Student Perception in a Dual Enrollment Magnet High School on a College Campus

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Abstract

Socioemotional research on advanced academic students is limited. Therefore, exploring student perceptions about their experience in one dual enrollment magnet school became a goal for this 2018 microethnographic study. As such, the following overarching research question guided the interviews and surveys of 34 students: How do students perceive their dual enrollment experience on a college campus? The findings were that students were conflicted in their perception about their program while they were adamant about how parents, teachers, and professors should engage with them. The implications deal with college and high school dual enrollment policies, recruitment, socioemotional learning for advanced academic students, parents, and educational professionals.

Keywords: dual enrollment, magnet schools, high school, advanced placement, affective domain, perception, qualitative

Introduction

Dual enrollment was originally intended for high school students perceived as intelligent to earn college credit and be challenged during high school (An & Taylor, 2015; Estacion et al., 2011; Lochmiller et al., 2016). Since the 1970s when dual enrollment programs were first established, more students are matriculating into these programs (Lochmiller et al., 2016). They differ by state and their definitions are multi-varied. The Florida Department of Education (2016) defines it thus:

> Dual enrollment is an acceleration program that allows students in grades 6–12, including home education students and students with disabilities, to take postsecondary coursework and simultaneously earn credit toward high school completion, a career certificate, an industry certification or an associate or baccalaureate degree...

Economic and educational shifts prompted many states to offer dual enrollment programs for college and career readiness and a dropout prevention measure. In Florida, schools offering dual enrollment or advanced academic classes, such as International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, or Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), must include student scores and student participation as factors in their school's grade (Estacion et al., 2011).

Dual Enrollment and the Family

Families have used dual enrollment to offset the cost of higher education. Accordingly, many students may take college/technical courses in their high school with a certified college/technical approved educator. They may take some courses at a college in close proximity to the school, by taking advanced academic/technical courses and passing the terminal exam to be awarded college credit/career certification; or they may be in a dual enrollment high school located on a college campus for their junior and senior year, terminating their high school career with a high school diploma and an associate's degree (Florida Department of Education, 2016).

Dual Enrollment and Colleges/Universities

Dual enrollment is also a benefit for colleges to gain access to advanced academic students, guarantee tuition coverage, market their school as a low-cost alternative to the university system, and an academic collaboration between the university, the college, and the high school (Estacion et al., 2011). According to Fink et al., in 2010, 15% of community college students were from dual enrollment and "nearly half of former community college dual enrollment students first attended a community college immediately after high school" (2017, p. 1). However, the stress caused by a dual enrollment advanced coursework should be considered when discussing these advanced academic programs and its socioemotional impact on students.

The Socioemotional Factor

Research increasingly documents the importance of the cognitive and affective domains as equal factors in the educational process (Jorquera Torres et al., 2017; Zhang & Lu, 2011). The affective domain deals with emotional and psychological wellbeing. Proponents of using both the cognitive and affective domain argue that students are more academically successful if they are emotionally connected to the intended outcome, teacher, and/or subject. Students who have a high affective appeal will be intrinsically motivated to succeed. Consequently, student perception is vital to student affect.

Thus, dual enrollment has become an integral part in the educational structure for secondary students who want to earn a certificate, an associate's degree, and/or to finish school early. It is used by schools, parents, students, and colleges for different purposes. Dual enrollment students are rarely seen as having socioemotional issues (Gilman, 2018) and mental health counseling is usually relegated to students who lack privilege or power or those who exhibit unwanted behaviors (Caldarella et al., 2019; Ferreira González et al., 2019; Vestal, 2018). This paper examines how dual enrollment courses impact students from a combined perspective of academics and socioemotional factors.

Theoretical Framework and Rationale

This microethnographic research is grounded in the affective learning theory and the constructive perception theory. Developed by David Krathwohl in 1964, who reimagined Bloom's Taxonomy to include the affective domain, the theory has five parts described from simple to more complex all having to do with the learner and learning: receiving (awareness and willingness), responding (allowing or cooperating), valuing (acceptance and preference), organization (examining and clarifying), and characterization (internalizing and resolving) (Wilson, 2019). "Well-researched strategies exist for implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in elementary grades in ways that reach and impact every child, but there is insufficient clarity and far less research on how to implement comprehensive SEL in high school settings" (Miller Lieber et al., 2019, p.1). As the authors suggest, socioemotional learning is not often a concern in high school and even less so with advanced academic students. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, "children and teachers are not disembodied intelligences, not instructing machines and learning machines, but whole human beings tied together in a complex maze of social interactions" (p. 12). Thus, it is the whole student that needs to be understood, both the academic and socioemotional components. It is through perception that we understand more fully one's socioemotional thoughts.

Perception is the "meaning we attach to the raw information received through our senses" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 245), which is based in cognitive psychology. Understanding perception promotes the understanding of how students learn. There are two forms of perception models: Bottom-Up Processing, which is "noticing separate features and assembling them into a recognizable pattern"; and Top-Down Processing, which is "based on the context and the patterns you expect to occur in the situation" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 245). Soles and Maduli-Williams (2019) and Kurnaz (2018) both studied the benefit of understanding student perception and its impact on the learning that takes place. How students perceive their learning is quite important to student success and program growth.

Students who participate in advanced academic programs are expected to perform better in school. They may have the intellectual capacity but not the emotional or social capacity to participate fully in such rigorous programs. Taken together, the research illustrates that there is a need to understand how the cognitive and affective processes delineate the success of students and by consequence, schools.

Research Design

Microethnography provides insight into the culture of the participants (Delbene, 2015; Molle, 2013), while the affective domain is concerned with feelings/emotions. This study will use microethnography to explore how advanced academic students perceive their schooling in a dual enrollment magnet school on a college campus.

Ethical Considerations

Subjectivity Statement

I am a Black female who migrated from Jamaica at the age of 11 and I was an IB student who matriculated through AP courses in a magnet school several miles from my home school. I attended my high school from 10th–12th grades. I worked in several magnet schools throughout south Florida and was an advanced placement English educator at the field site. I have been an educator for 20 years and had never seen students withdrawn from a program nor seen students en masse cry because of overwhelming stress. After these episodes, I wanted to understand the student perceptions about their experiences in dual enrollment more fully. My experiences from the educator and the student perspective provide me with some insight into what students were experiencing. I wanted to provide the students an avenue to voice their concerns. I was both an insider and outsider (emic and etic participant). I was a member of the school and its culture; however, I was not privy to all the experiences of the students who had left their home school after their 10th-grade year to attend this advanced academic program, and I had taught for only one year at this school.

Before embarking on the study, an IRB approval through the school district's Research Office was conducted and both the school district and the principal consented to the study. The students were asked to participate in the study through their research class, which was not taught by the researcher. It was through this class that they received their informed consent and Survey Monkey logon code to complete the survey. Students signed the interview permission form and parents and students signed the consent form. There were no risks involved for the participants of this study. The students were neither penalized nor rewarded for their participation or lack thereof.

Data Collection

Surveys

Before the interview, all participants were asked to complete a 32-question survey to explain their feelings about being in a dual enrollment high school on a college campus. The researcher-developed survey included questions about the students' perceptions about recruitment; curriculum in college, high school, and homeschool; and professors, administrators, and teachers. Also, to gauge students' socioemotional health, questions were asked about coping. The anonymous survey included demographic data along with open-ended questions to provide students a space to voice their concerns. The students were given two weeks to complete the survey via a link and they could use their research course time to do so if they felt overwhelmed.

Interviews

Six participants were asked to participate in a one-hour face-to-face interview, so that the researcher could gain additional data and to member check. To prevent researcher bias, the school counselor chose the interviewees, selecting students from different geopolitical, ethnic, gendered, and social backgrounds and with various grade-point averages. Students then met with the researcher during their free time to be interviewed. The interview content included predetermined questions that focused on participants' dual enrollment experiences (social and educational contexts), and their feelings about the program and its perceived effect on their future endeavors (exiting the program or graduating).

Participants

The students who were interviewed in this study were localized to one school, for a single-sited ethnographic study. "Ethnographic microanalysis of interaction, as microethnography is also known, aims at descriptions of how interaction is socially and culturally organized in particular situational settings" (Garcez, 1997, p. 187). Additionally, qualitative research, more specifically ethnography, allowed the researcher to gain insight into the culture and context of being a dual enrollment student in a dual enrollment high school on a college campus. This microethnographic study considered how the affective domain plays a role in student success.

For the convenience sample, students were chosen based on their attendance in a magnet dual enrollment school within a Florida school system of 230 students. Additionally, students who exited the program successfully (graduated) and unsuccessfully (transferred to their home school) or left the school voluntarily to pursue another type of dual enrollment, were asked to participate in the study. None of the students who exited unsuccessfully participated in the study; they either did not respond to inquiries or they agreed to participate and missed their appointment dates. Of the nine students who were interviewed; three had graduated, one decided to leave the school, and five were current seniors or juniors. The rationale for asking students in close proximity to the researcher was that the researcher would ask for referral interview possibilities especially from the unsuccessful transfers to foster trust; however, none of these participants were interviewed.

Participants self-identified demographic details. Most of the 34 participants were 17-year-old Hispanic females, and one transgender youth, also 17-years old and Hispanic. The interviewees were nine students: one male and eight females. As to ethnicity, two were of Southeast Asian descent, one of Middle Eastern descent, and six of Hispanic descent. All participants were provided pseudonyms. Debby, Joanne, Catherine, and Mary graduated from the school. Debby, Mary, and Joanne were attending the state university in town, while Catherine was attending Georgia Tech. Amanda, Linda, and Deborah were seniors. Deborah chose to leave the school in her senior year because she had all her credits except one and she would be allowed to work in her free time. Heather and Richard were juniors. What is important to note is that most participants attended either neighborhood schools with magnet offerings or all magnet schools yet found Advanced Academic High (a pseudonym) to be the school that fit their needs the most. As a result of attending this school, most participants would be attending the University of Florida, which was the number one school for all participants in the study. Students and faculty consider this university the "Harvard of Florida." Other students at the school intended to attend or were attending Ivy League schools, but none of these participated in the study.

Setting

Over 20 years old, and bearing an A grade, the high school, Advanced Academic High (pseudonym), is a magnet school, which constitutes a varied representation of socioeconomic status. The high school also represents a spectrum of cultures, ability levels, teachers, and communities that provided relevant data points for analysis. Students were recruited in the eighth grade as many other high schools do not want their students leaving to attend another school and won't allow other high schools to recruit their students.

The students who would like to attend, apply in their sophomore year. As part of the application process, the students must have a B grade-point average and have passed the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), an exam believed to gauge a student's capacity to take college classes. They are then chosen through a lottery system. Once accepted, students take college classes in the mornings and evenings, and in the afternoons take high school courses that are mostly advanced placement: English language and composition, English literature and composition, macroeconomics, U.S. history, U.S. government, and calculus AB and BC (depending on their mathematics skills, some only take AB) over the course of two years. If students do not gain four points on their AP English exams, they must take a college level equivalent course. Incoming juniors are given a 12th-grade student mentor.

The college, Palm College (pseudonym), has several campuses and Advanced Academic High is located on five of the campuses. Each campus is its own separate school. Palm College's Saga Campus houses 13 buildings on 185 acres in a suburban middle-class to upper middle-class location. The students from this study attend the Saga Campus.

Analysis

A qualitative thematic coding design method was used in order to investigate and explore the processes and perspectives students use to continue a stand-alone dual enrollment program. The interview and survey responses were analyzed using the transcription and coding method outlined in Rubin and Rubin (2005), *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Qualitative coding using inductive and deductive theme analysis and content analysis were employed. The researcher outlined possible themes or topics based on the literature and the researcher's own knowledge of dual enrollment. One question per deductive theme was asked of each participant to generate discussion. Throughout the interview, the researcher checked to ensure accuracy of data.

Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist to maintain accuracy and objectivity. Each transcript was copied for analytical purposes. Inductive analysis included breaking the data (survey and interview) up to look at the individual topics or themes that arose and their relationship to the deductive topics/themes that were coded. For the survey, the number of participants who had similar responses were converted to percentages. After identifying topics through coding, the researcher synthesized and clarified the data. The data were grouped again according to the research framework and research question. Data were analyzed in the context of the affective theory.

Findings

The following section is a detailed list of the themes and the associated findings that captured the interviews and survey data. The list includes: (a) Students' Perceived Experience (The best and worst parts of being a student in this program and who should be in the program); (b) Perception of Dual Enrollment's Future Impact; (c) Perception of Teachers/Administrators (Parents' perception was a finding derived from the students' interviews and surveys); (d) Perception of Curriculum; and (e) Perception of College.

Students' Perceived Experience

In order to understand the students and their experiences, it is important to also understand how they came to be a part of a dual enrollment magnet high school situated on a college campus. Of the students, 58% learned about the school through the mail, and 77% wanted to attend the school despite being dissuaded by their former school's teachers or administrators. Obtaining an associate's degree was a factor in attending this school, including the challenge the school afforded (77%). Of the 32% of students who found the first semester challenging, 24% reflected about their educational practice, changed their behavior, and became more responsible. Most students (53%) felt that their student mentor did not assist them to transition or in any way regarding school. Although the words "hard" and "difficult" were used

synonymously and simultaneously to discuss their experience, many students felt their high school experience was socioemotionally manageable because teachers allowed them to turn in assignments late when they were overwhelmed, or that most teachers "cared" for their emotional and academic wellbeing (38%). One attribution for this, students indicated that the school was very small. With a staff of six teachers, students felt that they knew their teachers more intimately, and teachers took the time to tutor them.

The Best Thing

In the online survey, a student expounded on what they thought was the best thing about this school: "The tight-knit community that forms long lasting relationships…I became more social, confident, in speaking, and surpassed my academic expectations. I love my experience at AAH." For many students, the best thing about the school was the opportunity for freedom and flexibility (35%). The students found the college classes to be easy, but time consuming, and thought that in high school, they had more opportunities to earn better grades. More than half of the students (56%) said their home school did not prepare them for the rigor of this program. Ironically, the top three schools that students matriculated from were magnet "A" schools. But some felt they had no opportunities, no choice, as in this online survey response:

> (Heather). AAH is literally like testing how well a fish can climb a tree. But I barely had homework at my previous school and my classes weren't hard, so a lot of my time was spent doing nothing. Like staring at a wall doing nothing. So, nothing significantly prepared me for AAH.

Students perceived AAH as a good school and, although they were unprepared, they saw its potential benefit for their future endeavors.

The Worst Thing

The worst thing was the pacing of their high school classes (38%). The problems students highlighted were that their former high schools treated them like children, the curriculum was too rigid, and there was a lack of rigor. For these reasons, especially, most students chose to attend AAH. However, in order to mitigate the stress they felt at AAH, one student said they cried, but most (24%) said they did something physical or relied on the arts (music, movies, etc.). "I have developed anxiety and gone through stints of depression. I believe the support towards individual mental health could be improved" (online response). Student stress can sometimes manifest as anxiety issues. Some students navigate this by using an agenda to manage deadlines (26%) and by creating schedules (44%). Ninety-four percent said their friends helped them deal with the stress, although some students did reveal that students engaged in self-harm behaviors; drugs and drinking were specifically discussed. Fifty-six percent said their friends outside of school encouraged them, while 24% had to leave those friends behind, and 12% said their outside friends were discouraging. Despite the stress, 79% of students did not regret attending. Although, some are still conflicted as they could have stayed in their home school and gotten higher grade-point averages and not be as stressed, they also stated: "Perhaps they would not have gone to the particular university as they more than likely would have settled for ones in town" (Amanda, online response).

Who is the Best Fit?

According to the data, students felt the best fit for a school like this is a hard worker who likes challenging themselves (79%), while 26% said that the student must be intelligent. Ironically, students' favorite and least favorite subjects were the same: math and history (29% both as favorites and 35% and 32% as the least favorite). Science and literature were favorites for 21% of the students. In order to be successful in this school, students reported needing the following three things: parents and teachers to understand them and what they are going through; teachers who are knowledgeable and like their subject; and assistance transitioning through dual enrollment. Catherine, when discussing what type of students

would do well in such a program, stated, "It wasn't for the faint of heart." The students' perception of the AAH student was incongruent with the data, but it is interesting to note that they wanted a socioemotional and academically responsive educator.

Perception of Dual Enrollment's Future Impact

In this particular high school, sometimes students leave because they are failing their college courses, they do not want to attend this school, their parents may have forced them, or they have enough credit and do not see how the added stress may help them. Deborah expounds on this idea when she says, "They just don't take responsibility for their actions. Those are the people ... They drop out of college. They want to blame it on everyone, but they don't see they have a problem with their own way of learning." Of those who stayed the requisite two years in this school, 32% will be attending the University of Florida (UF), 29% were undecided, and 15% would be attending the University of Miami (UM). Many said that they were attending (UF) because "it was the best school in Florida" (38%), 32% said cost was a factor in their decision making, and 12% were dependent on the type program the school offered. Based on the surveys and interviews, students think their future college experience would be different because of living on campus, not having as many classes, or because they won't have the same small environment (62%). Forty-seven percent of students wanted to be in fields that helped others such as law, politics, or sociology, which was contrary to the perception that an AAH student was a doctor or someone in the STEM profession as said by the students themselves when they discussed who should attend the school. Students would be matriculating into schools that were considered "top" schools in Florida, and although they were pleased to be in the dual enrollment program, they did have trepidations about what a "real" college experience would be like.

Perception of Teachers/Administrators (Parents)

Originally, the survey or interview questions did not include issues about or with parents; however, many students discussed how their parents were an issue. "I think it's also convenient for you guys and the administration to treat us as children when you guys want and as adults when it pleases you" (Amanda). Fifty-four percent felt that the administrators and counselors were detached in assisting them in transitioning to the school. However, Heather discussed the principal's policy of having private sessions with students in their research classes; "It's always nice to be able to talk about some problems that we're having, and it be anonymous, not just him calling you out during a meeting. And then, actually getting some results in the end, not just voicing our opinions and leaving it there." Students noted they spent time taking easy classes and wasted opportunities to take classes for their future careers, adding that the administration should help students find a balance (Debby and Amanda). One issue consistently raised by some students was that if you did not want to go to an Ivy League school or an out-of-state school, you were looked down upon (Deborah, Debby). They also felt that parents needed to be more supportive (47%) and to understand the rigor of the program (26%). One student online said, "mine had never partaken in a program that is this rigorous." Amanda, a senior, mentioned that she felt at odds with her parents as did many other students because either she could not participate in family activities or her grades were not all As, so parents did not understand the problems she was facing, which led to her not sleeping or eating enough and losing over 30 pounds in 3 months, which contributed to other health issues. She suggested that parents should be kept aware of the school's deadlines and curriculum throughout the process by having a more vibrant Parent-Teacher-Student Association. "The teachers are the only thing that kept me in line because I cared about them so much, so I had to do well" (Joanne). The students seemed to want a vehicle for transition into this advanced academic program and thought that the teachers, administration, and parents should work together to provide that avenue for success.

Perception of Curriculum

Some of the participants felt that many students could not handle the curriculum because they did not "take responsibility for their own actions…I think a huge part of the problem is people and their mental state… it makes everything so much harder because… you have so much on your plate" (Joanne). Students did not discuss their curriculum outright unless they wanted to discuss a problem. Debby discussed issues with teachers who coddle at AAH for no reason, "yeah it sure helped my grade but in the long run, I didn't learn anything, and I got a B in the class. I literally do not know anything about the class." On the other hand, Heather, when comparing her home school to AAH, said:

> Definitely the teachers are very thorough. They don't give vague instructions on what to do and expect you to figure it out yourself. They give in-depth lectures; they ensure you know what you're doing beforehand. And they also give work that is pertinent to what we're doing. It's not necessarily busy work or just work to give us something to do. Everything is relevant to what we're covering and will help us later on.

Since students had previously discussed the issues they had with their former high schools, they saw the benefits of the curriculum, but they also discussed how coping mechanisms are important to be successful.

Perception of College

All students discussed the enjoyment and the empowerment they had from taking the college courses. They felt the work they did in college was meaningful and positioned them as burgeoning adults and academics. The academic courses in college were much easier than their high school advanced placement counterparts. However, at times, students were embarrassed to say they were in high school because either professors or college students made them feel inadequate. But for them, having the opportunity to take college classes and obtaining an associate's degree was very important (53%). For students, the college setting provided more freedom and taught them how to manage their time and be more responsible (70%). Because professors were not as willing as their high school teachers to change deadlines, some felt more motivated to work on college deadlines before high school ones. Here's how one student describes the difference between high school teachers and college professors:

> My college professors are much more serious with their coursework. My high school teachers seem to care more about their students. However, the college professors sometimes have more engaging coursework than my high school teachers (survey response).

One student even used the words "less personal" and "cold" to describe college professors. Thirty-eight percent of the students felt their professors were not as caring to them as their high school teachers were. For these students learning is paramount, but it does not negate the socioemotional relationship that many needed to be successful.

Discussion

In secondary education, when one thinks about students who are in AP, IB, AICE, or Cambridge programs, they are usually students who have the highest grade-point averages, are school leaders, and have the most involved parents. They are not the only ones in these categories, nor do all advanced academic students fall into these categories. However, parental involvement does play a role (Atmaca & Ozen, 2019; Hunsaker, 2013). Unfortunately, studies rarely research parent–student emotional relationships within this group. Nor is there any research analyzing how college and high school counselors may work together to assist students in this category on a social or emotional level. More

information is presented about academic and fiscal returns, but rarely if any is provided on the importance of the social and emotional wellbeing of this group. Therefore, this is an area of need.

The students at AAH are not "overtly overly ambitious," students who took a great deal of advanced placement, dual enrollment, or IB courses, although some do fall into that category; they were students who wanted more out of their high school experience, which is in keeping with what Kurnaz (2018) posited about gifted students. There is a myth in schooling that secondary students who participate in advanced academic programs must have a certain IQ, which leads to issues of equity and access. Advanced Academic High negates this myth. These students were true learners; they wanted to learn, and many attended this school on a college campus to gain the benefit of finishing school early (Loveland, 2017). One came from as far as Canada to attend this school specifically because their country did not offer this program (Mary). Some had the added pressure of having siblings go through the program and felt obliged to follow in their footsteps (Linda, Amanda). Finally, they must be metacognitive and be willing to own up to the choices they have made and be hard workers (Joanne, Mary, Linda).

What makes the school thrive is that the students feel empowered by the college curriculum's freedom of choice and by the high school teachers' level of caring despite the rigorous curriculum; They participate in activities that allow them to unwind, and have close friends who support them through stressful times (Kurnaz, 2018; Loveland, 2017; Soles & Maduli-Williams, 2019). Andrews (2019) found that her AP environmental science students perceived relevance in their learning when the curriculum was adapted to meet the greater research needs through citizen science, or public participation in research. Advanced placement students' perceptions should drive curriculum and factor into how teachers interact with students. "You're not a statistic" (Richard). Students like Richard—who perceive the positive aspects of the school, understand that they are working toward a goal, and who chose to be a part of this advanced academic program—see the value of the school and how it may impact their future goals (Kurnaz, 2018; Loveland, 2017). The ownership of choosing to participate in this program seems to be a deciding factor in student success (Kurnaz, 2018).

The Socioemotional Role

For most students, their perception about the experience forced them to internalize the behaviors needed to succeed by exhibiting characteristics in the affective domain. Catherine who achieved great success at the school and is doing well at Georgia Tech, still saw the need for caring in her post-secondary institution when she says, "I wish I had you guys at Tech with me. It's not there. I guess you can talk to your professors, but they're kind of scary. Like one of my professors is like a Nobel Peace Prize winner." Students moved from a period of uncertainty and realized how to navigate the freedom, difficult curriculum, and the lack of emotional ties with their college counterparts, professors, and sometimes family and friends. Those who exited the program were vacillating between responding and valuing of the program and how they perceived themselves within the context of the program; consequently, they could not get beyond these emotions, internalize the learning that occurred, and thus ultimately "dropped out" of the program (interview data). However, some students are not as proactive or versed in gauging the pressures they feel in their academic journey as others, possibly because of previous learned behaviors or because of lifestyle choices. Those participating in harmful behaviors need assistance to navigate that. Perhaps providing college resources about drug interventions or managing stress may help. Additionally, parents should be trained about identifying warning signs of self-harm or other forms of unhealthy behaviors. Many affective or socioemotional programs are geared toward younger children and if they exist in secondary schools, they are usually for students without privilege or power (Caldarella et. al, 2019; Ferreira González et al., 2019; Vestal, 2018). Rarely is the advanced academic student a concern for these kinds of programs.

The Absent Participant (Parents)

Educating parents about how to offer care to their children and the various ways that care is exhibited is an important factor to assist participants in becoming more successful (Miller et al., 2018).

> Amanda: And then I know for a fact so many kids coming into here have such strained relationships with their parents because they're staying up all night doing all-nighters because they feel like they don't have time to do things because they're probably not managing their time well. Or even if they are, they just have so much. There was a time when I had seven exams in one week. So, they're staying up all night, they're not sleeping, they're not eating very well. I remember I was at a time where I was eating once a day. That's when you noticed all my weight-loss.

As Amanda did, many students discussed parents who cared only about grades and those students feel a great deal of pressure to perform. If students did not feel a connection with their parents or teachers, they were more likely to leave the school, often under negative circumstances.

The Absent Participant (Exited Students)

Deborah explained how she felt and the reason why she chose to leave:

> I just feel like coming into this I was very stressed out because I didn't really know how it works. I just thought I was going to college and then taking normal classes. But it turned out to be a lot more stressful than it actually was. The AP classes aren't like the classes that you take at a traditional high school; they're like 10 times worse, 10 times harder.

Based on the findings from those interviewed and surveyed, participants saw exited students as a subconscious cry for help; these students could not manage the workload and ended up in a vicious cycle by not seeking help, not attending college classes, and therefore becoming more overwhelmed. In this system, failing college classes is an avenue for dismissal from the program. Perhaps monitoring students and the work they do in college would assist them in not falling through the cracks (Loveland, 2017). This is a lament for the counselors in this dual enrollment high school; they cannot see the students' progress until after grades are posted. So, unless students are forthright with their inability to progress successfully as it happens (which most were not) then, it is sometimes too late to assist the student. This may be because of the lack of inter/intrapersonal skills on the part of the student and the socioemotional connection they feel toward adults in authority.

Perception's Role

Constructive perception played a significant role in this study as students' perception of the school, their teacher, administration, and themselves ultimately affected their success. Although no students who were asked to leave the school were interviewed or surveyed, the feedback from the students who were interviewed stated that these students lacked an emotional connection to everyone and possibly did not want to attend the school nor did they feel empowered to be successful (Amanda, Mary, Catherine).

> Mary: I don't want to say that this is for every student who left, but that maybe after a while they just stopped putting in as much effort. Maybe because they were feeling discouraged that they weren't doing well, and by the time they were about to leave, they had that attitude where they were just like, "Oh, what's the point of trying anymore? I'm not doing well. I'm going to leave anyway." Those are the two things that I've noticed.

The self-fulfilling prophecy of negative perception overwhelmed these students. Those students who stayed in the program perceived the positive influence of how they could be prosperous in the dual enrollment program and be successful in their choice of college and career (interview data).

Therefore, the perception of external stimuli on the student's internal motivation or self-efficacy in turn affects their emotional ties to the school, its mission, their teachers, administrators, and other students. Those students who were successful in completing the program perceived that they would gain a reward for doing well at this school, whether, it may be gaining an associate's degree, entering college as a junior, and/or gaining access to more post-secondary opportunities. If they found themselves falling behind, being emotionally and physically drained they shifted their behavior by reaching out to others and participated in healthy and sometimes unhealthy behaviors to cope. Even though successful students may have felt at odds with the teachers and students, ultimately, they understood that their role was to support and guide them through the dual enrollment program.

> Linda: I always say in this school more than other schools, because they just don't have the same tutoring schedules or anything like that, teachers here take two steps towards you when you take one step towards them… "Hey, I don't understand this. Can you please help me understand this?" And even if it was something so elementary, she'd sit down and explain it to me, something that I was expected to know. So that was really, really helpful, just being able to go to tutoring. I don't think that was very ... because of the way that my schedule was at [my home school] I just didn't have that opportunity.

Concurrently, the teachers and administrators exhibited some socioemotional behaviors that allowed students to feel care and that they could be successful with their help, which they did not encounter in their previous school.

References

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