

Examining Tracking and Students' Perceptions of Teachers as Predictors of Academic Identity



BASS CONNECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

- *Academic Identity* = connection between a student's personal identity & role as a student.
 - Positive academic identity is associated with better grades, higher motivation, & greater classroom participation.^{1,2,3}
- *Few studies have examined predictors of academic identity.*
- *Tracking* = the grouping of students into different classes based on perceived ability.
 - Track placement is associated with achievement disparities.^{4,5}

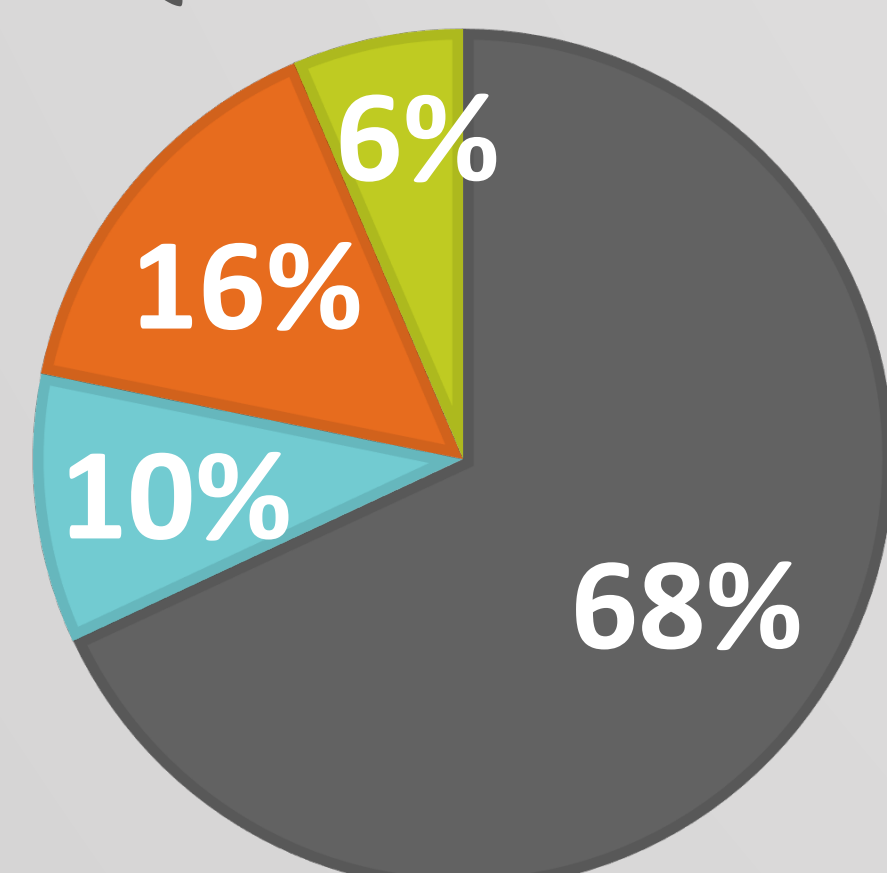
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does tracking impact sixth graders' academic identity?
2. How do sixth graders' perceptions of their math and English language arts teachers impact their academic identity?

PARTICIPANTS

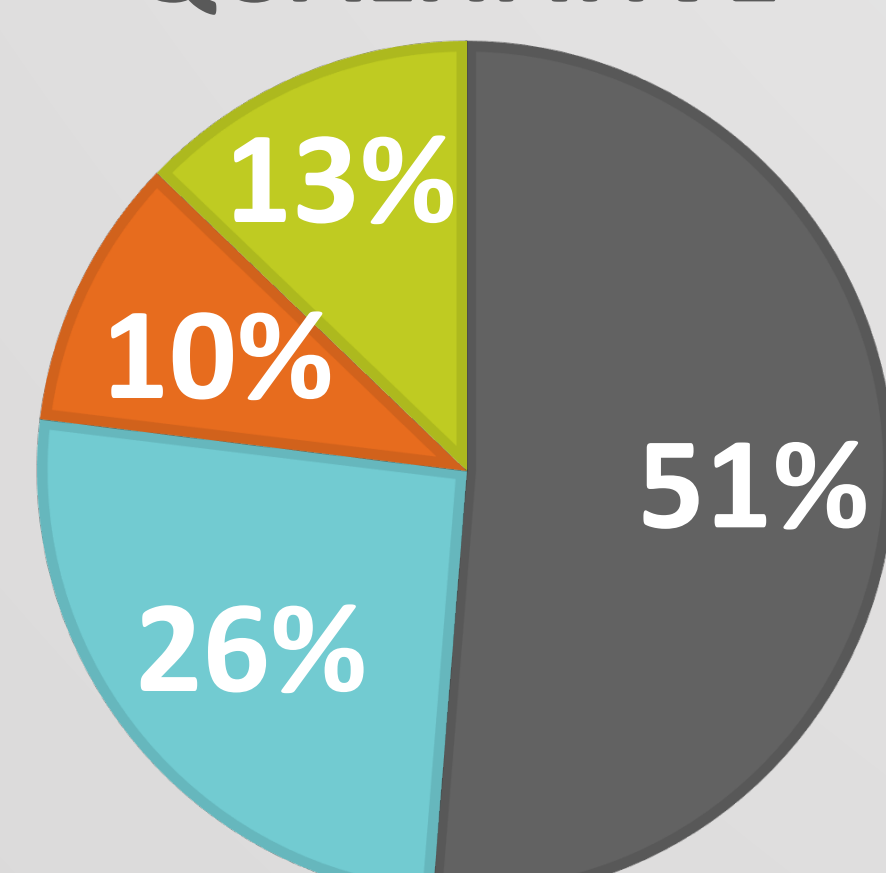
- Sixth graders and teachers from 4 middle schools in middle-class Southeastern school district
- *Quantitative:* Students: $N = 188$; 108 Female
Honors: $N = 102$
- *Qualitative:* Students: $N = 39$; 19 Female
Teachers: $N = 15$; 8 Female

QUANTITATIVE



■ White ■ Black
■ Latinx ■ Other

QUALITATIVE



■ White ■ Black
■ Latinx ■ Asian

METHOD

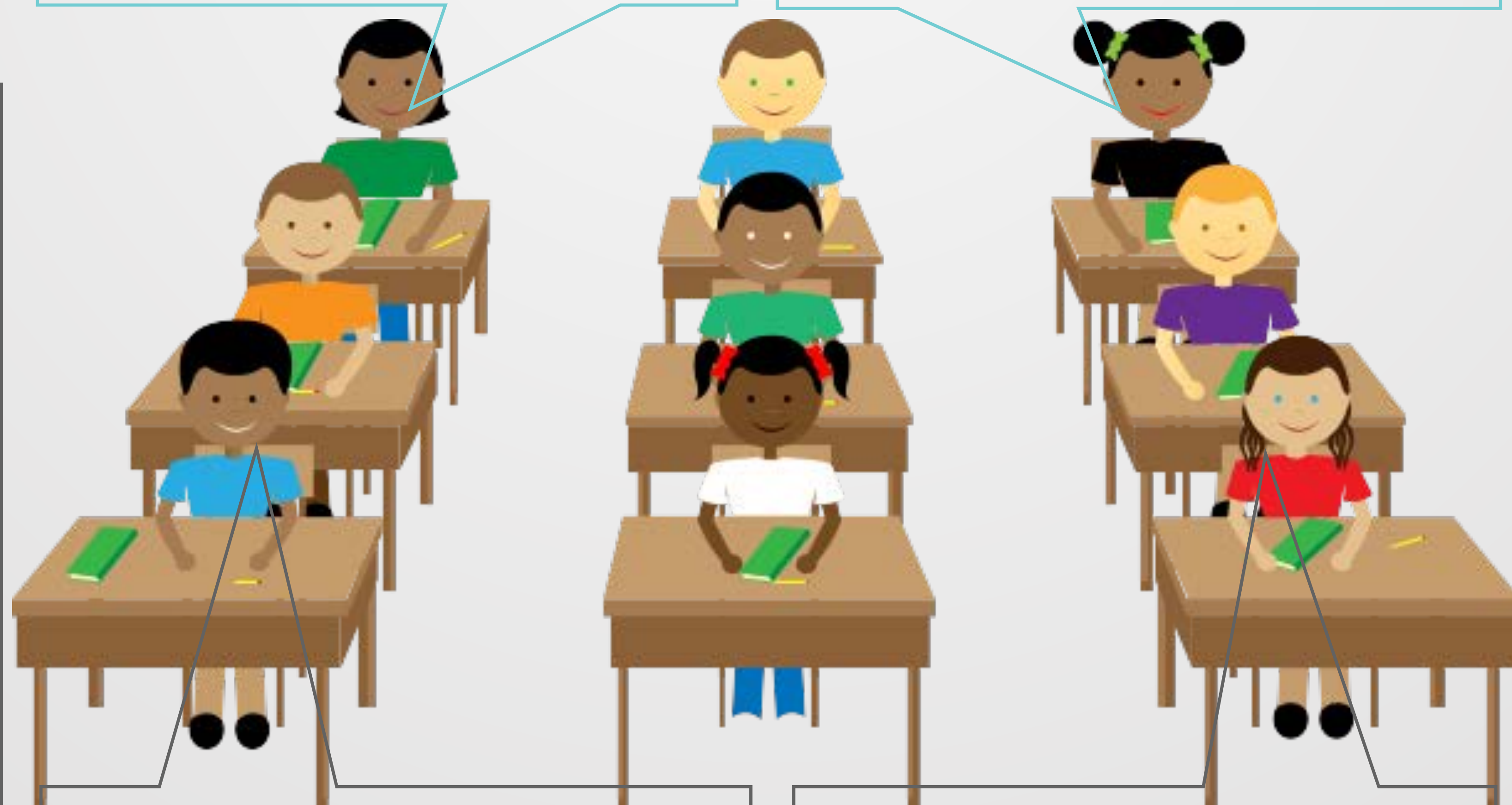
- *Quantitative:* Qualtrics surveys in Spring 2017
- Multilevel Modeling Analysis using STATA
- *Qualitative:* Conducted and transcribed student and teacher interviews
- Coded interviews thematically using NVivo 11

RQ1 FINDING

Being in the accelerated math track—but not in the regular track—was significantly associated with having a stronger academic identity ($b = .14, p < .05$).

“[Accelerated math is] where all the **really smart people** go.”
—David (Regular)

“Well, it's 'cause **all the really smart kids don't go to the regular math class.**”
—Tina (Regular)

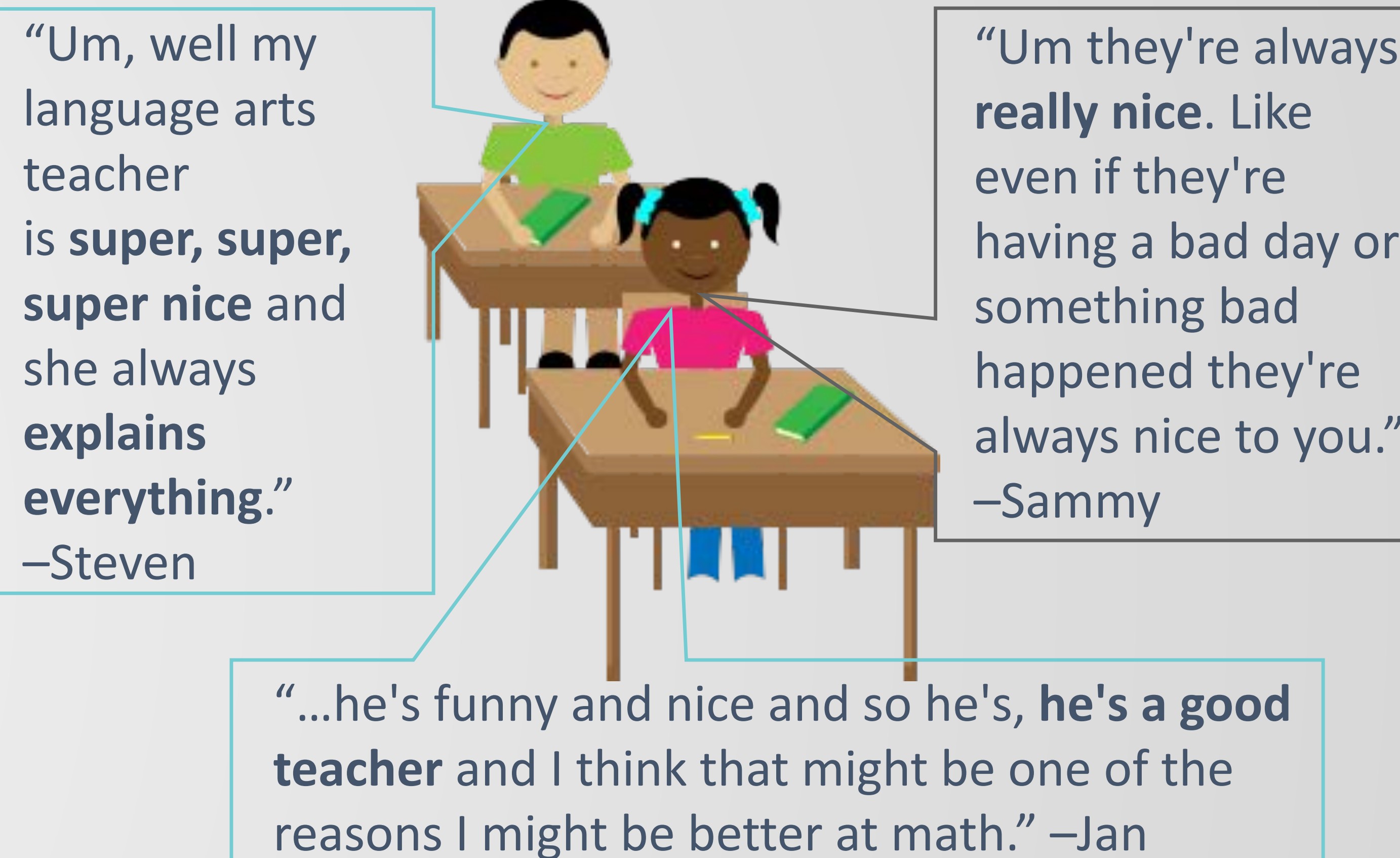


“The difference between people in [accelerated] and not in [accelerated] is **intelligence.**”
—Matt (Accelerated)

“I might **work harder** than those who didn't. I might **naturally be better at math** than the other students.”
—Sheila (Accelerated)

RQ2 FINDING

- Students' positive perceptions of their teachers were significantly associated with having a stronger academic identity.
 - Math Teachers: ($b = .13, p < .05$)
 - Language Arts Teachers ($b = .32, p < .001$)



“Um, well my language arts teacher is **super, super, super nice** and she always **explains everything.**”
—Steven

“Um they're always **really nice.** Like even if they're having a bad day or something bad happened they're always nice to you.”
—Sammy

“...he's funny and nice and so he's, **he's a good teacher** and I think that might be one of the reasons I might be better at math.”
—Jan

CONCLUSION

- This study provides new evidence on predictors of academic identity.
- Students' perceptions of teachers are important for academic identity development and school interventions.
- This study adds to the literature on how tracking contributes to disparities in students' achievement outcomes.

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