiculed in front of a class. These experiences created an unsafe learning environment and division among students. A few of the Vietnamese students expressed that they felt "sorry" for Latino/a students as they could see the lower expectations and occasional mistreatment. The Mexican students, on the other hand, related personal experiences of being ignored or made to feel invisible. Some specific examples of the different treatment were either verbal or non-verbal. They expressed frustration because teachers saw them as less than capable of performing to high standards. These personal experiences contrast sharply with those of the Vietnamese students who perceived that their teachers thought of them as capable of achieving high standards to the point of "giving them a free pass" from assignments because teachers knew they were able to do the work.

Research by Steele and Aronson (1995) and Brown and Pinnel (2003) on stereotype threat offer much needed insight on these personal experiences voiced by the Mexican students in this study. This theoretical notion formed a sensitizing concept in guiding the study - from the construction of the research questions, to the manner in which the data were analyzed, and in working toward an understanding of the meaning of the findings. Clearly, many of the Mexican

students who participated in the focus group sessions of this investigation indicated personal experiences indicative of stereotype threat. The examples include a variety of personal experiences and intrapersonal perspectives. Very revealing is how they regarded their teachers' attitudes toward their parents' involvement with their education. Indeed, the two affinity groups perceived that teachers regard parent involvement from each race as being different in character. For example, according to the Vietnamese students, teachers would tell them that they would call their parents if their work came up short or if they misbehaved in some fashion. This threat was delivered because the teachers believed that Asian parents would be more likely to hold their students accountable. This is an indication that they thought Asian parents are more heavily involved in their children's education. This stood in contrast to the experiences expressed by the Mexican students in the study who believed that teachers would "blame" their parents for their lack of academic performance. The Mexican students perceived that their teachers held a pervasion assumption that their parents were not only uninvolved in their education, but that their parents were an actual obstacle to their educational advancement. This perception of teachers created frustration and disconnect between the teacher's and student's understanding of what parent involvement should look like. Students believe their parents are involved and doing everything they can to support them. And, students perceived teachers did not think parents were doing enough. These perceptions (whether warranted or unwarranted) are a clear indication that the Mexican students in this study were experiencing the phenomenon that scholars have labeled stereotype threat.

Conversely, scholars have suggested that Asian students benefit from a "halo effect" whereby positive attributes such as a diligent work ethic, strong desire to achieve, and family support are ascribed to them by their teachers (Pang, Han, & Pang, 2011). In this regard, Asian

students are given the benefit of the doubt and allowed greater flexibility in school assignments and are generally graded higher regardless to the actual quality of their work (Dennis, 2007). Just as the notion of stereotype threat served as a sensitizing concept for the investigative side of the research involving the Mexican student sample, the halo effect worked as a sensitizing concept with the investigative side of the research with the Vietnamese student sample.

The experiences and perceptions of the Vietnamese students in this study support the contention that Asian students benefit from a halo effect. According to their own accounts, they have received special considerations from teachers in course assignments and personal support. Moreover, they saw this treatment as contrasting greatly with the treatment and attitudes directed at Latino/a students. They also recognized the injustice and inequity in this disparity.

Examination of the Findings and Ethnic Identity Theoretical Perspectives

An objective of the research was to examine the findings of the study against the basic premise of three prominent theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity among racial and culturally minority students. These three theoretical frameworks are Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development theory, Ogbu's (2003) cultural-ecological theory, and Huffman's (2008) transculturation theory. Since ethnic identity is central to the way in which both Asian and Latino/a students' experience mainstream schools, it appeared reasonable that the findings derived from the focus group sessions might relate to the essential assumptions of these established theoretical frameworks.

As themes were emerging, I paid special attention to see if there was any relationship in the students' experiences that could relate to the three theoretical perspectives. Ethnic identity development theory assumes an evolutionary process by which ethnic identity develops. Specifically, ethnic identity in young people is assumed to proceed through three stages of

development. As discussed in chapter 2, in the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, the young person does not actively engage in any substantial assessment of his/her ethnicity. At the second stage, ethnic identity exploration, the adolescent actively investigates his/her personal ethnicity and develops a keen awareness of what that ethnicity means. The third stage, achieved ethnic identity, the youth had developed confidence and self-assuredness in his/her ethnicity and is largely free of social psychological ambivalence regarding ethnic identity. While this research did not directly tackle the issue of an ethnic identity development process, nevertheless, much can be ascertained from the comments generated by the participants in the different focus groups. It can be safely concluded that generally the students in both affinity groups did not indicate responses indicative of the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity. They were very aware of their ethnicity. Moreover, their school experiences had taught them that their ethnicity carried important implications in terms of expectations and even treatment by teachers. Certainly these students, both the Vietnamese and Mexican students, displayed characteristics of ethnic identity exploration. This can be seen in the way in which the members of the focus groups actively examined the implications of their ethnicity. It is difficult to assess whether the participants of this study had attained the stage Phinney (1989) refers to as achieved ethnic identity. This stage is characterized by confidence and self-assuredness. At best, perhaps a small number of the Vietnamese and Mexican students may be considered as expressing an achieved ethnic identity.

What cannot be determined by this investigation is whether or not the individual students in the study actually proceeded through the successive stages of ethnic identity formation as conceptualized by Phinney (1989). That is, Phinney conceptualizes ethnic identity formation as evolving in a fixed series of stages. Simply, because this was not the focus of the study, the findings only partially speak to ethnic identity formation theory.

Most difficult of all is to ascertain whether the specific findings of this research relate to the basic premise and assumptions of Ogbu's (2003) cultural-ecological theory. Part of the reason for this difficulty is that cultural-ecological theory is designed to explain social structural arrangements (e.g., racial and class inequalities) while this research examined social psychological phenomenon (e.g., personal perceptions and experiences). Essentially, cultural-ecological theory asserts that current educational experiences for minority persons is shaped by historical racial inequalities and that current school relationships and practices reflect prevailing inequalities.

Cultural-ecological theory assembles a complex set of conceptual components to account for the general gap in educational attainment among U.S. minority students. Central among these components is Ogbu's (2003) contention that minority students experience mainstream education differently depending on the historical circumstances of their cultural group. Accordingly, there are three types of minorities: Autonomous minorities, voluntary minorities, and involuntary minorities. Autonomous minorities (such as Jewish Americans) hold a minority status but have not suffered from a severe subordinate status in society. These minorities have been able to achieve social, political, and economic autonomy. According to Ogbu, autonomous minority members generally do not experience academic barriers and, thus, do not experience lower educational achievement rates. Neither the Mexican nor the Vietnamese students belong to this type of minority group. Voluntary minorities (such as most Asian Americans) include those groups who have freely migrated to the United States. Frequently, these groups have specifically entered the U.S. to pursue greater educational and economic opportunities. Ogbu contends that these groups tend to achieve academically at higher than average rates. The Vietnamese students would be an example of a voluntary minority. Involuntary minorities (such

as Native Americans and African Americans) were brought into the United States against their will and have been subjected to the worst forms of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. They have historically been the most disenfranchised in society and suffered the most socially, politically, economically, and educationally. Ogbu considered Mexican Americans as involuntary minorities because the United States gained a large Mexican population by conquest as a result of the Mexican War and, subsequent generations of Mexican individuals have suffered from a highly subordinate status in the United States. Not surprisingly, Ogbu contends that involuntary minorities experience the most difficulties in mainstream schools and display the lowest academic success rates.

The students in this study voiced the experiences and perceptions about their teachers and schools reflective of Ogbu's (2003) types of minorities. The Vietnamese students, considered a voluntary minority, did not express overly negative experiences with their teachers. These students perceived their teachers as supportive and understanding. While a few of them recognized that others, most notably Latino/a students, were frequently treated differently and unfairly, their personal experiences were largely positive and appeared to display affirmative attitudes about school. This may be one of the reasons why as a group, the Vietnamese students were reluctant to regard their teachers as treating students differently because of their race or ethnicity. On the other hand, the Mexican students, considered by Ogbu as an involuntary minority, frequently pointed out unfair treatment and low expectations among their teachers. These personal experiences and perceptions appeared to be associated with a general feeling of alienation and marginalization among the Mexican students that was generally absent in the discussion generated during the Vietnamese focus groups. Taken together these findings are

consistent with the assumptions of cultural-ecological theory regarding the school experiences for voluntary minorities and involuntary minorities.

Generally, the findings align most closely with Huffman's (2008) transculturation theory. This framework asserts that ethnic identity is fundamental to educational achievement and that the more integrated an individual is in his/her native cultural background, the better equipped the person is to thrive in a mainstream culturally dominated school settings. All students, especially the students from both races that were doing well academically expressed strong feelings of pride in their cultural background and their racial identity. Furthermore, they expressed a strong knowledge of their identity. For example Rose stated,

I used to constantly question my identity and what it meant because, you know, I was a year away from going to college and, I mean, we live in America so there's a lot of PWI (predominately white institutions), I use a lot of acronyms. I just needed to start to reflect what that experience was going to be like for me as a student of color but also as a first generation student. I took this opportunity as an opportunity for me to kind of dive into some of the issues that I see that, throughout my education, that I haven't been really able to really say because I'm not really part of the majority. I'm kind of underrepresented, so I said, "Ok, let's do this."

Leticia also expressed her pride by reflecting, "I'm really proud, just like every other Hispanic, to have a voice. Even if it's not for, actually, a movement or just like anything inspirational. It's like, you know, it counts for something." These statements were made at the beginning of the focus group process as the participants introduced themselves. There were other students from both races that had high academic achievement that stated that they were very proud of their race and wanted to do well in school to show people that they were capable.

It is difficult to know how the expressions of pride in their ethnicity are actually linked to school performance. That is, it cannot be ascertained whether a strong ethnic identity actually equips the students in this study with the confidence to engage mainstream education in the specific manner posited by transculturation theory. Again this was not the focus of the study and no direct questions inquired about such perceptions and experiences. Nevertheless, the statements that did emerge from many of the students, most notably the high performing Mexican students, do seem to point in that direction. This, it should be added, is a possible avenue of further research to explore possible transculturated experiences with Latino/a students along the same lines as previous research with Native American students (Huffman, 2008).

Student-Driven Ideas on the Implications of the Study

The list of implications presented in the next few paragraphs are derived from the views, the words, and the experiences of the students who participated in the focus groups. In other words, the following list of implications resulting from this investigation are student-driven.

Based on the views expressed in the focus group sessions, it is clear that the students want teachers to get to know them on an individual basis. Teaching the curriculum alone using a multitude of researched teaching strategies will not be enough to help students succeed and close the academic achievement gap. Teachers need to make an effort to develop strong relationships with students. Students need to know and feel that teachers believe and care for them not only at the academic level but at a personal level as well. Building authentic relationships begins with teachers avoiding making assumptions of what students are capable of doing based on what students look like and what cultural group they belong. More importantly, teachers need to be cognizant of the implicit biases they have and from which they may operate. Teachers need to be aware of the unconscious messages they may be sending through non-verbal communication

but that pass along powerful messages to minority students. Even such subtle cues as rolling of the eyes, not calling on students send powerful messages that they may think students do not understand the material. They need to be cognizant of the comments they may consciously or unconsciously make about student's parents, cultural background, or racial history.

Students want to be valued. They want to be seen as a unique individual and not treated as a category merely based on the color of their skin. The Vietnamese students expressed this same feeling despite the fact that they perceived teachers as regarding them as smart and capable of achieving. They felt that they are more than just an SAT score, a student that complies, or a student that is a hardworking overachiever. The Mexican students desired that their teachers see them as intelligent and not as less capable than other students. They wanted teachers to have high expectations of them and not lower the academic standards or assignments just because they hold lower expectations for Latino/a students.

All students want to be motivated. All students want to hear teachers encouraging them by constantly reminding them that they can do the work. They need to be assured that their teachers believe in them. Significantly, this desire is shared by Mexican students who have to deal with the realities of stereotype threat and by Vietnamese students who benefit from a halo effect.

Recommendations for Practice and Scholarship

Although the students from the two affinity groups agreed on what they desire from their teachers, the research reveals that there are important differences in the perceptions and experiences articulated by the Vietnamese and Mexican students. The Vietnamese students tended not to have the same awareness of racial differentiated treatment by teachers in the same degree as voiced by the Mexican students. Some of the Vietnamese were able to articulate that

“perhaps their race had a little to do with how teachers perceived them.” A few even pointed to personal accounts of mistreatment of Latino/as which they admitted likely had something to do with race. Even though many of them admitted that they did not feel especially comfortable with some of the stereotypes teachers frequently have about Asian students, when asked directly, the two Vietnamese focus groups related that teachers do not treat students differently due to race. Contrary to this view, the Mexican students were very conscious of the treatment they perceived from teachers because of their race. These students clearly struggled with feelings of marginalization and alienation and ascribed their frustrations to the treatment and expectations they perceived in their teachers. Whatever else may be gained from this study, clearly race is highly important too and clearly on the minds of the students in this study even if they differed in their conclusions about what expectations surrounding race in schools actually mean.

Another significant difference in perception was how Vietnamese students perceived what teachers thought in relation to how their parents were involved versus the perception Mexican students had in this regard. Vietnamese students perceived that teachers thought of their parents as involved parents who would hold them accountable for their learning. Mexican students perceived that teachers thought their parents were not involved. Although Mexican students believed their parents were involved and were doing everything they could to support them in their schooling. This perception created a disconnect in understanding between Mexican students and their teachers which in turn added frustration and distrust towards teachers from the Mexican students. Mexican students understanding of parent involvement was that their parents were always attending parent teacher conferences, meeting, after school activities, and had conversations with them about doing “good” in school. They did not understand what else teachers expected from their parents and believed that teachers were making unjustified and

uninformed judgments of their parents that shamed and blamed them for their lack of academic performance.

What can be done in regards to fostering positive teacher expectations and race and ethnicity of students? Since there were significant reports of personal experiences and perceptions of stereotypical beliefs, one recommendation would be for districts to provide professional development that focuses on developing racial consciousness and awareness. This is necessary in order for educators to look at and interrupt any stereotypes or implicit biases they may have when it comes to students of different races.

Furthermore, professional development on racial consciousness varies across school districts and even within a school district. Some geographical areas have been more involved in such professional development opportunities than others. Therefore, another recommendation would be to expand this research and examine the perceptions students have in the areas where teachers have had more and have had less professional development in the area of racial consciousness in order to examine if the student perception differs according to the circumstance of the district. The general research question might be: Do students learning from teachers who have had extensive professional development of their racial consciousness have different perceptions of what teachers expect from them than those students who are learning from teachers with limited or no professional development in racial consciousness? This type of study would assist in achieving an understanding on the effectiveness of professional development efforts and racial awareness among educators.

Lastly, an important theme that emerged in this research is the role parent involvement plays in student academic performance. Some students from both races mentioned either the expectation parents had of them and how this expectation played a role in their performance.

Other students discussed the perceptions teachers had in terms of what parents expected from students. Based on this theme, a recommendation would be to pursue research that includes interview with parents. This line of scholarship could take a number of important directions. For one, it would be useful to understand the expectations Asian and Latino/a parents have about teachers; the perceptions of Asian and Latino/a parents on the expectations of teachers toward their children; and general notions of what constitutes positive parental support and involvement among Asian and Latino/a parents. I believe that this kind of research will provide insight and guidance to educators as a way to explore any assumptions they may be making about parent involvement in student's education.

Significance of the Research

The results of this research investigation have significance to both educational practitioners and to educational scholars. For researchers, studies such as this one need to be replicated to better understand the challenges and/or barriers educators may create in student academic performance of underserved student populations. The findings of this study indicate critically important similarities and differences expressed by two major American ethnic groups on how they experience teacher expectations. Further research would provide more insight on what is needed to eliminate implicit biases in the policies, procedures, practices and the learning environment that have a direct impact on students who have been historically underserved in our educational system. Researchers can further determine the impact implicit biases have on our predominantly White educational system and structures. Further research could also inform the public and private sector of implicit biases and inequitable practices which lead to inequitable outcomes of students of underserved populations. In this regard the experiences and perceptions expressed by the Mexican students in this study are especially noteworthy and insightful for

scholars who desire to pursue future investigations on the topic of this research. However, it is also important to note that in addition to implicit biases held by educators there are a number of other factors that can contribute to how teachers interact with students that can contribute to academic achievement of some students and lack of achievement of others. For example, most of the students in this research that thought that it was their responsibility to learn were the ones that were doing well academically. This could influence how teachers interact with such students. Another factor, which was not the focus of this research that may impact teacher behavior towards students is the lack of resources or a low socio-economic background of students. In short, there are many variables that play a role in how teachers perceive and interact with students. Teacher implicit biases is only one.

The study also has significance for educational practitioners. Namely, the findings of this research can be used to inform educators, K-12 districts, and higher educational professionals on the importance and impact of student perception in academic performance. That is, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the way in which students perceive their teachers' attitudes and behavior as ultimately having a direct connection to their academic performance. In that regard, the findings can be used as a professional development tool to help educators explore the complexities surrounding the causes for minority students to give up and quit school. The research can serve as a guide in developing interview questions that are aimed at identifying implicit biases toward youth of underserved student populations.

Most importantly, educators would benefit from the opportunity to explore their personal, implicit biases and/or stereotypes and how these are portrayed in the classroom. The students in this study clearly related that non-verbal cues are powerful and hold significant meaning. Frequently, these, along with even more explicit messages, go unexamined by educators. For

both educators and researchers investing in professional development that is focused on self-exploration of biases and/or stereotypes and its impact on student achievement can provide a bittersweet challenge. Yet these efforts may well result in reconsidering what are the core competencies all educators need in order to help each student achieve to their full potential. This is especially the case for students who have been historically underserved and underrepresented in our educational system.

Final Reflections

I believe that exploring personal biases and stereotypical beliefs is an essential component of teacher effectiveness. One cannot interrupt personal stereotypical beliefs if they remain unknown and conveniently hidden. When an educator is willing and able to courageously confront these stereotypes, he/she is also able to naturally and consciously implement other competencies such as culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices, and unbiased classroom management skills. For example, when a teacher has knowledge of a certain stereotype, he/she can look at the content and the curriculum and eliminate materials that may promote negative stereotypes and teach in a way that is truly inclusive and culturally appropriate for all students in the classroom.

What is more, educators who are willing to constantly interrupt their stereotypical beliefs can identify and eliminate the practices that lead students to believe teachers see them as less intelligent or unable to perform. They will then communicate high expectations for each student. In the end, they will be the kind of educators who strive to look for the potential in every student rather than seeing the deficits students may possess. This is my personal desire. It must be our collective goal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to School Principal

Email/Letter from Sara Gandarilla, Educational Foundations and Leadership Doctoral Candidate, George Fox University

RE: Request to conduct doctoral research study at your school site

Dear School Administrator,

I am a doctoral candidate at George Fox University and am excited to learn more about how to improve teaching and learning for all students, especially students of Latino and Asian American descent who have been historically underserved in public education across the country. I am conducting research to examine the degree to which participants perceive what teachers expect of them and how this perception impacts their academic achievement.

The study will consist of student focus group interviews with Latino (Mexican/Mexican America) and Asian (Vietnamese) first or second generation students of your school. Participation is strictly voluntary and will not in any way harm their academic performance or their emotional well-being. I project that the interviews will be approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed by me and kept in a locked and secure location to ensure confidentiality. Participants will be assigned letter designations (ie. Participant A, B, etc.) for anonymity. The criteria for student selection is as follows

- 1) Half of the students in each group should be female,
- 2) All of the students should be Emergent Bilinguals or as identified by the State English Language Learners (ELLs) even if they are not receiving ELLs services,
- 3) The ethnicity from the Asian students should be Vietnamese,
- 4) The ethnicity from the Latino/a students should be Mexican, or Mexican American and they should be considered first or second generation to the United States,

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Sara Gandarilla
Assistant Principal
Markham Elementary, PPS
Doctoral Candidate
Graduate School of Education
George Fox University

Dr. Terry Huffman
Dissertation Chair
Professor
George Fox University School of Education

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Questions

Hello everyone. Thank you for participating in this study. Your words are critical and will help me really understand what you think and need with respect to teacher expectations. Many of you may know each other, but for the sake of recording and documentation I would like for each of you to:

1. Introduce yourself, stating with your name, and grade level.
2. We will be using the Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) protocols developed by Singleton and Linton as a guide to have a healthy and respectful dialogue around race. (These are protocols district staff and leaders have been trained in to facilitate conversations based on race. The protocols are listed in the appendix for review.) Some of you may be familiar with these. Let me explain/review these with you. Will these protocols work for us? In addition to these protocols, I want to make sure that all of our voices are being heard, so I will ask us to go around in a circle and share. We will be giving each other time to speak.
3. First question/prompt, please tell us why you accepted the invitation to participate in this study.
4. How do teachers help you succeed and/or feel successful in a particular class?
5. What does it look like when a teacher has high expectations of you?
6. What do low teacher expectations look like? Can you give an example?
7. Have there been classes you or your peers have skipped based on teacher expectations? Why?
8. Were there any classes you absolutely could not miss? Why?
9. In your perception how does treatment of Asian American students compare to the treatment of Latino/Mexican American students based on your experience? Is there a difference? Why or why not?
10. What do you wish teachers would do in order for you to feel as though they really have high expectations of you?

Appendix C: Letter of Parent Consent – English Version

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Sara Gandarilla and I am an Administrator for Portland Public Schools as well as a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at George Fox University. I am conducting research as part of my doctoral dissertation on what students perceive to be the expectations teachers have of them and how this student view may impact their academic performance. Additionally, the research will seek to examine the differences or similarities in perspectives held by Latino/a and Asian students.

I am requesting permission to interview your student _____ about his or her perceptions on this topic. Specifically, your student will be asked to participate in a student affinity group consisting of six students that will last approximately 90 minutes. Later, your student will be asked to participate on a follow up affinity group session approximately 90 minutes. Both of these sessions will consist of open ended questions. For example, I will ask “What does your teacher expect from you in terms of academics?” I will not ask questions that will embarrass or make your student uncomfortable. **The participation of your student is entirely voluntary and I will only interview him/her with your permission. You may grant permission or decline for your student’s participation as you see best. If you grant permission and your child declines to participate, I will not interview him/her. The decision to participate or not will in no way impact your student’s standing in the school in any way.**

All information gathered from the students will be collected and analyzed in a professional confidential fashion and no student will be personally identified. The interviews and signed consent forms will be kept in a locked file accessible only to me and all material will be destroyed three years after completion of my dissertation. The results of the research may also be used for presentation to professional conferences and/or professional publication as a means to better inform educators on the general thoughts students have regarding their perceptions in terms of what teachers expect from them and how these views impact student performance.

If you prefer that your student not participate in this research, I thank you for your time to consider this project and understand your decision. If you decide to grant permission for your student, I thank you for your assistance. Please be aware that your student’s participation will contribute to the understanding of the nature of student perceptions of what teachers expect from them.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact one or both of the following:

Mrs. Sara Gandarilla
Assistant Principal, Markham Elementary
Portland Public Schools
503-916-9952
971-712-4324
gandarillas@pps.net

Dr. Terry Huffman
Dept. of Educational Foundations & Leadership
George Fox University
Newberg, OR 97132
503-554-2856
thuffman@georgefox.edu

Appendix D: Letter of Parent Consent – Spanish Version

Estimado Padre o Tutor:

Mi nombre es Sara Gandarilla y soy administradora de las Escuelas Públicas de Portland así como una alumna del programa de doctorado de la Facultad de Educación en la Universidad de George Fox. Estoy conduciendo una investigación como parte de mi tesis para el doctorado sobre como los alumnos perciben las expectativas que tienen los maestros(as) hacia ellos y como este parecer puede impactar los logros académicos de los alumnos. Adicionalmente, la investigación examinará las diferencias y similitudes en las perspectivas de alumnos Latinos/as y Asiáticos(as).

Estoy pidiendo su autorización para entrevistar a su alumno(a) _____ sobre sus perspectivas en este tema.

Específicamente, se le pedirá a su alumno(a) que participe en un grupo que consistirá de seis alumnos(as) y que durará aproximadamente 90 minutos. Después, su alumno(a) participará en otra entrevista que durará aproximadamente otros 90 minutos. Ambas sesiones consistirán de preguntas generales. Por ejemplo, les preguntare, ¿Que esperan sus maestros(as) de usted en cuanto a sus logros académicos? No les hare preguntas que los avergüencen o los hagan sentirse incómodos. **La participación de su alumno(a) es totalmente voluntaria y no lo entrevistare si no tengo su autorización. Usted puede dar o no su autorización según crea conveniente. Si usted da su autorización y su alumno(a) no desea participar, no lo entrevistare. La decisión de participar o no de ninguna manera tendrá algún impacto en los logros académicos o en ningún otro asunto escolar.**

Toda la información obtenida de los alumnos(as) será colectada y analizada de una manera profesional y confidencial y ningún alumno(a) podrá ser identificado de manera personal. Las entrevistas y las cartas de consentimiento firmadas se mantendrán bajo llave y yo seré la única persona que tenga acceso a esta información además todo el material será destruido tres años después de la conclusión de la tesis. Los resultados de la investigación podrían ser usados en presentaciones en conferencias profesionales y/o en publicaciones profesionales de manera que puedan servir para instruir a educadores en cuanto a los pensamientos que tienen los alumnos(as) con respecto a lo que ellos perciben sobre lo que los maestros(as) esperan de ellos y como estas expectativas impactan los logros académicos de los alumnos(as).

Si usted prefiere que su alumno(a) no participe en esta investigación, le doy las gracias por el tiempo que se tomó en considerar este proyecto y comprendo su decisión. Si usted decide dar su autorización, le doy las gracias por su ayuda. Por favor este consciente de que la participación de su alumno(a) contribuirá al entendimiento de la perspectiva de los alumnos en cuanto a las expectativas de los maestros(as).

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre esta investigación, por favor póngase en contacto con una de estas personas.

Mrs. Sara Gandarilla
Subdirectora, Markham

Dr. Terry Huffman
Dept. de Educación & Liderazgo

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Si usted entiende la naturaleza de esta investigación y da autorización a su alumno(a) para participar por favor firme abajo. Gracias!

Padre/Tutor

Fecha

Investigadora

Fecha

Appendix E: Letter of Parent Consent – Vietnamese Version

Thư Thoả Thuận của Phụ Huynh

Kính gửi phụ huynh/Người giám hộ học sinh

Tôi tên là Sara Gandarill và tôi là Quản Trị viên của Sở Học Chánh của Portland và cũng là ứng viên Tiến sĩ ngành giáo dục học tại trường đại học George Fox. Tôi đang làm một bài nghiên cứu cho một phần luận án của tôi về những điều học sinh hấp thụ là những mong muốn mà giáo viên chờ đợi từ học sinh và quan điểm này của học sinh có thể có tác động đối với sự học tập của học sinh như thế nào. Việc nghiên cứu này sẽ giám sát những điều giống và khác nhau về quan điểm của những học sinh Á châu và học sinh Latino.

Tôi yêu cầu sự cho phép của phụ huynh để phỏng vấn -----về quan điểm của em ấy cho đề tài này. Đặc biệt là con quý vị sẽ được yêu cầu tham gia trong nhóm học sinh có cùng chung đặc tính gồm sáu em kéo dài khoảng 90 phút. Sau đó con quý vị sẽ được yêu cầu tham gia trong một nhóm học sinh có cùng đặc trưng để theo dõi tiếp được kéo dài khoảng 90 phút nữa. Cả hai cuộc thảo luận này điều bao gồm nhiều câu hỏi mở rộng. Ví dụ tôi sẽ hỏi; “Cô giáo của các em mong chờ gì ở em trong việc học?” Tôi sẽ không hỏi những câu hỏi mà có thể làm xấu hổ hay làm các em không thoải mái. Sự tham gia của các em là hoàn toàn tự nguyện và tôi chỉ phỏng vấn các em nếu có sự đồng ý của quý vị. Quý vị có thể cho phép hoặc từ chối đối với việc tham gia của con em mình nếu quý vị thấy tốt nhất. Nếu quý vị cho phép nhưng con em quý vị không đồng ý thì tôi cũng không phỏng vấn con em quý vị. Việc cho phép hay không cho phép không ảnh hưởng gì đến việc học của con em quý vị.

Tất cả thông tin thu thập được từ học sinh sẽ được thu nhận và phân tích theo cách chuyên nghiệp và giữ kín và không có học sinh nào bị xác nhận danh tính cá nhân. Mẫu đơn thỏa thuận được ký và mẫu phỏng vấn sẽ được cất trong tài liệu khoá dành cho tôi và chúng sẽ được hủy bỏ sau ba năm sau khi tôi hoàn tất luận án tốt nghiệp của tôi. Kết quả nghiên cứu sẽ còn được sử dụng trong những buổi giới thiệu ở những cuộc hội họp mang tính chuyên nghiệp hoặc những xuất bản chuyên ngành như phương tiện để thông báo tốt hơn cho những nhà giáo dục về những suy nghĩ chung của học sinh trong trong nhận thức mà các em có sẵn đối với những gì giáo viên mong đợi ở các em và những quan điểm này tác động đến việc học của các em như thế nào.

Nếu quý phụ huynh không muốn cho con em mình tham gia trong việc nghiên cứu này tôi cũng xin cảm ơn quý vị đã dành thời gian suy nghĩ cho việc này và tôi cũng hiểu cho sự quyết định của quý vị. Nếu quý vị cho phép con em mình tham gia tôi xin tri ơn sự ủng hộ của quý vị. Xin chú ý rằng sự tham gia của con em quý vị sẽ đóng góp vào sự hiểu biết về bản chất của cảm nhận của học sinh đối với những gì giáo viên mong đợi ở các em.

Nếu quý vị có bất kỳ câu hỏi gì về cuộc nghiên cứu này xin hãy liên lạc một hoặc cả hai dưới đây:

Mrs. Sara Gandarilla
Assistant Principal, Markham Elementary
Portland Public Schools
503-916-9952

Dr. Terry Huffman
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George Fox University
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Nếu quý vị hiểu bản chất của cuộc nghiên cứu này và cho phép con em mình tham gia, xin hãy ký dưới đây.

Phụ huynh/người giám hộ Ngày Người thực hiện nghiên cứu Ngày

Appendix F: Student Informed Assent Form

Student Informed Assent Form

I assent to participate in a research project, which is being conducted by Sara Gandarilla, (503) 910-4738 or (971) 712-4324, Doctoral Candidate, George Fox University. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary and that I can decide not to participate at any time and that will not impact my standing at school in any way. In other words, I am free to stop being in the study at any time for any reason.

Please acknowledge that you have read and agree to each of the following paragraphs by checking each box.

- I understand that this study will focus on my experiences and perceptions I may have of teachers in terms of what they expect from me as a student.
- I understand that the time commitment for this research project will be spread out over the course of one month. My time commitment will consist of participation in two small group interviews, which will require a commitment of 90 minutes each.
- I understand that the researcher is willing to answer any research-related questions I might have regarding the study.
- I understand that individual data will be reported under pseudonyms (fake names) in order to maintain my confidentiality. I allow the publication of the results of this study with the agreement that confidentiality is ensured.
- I can decide not to participate at any time and that will not impact my standing at school in any way. In other words, I am free to stop being in the study at any time for any reason.

Please be advised that although the researcher will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of small group interviews prevents the researcher from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researcher would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the small group interviews to others.

Participant Name (Printed)

Participant Signature / Date

I have presented this information to the participant and obtained his/her voluntary consent.

Researcher Signature / Date

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep. The researcher will collect a signed copy prior t the start of the first small group interview and/or individual interview.