Humanistic School Culture and Social 21st Century Skills

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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Graduate Program in Education

The Ohio State University

2012

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Abstract
At their core, the essence of the Humanism movement and the 21st century skills movement share the same goal – both are concerned with promoting the education of people to be critically thinking and socially conscious citizens (Aloni, 2002; Balot, 2001; Kane, Berryman, Goslin, & Meltzer, 1990; Knapp, 1964; Lemke, 2002; Powell, 1988).
Given the strong similarities in the fundamental objectives of the Humanism movement and the 21st century skills movement, it seems appropriate to question if a humanistic school culture is an appropriate environment to develop Social 21st century skills in students. Therefore, this study examines a school whose self-description is congruent with humanistic school culture and (1) describes how humanistic intentions manifest themselves in the school’s culture, and (2) examines connections between found humanistic school culture characteristics and 21st century skills. Five humanistic school culture characteristics were found: personal student-teacher relationships, community, trust, respect, and consciousness. All humanistic school culture characteristics were found to have relationships with 21st century skills: personal student-teacher relationships and Foundational 21st century skills, community and collaboration, community and sociability, community and communication, trust and decision-making, respect and collaboration, and consciousness and social responsibility. The significance of this study is in its’ ability to combine the two literatures in a manner that informs both while creating an unexplored line of thought.
Acknowledgments

I am truly indebted and thankful to my adviser, Lynley Anderman, for her support, encouragement, and genuine caring and concern throughout the process of writing this thesis. Secondly, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of Sebnem Cilesiz. I owe sincere and earnest gratitude to Dr. Cilesiz for her time and attention. Finally, this study was completed as part of a larger project funded by a College of Education and Human Ecology SEED grant at The Ohio State University. Without such funding, this thesis would not have been possible.
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Table 1. 21st Century Skills using SCANS, P21, and enGauge Frameworks

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

At their core, the essence of the Humanism movement and the 21st century skills movement share the same goal – both are concerned with rejecting the ideal of an industrial, deferential people and promoting the development of critically thinking, socially conscious people. The Humanism movement originally sought to create and strengthen democratic societies by promoting the education of people to be critically thinking and socially conscious citizens to replace deference to religious dogma in a dictatorial state (Aloni, 2002; Balot, 2001; Knapp, 1964; Powell, 1988). Similarly, the 21st century skills movement seeks to prepare 21st century students for a new workforce that requires critically thinking and socially conscious workers to replace industrial workers who simply follow managerial orders (Kane, Berryman, Goslin & Meltzer, 1990; Lemke, 2002). Given the strong similarities in the fundamental objectives of the Humanism movement and the 21st century skills movement, it seems appropriate to question if a humanistic school culture provides a suitable climate to develop certain 21st century skills in students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine a school whose self-description is congruent with humanistic school culture and (1) describe how humanistic intentions manifest themselves in the school’s culture, and (2) examine connections
between found humanistic school culture characteristics and the development of 21st century skills.

This chapter will review the literature on humanistic school culture literature and the 21st century skills. The review of humanistic school culture will begin with a brief history of the Humanism movement and end with a review of some humanistic school culture characteristics consistent with a humanistic perspective. The review of Social 21st century skills will begin with a brief history on the development of 21st century skills movement and a description of three of the most widely used 21st century skills frameworks. Finally, this chapter will conclude with definitions for key terms used in this study.

**Humanistic Education**

Humanistic education is, at its core, a threat to status quo. To develop someone’s creativity is to develop their ability to question (Patterson, 1973). To increase someone’s consciousness and critical analysis is dangerous for status quo as it allows individuals to become “more capable of analyzing their own cultural myths, values, and social-political systems that inevitably resulted in personal and social strife, revolution, and continued social reorganization” (Valett, 1977, p. 10). Thus, humanistic education lends itself quite comfortably to social justice movements. Humanistic education requires that “rather than be trained and programmed to fit the manpower needs of society and to pledge unquestionable allegiance to a king or dictator, each person must be educated to be able to understand, analyze, and meet his own personal needs as well as those of society” (Valett, 1977, p. 12). The purpose of humanistic education throughout the ages has been
to catalyze social justice through the nurturance of youth into citizens that embrace equality, freedom and democracy (Patterson, 1973).

**History of Humanistic Education**

There have been many incarnations of humanistic education across the centuries that can be traced back to 5th century B.C.E. Athenian culture (Aloni, 2002; Patterson, 1973). Some incarnations of humanistic education have been 5th century B.C.E. Athens, 1st century Rome, 16th century Reformation, 18th century European Enlightenment, and 1960’s and 70’s America. In each of these periods of history, humanistic education manifested itself differently dependent upon the needs of that society.

The strongest movement for humanistic education in America was during the 1960’s and 70’s social revolutions (Aloni, 2002). America in the 1960’s and 1970’s was a country in civil turmoil. Every institution, especially the educational system, was examined and criticized for its perpetuation of economic, social, and political norms that widened the gap between rich and poor, First World and Third World, men and women, whites and non-whites, Christian and non-Christian (Bowen, 1981). During this period in history, many Americans were focused on addressing the issues of war, poverty, pollution, classism, racism, and sexism through the critique of capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism (Aloni). There was a focus on eradicating power imbalances and inequity, in all of its manifestations, and the propagation of social justice, peace, and solidarity (Watson & Battistich, 2006).

Specifically, critical theory emerged as a paradigm to understand the nature of oppression as not a random, psychological phenomena experienced by an individual, but
a systemic and structural problem that was created out of a social collectivity (Apple, 1977). In 1950’s America, educational reform was aimed at strengthening teaching strategies and updating curricula; the 1960’s social revolutions, partly concerned with making institutionalized normativity visible, redirected national reform on education to become more critical of the authoritarian institution of schooling itself, not just band-aid fixes within the system (Strub, 1982). The purpose of education, from the perspective of critical-radical humanist, is

“to rehabilitate man’s humanity thus liberating individuals from “thinking patterns and patterns of life that endanger individuals, dwarf their full development, and reduce their consciousness to the lowest common denominator” while “empowering individuals, or reinforcing them, so that they will be able to critically and autonomously ‘read’ reality, identify in it the forces and elements that shape the conditions of their lives, and develop for themselves directions and skills that will enable them to direct their lives for their own benefit and that of society” (Aloni, 2002, p.48).

The social revolutions in 1960’s and 70’s America challenged the institution of schooling as a system of propagating capitalist, nationalist, and Eurocentric norms. In this climate, critical-radical scholars who embraced humanistic education were concerned with traditional education, particularly the authoritative nature of traditional schooling. Some humanists favored Rousseau’s naturalistic, child-centered form of humanistic education where the teacher created a climate conducive to students discovering their potentiality (Aloni, 2002). Philosophically, Rousseau “argues against the identification of education with the consumerism of knowledge, culture and skills as a means for social success, and against the use of authoritative and artificial teaching patterns which hinder the
individual’s development and alienates human beings from their real needs” (Aloni, p.37). On practical terms, Rousseau advocated for a school culture that is built on mutual respect and trust, promotes relevant learning that is guided by student interest and internal motivation, autonomous and authentic growth, interpersonal closeness, and a democratic spirit where self-guidance replaces authority and a supportive attitude replaces judgmental and achievement orientation (Rousseau, 1979). There are many ways to create a humanistic school culture. A discussion of humanistic school culture and characteristic of humanistic school cultures follows.

**Humanistic School Culture**

Weiner (2003) argues that many teachers are conditioned to view urban schools in a deficit paradigm where teachers view “lack of school success as being due to problems in students, their families, their culture, or their communities” (p. 305). This impression of urban schools may stem from stereotypes of urban children as socially deficient and “needing to be contained, subordinated and to some degree, broken” (Ullucci, 2009, p. 13). Thus, the focus of many urban schools is on creating a school culture designed for discipline and control rather than the development of the students (Brophy, 2006; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006).

Humanistic education is concerned with creating a school culture that facilitates the development of the whole person: intellectual development, socio-emotional development, and physical development (Aloni, 2002). The definition of physical development is self-evident; that is, the development of athleticism and physical health. Intellectual development refers to a balanced education that includes physical sciences,
humanities, mathematics, and the arts. Socio-emotional development focuses on interpersonal skills, character, morality and the development of self. After receiving a humanistic education, a student should

“be endowed with curiosity and intellectual flexibility, open-mindedness and broad horizons, skills of distinction and reasoning, and rational, autonomous, critical, interpretive, and creative thinking…love of hi/her fellow men and women, courtesy, honesty, and decency, a sense of justice and sensitivity to the needs of others, as well as involved caring and responsible solidarity in the community and society…sincere, sensitive and demanding care for the nature and identity of his or her personality as it is manifested both in his relationship with others and with himself” (Aloni, 2002, p. 105).

On the most basic level, the humanistic teacher has a certain philosophy about education and the nature of students. A humanistic teacher is one who understands that learning is not just a cognitive activity, thus works to develop the whole person in their students. This can be accomplished by developing mutually respectful relationships, being empathetic and genuinely interested in their students’ feelings, and treating students like individuals instead of objects that need to be controlled (Patterson, 1973). Humanistic teachers emphasize the development of students’ emotional self and have a philosophy of seeing the nature of students as positive and good (Strub, 1982) while working to create a culture that supports positive interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, trust, community, and consciousness.

**Characteristics of Modern-Day Humanistic School Culture**

A humanistic school culture is one that places priority on the holistic development of students and demonstrates recognition of students’ human-ness by treating students like student-subjects rather than student-objects (Aloni, 2002). The literature does not
suggest a specific list of variables that define a culture as humanistic. Instead, the literature names many traits that humanistic school cultures may exhibit (e.g. Allender, 2001; Apple & King, 1977; Kolesnik, 1974; Kraft, 1975; Mosher, 1977; Patterson, 1973; Valett, 1977). This study names those traits humanistic school culture characteristics.

This following section of Chapter 1 defines human-ness and reviews a selection of humanistic school culture characteristics: teacher-student relationships, respect, trust, sense of community, and consciousness.

**Human-ness.** Humanism seeks to enhance those characteristics that can be argued as uniquely human, thus humanistic education moves from the behavioralist view of humans as objects and toward “a concern about the person as a subject, who is more than the sum of conditional responses, but a person, or self, who thinks, feels, and acts” to one’s own will (Patterson, 1973, p.17). Thus, humanistic education is concerned with developing the whole child and their cognitive, moral, social, ego, emotional, aesthetic, and physical self (Mosher, 1977; Moskowitz, 1978; Valett, 1977). This requires an education that facilitates students’ positive self-regard, character, sensitive caring for the Other, empathic understanding, compassion, tenderness, and morality (Aloni, 2002). A child who is humanistically developed should become more wholesome, balanced, self-actualized, responsible, happy, and capable of living a meaningful life (Valett, 1977). Three basic conditions for an environment that is conducive to self-actualizing behavior are empathic understanding, non-possessive warmth, and genuineness (Patterson, 1973).

Self-esteem and self-worth are human needs that are a concern for schooling in general because humanistic school culture is concerned with the development of self
The development of self-perception does not occur in isolation. Self is built through interactions and relationships with others (Kraft, 1975). Enhancing self-perception is built through enhancing self-understanding, and enhancing self-understanding is built through interactions with others (Valett, 1977). This process is cyclical; self-understanding alters through interaction with others and a student’s interaction with others alters as their self-understanding enhances (Strub, 1982). Thus, teaching is more than the application of a set of methods, teaching is the development of personal relationships and the student-self (Patterson, 1973).

**Teacher-Student Relationships.** The focus on interpersonal relationships is a central tenet of humanistic education (Allender, 2001; Aspy, 1977). Humanistic school culture is centered on the development of supportive and quality human relations and the development of traits in students that facilitate healthy and positive relationships.

A few scholars have selected humanistic school cultures and described the ways in which teachers in these cultures nurtured caring teacher-student relationships (Brown, 2003; Oakes, 2003; Ullucci, 2009; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). All of these studies emphasized the importance of teacher demonstrated care and warmth to develop a trusting relationship. Additionally, students perceive their teacher as caring when teachers make a special effort in teaching, communicate respectfully to students, are fair and honest, and treat students as unique learners (Wentzel, 1997). Teachers demonstrate care by connecting with students outside of class, elevating the importance of social bonds during class time, demonstrating a friendly façade through body language (Brown, 2003, Weinstein, 2003), focusing on the emotional well-being of children
through discussions about their feelings and consciously making efforts to have discussions on race (Ullucci, 2009).

**Respect.** As Valett (1977) argues, “school is a socializing experience that begins with purposeful instruction and help in relating to others in the immediate environment” (p.17). In the development of interpersonal skills, the teacher is crucial in creating an environment that facilitates positive and respectful interactions. A humanistic environment fosters respectful relationships and the promotion of dignity (Allender, 2001; Strub, 1982). In the humanistic education literature, respect is meant to describe the valuing of the inherent dignity of humanity in general and individuals specifically (Aloni, 1997; Cohen, 2006; Ullucci, 2009). By virtue of individuals being endowed with the ability to reason, imagine and be creative, people are deserving of dignity and should be valued (Aloni). A humanistic school culture would create an environment where respectful relationships can be built on a foundational understanding of people as rational and unique individuals deserving of dignity and value. Respect involves an unconditional acceptance of the student for who they are (Patterson, 1973). Often, teachers of urban students express their empathy with students by having low expectations for them (Patterson, 1973). This response, however, is disrespectful as the implicit message to students is that they are not capable of doing the work because of their background. Instead, in a humanistic culture, there is an emphasis on having explicit and high expectations for students (Brown, 2003; Weinstein et al., 2003) and respecting diversity (Gay, 2002).
**Trust.** The humanistic perspective is that institutionalized control conveys a message of distrust of students and these students rebel against being controlled, thus causing misbehavior that traditional classroom management responds to with increased control (Kraft, 1975). Instead of controlling students, a humanistic approach argues that students should be trusted and taught self-discipline (Allender, 2001; Valett, 1977). Humanistic teachers replace control with conversations about expectations to deal with behavioral problems (Allender, 2001) and humanistic scholars suggest that helping students to express their emotions properly is preferable to punitive actions (Valett, 1977).

Humanistic philosophy assumes that the desire for freedom is a human quality: the desire for freedom of expression, freedom to control one’s self, and the freedom to be different (Aloni, 2002). In a developmentally appropriate manner, there should be room for students to be trusted to make decisions in their environment (Strub, 1982). Teachers and school administrators can let go of authoritative control through embracing certain practices: open class scheduling instead of preplanned schedules, noisy and active learning, independence, creativity, cooperation instead of competition, and internal evaluation (Patterson, 1973).

**Community.** The ideal humanistic classroom would convey a sense of togetherness that is warm, accepting, non-threatening (Moskowitz, 1978), relaxing, (Allender, 2001), and reduces fear, anxiety and the need for defensiveness (Maslow, 1972). Once a teacher has orientated themselves toward a humanist philosophy on education and the nature of students, researchers have pinpointed several ways that these
teachers can create a warm, empathic, and inviting culture that encourages a sense of community.

The physical arrangement and design of schools and classrooms are a part of creating a sense of community. To facilitate a warm educational culture, schools should create a communal atmosphere that is structured for social interactions, interpersonal learning, and areas conducive to group collaboration (Aloni, 2002). Teachers can use the classroom environment (such as posters and banners) to communicate messages of respect for diversity and reaffirming connectedness and community (Weinstein, 2003). The arrangement of desks can work to create an atmosphere of community rather than sterility (Strub, 1982). The purpose of creating such an atmosphere is to make students feel like a part of a community and supports students’ feeling of being cared for as a person (Patterson, 1973).

**Consciousness.** The latest incarnation of humanistic education is the radical humanism of the 1960’s and 1970’s (Aloni, 1997; 2002). Although all incarnations of humanistic education contained a component of critical consciousness, it was the 1960’s and 70’s incarnation that emphasized the need for students to be critically conscious to become productive citizens of a democratic society. A critical consciousness is an understanding that institutionalized political, cultural, social, and economic inequities permeate all aspects of life in a society and a citizen of that society should be equipped with the skills to be keenly aware of these inequities and confront them (Aloni, 2002; Russo, 1995). A humanistic school culture would be critically conscious of the ways in which political, sociocultural and economic factors impact the school culture and
classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Additionally, a humanistic school would teach students to be critically conscious by empowering students with skills in recognizing inequity, analyzing power, and “reading” the world (Aloni 1997). Currently, however, the literature provides few specific actions teachers can take to teach critical consciousness to their students.

Personal student-teacher relationships, trust, respect, community, and critical consciousness are just a selection of humanistic school culture characteristics. It must be noted that a school culture is defined as humanistic by the embrace of human-ness, or the holistic education of pupils as student-subjects rather than student-objects. This study attempts to examine the relationship between humanistic school culture and 21st century skills. A discussion of 21st century skills follows.

**21st Century Skills**

Twenty-first century skills are cognitive, interpersonal, and basic competencies that are deemed necessary for students to acquire before entering the workforce. Three of the most prominent frameworks of 21st century skills come from the The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), and enGauge. SCANS, the first attempt at describing 21st century skills, is a 1991 report funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that brought together 30 business, school, union, and parental representatives to advise the Secretary of Labor on the skills students need to enter the labor force (Kane et al., 1990). This commission was created due to a belief that globalization and technology had affected the nature of the workforce, and thus the nature of student preparation for the workforce. The commission created a
list of 21st century skills from discussions with business owners, public employers, workers and supervisors (Kane et al., 1990).

P21, created in 2002, was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and many technology- and education-based private companies including Apple, Dell, Microsoft, Cisco, AOL Time Warner, Blackboard, and Cable in the Classroom. P21 seeks to develop and promote the 21st century skills believed to be needed by students “to succeed in work and life in the 21st century” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002, p. 2). Finally, enGauge is a 2002 report developed by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory and funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Lemke, 2002). The enGauge 21st century skills were developed using literature reviews, educator input, reactions from constituent groups, educator surveys and focus groups. (Lemke, 2002).

SCANS, P21 and enGauge present different frameworks for 21st century skills, but the components of these three frameworks can be grouped into five general subsets: technological, cognitive, social, foundational, and other skills. The organization of SCANS, P21, and enGauge frameworks into the five subsets of 21st century skills are presented in Table 1.
Table 1

21st Century Skills using SCANS, P21, and enGauge Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technological (the use of diverse technological skills)</th>
<th>SCANS</th>
<th>P21 Information, Media, and Technology Skills</th>
<th>enGauge Digital-age Literacy Information Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive (thinking; the organization and creative use of information)</td>
<td>Informationen Competencies Thinking Skills</td>
<td>Learning and Innovation (Creativity and Innovation subset)</td>
<td>Inventive Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (interpersonal and intrapersonal skills)</td>
<td>Interpersonal Competencies Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Learning and Innovation (Communication and Collaboration subset)</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational (knowledge in subject content)</td>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>Core Subjects</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Skills</td>
<td>Resource Competencies Systems Competencies</td>
<td>21st Century Themes (civic, financial, business, entrepreneurial, environmental, and health literacies)</td>
<td>High Productivity</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Technological proficiencies reflect the need for students to be technologically literate and competent in a diverse set of technologies. Cognitive proficiencies include the need for students to effectively organize information and creatively use information in a manner that achieves some goal. Social 21st century skills reflect the need for students to possess the interpersonal skills to work, communicate, and collaborate with people and the intrapersonal skills to have self-esteem, open-minded global awareness, perseverance,
integrity, and sociability. Foundational proficiencies are the need for students to possess fundamental knowledge in subject areas such as math, reading, and writing. Finally, other proficiencies include components of SCANS, P21, and enGauge that are unique to one framework and cannot be grouped with others.

Interpersonal skills, such as interpersonal competencies in SCANS, learning and innovation in P21, and effective communication in enGauge, are concerned with students’ ability to collaborate and communicate with a diverse group of people (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). Interpersonal skills require students to become competent in contributing to a team, communicating ideas, justifying and persuading others, negotiating, being open and responsive to opinions, and valuing diversity as an asset. Across the three frameworks, the most consistent interpersonal skills discussed are communication, collaboration, and decision-making. Communication is defined as actively listening and effectively articulating ideas using multiple medias and technologies (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). Communication is effective when the student is able to convey and transmit messages and teach, inform, and understand others. Collaboration is defined as effectively working with others to achieve a common goal (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). Collaboration is considered effective when the student is able to respect and value diversity, contribute to a group effort, be flexible and compromising, and share responsibility for work. Finally, intrapersonal skills, such as personal qualities in SCANS, the social and cross-cultural skills subset of life and career skills in P21, and the personal and social responsibility subset of effective
communication in enGauge, are concerned with student ability to develop self. Intrapersonal skills require students to become sociable, honesty, open-minded, ethical, responsible for the collective good, and have a sense of self-worth.

SCANS and P21 argue that knowledge in subject content is essential to every component of their frameworks (Kane et al., 1990; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). In contrast, the enGauge framework makes no mention of subject content. Although SCANS and P21 agree that subject content is essential, there is a discrepancy in delineating which subjects are essential. SCANS lists reading, writing, and math as the three content subjects essentials in their basic skills foundation (Kane et al., 1990). In contrast, P21 includes reading, languages, arts, math, economics, science, geography, history and civics as their Core Subjects foundation (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).

**Statement of the Problem**

Currently, there are no in-depth studies that examine the possibility of a link between humanistic school culture and 21st century skills. Such a study is needed given the national agenda on the development of 21st century skills (Kane et al., 1990; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). This focus on developing 21st century skills arose from a recognition by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education that globalization and new technology in the 21st century significantly altered the nature of work, thus concluding that students require a new set of skills to adapt to the change in the nature of work (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).
No in-depth study examines the role a school’s culture may play in the development of 21st century skills. Given the pressing need to prepare students for the 21st century workplace, it is imperative that educational researchers seek the schooling cultures most appropriate for the development of 21st century skills. Given the shared goals of the humanism movement and the 21st century skills movement as developing students who are socially conscious, critical thinkers, this study will examine the appropriateness of humanistic school culture for the development of 21st century skills.

**Purpose of the Study**

This exploratory study examines a school that intends to create a culture congruent with the definition of humanistic education. The primary goal is to describe how this school creates a humanistic school culture while also examining the potential relationship between the humanistic school culture and Social 21st century skills. The school’s intention to foster a humanistic school culture will be determined based on the stated mission and goals of the school’s administration. If the school’s mission and goals statements indicate recognition of students as student-subjects rather than subject-objects and an intention to create an educational environment that is committed to the holistic development of student-subjects, the school will be determined to have the intention of fostering a humanistic school culture.

**Research Questions**

1. In a school that officially states their intention to create a school culture that can be described as humanistic, how do those intentions manifest in the creation of a humanistic school culture?
2. Is there a relationship between the humanistic school culture characteristics and Social 21st century skills?
Definition of Key Terms

This section begins with definitions of general humanistic education and 21st century skills terms: 21st century skills, foundational 21st century skills, human-ness, humanistic education, humanistic school culture characteristics, and Social 21st century skills. Secondly, the following humanistic school culture characteristics are defined in this section: community, consciousness, personal teacher-student relationship, respect, and trust. Finally, the following Social 21st century skills are defined: collaboration, communication, decision-making, sociability, and social responsibility.

21st century skills. The 21st century skills included in this study are a combination of three frameworks of skills (SCANS, P21, and enGauge) devised to articulate the particular skills needed by students in preparation for the 21st Century workplace.

Foundational 21st century skills. The researcher of this study examined three frameworks of 21st century skills (SCANS, P21, and enGauge) and found that SCANS and P21 claim that a knowledge of subject content is the foundation to all 21st century skills. Subject content knowledge has been termed Foundational 21st century skills by the researcher of this study.

Human-ness. Human-ness is the viewing of the student as a person (student-subject rather than student-object) and the recognition of students as persons who are more than the sum of conditional responses, but instead as thinking, feeling, acting individuals (Patterson, 1973).
Humanistic education. Humanistic education is the concern for the holistic development of students as socio-emotional, critically thinking, and socially conscious beings (Aloni, 2002).

Humanistic school culture characteristics. Humanistic school culture characteristics is a term created by the researcher of this study to describe the traits of a school practicing humanistic education.

Social 21st century skills. The researcher of this study examined three frameworks of 21st century skills (SCANS, P21, and enGauge) and found a subset of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in each of the frameworks. The interpersonal skills are collaboration, decision-making, and communication. The intrapersonal skills are sociability, and social responsibility. These interpersonal and intrapersonal skills have been termed Social 21st century skills by the researcher of this study.

Community. Community is defined as a sense of togetherness that is warm, accepting and non-threatening (Moskowitz, 1978).

Consciousness. Consciousness is the critical awareness of power and the manner that power enacts to create political, sociocultural, and economic inequities (Aloni, 2002).

Personal Teacher-student relationship. Teacher-student relationship is defined as a closeness between teachers and students characterized by a sense of teacher care and warmth (Brown, 2003; Ullucci, 2009; Wentzel, 1997).
Respect. Respect is defined as placing the highest value on the dignity of humanity and valuing the uniqueness of individuals (Aloni, 1997; Cohen, 2006; Ullucci, 2009).

Trust. Trust is defined in relation to control. Trust is defined as the degree to which students are controlled or free to exert control in their environment (Allender, 2001; Valett, 1977).

Collaboration. Collaboration is to effectively work with others to achieve a goal (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).

Communication. Communication is to actively listen and effectively articulate ideas (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).

Decision-making. Decision-making is the ability to specify goals, create alternatives, consider risks, evaluate and choose the best alternative (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).

Sociability. Sociability is the ability to demonstrate understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).

Social Responsibility. Social responsibility is the ability to act with the larger community and public good in mind (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002).
A humanistic school culture in one in which the school culture is rooted in the idea of treating students as thinking, feeling, socio-emotional, and rational student-subjects (Patterson, 1973; Valett, 1977). In other words, a humanistic school culture is one that recognizes the human-ness of students and makes a concerted effort to attend to that human-ness. There is not an exhaustive list of humanistic school culture characteristics and the literature does not indicate that certain characteristics are necessary for a school culture to be considered humanistic. A school culture can demonstrate attendance to the human-ness of their students through a combination of humanistic characteristics: viewing and treating pupils as student-subjects as opposed to student-objects, facilitating the development of student-self, positive school relationships, student autonomy, mutually respectful and trusting relationships, consciousness, and a perceived sense of community (Aloni, 2002; Patterson, 1973).

A humanistic school culture may be an appropriate environment for the development of 21st century skills. Specifically, Social 21st century skills are competencies that involve relating to people on a personal basis: collaboration, communication, decision-making, sociability, and social responsibility (Kane et al., 1990; Lemke, 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). As these Social 21st century skills involve socio-emotional development, they may be facilitated by a humanistic school culture where their human-ness is valued (thus students’ socio-emotional
development is a priority) and priority is placed on valuing and relating to people. However, no in-depth study has examined the possible connections between humanistic school culture and the development of 21st century skills.

The purpose of this study is to examine a high school that has an official intention of fostering a humanistic school culture and to describe how humanistic intentions manifest themselves in the school’s culture. Additionally, this study will examine connections between the humanistic school culture characteristics found in the school and Social 21st century skills. Therefore, this study has two objectives: (1) describe if and how a high school with an official commitment to humanistic school culture actually enacts those values in their school, and (2) examine how humanistic school culture characteristics found enacted in the school relate to Social 21st century skills.

This chapter will outline the methodological paradigm and study design. The discussion of the methodological paradigm will include an explanation of why this research question is well suited for a qualitative inquiry, an interpretivist paradigm, and an inductive analysis. The chapter will then discuss the study design. The study design includes a description of the school, participants, data collection, data analysis, and validity.

**Methodological Paradigm**

Empirical methodologies that strive toward objectivity are insufficient in holistically examining cultures, “the concepts of objectivity, reduction, and manipulation, which are fundamental to empirical science, defy the authentic fiber of humans and their social interactions” (Speziale, 2003a, p. 4). Methodologies that embrace subjectivity are
designed to describe, understand, and interpret human experiences, human interactions, human cultures (Lichtman, 2006; Speziale, 2003b).

People are socially situated and subjective, thus reality can be accessed through the examination of multiple, subjective realities (Creswell, 2007; Speziale, 2003a). It is the human, situated in their subjective reality, that contributes to the creation and maintenance of a culture; as such, the study of a culture is most appropriately conducted using approaches that embrace subjectivity and seek knowledge through the examination of subjective social interactions. This study will use a methodology embracing subjectivity to examine a school’s culture holistically. A holistic approach requires the researcher to examine a phenomenon in its entirety rather than identifying specific variables and examining relationships amongst those variables (Lichtman, 2006). A discussion of the interpretivist paradigm used in this study follows.

**Interpretivist Paradigm**

A paradigm is a specific world view held by a scientific community containing specific beliefs, values, and assumptions (O’Donoghue, 2007). Assumptions of a paradigm make claims concerning the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). O’Donoghue claims that there are four major paradigms: positivist, interpretivist, critical, and post-modern.

An interpretivist paradigm understands reality to be the socially constructed perspective of subjective individuals (Creswell, 2003; Schram, 2006). All individuals have a subjective perspective that is influenced by the sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and other societal factors in which they are situated. The basic premise of interpretivism
is a belief that as people are subjective and situated within particular social situations, social sciences must be studied with a subjective framework (Willis, 2007).

Interpretivism is the attempt to understand the intention and meanings of human actions within a specific context (Dey, 1993; Schwandt, 2000). For instance, the action of taking a deep breath can be intended to relieve stress, handle frustration, or mitigate sadness depending on the context in which the action is occurring and the meaning of the action for the person taking the deep breath. The interpretivist paradigm assumes reality to be relative to the perceptions of individuals conditioned by their experiences and cultures (Creswell, 2003; Willis, 2007).

The purpose of research under the interpretivist paradigm is to know through an understanding of a specific context using the subjective perspectives of individuals who live in the specific context rather than seeking to generate universal, generalizable theories (Schwandt, 2000; Willis, 2007). This process of understanding subjectively conscious meanings is termed intentionalism (Schwandt). Interpretivist paradigms understand reality to be a complex construction of meanings by individuals situated in specific contexts (Schram, 2006). Therefore, interpretivism’s ontological perspective is that people are situated in social, cultural, political, economic, and other societal contexts; people as knowers perceive according to their social orientation. Interpretivism’s epistemological perspective is an understanding of knowledge production as the investigation of subjective perspectives that are socially constructed. As knowledge is produced using socially situated participants, knowledge produced in a social science
study is local knowledge that informs local understandings of specific situations rather than generalizable knowledge that informs universal truths (Willis, 2007).

**Inductive Analysis**

Interpretivists use may use a variety of data collection methodologies as they are all sources of understanding a situation (Willis, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm requires that results be interpreted in a manner that recognizes the subjectivity of individuals and the contextualized nature of data. This study will use a process of inductive reasoning. In inductive analysis, the researcher studies a phenomenon by gathering details of individual experiences and creates a broad understanding of that phenomenon from individual experiences (Speziale, 2003a). This bottom-up approach differs from the top-down deductive reasoning approach that begins research with a general theory and uses research methods to provide evidence for theory.

Inductive analysis is a generic research method similar to approaches of many qualitative methods including grounded theory, discourse analysis, phenomenology, and narrative analysis in that theory emerges from a systematic analysis of raw data (Thomas, 2003). Inductive analysis can be defined as “a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives” (Thomas, 2003, p.2).

Although the term inductive analysis implies generation of theory from raw data, inductive analysis actually involves both an inductive and deductive practice. Data analysis is conducted using both a deductive process of examining research objectives and an inductive process of reading and interpreting of raw data; however, the primary process is the inductive process of closely reading data, categorizing data, refining
categories, and creating a model of key themes using categories (Thomas, 2003). The most important of the methodological stances of inductive analysis is the idea that theory should rise from data, rather than data being collected to test a specific theory. This emphasis on inductive reasoning to create theory is important for this study as there are no in-depth studies that have examined the relationship between humanistic school culture and 21st century skills. The nature of this particular research question as novel without a guiding theory makes it appropriate for an inductive, bottom-up methodological approach.

**Study Design**

**The Setting: Central High School**

Central High School is a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) focused, 9th through 12th grade public, dual-enrollment program that is designed to prepare students for college entrance. The school was created to be a research model for educating with a STEM focus and preparing urban high school students for college. The aim is for Central to be used to test innovative education practices with the hope of integrating successful innovating educational practices in traditional schools.

Central, which had its first graduating class in 2010, holds an annual lottery that admits 100 9th graders of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The school is funded by both public and private funds and is closely tied to a nearby, large public university. In addition to the affiliation with the nearby university, Central has many partnerships with businesses and educational centers across the city. In addition to Central being a research school, it is also a training ground for teachers seeking the
opportunity to engage in innovative teaching practices. Teacher turnover is high as the average teacher stays at Central approximately three years. Teachers are expected to learn from Central then leave and apply their knowledge in other educational settings.

Central provided the project’s research team with data on their student demographics and student achievement. According to these data, Central pulls students from 13 districts and 32 schools in a large Mid-western city. Amongst the students at Central, 55% are White, 26.5% are Black, 5% are Asian, 3.5% are Latino and a quarter of Central students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Central is considered successful due to the achievements of its first graduating class of 75 students: average GPA of 3.21, all students accepted to college, $4 million in scholarships, a high percentage of students passing state standardized tests, and a high percentage classified and “Advanced and Accelerated” in the state standardized assessment.

Central has traded traditional schooling in favor of a system that favors personalized student development, both academic and personal. At the center of the Central system is the mastery expectation. Under this mastery system, performance is fixed and time is flexible. In this way, the pace of students’ education is set by the students and students often have the opportunity to work collaboratively, independently, and according to their preferred learning style. Student must demonstrate mastery of course content by achieving a letter grade of an A- or above. If mastery is not demonstrated, the student repeats the course or works through independent study, until the student has mastered the course content.
First and second year students have core subjects they must take, but third and fourth year students typically have a personalized educational experience that can include college classes, internships, and research. Central uses a block scheduling system where students take three classes per term and there are three terms in a year. Learning and assessment are often achieved through projects that require students to demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge. Once all requirements are met, students can then work to create a personalized education for themselves. Most students take courses at the affiliated university after completing Central’s core requirements.

Central is an appropriate environment to study the potential intersection of humanistic school culture and 21st century skills. Central has a stated mission of being a democratic, trusting, and fair school that is focused on the holistic and personalized development of students. Central claims to have a “holistic approach to educating the students – focusing on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development through experiential learning, service learning, and family and community support” (Central website). Central’s approach is congruent with the definition of humanistic education: a recognition of the human-ness of students and a focus on the holistic development of the student as a person (Aloni, 2002).

The application process to Central’s admissions lottery reveals the aim of the school to be humanistic; the application seeks to learn about the student as a person rather than serve as a tool to collect data on the prospective student’s academic history. The following are the five questions that Central asks students to answer on their application.

1. What is your favorite thing to do?
2. Describe what you enjoy most at school.
3. Describe something that you did that made you proud of yourself.
4. How would your classmates describe you?
5. What plans do you have for the future?

These questions ask about students’ self-perception, career goals, and interests. These non-traditional questions are designed to aid Central administration in getting to know the student as a person. Moreover, there are some questions and requirements noticeably absent from application: middle school GPA and coursework, standardized test score information, learning disability or learning services information (English as a Second Language placements or special education placements), Individualized Education Program (IEP) information, academic transcripts, attendance records, and teacher recommendations. The application materials and questions absent from Central’s application are ones that are generally used to classify students according to their abilities and needs. The nature of Central’s five application questions combined with the absence of inquiry into the student’s educational history reveals Central’s intentions to view the student as a person (student-subject) rather than seeing students as just cognitive entities (student-object). By omitting particular questions used to classify students according to their cognitive ability, Central is demonstrating their unwillingness to classify students and their unwillingness to view students as student-objects. Moreover, by deviating from the norm to create non-traditional application questions that are designed to get to know the student as a person, Central is demonstrating their intention to value the student-subject. Given all of these factors, Central is an appropriate environment to examine the manifestation (or lack of manifestation) of an administration’s humanistic intentions into
a high school climate and the connections between that humanistic school climate and
21st century skills.

Participants

The participants in this study are 17 parents, three teachers, and 15 students from Central
High School. Of the 17 parents, 15 were mothers and two were fathers. Approximately
two-thirds of the parents resided in the suburbs, and the parent sample was predominately
White. Of the three teachers, one was a White female art teacher, one was a White male
history teacher, and one was a White female math teacher. Of the 39 students recruited
for the project, 15 agreed to be interviewed. Independent t-tests were performed to
investigate differences between the 15 student participants who elected to be interviewed
and the 24 student participants who did not wish to be interviewed. There were no
statistical difference between students who agreed to be interviewed and student who
decided to be interviewed on GPA ($t(37)=-.077, p=.939$), gender ($t(37)=-1.291, p=.205$),
and grade level ($t(36)=.582, p=.564$). For students interviewed, nearly all had a GPA
between 3.4 and 4.0, there were 9 females, and there was nearly equal representation of
9th through 12th graders. Of the 15 students interviewed, three were conveniently
sampled to be key informants for this study. All key informants were female. One key
informant was a Black senior who aspired to be a teacher. The other two key informants
were first-year White students undecided about their career aspirations (although both
indicated an interest in STEM).
Data Collection

This qualitative study used interview data from a larger mixed-method project that broadly examines academic success at Central. In the qualitative portion of this project, researchers conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with students, teachers, and parents. The interview protocol for students, teachers and parents were developed by a team of six researchers. This study deliberately utilized semi-structured interviewing as “an open-ended question allows the participants to share their experiences, in their own words, rather than being forced into pre-established lines of thinking developed by researchers” (Speziale, 2003c, p. 18). Allowing the participant to share their experiences in their words is crucial to the research question. There is not an established theory about possible connections between school culture and 21st century skills; thus, it is important to explore this line of thought with knowledge from the people who live this particular school culture. Without the Voice of participants, this study will be vulnerable to criticism that this line of thought is artificial and researcher-created rather than reflective of the experiences of the Central community. Therefore, interview questions were devised to be general and broad and interviewers were trained to probe interview participants for detailed descriptions.

Students were recruited through a statement crafted by the research team and read by students’ teachers. Students were informed of the intention of the overall project and asked to present the parental consent form to their parents and return the consent form. Participants were emailed a link to the quantitative portion of this project. In the online questionnaire, student informed assent was obtained and students were asked if they
would be willing to participate in an interview. Students who assented were scheduled for a one-on-one interview with a member of the research team. All recruitment statements, consenting documents and methods, and interview protocols were approved by an institutional review board.

Parents were recruited through an advertisement on Central’s parental e-newsletter. Parents who responded to the e-newsletter were asked to schedule a one-on-one interview. Parental informed verbal consent was obtained at the beginning of the interview. Teachers were approached by a member of the research team who read a recruitment statement and scheduled an interview with teachers who agreed to participate in the study. Teacher informed verbal consent was obtained at the beginning of the interview. All interviews asked general questions about Central’s school culture, cultural factors at Central, and student motivation.

In an effort to obtain data that focused specifically on Central’s school culture, the researcher of this study conducted key informant interviews with three students. The interview protocol is similar to the protocol used in the larger project, except questions focused on the culture of the school (See Appendix A). Key informants were conveniently sampled. The key informant interviews were used to gather data specific to this study to accompany data gathered for the larger project. Key informant interviews focused on student perceptions of Central relationships and school culture factors such as trust, respect and sense of community. Broad questions were asked in key informant interviews and probing was used to pull examples of student experiences in Central’s school culture.
To examine the administration’s intention for Central’s school climate, the researcher used information on Central’s website and collected various documents. Central documents were provided by Central administration: a PowerPoint presentation Central administrators deliver to community members, school partners, and researchers; Central’s 2011 College Admissions Profile; Central Program Overview which gives an explanation of their curricular offerings, gives statistics about student performance on standardized tests, and student/teacher demographic information; and Central Application to enter the Central lottery.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using inductive analysis. The researcher first read and re-read all interviews to create codes representing the statements for all statements regarding school culture and 21st century skills, then conducted line-by-line coding of all interviews. The codes were then organized into categories and these categories were organized into themes (See Appendix B). The themes went through a non-linear process of being compared to one another and being taken back to the data to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the participants’ description of their culture. This process was complete when it was determined that the themes holistically and accurately reflected the data. A detailed explanation of the data analysis process proceeds.

After reading and re-reading all transcripts, 34 codes were created relating to school culture and 21st century skills. Of those codes, two were dropped before being categorized. The first code, discipline, was dropped because the code contained vague quotes from parents stating that, in general, Central felt safer than a traditional school. As
it was only parents who made these statements and the statements themselves were vague, this code was dropped. The second code, critical thinking, was dropped because there were few participants who mentioned critical thinking, and when it was mentioned, the comments were vague. The remaining 32 codes were then organized into 17 categories. Categories were created by combining like codes. For instance, the codes togetherness, space, and smallness all dealt with issues of creating a sense of community, thus, those three codes were combined to create the community category.

The 17 categories were then organized into five themes and eight sub-themes. The five themes were Personal Student-Teacher Relationship, Community, Trust, Respect, and Consciousness. The eight sub-themes were Personal Student-Teacher Relationship and Academic Development, Community and Collaboration, Community and Cooperation, Community and Sociability, Community and Personal Growth, Trust and Decision-Making, Respect and Cooperation, and Consciousness and Social Responsibility. These labels were taken from humanistic school culture and 21st century skills literature, thus data analysis was both an inductive and deductive process. Themes were generated from the data, yet the concepts and labels for humanistic school culture characteristics and 21st century skills were derived from the literature a priori.

At this stage, the researcher dealt with the issue of human-ness. Human-ness was originally conceptualized as a category. However, most of the quotes in the human-ness category also fell into other codes and categories and most of the codes could be thought of as expressions of human-ness. This issue was resolved by going back to the literature on humanistic school culture and coming to the conclusion that human-ness is a part of
the definition of humanistic education, thus it is found in all humanistic school culture characteristics. Therefore, human-ness as a category was dropped as human-ness is now understood to be the underlying component of all categories. Instead of having human-ness as a category, an explanation of human-ness as a component of each theme is provided under each theme in Chapter 3.

After consulting with researchers familiar with these data in a peer review session, the themes were reorganized. Through this process, it was determined that the data do not indicate academic development, just communication between students and teachers. Foundational 21st century skills are the content knowledge in subject areas. Data suggest that students and parents believe that students grasp more content knowledge when they have personal relationships with teachers. Thus, the Personal Student-Teacher Relationship and Academic Development subtheme was re-titled Personal Student-Teacher Relationships and Foundational 21st century skills. Additionally, cooperation and collaboration were combined under the term collaboration. Initially, codes were developed with the understanding of collaboration as students helping each other to achieve a common goal while cooperation was understood as students aiding each other to achieve individual goals. For instance, examples of students working together on a project would be considered collaboration while a student helping another to work a math problem would be cooperation. The difference seemed to be too minor for separate sub-themes and the 21st century skills literature was not clear on the differences between collaboration and cooperation. Thus, Community and Collaboration and Community and Cooperation sub-themes were combined into one sub-theme:
Community and Collaboration. For the sake of consistency, Respect and Cooperation was re-titled Respect and Collaboration.

Finally, Community and Personal Growth was re-titled Community and Communication. It was determined that the codes that comprise the personal growth category (confidence, public speaking, and dress code) all dealt with issues of a specific type of personal growth – communication. When students and parents spoke of confidence, they spoke of it in terms of gaining the confidence to interact with others in social situations. There were only two students who mentioned the school’s business-casual dress code as making them feel confident, and dress code did not fit into the new Community and Communication sub-theme, so dress code was dropped. All other themes and sub-themes remained the same.

**Validity**

Whittmore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) analyzed 13 writings on validation in qualitative research, including the seminal work by Lincoln (1985) and identified four primary criteria for qualitative research: authenticity, credibility, criticality, and integrity. Authenticity requires qualitative research to ensure that data reflect the lived experiences of the participants and demonstrate multiple realities. Credibility requires qualitative research to ensure data are interpreted accurately and the conclusions drawn by the researcher reflect the data. Researcher bias and inattention to multiple realities are threats to authenticity and credibility; therefore, authenticity and credibility can be maintained by addressing researcher bias, triangulation, extensive use of participant quotes and exploring differences between participants rather than ignoring them. This study aims to
satisfy the conditions of authenticity and credibility by extensively quoting participants, using triangulation of data sources and data gatherers and addressing researcher bias by conducting peer review.

Criticality requires qualitative researchers to critically appraise their own findings. This can be done by searching for alternative hypotheses, examining biases, and examining negative views – the examination of unusual perspectives. The condition of criticality is aimed to be satisfied in this study through a process of peer review that requires colleagues familiar with the data to examine this study’s findings and seek alternative explanations and interpretations (Lichtman, 2006). Finally, integrity requires that researchers attend to ethical issues (Fade, 2003). This study attended to ethical issues by obtaining Institutional Review Board approval and obtaining informed consent from each participant.

**Researcher bias.** In qualitative research, the researcher plays a key role in the processes of data collection, data analysis, interpretation of data, and the presentation of findings (Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 1988; Schram, 2006). As researchers are people, they are subjected to certain sociocultural worldviews and academic or professional trainings that introduce biases in the research process (Schram, 2006). Researcher bias can potentially diminish participants’ Voice. As it is impossible to eliminate researcher bias, there should be processes that check researcher bias. Researcher biases can be treated in many ways including attempting to eliminate researcher bias, accepted as part of the research process, or acknowledged with a statement of subjectivity (Speziale, 2003a). This study uses peer review and triangulation
to address researcher bias. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources, data gathering methods, data collectors, theories, or researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study gathered data from multiple sources including students, parents, teachers, the school’s website, and documents provided by Central’s administration. Moreover, this study used multiple researchers to gather data and create the interview protocol for all participants except the key informant participants.
Chapter 3: Analysis of Data

This study sought to describe if and how Central, with its official commitment to humanistic school culture, actually enacts those values and examine connections between humanistic school culture factors and the Social 21st century skills. Five humanistic school culture characteristics were found: personal student-teacher relationships, community, trust, respect, and consciousness. All humanistic school culture characteristics were found to have relationships with 21st century skills: personal student-teacher relationships and Foundational 21st century skills, community and collaboration, community and sociability, community and communication, trust and decision-making, respect and collaboration, and consciousness and social responsibility. Each section of this chapter will begin with a description of a humanistic school culture characteristic perceived by students, teachers, and parents and conclude with the examination of the relationship between that humanistic characteristic and one or more 21st century skills.

Personal Student-Teacher Relationships

Personal student-teacher relationships are defined in this study as ones in which the Central community perceives a closeness between students and teachers. The development of personal student-teacher relationships is a humanistic characteristic as it demonstrates the value teachers place on human-ness. The development of personal student-teacher relationships reveals teacher valuing of and concern for students as
people rather than students as cognitive entities. This section will begin with general evidence from students of the existence of personal student-teacher relationships at Central and evidence from teacher interviews that teachers care for students as people. This section will then provide evidence of specific behaviors that students and parents recognize as caring. Finally, this section will end with evidence of a connection between personal student-teacher relationships and Foundational 21st century skills.

All students described at least one personal student-teacher relationship, however, comments on the nature of personal student-teacher relationships were mixed. Many students characterized the relationship as a friendship, a few students characterized the relationship as a caring one, but certainly not a friendship, while a third group of students characterized the relationship as similar to a parental relationship, “It's not a friendship relationship, but you can definitely talk to them. It's not like one is the student and one is the teacher. I can talk to them and tell them about my life and what is going on” (Anne, student). One student compared the relationship she had with a teacher to her relationship with her mother, “I guess our relationship is more like my mom and I...she can and will talk, most of the students in [the art program] have that same kind of relationship with her, so she can and will talk with you about any issues if you have them or personal stuff” (Ali, student). Students it clear that they feel their teachers care for them as people and not just their academic success, “It is someone that you can really go to and talk to and ask for help about things that may not deal with school or relate to school. There are people that you really develop a relationship with” (Alexa, student). Part of that feeling of care a sense that teachers are confident in student ability, “I feel
like having the teachers care about our education, care about us reaching that goal makes it feel a lot more confident with yourself because they feel confident in you and they have these goals for you and they help you work towards them” (Theo, student). The personal student-teacher relationship can be so strong that it persists after a teacher leaves the school, “I had one teacher, she actually eventually left. She got a better job…but I still talk to her. I asked her to write a recommendation. She wrote me the best recommendation out of all the teachers here” (Isabella, student).

The data suggest that the nature of personal student-teacher relationships is somewhat dependent upon specific teachers and specific students. A few students made statements suggesting that their lack of intimate relationships with teachers is due to their unwillingness to develop one, “I am not the kind of person who talks a lot about my personal issues with other people, but if I needed to, I could go to her and talk about stuff” (scott.2). Additionally, one student recounted a teacher who failed to demonstrate care by failing to remember the student’s name. However, students who were unwilling to develop relationships and teachers who failed to demonstrate care were in the minority.

Teacher interviews also revealed teacher care for the students as people. Mr. Cross refers to his students as “my kids” and recognized his students as people who have developmental needs as well as academic ones, “people want consistency, especially young people. When so much of their lives is changing, when their body chemistry is changing every day, they need to know that the sun is going to rise and set. They need that” (Mr. Cross).
There were several teacher behaviors that students recognized as caring. Talking about personal issues and using friendly terms of endearment when referring to students were perceived as a form of showing care, “Mr. Smith is the dude at Central. He knows the rules at Central and he enforces them, but he also takes the kind of personal role with students. He’ll talk to you about issues. He calls everyone buddy and stuff” (Ali, student). Showing emotions when discussing the welfare of students another form of showing care, “we were talking one time and I said something about how there is a lot of students at [the affiliated university] who use Adderall to help them study….she was wiping her eyes with a tissue just like, ‘the thought of one of my students not being able to get what they want in life just hurts me so much’” (Ali, student). Overall, most students spoke about teacher behaviors that they considered caring. However, some students were able to name a teacher that they did not have a personal relationship with and named specific behaviors that hindered the development of a relationship with that teacher, “one of my teachers – it’s not her fault that she couldn’t pronounce my name, but it got really irritating. She would forget my name a lot and it wasn’t happy for me” (Paul, student).

Parents recognized teacher care as teacher ability to “show an interest. Somebody has to care about them first. Somebody has to inspire them, and that’s what teachers are supposed to do” (Abigail, parent). Parents believe Central teachers to be “really involved wholeheartedly in the idea of teaching students” (Christina, parent) and “concerned with us as individuals and where our child was going, so I think their focus, their uniqueness is that they are focused basically per child. Everything can become so individualized and where we can go over here and do this cause that’s not working for your child”
(Margaret, parent). Certain teacher behaviors resonate as teacher care with parents. These behaviors include getting emotional when discussing student hardships, “I’ve had five teachers cry or get tears in their eyes discussing our situation, so that says a lot. There is a lot of empathy there. There’s a lot of support” (Margaret, parent) and going beyond required responsibilities, “I had one teacher say ‘I’ll come to your house on a Saturday morning and go through the lesson with him. I know he knows it. If he can’t take the test, he can tell me the test. We’ll talk the test.’ That’s above and beyond” (Margaret, parent).

**Personal Student-Teacher Relationships and Foundational 21st century skills**

Foundational 21st century skills include subject content knowledge that is fundamental. All 21st century skills frameworks that include proficiency in subject content agree that the subjects of math, reading and writing, and science are essential subjects (Kane et al., 1990). Other frameworks include subjects such as foreign languages, arts, geography, and civics (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). The data of this study show that personal student-teacher relationships are related to the development of Foundational 21st century skills as students are more willing to ask for help on understanding subject content when they have a personal relationship with their teachers.

Personal student-teacher relationships are important for academic development as they enhances communication, “I am not the kind of person who talks a lot about my personal issues with other people, but if I needed to, I could go to her and talk about stuff like that. She knows issues and stuff that I have about my education and I can tell her about my classes, things that I am excited about, etc…” (Ali, student). Strong personal
relationships help students feel comfortable having academic conversations, “The more I get to know them, the more I can go up to them and ask them for help. I can communicate with them about something that I don't understand. It is just easier to communicate when you actually know the teacher” (Anne, student). In demonstrating teacher care by making time for students, teachers give students confidence to approach them with academic issues, “I feel comfortable talking to them about problems. If I just have a question, I would never hesitate to ask, because they won’t make you feel bad. They don’t act like, ‘Oh, we’re busy. We don’t have time’. So I feel like the teachers here, you can really rely on them” (Theo, student). Just as a positive student-teacher relationship can aid student willingness to approach their teachers with an academic problem, a negative student-teacher relationship can keep students from approaching their teachers, “I know a lot of people, they’ll hate their teacher and then they’ll be doing badly in their class, because they don’t talk to [their teachers]” (Sofie, student). Caroline admits that a lack of relationship with a teacher negatively affects her willingness to approach that teacher with academic issues, “I’m more uncomfortable with teachers that I can’t just act normal with, because then I don’t want to ask them questions. I don’t want to talk to them. I don’t want to spend time after school”.

As important as the personal student-teacher relationship is to make students feel comfortable in approaching their teachers with academic problems, it is possible that peers can derail the benefit of a strong student-teacher relationship. Feeling self-conscious about asking questions in front of peers may affect student willingness to address academic issues in class despite the development of a personal student-teacher
relationship. “When we do get a chance to discuss, nobody really wants to, like, ‘hey, I’ve got a question,’ but then they go up to them afterwards and he gets kind of mad about that. I think sometimes the other students would be like, ‘Maybe I shouldn’t ask that question right now. Maybe I’ll look kind of stupid’” (Paul, student). However, it must be noted that Paul is the only participant in this study to make such a comment about the effect of peers.

In addition to enhancing communication, personal student-teacher relationships aid teaching capabilities, “It’s nice because they know you, they know how you think, how you learn. They know if you have kind of a hard time on something or not. They understand your different needs” (Alexa, student). Students also believe that personal student-teacher relationships helps teachers to know how to explain subject content, “I had some really great teachers that really tried to help the students, build relationships with the students and that was very helpful when it came down to understanding a subject a lot better because the teacher would, you know, ‘how can I explain this to you to make it better?’ So they would know that this makes sense to you, so that really helped” (Ricky, student).

Parents also expressed a belief that personal student-teacher relationships aid teaching capabilities, “I think the teachers get a chance to understand what motivates, what drives so that they can help with bringing up the best for the student” (Elizabeth, parent). When that personal relationship is missing, parents notice that the quality of academic advising declines, “when we sat down for his first advisory thing that they have at the end of the year, she had no history on him. She went at us as if he was way, way
behind, and he would never be able to complete everything at Central in time and all of it was really, because she had never really even seen his transcripts” (Elizabeth, parent).

**Community**

The intention to develop community is a humanistic characteristic as it demonstrates the value individuals place on human-ness. The intent to develop community is an intention to build person-to-person bonds (requiring a view of individuals as socio-emotional beings of worth and value) and recognition of the value of individuals as capable of contributing to a unit (requiring a view of individuals as thinking beings of worth and value). This section begins with evidence of the general feelings of Central as a community and specific types of bonds that contribute to the feelings of community. This section will then provide evidence of the factors that contribute to the feelings of community: size and space, community meetings, and advisory. Finally, this section will end with evidence of connections between community and collaboration, community and sociability, and community and communication.

Central builds a sense of community that has a foundation of general concern for the individuals within the Central community. “I feel that it’s a tight-knit community of students and teachers and faculty. When I’ve gone into the school, you know for the most part, all the staff and faculty know who I am, know who my child is. You could tell that there’s a concern there for his well being and his academic and personal growth” (Victoria, parent). Most students made a statement that expressed the sentiment of their school’s community feeling “like a family” (Isabella, student).
Community bonds among peers revealed a sense of togetherness and inclusivity within the student body, “even the nerds have friends because it’s all together. I don’t know how to explain it, but they all do so there’s not someone sitting alone in a corner” (Tatiana, student). This togetherness is intentionally created by Central through the creation of advisory groups, “they put you in the same group of people for like a whole year, so your junior year you really get to spend almost your entire time with the same group of people, so you get really close with them” (Trent, student). However, advisory groups are not the source of developing peer bonds for all students. One student found it difficult to bond with peers in her adviser and sought peer bonds outside her advisory group, “the freshmen in my advisory I didn’t – they weren’t like me I guess. I didn’t really get along with them, the freshmen, and so it was just kind of hard, but I made friends outside the advisory” (Tatiana, student). These peer bonds go beyond friendships within cliques. Many students spoke of a general community bond within the student body that can result in helping behaviors, “they might go out of their way to help somebody who they might not normally, well, might not really talk to as much” (Natalie, student).

The community bond between students and the administration is positive mixed. All students who spoke of the principal or the school’s administration did so unenthusiastically, “she just kind of does the principal stuff. She tries to get to know the students, so there is a pretty good relationship between her and the students” (Ricky, student). In fact, some students haven’t “had a personal conversation at all” (Sofie, student) with the principal and others haven’t had significant interactions with
administrators, “I haven’t had a chance to really talk to the principal, but I’ve seen other students spending a lot of time working things through with her and so, just from what I’ve picked up, there’s as good a relationship with the administrator as with the teachers” (Theo, student). In fact, Caroline claims that students “just know [the principal] as that lady who gives us rules”. Even though students do not seem to value a relationship with the administration, that lack of a quality relationship does not hinder students from approaching administrators with problems “I’ve seen people get really frank with administrators and it’s not the best, but it’s still friendly most of the time. Like whenever I go up and ask questions or ask for help, they’re really nice and friendly” (Trent, student).

In contrast to the general ambivalence to most administrators many students spoke highly of the school’s secretary, “Ms. Walsh is sort of an administrator, but everyone loves her, period. If you don’t like Ms. Walsh, you need to leave the school, because an angry mob will rush you out” (Mia, student). Although no student gave a specific reason as to why they love Ms. Walsh, most made it clear that Ms. Walsh is generous with her concern for students, “I know that the front desk lady, Ms. Walsh, everybody loves Ms. Walsh. She just does everything for everybody and she’s very nice. She really gets to know the students a lot, so she’s pretty cool. I like her a lot” (Ricky, student).

This sense of community is partly due to the small size of the school, “because they are in a small environment, they know each child individually” (Margaret, parent). Other parents also noticed how “the smaller environment allows them to, um, get to know
each other and the staff a whole lot better” (Jane, parent) and how that fostered community, “the size of it, the teachers really get to know your kids. Last week I went to a meeting over there with her and she had to have a meeting with her advisor. I just sat back and let them talk, and it was amazing how well he knew my daughter. I mean I was kind of shocked” (Blanche, parent). The small size also affects peer bonds, “I think that you interact with them more. You interact with the other students too. It’s not just you interact with your group of friends. You interact with your whole class” (Alexa, student). This peer interaction creates a student body dynamic that judges people for who they are instead of by a stereotypical label, “I think that people, once they get to know you, even if you are not best friends or in the same group, at least you can talk and be friendly. Everyone is much more on a name-to-name basis instead of she's popular, she's not, she's the jock..." (Anne, student).

In addition to the smallness of the school, the “sense of openness” (Augusta, parent) also contributes to community. This sense of openness makes students “feel like everything’s all together” (Ricky, student). In this communal space, “you don’t like settle into a space and this is your space for 20 years. You are going to be there for 3 months. Then you better pick up and go. You roll your cabinet out, you roll your desk out. You go to another space” (Mr. Cross). Here, a Central teacher is referring to a Central policy that requires teachers to claim a space in the school as their office for one academic term, and then seek another space at the end of each academic term.

Size and space are not the sole community-building factors; Central makes a concerted effort to build community. Central teachers perceive Central’s community as
having “a democratic philosophy [and] town hall meetings where students, parents and staff can all vote on a variety of issues” (Mr. Cross). This democratic philosophy is exemplified in Central’s weekly, whole-school meetings, “before class starts, we have morning announcements in which both teachers, staff, and students can make announcements. The whole school gathers in front of the school” (Mr. Cross).

The final factor of Central’s sense of community is the use of advisory groups. “Every Tuesday and Thursday we have advisory and we have a group of students from first-years to fourth-years. You really get to know the students in there and you really get to know the teacher” (Alexa, student). The effect of positive student-teacher relationships developed in advisory carry over into the classroom, “within each classroom depending on the type of class that it is, there’s always seem to be availability for the kids to discuss it with other kids. So, that just starting I guess from advisory a couple of times a week and then into each classroom” (Alice, parent).

**Community and Collaboration**

The sense of community, togetherness, within Central creates a culture where students support one another in their academic pursuits. The importance of collaboration is stressed by teachers early, “the first week of school we had advisory week where we talked about that and did some teamwork projects” (Theo, student). The nature of the bond amongst peers is largely academic. Students help each other to achieve academic goals. The sense of community amongst students makes them feel supported in the academic pursuits, “I think personally that the whole – just the feel of the school, the teachers, the principal, the other kids, everything I feel like it makes you feel pretty good
about yourself and your work…you feel like it’s not just you against the work, it’s you and the school and not even against the work, just trying to conquer it” (Theo, student). Students describe Central’s atmosphere as collaborative rather than competitive, “people who have strong leadership roles ends up taking leadership roles most of the time. Everything kind of plans itself out. It just kind of works itself out and everyone ends up in a place that they are comfortable in and a place that works for them and everything is non-competitive” (Alexa, student).

The development of a community mindset and the tendency toward collaboration begin in advisory. Students are placed in advisory groups and are given the opportunity to develop bonds while working collaboratively on projects. Moreover, in these advisory groups, teachers use advisory as an opportunity for students to develop bonds that are based on helping each other academically. Central’s promotion of togetherness has resulted in collaboration amongst students. “There is a really great sense of community. Everyone works together. Everyone works together on projects. There is so much that everyone does together. Each class grows so close together because they do so much together and they learn to help and trust each other so much” (Alexa, student).

This collaboration is further encouraged by Central teachers through collaborative learning assignments, “we are doing an art piece to bring together the art piece…it’s like a triptych, a three segment painting, and I am putting mine into that ” (Anne, student). Parents also notice Central’s promotion of community, “[Central] helped him work together as a team with various people so teamwork is obviously something he’ll need the rest of his life how to work in a team” (Alice, parent). In addition to the collaborative
learning assignments, Central uses community to promote collaboration through advisory groups, “she had a small group, the advisory. Their advisory there is so many kids in each group, and they would work together. They would call like each other up or email each other or a teacher, and the teacher would help them. The teacher would email them and help them with it” (Blanche, parent).

**Community and Sociability**

The bonds formed in Central’s community provide a safe space for students to develop socially. “I used to live in a little bubble. I wasn't really shy. I just kept to myself, just more of an introvert. I have definitely expanded my horizons…I think that was due to teacher that I've had” (Anne, student). This development in sociability has resulted in increased class participation for some students, “I was really shy and closed off and even if I was having problems in the class, I wouldn’t ask questions or anything. Now I’m really open and if we’re having a discussion, I’m going to say something. I’m open about stuff and I ask questions and get involved in things now” (Chrissy, student). Most students who discuss their sociability speak of the general Central atmosphere as contributing to their sociability, but one student specifically cited the comfort of bonds within his advisory as the source of his sociability development “I feel a lot more comfortable socially…so you’ve got kind of an advisory – it’s almost like a family within the school, just a small group and then a teacher who’s your advisor. It’s the person you can go to with really anything. So that creates something that makes you a lot less nervous in any situation. Advisory’s really great for that” (Theo, student).
Students described as shy or introverted by their parents or themselves spoke of their development into a person who increases their number of friends and ability to be comfortable in social situations. Many parents described their child as shy or “socially extremely awkward” (Julienne, parent), and they spoke about their child’s social growth while at Central. “Victoria was kind of shy and a little bit backwards, but now she’s kind of, she’s still quiet. She thinks before she says, they brought out the best of her intelligence that could possibly be” (Blanche, parent). A consequence of this social development is an increase in the number of friends these shy students gain, “he has a lot of friends [at Central]…versus the public school where he never made friends” (Abigail, parent), and increased socialization, “knowing that he’s got you know a group of friends that he hangs out with and he eats lunch with, and they go to the movies together. They go to the Gallery Hop at the North and stuff like that. That tells us just incredible development for him” (Augusta, parent). However, several parents were careful to note that the development of their child may be due to natural personal development rather than Central’s culture. This must be taken into account, especially considering that most parents and students who spoke of development of sociability did not attribute this development to anything or anyone specific in Central’s culture; most participants spoke of the development without citing a cause for the development.

**Community and Communication**

In addition to an increase in sociability, Central parents and students report development in students’ ability to engage in public speaking and an ability to communicate appropriately given the social situation. As students gain confidence, their
ability to engage in public speaking increases, “she actually has huge anxiety issues and she had to get up and talk. And that was hard for her at first, and but she’s learned how to put on that persona and be able to present. So that was a big. That was really big for her to be able to get up and speak” (Beatrice, parent). Students felt the growth in themselves and their ability to communicate in different ways appropriate for different situations. “One big thing that I have learned about me is my ability to filter myself and have that…When I am around my friends, there is a different way that I talk than when I am in group discussion or talk to somebody who is important. Central has given me a lot of accomplishments and made me feel proud of myself” (Ali, student). Central requires students to “do lots of [presentations] all the time in front of the whole class” (Ricky, student) and it is the Central bonds that comfort students who are nervous to do presentations, “but in any social situation I feel comfortable now. I feel like Central actually prepares you for anything from just being with other people to public speaking, because, you know, that’s important for your life in the future. I feel a lot more comfortable doing things that I might be nervous to do otherwise” (Theo, student).

**Trust**

Trust is defined in this study in relation to control and freedom; the degree to which students are controlled or freed to control their environment. Trust is a humanistic characteristic as it inherently embodies the values of human-ness. To create a culture that respects the human need for freedom is a demonstration of the value that culture places on addressing the human needs of their students and to address the human needs of students requires that students be seen as student-subjects rather than student-objects.
This section begins with evidence of the general feelings of Central as a trusting humanistic culture and evidence of specific ways in which Central creates this trusting environment. This section will end with evidence of connections between trust and decision-making.

Nearly all participants recognized Central as a trusting culture. Parents spoke most extensively of Central’s insistence that students take control of their education. Central’s trusting atmosphere begins with trusting students to take primary responsibility for their education, “[Central] really puts a lot of responsibility and trust in the students to figure out what they want to do” (Beatrice, parent). Parents perceive Central as intentionally “instilling in the kids, ‘this is about you. You have to do this. It’s not up to your parents; it’s not up to anybody else. It’s up to you to get these things done’” (Alice, parent). As one parent put it, “Central challenges kids to take responsibility for their own success. You can choose to take longer to make it through the program by your amount of effort” (Jane, parent).

As students are encouraged to take primary responsibility for their education, Central provides a trusting freedom for students to take actions that demonstrate their ability to take primary responsibility for their education. Instead of regulating student time and movements or constantly quizzing students to ensure that they understand every concept, Central frees students by trusting them to manage their schedules, their time, their understanding of content, and their behaviors in the classroom. Students gave specific examples of how they are trusted by Central teachers and staff. For example, “teachers trust you to get your work done on time, know what you are doing, and be
truthful about whether you understand this or not” (Anne, student). There is a degree of freedom that accompanies this trust, “it is not a traditional high school and we have freedom and we have different privileges that other schools don’t have” (Anne, student). This trust involves allowing students the freedom to manage their schedules without supervision. Students compared this trusting freedom to the college atmosphere “classes are more like college…if you skip class, they won’t even ask why you weren’t there” (Ali, student). Students also compared Central’s trusting freedom to the corporate atmosphere, “we can be like businesspeople in the good ways, but not the bad ways … we can be like in them in that people are studious and we can take out our computers and go online and look up things we need to do. We are allowed to chew gum and eat in class because sometimes students have to hurry from [the affiliated university] and as long as we are not distracting other people”. This trusting freedom increases as the student matriculates through Central, “they trust students to leave the classroom or the building to pursue educational opportunities” (Matilda, student). Mia describes the progression of trusting freedom granted to students, “our teachers trust us very much to be able to break off, go on our own, and do our own work. Eventually, you get to the point where you are trusted by Central to go off campus and take college courses. So I think that they are really, it is a very trusting atmosphere” (Alexa, student). In the third and fourth year at Central, students are given the highest degree of trust, “you get to go out for lunch a lot when you’re a junior or senior and you’re not really held at school. You could sign yourself out with your parents’ permission, but you get to sign yourself out if you need to go home or go someplace. It’s really open like that” (Paul, student). The effects of this
trusting freedom is “when your teachers really trust you with things, you really want to show them that you can be trusted and that you can take on the work and challenges and the leadership roles that you are given” (Alexa, student).

**Trust and Decision-Making**

Trust allows for opportunities for decision-making, “a student here is one with a lot of freedom, a lot of choices they can make. People can either really succeed with that or people can really be playing games. That freedom is a double-edged sword, but it also leads to different decisions that apply to other sections of life” (Mia, student). There are many ways that Central trusts student to make decisions in the classroom, “they trust you to have your laptop out and to be doing homework, not playing games and stuff. They want to have these amazing opportunities for you, but they also want you to be able to decide if you want to go play games on your computer or instead are you going to work on the assignment that you are given or are you going to go home and blow off the assignments that you are given. So, they give you a lot of decisions” (Alexa, student).

This trusting freedom has ramifications beyond the classroom as students believe that their responsibility to make decisions concerning their education extends beyond the classroom, “I have specifically acted in responsible decision making. I’ve seen with like choosing to study over watching TV or whatever” (Trent, student).

When students spoke of the specific decisions that they are trusted to make, students mostly spoke of the daily decisions regarding class participation, completing homework, and procrastination. In regards to classroom participation, Ricky described how student responsibility for their education relates to making the decision to
participate, “you’re responsible for your work, so you have to be active and responsible
decision-maker and when you’re making those decisions you have to ask if you have
questions”. The biggest daily decision students make is the decision whether to
procrastinate or not. As student time is hardly regulated, students are trusted to make
decisions regarding what they do with their time when not being directly instructed. This
unregulated time leaves many opportunities to make decisions in regards to
procrastination. Procrastination seems to be the daily decision-making battle that students
face, “procrastination is not being an active and responsible decision maker. So I still do
it sometimes, but I recognize it as a problem” (Ali, student). Instead of regimenting
students’ time, thus eliminating the ability for student to make a decision to procrastinate
or not, Central gives a trusting freedom to students to make those decisions on their own,
“I'm a big procrastinator and I get off-task when there is a computer in front of me, but I
have been managing. Before, I would have completely ditched my work and gone on
Facebook or something, but now I am finding it easier to pull myself back. I know when
it is time to make a decision and I know when to pay attention and not do that kind of
stuff” (Anne, student).

Respect

Respect is defined as the valuing of human dignity and the valuing of the
uniqueness of individuals. Respect is a humanistic characteristic as it recognizes the
human-ness of people as embodiments of reason and creativity. To foster respect in a
culture is to foster a valuation of the uniqueness of individuals and their ability to make
meaningful contributions through their perspectives and manners of thinking. In other
words, to respect a person is to value them as a person (thus supplying a degree of dignity to the individual) and to value their uniqueness. This section begins with evidence of Central as a respectful humanistic culture and ends with evidence of a relationship between respect and collaboration.

Participants of this study were asked about respect using the conventional definition of the word (not the humanistic definition) and the question did not specify which relationships the participant should respond to. Interestingly, nearly all participants responded in terms of respect between peers. Students and parents gave evidence that relations between peers are respectful in that students do not bully each other. Moreover, without prompting participants to discuss respect as valuing individuals, some parents and students spoke of respect as students respecting diversity and respecting different opinions. There is a general sense of respect amongst peers at Central, “he felt really comfortable there because the students respect each other for the most part” (Beverly, parent). Several students spoke of Socratic discussions being held in their classes. Socratic discussions were described as whole-class talks facilitated by teachers where each student is required to participate and to respect each other’s opinions (although they are certainly allowed to disagree). These Socratic discussions are evidence that Central teachers intentionally create situations where students practice respecting each other’s unique opinions. Central’s respectful culture is facilitated through deliberate teacher efforts to create opportunities in their classrooms for students to practice respecting their peers while discussing issues. “We can say basically whatever we wanted as long as it wasn’t insulting to anyone else, respect ourselves and respect other people, but that
helped a lot when we were talking about things, we could really kind of share our exact opinions” (Ricky, student). It is also possible that the smallness of the school contributes to the respectful culture. As the school is small, students get to know each other and respect each other as individuals. As students get to know each other personally, they come to respect their peers and the opinions of their peers. The respect amongst peers can be partially explained by the smallness of Central, “I think the relationships definitely are really good. I mean, again, with the school being so small, you really kind of can build relationships a lot easier. So I think the student-to-student relationships are very good” (Ricky, student).

Respect and Collaboration

Respect amongst peers occurred in the form of valuing each other as individual people (rather than as members of stereotyped cliques), valuing diversity and valuing diverse opinions. This form of respect is related to student collaboration. As students value their peers as individuals rather than members of cliques, the student body has developed a non-judgmental, inclusive culture. Parents notice that the students at Central “seem to form relationships really well, even though they’re so diverse” (Jane, parent). Similarly, students seem to reject judgmental attitudes, “I think that a lot of people at Central believe that if you want to look up or down on somebody, then there is something wrong with you. It’s that type of social atmosphere” (Ali, student). There is more than a respect for diversity; diversity is viewed as an asset. “It is [a] diverse community and it is really nice to see how everyone appreciates and respects each other. It’s really nice and you don’t get that at most schools. Everyone has their differences and they are used to the
best of their abilities” (Alexa, student). Diversity is viewed as a positive contribution to their community as they see a correlation between the diversity of people and the diversity of opinions that can contribute to a discussion. “In a lot of my classes, there is a question and answer time where people raise their hand and have discussions…discussing something is a really great way to learn it because people really have different and interesting things to bring to the table” (Ali, student). This respect for diversity is related to collaboration in another way; as students feel respected, they feel comfortable to speak up in a group or team, even finding the confidence to lead teams. Respect for others’ opinions has allowed some shy students to develop as leaders, “his opinion, whether people agree with it or not, is respected. um, so he’s a little more vocal at home with his opinion as well. I don’t want him to be quiet and just follow” (Beverly, parent). Thus, respect is connected to collaboration when students who feel respected find the confidence to contribute to group effort.

**Consciousness**

Consciousness is defined as the critical awareness of power and the exertion of power in the creation of political, sociocultural, and economic inequities. Consciousness is a humanistic characteristic as the foundation of consciousness is recognition of the human-ness of people as deserving of human dignity. This section begins with evidence of Central as a humanistic culture that promotes consciousness and ends with evidence of a connection between consciousness and social responsibility.

When asked about his motivation to teach, Mr. Cross explained how his class consciousness drives him to instruct students, “were these kids wrong for being born in
the wrong family? Was that their fatal mistake? I want to believe in America and I want to believe in my country, but I cannot believe in a meritocracy when it’s not a meritocracy. It is not about your sheer effort, it’s about if your effort generates results depending on the resources that you are given”. Teacher consciousness about global issues and inequities affects student consciousness as teacher consciousness is integrated into curriculum. The results of this study indicate that Central’s culture promotes consciousness by encouraging students to become open-minded. A few students reported taking a course that had a theme of becoming open-minded throughout the curriculum. In this class, students were required to think about history from different perspectives, “I do remember in history, they talk a lot about winners are usually the ones who write history. When you look at history, what it is its White men history. It is not a lot of women or people of color, it is mostly the history of the White males” (Ali, student). One parent noticed a change in her child whom she describes as taking more of a worldly perspective due to Central. Victoria noticed a change in her son’s consciousness, “there’s a maturity and an interest in things outside of…he has broadened his interests. Instead of just, you know sports or school or friends, he’s broadened his interests into business, economics and investing, just and I think the world in general, like what goes on in the world instead of just in our own little area”.

**Consciousness and Social Responsibility**

Consciousness is the critical awareness of global, sociocultural, political, and economic inequities while social responsibility is the willingness or ability to act with the larger community or public good in mind. Several students made statements about
becoming more open-minded while attending Central. Central’s focus on global consciousness has resulted in students embracing a social responsibility to be open-minded, “Central has made me more open-minded. One of the first courses that I took I had this teacher and the whole focus of this course was how to be open-minded. It’s like the biggest thing that he drove into everybody’s heads and I really do feel more open, stronger” (Ali, student). Alice has seen her child become more open-minded due to global-awareness class discussions with diverse peers, “I think it made them think more globally and especially in the diverse school that he’s at. I think more globally and just be more open to a lot of ideas also because they did a lot of group talks”. One student incorporated social responsibility into his career goals. When asked what the purpose of education is, Theo answered, “to better the world, to make it a better place, because every person who learns something new can bring that to the world and make it safer and better”. It must be noted that Theo did not indicate that it was Central’s culture that instilled this value.

Teachers at Central have used opportunities to integrate issues of environmental, social, economic, and political issues into their classroom content. “The ‘design a sustainable world’ project we presented in front of the whole entire government class as well as many different visitors that just came to see it as well as parents…It was basically finding a problem with the millennium development goals and then finding a solution and then presenting about that solution” (Ricky, student). Teachers work together to create year-long themes of a particular global issue, and that global issue is worked into the classroom content of many of the students’ classes, “the whole focus of one year was
sustainability and we had to measure and determine the flow rate of different stuff, like toilets, showers, sinks, different things” (Paul, student). These are examples of social and global consciousness being integrated into student curriculum and Central’s effort to use student projects as an opportunity to encourage students to engage in social responsibility.
Chapter 4: Discussion

This study sought to describe if and how Central, with its official commitment to humanistic school culture, actually enacts those values and examine connections between humanistic school culture factors and the Social 21st century skills. Five humanistic school culture characteristics were identified in Central’s culture. Moreover, these humanistic school culture characteristics were found be related to 21st century skills. Personal student-teacher relationships are related to Foundational 21st century skills. The sense of community at Central is related to collaboration, sociability, and communication. Trust undergirds the freedom that Central gives to students, and this trusting freedom is related to decision-making skills. Respect amongst peers is related to collaboration. Finally, a consciousness of global issues and social inequities is related to social responsibility amongst teachers and students. Chapter four will discuss the results, significance, limitations and future directions of the study.

Conclusions

Humanism, at its core, is the prioritization of human interest and welfare above all else. A sense of human-ness, or valuing of the student-subject as a rational and socio-emotional individual as opposed to viewing students as the sum of conditional responses, defines a humanistic school culture (Valett, 1997). There are many characteristics a humanistic school culture can exhibit (Aloni, 2002; Patterson, 1973; Valett, 1977) and all
of these characteristics demonstrate ways in which a culture can express human-ness. Five such humanistic school culture characteristics were found in Central: personal student-teacher relationships, community, trust, respect, and consciousness.

Personal student-teacher relationships and community were the most heavily supported humanistic school culture characteristics. Students, parents and teachers went into great detail about the bonds between students and teachers, between students and certain administrators and amongst students. Students and parents shared the most detailed stories about personal student-teacher relationships, more so than any other type of bond in Central. Relations between students and teachers were described as close and caring, akin to a parental relationship. This finding is consistent with previous literature which found positive student-teacher relationships to be characterized as close, safe, and trusting and comparable to the quality of parent-child relations (Wetzel, 2009).

The bond between students and administrators is the most contentious. Student unanimously adored Ms. Walsh, the front desk secretary. However, the description of the relationship between students and the principal was surprising. Most students were indifferent about the relationship between the principal and themselves. This is surprising given the small size of Central and the degree to which students gave detailed stories on other community bonds. Given that the entire student body is fewer than 400 students and that Central makes a concerted effort through advisory groups and whole-school meetings to develop a sense of community, bonds tend to be strong in Central. The lack of bond between students and the principal is out of the norm considering the strength of other bonds in Central. This lack of bond between students and the principal may be of
no consequence as the data do not suggest that students suffer from it and generally feel comfortable approaching their principal with education-related issues.

Trust was defined in relation to control and freedom. Students described the freedom allotted them as a reflection of Central’s trust in students. The humanistic philosophy on trust argues that people have an intrinsic need for freedom and choice (Aloni, 2002). Central creates a trusting culture by giving students primary responsibility over their education and requiring students to monitor themselves. Self-determination theory posits that individuals are naturally curious and education institutions that insist on external controls, monitoring, and evaluation attenuate natural curiosity (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2009). An autonomy-supportive environment is one that provides choices and encourages students to take responsibility for their actions (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2009). Central’s culture of trusting freedom, which gives students primary responsibility for monitoring themselves and responsibility for their education in general, can be considered autonomy-supportive.

Regarding respect and consciousness, it was often difficult to separate data concerning respect from data concerning consciousness. Students and parents spoke of respect in terms of valuing diversity and diverse opinions while consciousness was defined as being open-minded and aware of social and global issues. These two inform each other as being open-minded is related to accepting diverse opinions and being aware of social and global issues may help students to value diversity. Respect and consciousness are interrelated. For this study, expressions of awareness and acceptance of the diversity of their peers was categorized under the theme of respect while expressions
of awareness and acceptance of diversity and social issues in general were categorized under the theme of consciousness.

Similarly, it was often difficult to separate data concerning community bonds from data concerning respect, as these humanistic school culture characteristics often informed one another. For instance, students and parents spoke of the respect for diversity within the student body, but the reasoning for that respect was often attributed to the fact that students had close bonds with one another, thus enabling students to respect their peers as individuals. For this study, expressions of valuing diversity were categorized under the theme of respect while expressions of the close bonds amongst peers were categorized under the theme of community; however, the two certainly inform one another. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that these themes are not fixed, separate entities; humanistic school culture characteristics are intertwined.

The second research question inquired about the possibility of relationships between humanistic school culture characteristics and 21st century skills. Seven sub-themes were found: personal student-teacher relationships and Foundational 21st century skills, community and collaboration, community and sociability, community and communication, trust and decision-making, respect and collaboration, and consciousness and social responsibility.

Similar to the complications amongst themes, there are overlapping complications amongst sub-themes. This study found that positive student-teacher relationship can encourage students to approach teachers with academic issues; however, peers may play a role in modifying the significance of personal student-teacher relationship in the
classroom. One student notes that, even when he has a personal relationship with his teacher, he may not ask a question during class if he feels that his peers may judge him for the action. This finding is in line with previous literature which has found that student belief that a particular behavior is discouraged or received negatively by their peers will result in the student refraining from displaying the offending behavior (A. Ryan, 2000). Community bonds, specifically peer bonds, can mediate the academic advantage of personal student-teacher relationships. Although it was only one student who made note of the role of peers in moderating the effect of personal student-teacher relationships on classroom participation, it must be noted that Paul offered the comment unprompted and other students were not asked about the role of peers in these situations. It may be the case that, if asked, other participants may have made a statement that supports Paul’s comment.

Consciousness is the critical awareness of power and social and global inequities and issues (Aloni, 2002). The promotion of consciousness involves the development of empathy, or concern for others, and the development of knowledge concerning sociopolitical, economic, and cultural issues (Russo, 1995). Social responsibility comes from the application of empathy and knowledge concerning social and global issues (Russo). The data concerning the connection between consciousness and social responsibility were thin; only a handful of participants mentioned consciousness and social responsibility. This sub-theme was included for three reasons. Firstly, data on consciousness and social responsibility came from several different sources: students, parents, a teacher, and the researcher’s informal observations. In addition to students,
parents, and a teacher speaking on the issue, the researcher observed acts of social responsibility in the projects and artwork displayed in the school. These included projects and artwork that addressed global and social issues and inequalities such as racism, sexism, malaria, HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability, and the politics of economic inequalities.

There may not be much data on consciousness and social responsibility, but the diversity of data sources warranted inclusion of this sub-theme. Secondly, consciousness and social responsibility was never directly addressed by the interviewer; every consciousness and social responsibility comment was offered unprompted. The presence of these data, despite the lack of intention to gather these specific data, indicates their importance. Lastly, although only one teacher spoke of intentionally addressing global and social issues in his classes, students spoke of several classes in which global issues and inequities were addressed. Moreover, students mentioned whole-school initiatives to incorporate global issues and inequities into class projects. Thus, the data show that the focus on global issues and inequities is not stemming from one teacher even though only one teacher reported on the issue in the study. Given these three factors, consciousness and social responsibility were included as a sub-theme despite the sparseness of the data.

**Significance of Study**

This study contributes to the literatures on humanistic education and 21st century skills. The significance of this study is in its ability to combine the two literatures in a manner that informs both while creating an unexplored line of thought. Humanistic education is relevant for modern education. As education scholars look to new school
culture paradigms, this study demonstrates the relevance of classic educational paradigms in a modern educational school culture. There may not be a need to create new school culture paradigms when classic paradigms are appropriate.

Another significance of this study is the understanding of school culture as important for 21st century skills. The development of 21st century skills is more than teaching and assessing competency in specific skills. The development of certain 21st century skills, particularly Social and Foundational, is related to the culture in which students are schooled. Reviewing the list of 21st century skills (communication, collaboration, decision-making, sociability and social responsibility) it is evident that these skills are concerned with students learning to conveying a message to, working with, and being concerned for people. Humanistic education is concerned with developing the socio-emotional self. It makes sense that a school culture concerned with the socio-emotional development of students would be an appropriate schooling culture to develop students’ people skills. This is why humanistic school culture is an appropriate culture for students to learn 21st century skills and why school culture in general is important for Social 21st century skills.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the results of this study are limited to the school studied. Central is extremely unique, and Central’s school culture is equally unique. Thus, the results found in this study are particular to Central. Second, all data, except key informant interviews, were collected for a larger project, not specifically designed for this study. Moreover, a considerable amount of the key informant interview
protocol had to include questions for the larger project. Thus, none of the interviews were able to delve into perceptions of Central’s school culture to a degree that would capture all school culture factors. As such, it is possible that some humanistic school culture characteristics of Central were left unexamined as they were not captured by during the data collection process. The final limitation is the lack of gender diversity in the sample. Amongst parent participants, all but one were female and all three key informants were female. Lack of gendered diversity may only be important if males and females are affected differently by socio-cultural factors such as school culture. It is possible that school culture is either more or less important for males than it is for females.

**Future Directions**

Connecting school culture and 21st century skills is a new line of thought with many unexplored questions. Futures studies are needed to examine the degree to which the humanistic school culture characteristics found in Central are specific to Central, discover other humanistic school culture characteristics important in modern education, and investigate the nature of specific humanistic school culture characteristics in regards to their level of importance as primary or secondary. Moreover, futures studies are needed to examine connections between humanistic school culture characteristics and Cognitive or Technology 21st century skills. This study was unable to investigate the relationship between humanistic school culture characteristics and cognitive or technological 21st century skills due to a lack of in-depth descriptions of cognitive and technological 21st century skills in data. These are all unexplored questions that future studies should address.
Few current studies have examined the importance of humanistic education in modern schooling. There may be worth in resurrecting humanistic education as it is a paradigm that combines many elements in an effort to promote the holistic education of children. A particular research inquiry for future studies is a comparison of humanistic school culture to other school culture philosophies. This study provides evidence that humanistic school culture is related to Social 21st century skills, however, this study did not conduct a comparative analysis on the relative ability of humanistic school culture to be an environment conducive for 21st century skills. It is possible that other school culture philosophies and paradigms are just as conducive to the development of 21st century skills as a humanistic school culture. Future studies would conduct comparative analyses.

Finally, future studies are needed to examine the relationship between humanistic school culture characteristics and Social 21st century skills using a sample that is representative of the school demographics. A future study would equally sample males and females and conduct a gender analysis to understand the relationship between humanistic school culture and Social 21st century skills in males versus females.
References


Appendix A: Key Informant Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to interview with me. My name is Nicole and I am a researcher in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership at the Ohio State University. The purpose of this study is to better understand student experiences at Central. I’m going to ask you some questions about yourself and your perspective on your school climate, your teachers, your administrators and your life outside of school. Please remember that these questions are designed to help us to understand your perspective of Central. This interview will be audio-recorded so that I will be able to focus on our conversation and not on taking notes. I want to assure you that your responses are completely confidential, and won’t be shared with anyone. We will summarize the responses to the many interviews that we are conducting for research purposes, but we will never report your individual results. You are allowed to stop this interview at any time and if you feel uncomfortable answering any question, just tell me and we will skip it.

1. How did you decide to apply to Central? (what factors influenced your decision?)
2. What is it like to be a student at Central? (e.g., stressful, exciting, etc.)
3. How would you describe Central’s culture?
4. What type of extracurricular activities (if any) do you pursue? (also see if they do things not affiliated with the school, e.g. play basketball with kids in the neighborhood)
5. Have there been particularly interesting ways teachers have approached the subject matter? Describe one.
6. What is it like in class in terms of discussion? (Is it mostly whole-class? Small-group? With a partner? What is this experience like for you? Is participation graded?)
7. Are you supported by your teachers if you go about solving problems differently than other students?

8. How do you feel about the dress code?

9. How supportive is Central’s atmosphere for students (regarding academic pursuits)?

10. How do you study/prepare for classes? How many hours do you spend outside the classroom on school-related work?

11. If you have an interest in a topic that wasn’t directly assigned by a teacher, can you pursue it at Central? (Give examples)

12. Who and where do you get most of the support in your education? (we hope they will mention school, family, community, friends/peers—if not, specifically ask about parents and peers).


14. What kind of academic expectations are there for you at Central (from teachers, administrators and parents)? How do they get communicated to you?

15. How do you feel about the way you are graded/assessed? (are there paper/pencil test, verbal, portfolio submission etc)

16. What do you think about mastery expectation? How has it affected you?

17. Has Central influenced your career goals? How? (how did you decide on that career? Have you always had these goals? if not Central, then who influenced them?)

18. Are there any opportunities at your home institution that you are missing out on due to your commitment at Central? (How does this make you feel? What do you do about it?)

19. How does the quality of social life for students at Central compare to peers in your home institution? (we’re trying to find out where they fit more?)

20. What is the purpose of education for you? Why are you in school?
21. In what ways have you changed since you started at Central? (habits, etc.)

22. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix B: Data Analysis Map
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th># of quotes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Final Themes</th>
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<td>Teacher treating students as if own kids</td>
<td>Human-ness</td>
<td>Personal Student-Teacher Relationships</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Feelings of connectedness between students and teachers</td>
<td>Personal Student-Teacher Relationships</td>
<td>Personal Student-Teacher Relationships</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Teacher academic support of students</td>
<td>Personal Student-Teacher Relationships and Academic Development</td>
<td>Personal Student-Teacher Relationships and Foundational 21st century skills</td>
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82
<table>
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<th>Term</th>
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<td>Student report of personal relationship affecting academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students, teachers, parents and staff coming together/meeting</td>
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<td>Space</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sense of open-ness, sense of communal space</td>
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<td>References to the size of school as small</td>
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<td>Students contributing to governing of Central Student as Contributing Member</td>
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<td>Administrative decision-making by student of Community</td>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students working together in groups to achieve a common goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collab</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher creation of groups initiating Collaboration in a group setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collab</td>
<td>student collaboration</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teach Coop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher creation of groups where students help each other on independent goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation in a group setting</td>
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<td><strong>Stud Coop</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students feeling a bond makes them want to help peers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>More</strong></td>
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<td>Student and parent reports of students having more friends in Central community as opposed to previous educational community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Confidence</strong></td>
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<td>Student and parent report of increase of student confidence due to Central bonds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pspeaking</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student and parent report of student confidence to speak in public due to Community and Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sociability</strong></td>
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<td>Student freedoms that are not related to academics</td>
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<td>Making and Trusting</td>
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<td>Trust and Decision</td>
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<td>Description</td>
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<td>Parent claims of trusting freedom as opportunity to practice responsibility</td>
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<td>Student and parent claims that student body respects racial/ethnic diversity</td>
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<td>Respect for Diversity</td>
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<td><strong>PR Opin</strong></td>
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<td>Student and parent claims that student body respects diverse opinions</td>
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