Urban, primarily minority and low-SES students continue to lag behind their suburban white non-low SES counterparts in terms of academic achievement. Some previous research suggests that strong bonds between teachers and students help such students succeed. This study therefore sought to investigate any relationships between student-teacher connection, race, and academic achievement. Student perceptional data on student-teacher connections (i.e., a teacher caring about them) and student achievement data in the areas of math and reading from 3,359 high school students within a large urban Midwestern school district were examined. In addition, the race/ethnicity of both the students and teachers were examined to determine any connections to level of perceived care.

Descriptive statistics revealed that the students in this urban district were performing slightly better than their peers across the nation on the NWEA’s MAP math and reading assessment, and that they perceived a slightly positive level of care from their teachers (using the TRIPOD student perception survey). Regression analysis did not show significant findings in the correlation between student-teacher connection and academic achievement. However, it did reveal significant findings related to the student-teacher connection and the race/ethnicity of both the student and the teacher. More specifically, Black and non-Black or Hispanic Minority students showed a significant
decrease in the perception of care from White teachers. When they had non-White teachers, Black and White students showed an increase in the perception of care from their teachers, while Hispanic and non-Black or Hispanic Minority students showed a slight decrease. Finally, when students were matched with teachers of the same race/ethnicity, White, Black, and non-Black or Hispanic Minority students showed a slight increase in the perception of care from their teachers, while Hispanic students showed a slight decrease.