Students' Views on What Identifies Teachers as Effective

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Abstract

This paper looks at the survey responses of senior students of Mexican descent in one urban high school describing what makes teachers effective. Students identified teachers as effective when they provide help (by means of caring, supportive interactions, and effective teaching practices) within two specific contexts: their everyday school experiences and their transition from high school to post-secondary school and/or work. Understandings of the contextual interactions that students believe have an influence in their school engagement and overall wellbeing helps to advance our thinking about the importance of teacher actions and interactions with students.

This paper is based on the analysis of survey responses by 95 students of Mexican descent attending a large urban school at the end of their senior high school year in 2007. The aim of the survey was to understand students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness in one local school context. In particular, survey participants were asked to provide the names of three teachers who they would consider to be most effective in supporting student learning and overall student success in their school, and to offer evidence, in the form of an explanation regarding why they chose those particular teachers for nomination. A key advantage of the survey was that it provided an opportunity to explore the criteria by which 'effective teachers' are identified by this group of students. Students' responses suggest that 'effective teachers' were identified through their actions, behaviors, and practices.

Student responses were analyzed using a theoretical framework that draws from the literature on resilience (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2001; Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Rutter, 1987; Ungar, 2005; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). This framework allowed for the focus of analysis to go beyond what teachers *do* that is effective but to also consider the situations in which students highlight teacher effectiveness. That is, when taking students' accounts of teachers' effective actions and interactions into consideration, it becomes clear that the types of support they discuss are situated within two contexts. In particular, students' describe teachers' support in dealing with daily school-related stressors or hassles (e.g., homework and school-related pressures; Rowlison & Felber, 1988) and the support teachers provide during the transition period from high school to college (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Newman, 2002; Winfield, 1994). Students' accounts are important because they highlight the naturally or contextually based circumstances and events in which they, as student, may need support. Accounts like these, especially from marginalized youth, are often missing in the literature. When studies do involve poor, urban youth of color, the focus is often on academic failure, neglecting to give much attention to the academically engaged (O'Connor, 1997). This paper adds to the literature regarding how teachers help strengthen student resilience and is particularly important because it focuses on the accounts of students of Mexican descent, a student population often overlooked in research.

Academic resilience

Educational research has focused much attention on understanding the protective processes of resilience that foster children and adolescents' ability to overcome obstacles and difficulties detrimental to their wellbeing and school engagement. Although protective factors may be related to the individual (e.g., internal capacities and strengths; Masten, 2001; Newman, 2002), there is wide consensus that the community, in particular schools, play a major role in the promotion of resilience in children and adolescents (Wang et al., 1997). More specifically, teachers who form caring relationships with students and who create positive learning environments seem to have a strong influence on students and their outcomes (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Kenny, Gallagher, Alvarez-Salvat, & Silsby, 2002; Knight, 2007; Masten, 2001; Masten, Coatsworth, & Douglas, 1998; Newman, 2002; Wang, 1998; Wang et al., 1997). Prior research also suggests that social support from school staff can be particularly beneficial for youth from poor communities (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; Winfield, 1994).

Student academic resilience is a dynamic process of coping with challenges and stress (Johnson, 2008; Masten 2001; Wang et al., 1997) that can be nurtured and strengthened throughout student's lives (Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Winfield, 1994). Specifically, student ability to use protective mechanisms or "resilient" traits when confronted with problems or obstacles (Winfield, 1994) is viewed as "changing over time and situations, dependent on, and specific to, the contexts embedded in children's lives" (Cefai, 2004, p. 151). Teachers' actions and responsiveness, then, can be viewed as positive interventions that serve to augment and promote students' protective processes during specific stressful times and instances. Two such cases pertinent to this work are everyday school matters and the transition period from high school to post-secondary school and/or work. Each is discussed next.

Every day school stressors

Experiences in school may add emotional and psychological stress to students. Studies on resilience have shown that chronic stressors (and not just acute adversities or major life events) can have negative consequences for children and adolescents (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Newman, 2002). Newman's (2002) literature review on resilience indicates that relatively minor but chronic and distressing difficulty, such as bullying and problems with friends, can have greater effects on children than dire life events. Pressures such as homework and other school-related demands, what Kanner and colleagues termed, *hassles* (as cited in Rowlison and Felber; 1988, p. 433), seem to increase anxiety and somatic symptoms, which can effect school engagement and outcomes in adolescents from poor rural communities and from minority backgrounds (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999; Compas, 1987).

Howard and Johnson's (2000) work indicates that the fear of not doing well in school and of failing can potentially weaken students' resilience. Their study on elementary students' accounts of what contributes to distressing experiences or 'tough life,' suggests that:

> Not only do the children seem to define learning difficulties as a key criterion of
> 'a tough life,' their talk about this topic is so pervasive and so tied up with their
> view of the school and its personnel as being caring and nurturant that it seems

almost to amount to a form of school anxiety on the part of all respondents —
falling behind and failing to achieve can predispose any child to 'a tough life' (p.
332).

Their work allows the consideration of academic setbacks as a *factor* that may threaten resilience
and moves away from simply identifying school success (as shown through overt indicators such
as passing grades on standardized tests) as a determinant of resilience (Luthar & Zigler, 1991).
This suggests that although students may have passing grades and have successfully made it to
their senior year, they may still be experiencing anxiety and worry about the ever-looming
possibility of failure (cf. Pianta & Walsh, 1998).

Transition periods

A major life event, that can potentially compromise student resilience, has been identified as the
transition periods from elementary to high school and from high school to post-secondary school
and/or work (Newman, 2002; Winfield, 1994). Research on students' transition periods, although
limited, points to these key turning points as times when children and adolescents may need
added support from adults in order to successfully cope with and benefit from these periods
(Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Newman, 2002). During the transition phase to adulthood,
teachers' support of high school students' future plans helps them develop their ability to cope
(Newman, 2002) and students in urban schools seem to especially benefit from such support
(Winfield, 1994).

Information and support around college application procedures helps reduce risk and anxiety
during this period and strengthens school commitment. Horn and Chen's (1998) study, which
specifically examined factors that contributed to the graduation of high school students,
considered "at risk," noted that among the positive influences were teachers and school staff that
provided help and information about financial aid and the college application process.

Other work pertaining to the influence of teachers on resilience, although not focused on
students' transition periods specifically, also informs the importance of this time for adolescents
from minority groups. O'Connor's (1997) case study, for example, looked at the approaches
taken by six Black students and the influence of adults in their quest for educational
achievement. O'Connor found that the youths' ability to succeed despite the realities of social
constraints rested on three factors, among these, support by teachers and other adults who served
as models of success and providers of information and strategies around the college admissions
process and on matters such as how to finance higher education.

When teachers provide students with support and information on how to overcome financial
drawbacks in the pursuit of social mobility, teachers in essence become part of students' social
network (Kenny et al, 2002; O'Connor, 1997). Information provided by teachers and other
influential adults help students to look beyond structural and racial constraints on social mobility
(O'Connor, 1997). Research conducted by Kenny and her colleagues (2002) support this finding.
Their study examined sources of support among sixteen academically successful inner-city high
school seniors. All students reported significant relationships with at least one family member in
addition to other important relationships with non-familial individuals, including teachers. Their

findings suggest that positive teacher-student relationships influence students' continued pursuit of academic success, especially when provided with strong support for present and future academic achievement.

Methodology

This research was conducted at Alamosa High School (all names are pseudonyms) in 2007. Alamosa is an urban high school located in Northdale, a densely populated Mexican-American working class community located in a large midwestern city. The school was chosen because of its high population (90% in 2006) of students of Mexican descent.

The data used in this paper were drawn from the author's multi-methodological dissertation, which explored the perceptions of ten teachers regarding the practices and strategies they believed contributed to their success with students. The primary aim of the overall study was to identify teachers who were effective, with respect to supporting student resilience and to understand the characteristics of these teachers and the mechanisms by which they supported their students. In order to determine which teachers were considered to be effective in the school, teachers and students in their senior year completed a short survey to nominate teachers they perceived to be effective. The survey was worded specifically to attend to the literature that identifies the principles of forming caring, supportive relationships and effective teaching practices as major influences of urban students' academic engagement and success (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2003) and promotion of educational resilience (Dryden, Johnson, Howard & McGuire, 1998; Johnson, 2008; Knight, 2007; Masten, 2001; Wang et al., 1997), thus allowing analysis of responses to be extended to how teachers promote and strengthen student ability to remain academically engaged, i.e., resilient. This work examines student survey data. In total, 133 surveys were distributed to graduating seniors and 95 (71%) completed surveys were returned.

Analysis

Student survey responses were analyzed through the theoretical concept of resilience and the criteria identified in the literature as being influential in building resilience (supportive teacher-student relationships and use of effective teaching practices). Ongoing comparison and multiple re-readings of students' responses revealed that students in this study identified teachers who are effective through their 1) willingness to "help" (an in vivo code; Strauss, 1987), 2) show caring, and 3) use effective instructional methods. The in vivo code "help" was used by 63%, caring and caring relations by 56%, and effective ways of teaching by 53% of the students. All student responses contained a combination of two or all three themes. But what also emerged was students' attention to notions of help. That is, while students mentioned effective ways in which teachers taught and supported them in general, most student respondents invariably referred to teachers' help and caring in one or two contexts: coping with every day school matters related to engagement and achievement, and making decisions around post-secondary plans. Analysis of data supports the position that resilience is a dynamic process with contextual and relational dimensions.

Findings

According to these students[1], teacher effectiveness can be measured by their "help."

> They all care on how we are doing in school. No matter how hard we are down they still manage to put their time and effort to help me. They make you a better person and teach more responsibility and you always learn something. (Mario)

> These three teachers make a difference in my life because they are always encouraging me to do my best and they are always telling them to do my best. They're always there to help you with your work. (Ana)

Mario and Ana's responses suggest that for them, the effective teachers are those that not only focus on how well they do in school, but those that provide the needed support to make sure they are successful. For example, Mario identified three levels of teacher effectiveness: the monitoring of his school progress, provision of support during the most difficult times (as identified by his phrase 'no matter how hard we are down'), and guidance related to personal growth (becoming a better person). Another student, Sandra, identified something similar:

> They work with you one on one and give you a lot of example like real-world situation for problems to be solved. They provide extra help before school and after school. They give you challenging work because they believe that you can always do better than easy. (Sandra)

Sandra, like Ana, identified teacher effectiveness as having high expectations of students and both indicated that effectiveness is providing the necessary support needed to achieve at the level required. Delpit, (1992) among others, has noted that high expectations are often missing in the practices of those who teach students of color. Embedded in these students' comments is the combined notions of teacher-student relations and the strategies that are characteristic of good teachers such as having high expectations, providing challenging work, and helping with school work (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2003). Also important in Sandra's response is her belief that her teachers provide her with challenging work because they believe she is capable of doing it. Because teachers' assumptions regarding students' abilities in large part determine their teaching practices, behaviors and interactions with students (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008), it can be surmised that the teachers whose actions they describe firmly believe in the capabilities of students but also in their own self-efficacy around providing support (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1982; Payne, 1994). Other work, such as Valenzuela's (1999), while not specifically focusing on the resilience of students, shows how a high school that accepts low expectations for their students of Mexican descent threatens students' wellbeing and limits their capacities.

Students repeatedly offered concrete ways in which the teachers they nominated provided help, support, and encouragement to cope with their anxiety around school success (Howard & Johnson, 2000). Most seniors mentioned a combination of teacher practices and social interactions and relationships, emphasizing a connection between caring relations and positive

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[1] All responses were replicated as written on the teacher nomination surveys.

influence on student outcomes (Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). For example, Natalia's response reads "They cared for my grades and helped me out when I needed them. Mr. L. helped me with a test." And Lupe comments "They are effective teachers because they helped me with assignments I didn't understand. Also they are very patient and outstanding teachers." Eduardo's response is more detailed:

> These three teachers are so effective teachers because the teachers connect with the students. These teachers don't give up on the students who have trouble understanding the curriculum. These teachers are dedicated to see their students pass their course, and to see they are prepared for the next level. (Eduardo)

Students repeatedly pointed out that they felt the teachers they nominated cared for them and taught them well. Students also emphasized teachers' help in trying to understand schoolwork and assignments. Further, their willingness to openly state that they did not understand certain work may indicate that the teachers they named were successful in lessening students' fear of failure and embarrassment. By showing that teachers are available and willing to help, teachers send the message to students that they can take risks in learning (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008). Students also seemed to include instructional techniques in their responses as part of how teachers provided help and showed they cared. Among them, students noted: clear class explanations, the push and motivation to work harder, making the subject interesting and teaching in a way that students enjoy. Students also nominated those that help them "work to their full potential," and who motivate them to do better and do not allow them to give up on school work. Their responses also highlight the importance they place on the seemingly small teacher actions and interactions that they interpret as important, such as being helped with tests and showing patience as Natalia and Lupe respectively indicate. These "small gestures" and "little things" have been noted by Brooks and Goldstein (2008) and by Johnson (2008) as promoting children's capacity to deal with stressors.

Student responses also indicate the influence of every day, ordinary, relational interaction in building student resilience (Johnson, 2008; Masten, 2001). It can be surmised that one of the stressors, at least for Mario, Natalia, and Lupe, is to make sure they are able to find help when they don't understand school-related work. Thus, their ability to cope with such challenge is to rely on those teachers who they feel provide them with the help they need. The fact that the students feel they can trust the teachers to be there when they need them, not only strengthens their capacity to deal with issues (MindMatters Consortium, 1999), it also further cements relatedness between student and teacher. However, help-seeking indicates student engagement but students may not persist in this effort if they continuously come across teachers not willing to provide such needed help (cf. Valenzuela, 1999).

Strengthening Sense of belonging

Another way that several students identified what made the teachers they named effective, was the ways that teachers nurtured their sense of belonging and showed concern for their individual experiences in the classroom. This type of positive and supportive classroom environment attends to students' social and emotional well being and provides students motivation to continue trying, builds trust in their abilities as students, and strengthen their ability to more effectively deal with daily hassles and stress (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008). Jason, Noel, and Debbie speak to

this. "They make a lot of class work, and make that the student participe in class unclusivilly even if they don't speak English. They help." (Jason). "They're very dynamic teachers, and they always do their best to feel comfortable in the classroom." (Noel).

> This teachers have helped me in my academic understanding, they have helped me how to be a better student and progress in my classes. They talked to me and understand my position as a bilingual student (Debbie)

Students' responses emphasize the connection between the social climate of classroom environments and academic engagement and learning (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston & Smith, 1979; Wang et. al 1997). Jason and Debbie's response suggests that the teachers they nominated make sure not to exclude students due to language differences. For many students whose first language is Spanish, language discrimination oftentimes becomes a secondary stressor that can potentially erode student resilience (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999). Jason's comment that the teachers he nominated have students participate even if they don't speak English speaks to how English language learners must be active members of classrooms and activities (as opposed to separated or excluded by having them work on something else) if they are expected to be engaged (Curran, 2003).

Acceptance of students' language and language status (as Debbie suggests by her term, 'bilingual student') also influences students' sense of classroom community. For example, studies suggest that teachers' practices and interactions with students whose primary language is other than English affect their participatory behavior (Miller, 2000; Yoon, 2008). Similarly, Valenzuela (1999) contends that the seemingly uncaring treatment of students in her study is in part due to teachers having a "culturally chauvinistic perspective" of the language and culture of students that is different than their own (p. x). In sum, if the classroom is an uncomfortable space, students may not do well in class (cf. Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

Several students were critical of what they perceived was the absence of caring, helpful teachers and their few or limited chances for connecting with other teachers. Erick was one of the most critical and outspoken respondents in the survey. He began by describing the teachers he nominated and then contrasting their care and support with that of other teachers.

> These teachers take time to care about our learning. They help a lot because they stay after school and give a chance to do our work and to catch up in class. They lecture me a lot and help me out with family problems and stuff. These are good people that when you ask them for help they give it! Other teachers are bullshit. They just care on getting paid and that's all! That's why this school doesn't get any better. Do something about these teachers who need to put more discipline and attention to students and provide more help. Stop worrying about uniform or bullshit like that. Care more about Education! (Erick)

Erick, who nominated four teachers instead of the requested three, related his admiration and gratitude for the teachers who he felt provided support while candidly providing his opinion of those who he felt failed to do so. His remarks suggest that the majority of his teachers have not provided the help, even when asked. He also suggests that other, less effective, teachers may be focusing on the practical aspects of teaching, such as making sure students are following the

uniform code. Erick's suggestion about teachers needing to provide more discipline, attention, and help to students highlight the provisions that are emphasized by practitioners and researchers as effective methods for building resilience and practices of successful teachers of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 994; Martin, 2009; Ware, 2006).

Another student, Gabriel, although more subtle in his critique, emphasized the absence of relationships with those other than the teachers he nominated. He explained why he nominated the teachers he did.

> Because they put attention to the students problems and they hear us not only they talk like others teachers they know that we are person who have needs and life and problems like them and that's pretty cool because that's make a really good relationship between student and teacher. (Gabriel)

Similarly, Lucy comments, "They care, they are one of the fewest teachers that help students and care about their grades and attendance. I know I can count on these teachers anytime." Jenny, like Lucy, underscores what she perceives to be a scarcity of caring teachers in the school.

> What makes these teachers effective among students is because they show "us" as students that they care, and they push us which I think it's great and there should be more teachers like that to influence students that anything and everything is possible. The problem is we don't have many teachers here at Alamosa. (Jenny)

Gabriel indicates that teachers who are willing to see students as individuals and to take into consideration what is going on in their life are those that are successful. Valenzuela (1999) and Pianta and Walsh (1998) suggest that when teachers need to deal with the realities of students' lives, they may be unable to do so because they have not been trained to recognize or prepared to cope with students' circumstances. In many cases, the teachers then rely on disconnected practices and management skills that further move teachers away from being able to respond to students holistically. By contrast, when learning is seen as the result of social interactions, students' knowledge and experiences become central in instruction and learning (McIntyre, Rosebery, & Gonzalez, 2001). Because instruction is contextually based connecting learning to students' everyday out of school experiences makes the context meaningful to students and academic engagement is supported (McIntyre, Rosebery, & Gonzalez, 2001).

Unfortunately, students' perceptions regarding a lack of caring teachers has been noted in other work that focuses on marginalized youth. Valenzuela's (1999) work convincingly argues that classrooms are uncomfortable places when there are 'dangerously low expectations' of students and teachers fail to know their students in any personal way. Just as damaging, the chronic implicit message that "no one cares" received by students in urban schools can have serious implications for their identity and academic success (Valenzuela, 1999). Similarly, Fine's (1991) work on students who have dropped out of school found that they attribute leaving to "'being bored', frustrated or 'not getting it'" (p. 70). Having such reactions to school, one can argue, may be due to the type of environment created by low expectations and lack of teacher connection with and support of students.

Even more subtle but just as powerful, are the survey responses of five students who only nominated two teachers, leaving the third space blank. What also may be telling are the nominations of faculty staff by 13 students. Among them, students nominated the school's senior counselor/college liaison, a member of a community organization that works with freshman students in the school, and a student teacher. The nominations of less than three teachers and those of school staff may be an indication that there are students who are not so lucky as to be taught by memorable teachers who they consider caring and supportive and who they learned from at the school. This may also highlight the lack of key resources of support largely helpful in buffering the possible stressful conditions of living in disadvantaged communities (Dubois et al., 1992; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003).

Transition

The fact that the respondents are high school seniors places them at a critical decision-making moment in their lives. In fact, transition periods can be times of anxiety and stress for students (Knight, 2007; Newman, 2002; Winfield, 1994). Understandably, about a quarter of students in this study identified teachers who had helped them with advice, encouragement and information regarding their post-secondary options as the practices that made them effective.

> What makes them effective teachers is the fact that they have a unique style of teaching and interesting and mostly help us make the right decision and are very helpful when it comes to the topic of college. They are teachers when you don't understand something you aren't scared to ask them and are always willing to help you. (Linda)

Adam is more precise in defining how teachers help him with college-related matters. "They encourage me to go to college to go and accomplish my dream. Help me with my work and my college essay. And recommendation for a job."

For Ruben, the teachers he nominated not only helped him with his college choices, but also attended to his emotional wellbeing. "They helped me with my college choices, kept on pushing to work harder, told me not to stress out about it. Told me everything will be fine. They have also been very supportive."

The respondents emphasized how teachers provided advice and support regarding college, a very real and immediate issue they were facing as seniors about to graduate. Their responses may be pointing to the absence of adequate preparation and information about postsecondary requirements and options in urban schools (Winfield, 1994). Along similar lines, students may also see effective teachers as information providers, especially on matters related to financing higher education (O'Connor, 1997), the influence to pursue higher education based on the provision of strong support for academic success (Kenny et al., 2002), and those willing to become "institutional agents" (Valenzuela, 1999) offering important information and resources about colleges and the application process.

Discussion

The findings presented here suggest that this group of high school seniors identify teachers as effective based on the meaningful interactions and practices that are relevant to their engagement and success. Whether discussing the support provided to cope with the constant stress of "doing" school (providing tutoring, showing a connection with students, helping prepare for a test, etc.) or with transitioning from high school to college (providing information about colleges, writing letters of recommendation, providing guidance around school decisions, assuaging fears, etc.), students' accounts emphasized teachers' ability to attend to their social, emotional, and educational needs (Hargreaves, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). The relational aspects found in this work are especially important in supporting the academic achievement and social-emotional well being of marginalized youth. (DuBois et al., 1992; Kenny et al., 2002; Norris, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999).

For some students, however, the few perceived options in finding support and help may cause distress and weaken their resolve to cope with issues and circumstances over time (Knight, 2007; Winfield, 1994) and to adapt to challenges as adults (Dubois et al., 1992). Inconsistent support or lack of a school-wide focus on ways to strengthen student engagement and resilience diminishes the chances for positive influence on student success and overall wellbeing (MindMatters Consortium, 1999; Rutter, 1987).

By identifying and documenting concrete examples of students' notions of effective teachers, this work offers deeper understandings of the contextual and relational dimensions of educational resilience. For example, what the study participants deemed as effective in their senior year was, in part, help with focus on their future. Although this work is limited in making clear connections between teachers' interactions with students and their successful outcomes, it nonetheless makes a case for knowing students and speaking to their situations. In fact, survey responses may be pointing out that what these students are really advocating for is for teachers to know them better. A major criticism of how schools try to build student academic resilience is when they try additive or packaged-bought interventions rather than trying to help teachers understand the importance of the cultural and social contexts in persistence and learning (Pianta & Walsh, 1998). Student accounts seem to point out that teachers' support, help, and caring leads to their success, emphasizing Luthar and Zelazo's (as cited in Johnson, 2008) findings that "resilient adaptation rests on good relationships" (p. 386).

There are limitations associated with student surveys as the only source of data for this work. More concluding data about why students cited specific instances is lacking. Also, it cannot be assumed that students did not experience other means of teacher support that they did not define as effective practices and hence chose to not include them in their responses. However, this limitation also points to a need for further inquiry into difficulties students face and how their views of teacher "effectiveness" are related to the help they seek in coping with specific issues and circumstances at particular times during their school trajectory.

The current study has several implications for practice. Teacher training programs need to help pre-service teachers become self-reflective with respect to their actions, especially those involving students' social/emotional selves. It is important for pre-service teachers to understand the importance of their actions and interactions with students especially when seemingly

insignificant ones seem to be important (Howard & Johnson, 2000). Teacher pre-service and in-service training must include, as part of their programs, ways to help teachers develop the type of teacher-student relationships that attend to students' social, emotional, and educational needs (Hargreaves, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). Similarly, teacher training and in-service programs must include information regarding the value that students place on the support of and relationships with teachers which, although may seem "ordinary," may have the potential to strengthen student resilience. This requires that novice teachers be provided with strategies and practice in forming, improving, and sustaining beneficial relationships. This is important because schools are contexts in which resilience is largely influenced. Finally, schools need to provide time for struggling and beginning teachers to engage with and observe how effective teachers in the school develop and sustain beneficial caring relationships with students.

Looking forward, studies that include larger numbers of student voices are needed to detail how teachers can be sources of support for their school engagement. To this end, other modes of research, particularly interviews of students over time and especially during specific transition periods, (elementary to high school and high school to college) should be included in the corpus of data. In addition, future studies must include teacher and student interviews and classroom observations to document the important nuances of teacher and student relationships and also to understand more about how teachers develop their sense of support and understanding of students and in turn how students interpret such actions.

Although academic resilience is an important issue that has generated considerable research, little of this research has focused on high school students of Mexican descent regarding their views of effective teaching practices and teacher-student interactions. Even less attention has been given to the voices of this particular group in their last year of high school. We must advance discussions about the influence of teachers on students' continued academic engagement and commitment, especially in urban schools that are often largely underfunded and plagued with systemic and social issues if our goal is to help all students succeed.

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