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ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS TRANSITIONING FROM URBAN TO RURAL SCHOOLS

by

La Shawn Catrice Bacon

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in
Rehabilitation and Counselor Education
in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor David K. Duys

ABSTRACT

The relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement in African American students who have experienced geographic mobility was the focus of this study. Specifically, this study used quantitative methods to assess African American students from counties in Iowa to obtain information about the students' relocation from urban to rural school environments and to understand how such moves influenced their academic performance and academic self-concept. Gender and length of time since transition were also considered. The sample consisted of 101 African American middle school/junior high students who had been enrolled in Iowa schools for less than 24 months or more than 24 months. Results indicated a significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement measures of ITBS composite scores and cumulative GPA. Gender and the length of time since transition were not shown to be linked to students' academic ability or performance in school. Data gathered from this study will assist administrators, parents, educators, and school counselors with understanding geographic mobility, academic self-concept, and academic achievement. Information obtained will also provide insight about other factors that relate to the academic setting and students' assessment of school such as student motivation, perceptions of peers, the academic self-perceptions students possess, students' attitude towards teachers and classes, and students' attitude towards school.

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Thesis Supervisor

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Title and Department

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Date

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

_____

PH.D. THESIS

_____

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

La Shawn Catrice Bacon

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Rehabilitation and Counselor Education at the July 2011 graduation.

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To my parents, the late Rayford T. Bacon, Sr., and Bertha M. Bacon, and my sister, Dr. Legena Roberts-Kpinkpin, without your love, prayers, and support I would not be the person I am today

Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Relocation and environmental transitions occur frequently in the lives of many Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data (2004), 40.1 million U.S. residents relocated between 2002 and 2003, and this phenomenon is expected to increase. Moving can be a stressful event for family members as adults and children often experience relocation differently. Using a meta-analysis of research studies, Mehana and Reynolds (2004) evaluated school mobility and achievement to discover the influences of residential and school relocation on students' academic performance. The results from this and other studies conducted between 1975 and 1994 indicated a significant relationship among math and reading achievement measures and school mobility (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). In a study by Bronfenbrenner (1979), a relationship between changes in students' educational settings and their achievement was established on the basis of Bronfenbrenner's concept of ecological transition, because changes in the students' environment led to disruptions in students' roles, expectations, and overall surroundings, thus impacting academic performance. Relocation and changes in environment have also been linked to fluctuations in students' emotional, behavioral, and school functioning (Simpson & Fowler, 1994). Simpson and Fowler (1994) concluded that multiple moves may have a greater impact on students because there are more frequent changes in peer and social relationships and fluctuations in familiar places and routines, leading to variations in emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning.

School mobility can be described as a school enrollment change that is not initiated by a school system or dissatisfaction with current residence. For example, school mobility may occur because of (a) factors associated with dissatisfaction with schools in a particular geographic location, (b) alterations in family structure due to divorce or parental separation, (c) change in parents' employment, and (d) other stressful

life events (Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, & Fleming, 2008). Fluctuations in learning environments and changes in the educational settings of students can impact the students' academic achievement and overall academic performance. Researchers have indicated that these students may have a greater risk of low grades, behavioral problems, and other academic difficulties (Gruman et al., 2008; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Although studies exist on school mobility and the effects on academic performance, they are based primarily on White middle-class students and may not be applicable to the overall U.S. school population; therefore, racial differences associated with school mobility need to be explored (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1996; Temple & Reynolds, 1999).

Because changes in environment and educational settings due to geographic mobility may be associated with fluctuations in students' academic self-concept, understanding the potential relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement was a primary concern of this research. Academic self-concept can be defined as the way a student views his or her academic ability when compared with other students (Cokley, 2000) and consists of attitudes, feelings, and perceptions about one's academic skills (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997). Another research concern was the influence of environmental transition from urban to rural settings on junior high/middle school students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

The academic underachievement of Blacks within the U.S. education system has been attributed to a host of individual, family, community, cultural, and societal factors (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). Subsequently, many theorists have conducted research and offered explanations as to the cause of and solution to this phenomenon of low academic performance among Black students. Nevertheless, the academic achievement gap between Black and White students continues to expand into the 21st century. Several factors impact the educational achievement of students, including

school curriculum, student learning style, and teacher expectations (Kunjufu, 1989). Gutman, Sameroff, and Eccles (2002) examined the influence of risk factors on achievement measures including grade-point average and test scores of African American seventh graders and found that multiple risk factors, such as socioeconomic status and parental education level, put some students at risk for less than optimal academic achievement. Neighborhood characteristics and the presence of people with positive educational experiences and outcomes also have been shown to influence student success; however, many poorer neighborhoods lack these role models, and students may rarely encounter influential academic achievers (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993; Duncan, 1994).

Research studies have also shown that achievement levels of African American adolescents are being negatively impacted at a higher rate than the levels of other students and demonstrate that these students are not reaching the levels of academic achievement of their peers as evidenced by the test score gap when comparing Black and White students (Phillips, Crouse, & Ralph, 1998). Although many researchers continue to investigate the reasons for lower performance of Blacks on achievement measures, few are able to establish concrete resolutions to this gap in achievement.

The current study focused primarily on young adolescents in Grades 6 through 8 because of the nature of their experiences during this developmental period as described by Berger (2001): “Adolescence is not defined by its problems, but all adolescents experience moments of awkwardness, confusion, anger, and depression; many make serious missteps on the path toward maturity; and some encounter obstacles that halt their progress completely” (p. 381). Early adolescence encompasses many physiological and psychological changes associated with puberty, and these changes can leave some students susceptible to risk factors that may generate academic problems during this period of development (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Gutman et al., 2002). Throughout the course of their development, adolescents engage in personal

relationships with individuals within their networks, which include parents, siblings, relatives, peers, and teachers (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

During the middle-school years, adolescents become more dependent on peer groups and begin to formulate their self-concept and self-understanding based on the influences of others (Berger, 2001). Hart and Damon (1988) described self-understanding as thoughts and attitudes that encompass all the considerations that an individual uses to define the self and to distinguish the self from others. Therefore, the influence on adolescents' self-understanding and the potential effects of changes in their social networks should be considered when assessing the impact of geographic mobility on academic self-concept and academic achievement. Examining aspects of the students' academic setting, such as the interactions with peers and teachers, and other student influences within the school, can be useful in determining how these factors relate to academic performance. Additionally, it is important to explore the presence of gender differences among students who have experienced geographic mobility because these differences may be unique for males and females.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine African American sixth- through eighth-grade students who recently transitioned from an urban to a rural environment to determine the relationship between the transition and their academic achievement and academic self-concept. The goal of this study was to promote awareness about underrepresented student populations and to assist educators in gaining insight into the transitional experiences of these students in order to provide effective programming. The findings of this study generated information to assist administrators, parents, educators, and school counselors with understanding the effects of geographic mobility on academic self-concept and academic achievement and with providing additional educational supports to those students who may be negatively impacted.

Rationale

A case study of elementary African American students by Murphy (2003) found that positive interactions, relationships, and social environment can influence academic achievement. In Murphy's study, school success was attributed to cultural values and to emphasis on high scholastic achievement by individuals in the students' social network (Murphy, 2003). Changes in personal networks may create disparity among adolescents. Scott-Jones and Clark (1986) explored the academic, social, and motivational experiences of Black middle-school females to determine the impact of these experiences. The results indicated that academic achievement was influenced by the students' abilities in math, science, and verbal skills; the students' aspirations and motivations; and the educational expectations of teachers and parents. Social environment, teacher and student interactions, and peer interactions were also shown to influence academic achievement (Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986). Examining the relationship between the academic self-concept of adolescents who have recently transitioned from an urban to a rural environment and their academic achievement may contribute further information regarding the impact of environmental transitions on academic performance.

Ferguson (2003) discovered an association between teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors and their students' beliefs, behaviors, and work habits. This association was found to generate dissonance among students and educators, leading to low achievement in students. Zhang (2002) examined the achievement gap between Black and White students in reading and mathematics, along with overall patterns of academic achievement of several grade levels over a period of time, and concluded that White students scored consistently higher than Black students on achievement tests. Research has also indicated that Blacks enter elementary school with weaker skills than their White counterparts (Phillips et al., 1998). Because school environments differ between states and among individual school districts, it is useful to determine the effects on Black students of recent transitions from urban inner cities to rural environments,

while exploring the relationship between the academic self-concept and the academic achievement of these students.

Research Questions

Questions guiding this research study include:

1) What is the relationship between academic self-concept (Academic Self-Concept Scale) and academic achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and grade point averages) of African American students in Grades 6 through 8 who have experienced transition from an urban to a rural environment and those who have not?
2) What are the gender differences in the relationship between academic self-concept (Academic Self-Concept Scale) and academic achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and grade point averages) among these transitioned and non-transitioned students?
3) Are academic self-concept (Academic Self-Concept Scale) and academic achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and grade point averages) related to students' academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions (modified School Attitude Assessment Survey/School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised) for transitioned and non-transitioned students?
4) How do the students' attitudes toward teachers (modified School Attitude Assessment Survey/School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised) relate to academic self-concept and academic achievement?
5) How does the length of time since transition relate to academic self-concept (Academic Self-Concept Scale), academic achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and grade point averages), and modified (modified School Attitude Assessment Survey/School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised) subscales?
6) How does the transition from an urban to a rural environment relate to the students' attitudes toward school and their motivation/self-regulation in the

school setting (modified School Attitude Assessment Survey/School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised)?

For the research questions, academic self-concept was measured by the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina, & Allen, 1980). Academic achievement was measured by scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and grade point averages (GPAs). Academic self perceptions and peer perceptions were measured by the modified School Attitude Assessment Survey (SAAS; McCoach, 2002) and the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). These measures are discussed in more detail in Chapter III, Methodology.

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions served as a frame of reference for the language used in this study.

African American

African Americans or Blacks are citizens or residents of the United States who have origins or ancestry in any of the black populations or racial groups of Africa (www.census.gov). Throughout the study, the terms African Americans and Blacks are used interchangeably. Students of color in this study self-reported their racial category by agreeing to participate in a study designated for African Americans; race and ethnicity information also was obtained from cumulative school records.

Academic Self-Concept

Academic self-concept can be explained as “specific attitudes, feelings, and perceptions about one’s intellectual or academic skills, representing a person’s self-beliefs and self-feelings regarding the academic setting” (Lent et al., p. 308). Cokley (2000) defined academic self-concept as a student’s view of his or her academic ability when compared with other students. Academic self-concept can also be measured in specific subject areas such as mathematics, English, and science as it involves a

description and an evaluation of one's perceived academic abilities (Byrne, 1996; Hattie, 1992; Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988).

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to standardized test scores, grades, and overall academic ability and performance outcomes. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and grade-point averages (GPAs) were the academic achievement measures used for this study. Specifically, this study utilized the term academic achievement in reference to academic performance and educational outcomes of African American students.

Junior High and Middle School

The classification of school type was used interchangeably throughout this study. However, this term may refer to students in Grades 7 and 8 or students in Grades 6 through 8 depending on the school composition and guidelines for the district. The age range of these students varied from 11 to 13 years. Nevertheless, some students may have been slightly older or younger than this age range but were included in the study because they were enrolled in a junior high or middle school and met the inclusion criteria.

School Mobility/Environmental Transition

Mehana and Reynolds (2004) referred to any change in school or academic environment as school mobility. In the current study, this term was used to refer to students who had recently transitioned from an urban to a rural school within the past 24 months. The term environmental transition was also used as a reference to school mobility given that relocation to another area of residence could result in a change of school.

Geographic Mobility/Residential Mobility

The United States Census Bureau refers to geographic mobility as any transition or move within the same county or state, to a different county, state, or country. The movement can be associated with factors such as changes in socioeconomic composition

and family structure (www.census.gov). Residential mobility specifically refers to moves within a particular jurisdiction or county boundary (www.census.gov). Both geographic and residential mobility involve the movement of a family unit from one location to another, thus potentially influencing the family structure.

Social Cognitive Development

This concept comprises many aspects of a child's environment, including parental involvement or parent-child interaction, decision-making skills, communication skills, social skills, peer interactions, and other factors that may be included in a child's developmental process (Miller, Kessel, & Flavell, 1970). Contextually, the aspects of children's social cognitive development were addressed throughout the study. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) also discussed the link between academic performance and the school environment based on the interaction between personal and environmental constructs.

Urban

The United States Census Bureau defines urban or metropolitan areas as a large population nucleus with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus. These areas contain a minimum population of 50,000 to 100,000. The term urbanized area denotes an urban area of 50,000 or more people. Urban areas under 50,000 people are called urban clusters. Urban or metropolitan areas generally include a city or urbanized area (www.census.gov).

Rural

The United States Census Bureau defines rural or non-metropolitan areas as consisting of all territory, population, and housing units located outside of urbanized areas and urban clusters (www.census.gov). Rural areas encompass all territory, population, and housing units not classified as urban. These areas possess low population density and consist of fewer than 50,000 people.

Urban versus Rural

Census data from 2010 indicate that the state of Iowa has an estimated total population of 3,046,355 (www.census.gov). Two of the counties included in this study have populations that would be considered urban based on census population definitions. For example, Johnson County has an approximate population total of 130,882 and Linn County has an approximate population of 211, 266. Participants in this study resided primarily in Iowa City, which has an estimated population of 69,086, and Cedar Rapids, which has an estimated population of 126,326 (www.census.gov). However, when compared to areas such as the state of Illinois (12,830,632) and the city of Chicago (2,851,268), which many participants identified as locations where they previously lived, the scope of urban versus rural was gauged using more metropolitan area characteristics such as high population density in a nuclear area to be defined as urban. Therefore, Iowa counties were viewed as non-metropolitan areas with lower population density.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The U.S. Department of Education has reported that children educated in large urban school districts in the United States have substantially lower academic performance and achievement than children educated in other types of school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) and furthermore that a substantial number of Black students are represented in these urban school districts (Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). Influences on children's educational outcomes can be associated with geographic location and characteristics of residential neighborhoods among other factors (Jacob, 2004; Sanbonmatsu et al., 2006). Stanley, Comello, Edwards, and Marquart (2008) compared the difference between urban and rural school communities and noted significant differences in income and education of high school students' parents. These findings supported previous research on the academic performance of students by indicating that outcomes were based on other variables, such as parental education and socio-economic status, rather than on community/school characteristics of urban and rural settings (Stanley et al., 2008). Extensive research has been done on the academic achievement of African American students and has found that the lower educational performance of Black students can be attributed to a number of factors, such as parents' level of education, poverty and social economic status, social class, culture, and school system resources (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996; Walker, Greenwood, Hart, & Carta, 1994; Wilson, 1987). Rolf and Johnson (1990) referred to risk factors as variables that "have proven or presumed effects that can directly increase the likelihood of a maladaptive outcome" (p. 387). The following sections provide information from the literature addressing educational risk factors and influences on academic performance among African

American students and examine how the social constructs of the academic setting impact students.

Social Cognitive Theory

Exploring contextual aspects of a student's environment was a component to this study, along with developing a comprehension about how social cognitive factors influence the achievement and self-concept of students. Given that internal thought processes and external behaviors/actions are influenced by human interactions (Bandura, 1982, 1989, 1991), self-image and perceptions during the adolescent period of development are largely affected by individuals' external environment. Exploring the manner in which academic achievement and academic self-concept are derived based on social constructs is essential because adolescents are strongly influenced by their social environment. Burleson (1984) conducted research on children's and adolescents' social cognitive development and evaluated the affect of maturity on individuals' comforting skills. Burleson's research, which emphasized the influence of interactions, development, and maturation of children and adolescents, is applicable to the current study of academic self-concept, academic achievement, and the relationship of these factors with transitioning from an urban to a rural environment. Social cognitive abilities manifest throughout childhood and adolescent developmental periods (Chandler, 1977; Shantz, 1975), and individual differences in behavior become more stable as the individual approaches maturity (Little, 1972). Therefore, the current study examined the influence of social constructs on adolescents who were enrolled in middle schools /junior high schools.

Previous research has established a link between high school students' level of engagement in school, self-efficacy, and goal orientation (Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003). The students were asked to complete scales that measured self-efficacy, goal orientation, test anxiety, general fear of failure, and other instruments measuring aspects of school engagement. The findings showed a need to increase teacher and parent

involvement and support of students, which could increase students' general levels of confidence and competence in making higher grades in school while being more engaged in school (Caraway et al., 2003). Caraway et al. (2003) also focused on students' fear of failure in a variety of academic situations and suggested ways that social supports, such as parents and teachers, could provide positive reinforcement for student success and increase overall involvement in students' education to reduce negative feelings toward school. The magnitude of successful academic outcomes was greatly influenced by factors outside of the students, supporting the importance of social cognitive theory as a framework for the current study's examination of the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of transitioned and non-transitioned African American students.

African American Academic Achievement

Examining racial, cultural, and ethnic differences in academic achievement involves an investigation of the existing literature on performance outcomes of students from different races and a comprehension of the specific influences on the education of African Americans. Many researchers have explored the academic matriculation of African Americans, as this group is disproportionately represented as a group with lower academic achievement and performance outcomes. Steele (1992) asserted that the poor academic performance of African American students could be linked to an inability to identify or connect with academics and the school setting rather than to innate ability. Demo and Parker (1987) contributed to the existing literature by examining the relationship between self-esteem and grade-point averages of African American college students. The researchers were unable to establish a significant relationship among the variables but indicated that there were social influences on achievement. Motivation is another vital component of student academic success because engagement in academic activities supports success in school (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). Van Laar (2000) also examined self-esteem and academic achievement and implied that student motivation was

more closely related to academic performance than to self-esteem, indicating a need to examine influences on students' educational attainment and to establish ways to reduce or remove negative variables. Osborne (1997) explored students' ability to identify with positive academic attributes and to establish educational performance goals related to high scholastic achievement and found that many students are unable to identify with the qualities associated with successful academic achievement due to low academic self-concept and self-esteem. Cokley (2002) affirmed previous research on ethnic and racial differences in academic achievement of African American students that explained overall lower grades and test scores when compared to White students. The plausible reasons for low academic performance and outcomes in African Americans were cited as environment and culture, and this literature was used to develop an understanding about the influence of ethnicity and gender on students' academic self-concept and self-image (Cokley, 2002). Developing means to improve students' self-perception and self-image are useful in establishing ways to enhance academic performance.

Racial Influence on Academic Achievement among Blacks

Traditionally, racial stratification has been applied by social scientists to help explain and better understand the lower academic performance of Black students (Ogbu, 1994; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Historically, discriminatory policies and practices have denied Blacks equal access to education in quantity and quality. Likewise, societal barriers that are political, legal, and economic have excluded Blacks from mainstream social mobility and have shaped the educational experience and outcome of Blacks in educational and occupational settings (Ogbu, 1994). For example, African Americans have been denied rewards for their educational accomplishments through job ceiling limitations, such as exclusion from higher paying professions and access to resources and training linked to positive occupational mobility, which has helped to reinforce self-advancement through non-educational sources (Ogbu, 1994). Additionally, the devaluing of Blacks culturally, linguistically, intellectually, and socially as inferior to White

Americans has been both internalized and rejected by the Black community. Ogbu (1994) insisted that Blacks have been restricted from competing for desirable jobs and social positions because their occupational roles depended more on their membership in a subordinate racial group than on individual education and ability. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), examining African American perceptions of and responses to school, as influenced by historical forms of discrimination and racism in society and within school settings, sheds light on the lower school performance of Black students. To understand how Blacks perceive and respond to education, the discriminatory treatment of Blacks by Whites and Blacks' symbolic and relational responses must be addressed.

Hacker (1992) explored the historical context of race, the influence of race, and the barriers to Blacks' educational and occupational mobility. Historically, Blacks in America have been treated as lesser citizens and have experienced discrimination and segregation resulting in challenges to educational success and outcomes (Hacker, 1992). Unlike Asians, African Americans have continued to face difficulties gaining access to resources related to high educational attainment (Hacker, 1992; Steinberg, 2001). Ogbu (1994) asserted that African Americans' educational opportunities are constrained by race more than by class because these students possess distorted values and expectations about education and often rebel against cultural ideology associated with educational success due to fears of "acting White" (Ogbu, 2003, p. 175). Students often become disengaged or disinterested in succeeding academically because peer groups do not possess values and beliefs related to high academic achievement, and students may resist consciously or unconsciously the ideals of making good grades, speaking standard English, or enrolling in honors courses to maintain what they believe to be their Black identity (Ogbu, 2003). Racial inequality has created negative associations for Black students regarding academic achievement due to historical discrimination and racism (Ogbu, 1994). However, Harris (2006) refuted the "acting White" phenomenon by indicating that in many cases Black students have no greater social risk in achieving successful academic performance than

Whites, suggesting that friendship and popularity may not be associated as previously indicated. Thus, it is important to examine multiple factors that are involved in the academic achievement of Black students to establish more probable reasons for reports of low academic performance.

Black students who recognize the educational attainment potential of White students may not be able to associate the same level of success with their own achievement potential because they are unable to equate their potential with peers. For instance, Blacks tend to disidentify with high academic achievement and fail to attain higher grades and test scores due to their inability to associate themselves with educational success (Osborne, 1997). Farkas (2003) discussed the influence of racial disparities and racial discrepancies on Black students in relation to academic achievement. Black students' performance and achievement may be limited by the racial associations of meeting the demands of White ideals for education. Thus, the inability to relate to those ideals may also result in the lower school performance of Black students.

Cultural Influence on Academic Achievement

Lewis (1968) developed the term "culture of poverty" to refer to those who lack opportunity, possess low aspirations, and demonstrate other inferiorities based on conditions in the impoverished societies in which they live. This cultural association implies an adaptation to environmental factors by aligning values and beliefs based on the conditions of poverty. Steinberg (2001) examined the association of a culture of poverty with groups that are deficient in the cultural values and morals that are needed to become successful. Theoretically, all ethnic groups start at the bottom and those whose values are conducive to success achieve; individuals are able to triumph by living an exemplary life (Steinberg, 2001). Steinberg (2001) also suggested that low aspirations and decreased desires to excel in society are an inevitable response to restricted opportunity, particularly when considering the likelihood of obtaining a decent job upon finishing school due to perceived limitations based on culture.

Unlike other minority groups, many Black students have not been successful in adapting to the cultural conditions associated with high academic and scholastic achievement. Students who have attributed value to certain academic achievements do not want to be aligned with those ideals due to cultural beliefs about higher performance in schools (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). Individuals may feel marginalized, helpless, and inferior, and adopt an attitude of living based on the conditions of the culture. The culture of poverty delineates the low performance and low academic achievement of Black students based on their disassociation with success and positive educational outcomes.

Harris (2006) challenged the theory and ideology of previous research on Blacks in education by exploring whether Blacks resisted school more than Whites. Using information collected from the Maryland Adolescence Development in Context Study (MADICS), the notion of oppositional culture among Blacks was examined. Specific procedures involved using maturation data collected in the MADICS on students who entered middle school and were evaluated until they were 3 years removed from high school to demonstrate academic achievement and academic engagement over time (Harris, 2006). Harris' study found that there were no racial differences in educational expectations and that students' attitude toward school over time showed no significant relationship to these factors. In fact, a school resistance analysis showed that Blacks seek assistance in school at the same rate if not more frequently than Whites and that they have similar levels of academic engagement. Information gathered from this research provides an alternative reason for the low academic performance of Black students and suggests that limitations in a student's skill set is a potential explanation for the inability to obtain academic success (Harris, 2006).

Because personal identity was also deemed as an underlying explanation for low performance among Blacks, researchers began to associate the concept of stereotype threat in an attempt to explain academic achievement outcomes. Students often scored

low on academic measures because of negative stereotypes related to their racial group (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Osborne, 1997). The negative stereotype association research has focused primarily on the performance outcomes of females and African Americans in school. Steele (1997) suggested that increased anxiety related to negative stereotypes generated poor performance on intellectual and academic ability tests. Students also underperformed on difficult tests despite ability and failed to complete the tests due to perceptions connected with their culture or gender groups' academic or intellectual ability (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In essence, performance was low due to fears of confirming negative stereotypes. Osborne (2001) explored the effects of anxiety on test performance as it relates to racial and gender differences. Osborne determined that anxiety was associated with stereotype threat for both groups, thus supporting previous research related to environmental influences on academics and connecting social perceptions' impact on personal identity and self-efficacy of minority students.

Social Class Influence on Academic Achievement

Social class inequality can place limitations on educational opportunity and performance for many Black students. Family discussions about school experiences and educational plans for children are often limited among lower class families. Wilson (1987) used the term "underclass" to refer to individuals and families who were subjected to social stratification and inequity based on social class. High prevalence of unemployment, lack of educational opportunity, concentrated poverty, social isolation, welfare dependency, teenage parenthood, high rate of single-parent families and unwed mothers, along with problems of substance abuse, crime, and violence, were cited as contributors to the lower performance of Black students.

Black students of the underclass have few reasons to remain in school or to place a higher value on education because often they have few role models, limited resources, and few overall motivators to education. Underclass families consumed with a

preoccupation with survival have extremely limited economic resources and often resort to illegal activity as a means to survive (Wilson, 1987). Insufficient employment opportunities can also be attributed to the gravitation to alternative living and to lack of emphasis on education. Families may lack meaningful insights about education due to the destitute environments in which they live. Unlike middle class or upper class families, underclass families experience an imbalance in societal reinforcement of education and success. Black underclass families are disproportionately represented in the work force and devalued by society because they lack the skills and knowledge to thrive in work environments due to limited educational exposure and poor performance in school (Epps, 1995). Epps (1995) suggested that in order to improve the conditions of Black students and their abilities to achieve in society, the obstacles from society and within the schools must be eliminated and the oppositional responses of students must be reframed to be more optimistic while they work harder to excel in academic performance.

Lareau (1987) discussed the findings of a qualitative inquiry into the influences of social class on the academic success of students from middle and working class families. The findings indicated that although parents shared high educational aspirations for students, their approaches varied because working class families tended to rely more on teachers to produce high academic performance, and middle class families possessed a more shared responsibility in helping students achieve high measures. Although this research focused on White families, it validated the influence of class on educational outcomes (Lareau, 1987). Parents who have obtained a higher education level and income are often able to cultivate successful academic outcomes for their children based on parental exposure to school settings (Lareau, 2003). These parents advocate and support academic achievement for their children due to prior experience with positive values related academic excellence.

Poverty and Socioeconomic Status Influence on Achievement

The influence of poverty and socioeconomic status on the education and achievements of Blacks can be associated with the resources and support available to a family. Research has also linked poverty and socioeconomic status as possible reasons for school mobility (Alexander et al., 1996; Mehana, 1997; Temple & Reynolds, 1999). Families living in poverty face the challenges of inadequate housing, healthcare, and other basic necessities for their children's development (Duncan et al., 1994). Gutman and Midgley (2000) found that many African American adolescents living in poverty experienced a significant decline in grade-point average from fifth to sixth grade, demonstrating the effect of limited resources on educational outcomes. This result was mainly attributed to a decline in parental involvement in school activities and interactions with schools as students transitioned from elementary to middle school. Duncan et al. (1994) described the influences of economic deprivation on the academic performance of a child and indicated that lack of access to educational learning tools such as learning toys and games limits the achievement potential of students from families with low socioeconomic status. Parents of higher socioeconomic status have financial, social, and educational supports that enable them to assist their children with learning (Walker et al., 1994).

Factors of socioeconomic status include family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and other components of social status. Families with higher socioeconomic status have access to educational and social resources to assist their children with preparation for school. These parents are able to dedicate time and energy to invest in their children's education through assistance with homework, providing tutors, and active involvement with schools. Families of poverty, however, are limited in their ability to prepare their children for school. Walker et al. (1994) addressed school readiness and language development in children and concluded that many children of poor families have limited language skills upon entering school. Parents of lower

socioeconomic status often possess different values and expectations regarding education, childrearing styles, and ways of communication that may impact the child's interactions with peers and teachers in school. The existence of poverty and economic barriers inhibits the children and results in lower performance of Black students in school.

School Systems' Influence on Academic Achievement

Examining the influences on academic achievement entails evaluating all the factors that contribute to a school system. In a fundamental article about student social class and teacher expectations, Rist (1970) indicated that teachers have lower achievement and performance expectations for students from families with low socioeconomic status. Student performance in school is based on funding and resources associated with school systems, the school curriculum, and the quality of education provided to students. Bidwell and Kasarda (1975) explored school environmental conditions, such as school district size, financial resources, population and culture composition of the district's community, and the education and income levels of parents, and found evidence related to school district structure and academic achievement. School systems could be linked to the low performance and achievement of Black students in education due to factors such as qualification levels of professional staff, student-to-teacher classroom ratios, and the amount of educational resources available to school buildings. In some cases, student performance was superior for schools possessing higher credentialed personnel, smaller classroom ratios, more educational materials, and other characteristics deemed essential to successful school outcomes (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1975). Beady and Hansell (1981) suggested that expectations for student success held by teachers and communicated to students are potentially important influences on classroom interaction. Often Black students are not adequately embraced by educators, and these deficits can be attributed to a number of factors leading to low academic performance. Additionally, Mickelson (2003) discussed district funding and school system policies that influence student achievement. Black students residing in

areas with low economic resources may have educational limitations, such as teachers who have minimum qualifications and low expectations for students' performance. In essence, advocating for well-qualified teachers, adequate district revenue, and diversity in teaching instruction were just a few ways school districts could improve student education (Bidwell & Kasarda, 1975). However, disparities remain in the quality of teachers and the methods by which students are educated in the classroom (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009). Rogers-Sirin and Sirin (2009) developed a training model to address racial and ethnic sensitivity in teachers with the intent to enhance teachers' awareness of racial intolerance and potential bias or stereotypes while providing techniques and skills for solving potential dilemmas in school. Educators should consider (a) how students may perceive and internalize their teachers' expectations often resulting in lower self-esteem about personal ability, (b) potential limitations in the quality of education the student has been exposed to, and (c) the effects of racial stereotypes or bias on the students' overall educational experience (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009). Developing an understanding about how school systems influence students' achievement could also be useful because students' feelings about themselves academically could be related to academic performance.

Academic Self-Concept among African American Students

Constantine and Blackmon (2002) examined the relationship between Black American adolescent students' self-esteem and academic performance by denoting how students process academic experiences. Often students may place different levels of importance on academics based on perceived personal or societal limitations, thus leading to diminished academic outcomes (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). Understanding the connection between a student's self-esteem and level of several variables leads to what Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) referred to as self-concept, which is derived from a person's response to a social or environmental situation. These authors identified seven

characteristics of a person's self-concept based on specific situations and experiences. Self-concept was viewed as (a) organized or structured, based upon experiences and meanings associated with those experiences; (b) multifaceted or represented in different areas of an individuals' life, such as personal, familial, and societal views; (c) hierarchical with levels of personal importance varying from individual experiences to general ideals; (d) stable or established viewpoints; (e) developmental and increasing in sophistication through the life span; (f) evaluative or self-reflecting based on experiences; and (g) differentiable or varied from other constructs affecting a person (Shavelson et al., 1976). Subsequent research on self-concept was associated with additional academic and non-academic constructs, such as examining one's beliefs about abilities in academic, social, emotional, and physical settings (Lyon, 1993; Marsh et al., 1988; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982). Researchers have acknowledged the significance of academic self-concept in the academic achievement outcomes of students and have supported the need for a more concise examination of ways to increase students' academic self-concept.

Lyon (1993) proposed additional assumptions about academic self-concept, noting that high academic achievement levels were correlated with high academic self-concept even more significantly than with students' motivation toward school. Cokley (2000) looked more specifically at African American college students and determined a significant relationship with positive interpersonal relationships as a means of increasing academic self-concept and overall academic outcomes of students. Students attending both historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately White colleges and universities (PWCUs) were asked to answer questions related to personal beliefs about academic ability in an attempt to understand how achievement was influenced. The study also showed that the interaction between student and faculty was vital for many students' academic self-concept, supporting other research linking teacher expectations to student performance (Cokley, 2000; Ferguson, 2003).

Mboya (1986) conducted a descriptive study of Black tenth-grade high school students to determine the potential relationship between self-concept and academic achievement by examining students' self-esteem and self-concept regarding their academic ability. The findings showed that students' academic performance was influenced by multidimensional factors outside of school such as self-esteem and personal perceptions (Mboya, 1986). Perception of academic ability was also related to achievement, suggesting a connection between students' perceptions and positive academic performance. Understanding the underlying characteristics and potential influences of a student's academic self-concept can lead to more successful academic outcomes because self-concept has been cited as a predictor of performance.

Gender Differences and Experiences Related to Self-Concept

Adolescents face many challenges associated with the developmental progression to adulthood. Female adolescents often experience more barriers to development than males, and the differences in growth are impacted by contrasting incidents related to social constructs such as gender. Abrams (2002) examined adolescent girls and explored how gender, race, and class influenced development. Specifically, the manner in which an adolescent female responds to stereotypes and cultural norms about gender roles and expectations shapes the behavior of the individual, as some females may respond to these influences in a negative/defiant way and others may resist negative behaviors and develop resiliency against them (Abrams, 2002). For example, a study of African American girls from a St. Louis housing project showed how females responded to multiple levels of oppression related to contexts of race, gender, and class, thus generating additional discussion about the challenges to development and influences on self-perception as female's progress toward womanhood (Ladner, 1971). Threats to development and acquisition of positive self-view and image can also influence adolescent girls' educational and vocational attainment as well as their life goals and

aspirations as evidenced by Gibbs' (1985) study of urban junior high school students. Understanding the influences of the social constructs and the contexts in which race, gender, and class impact the individual can be helpful in increasing awareness about the impact of these factors on development and other experiences of adolescents. Furthermore, Honora (2002) explored the relationship of gender and achievement to the future outlook among African American adolescents, yielding significant information about gender differences and achievement. Higher achieving girls expressed more future goals and expectations and considered more long-term goals than did higher achieving boys and lower achieving girls and boys. Gathering information about the importance of cultural and social constructs that may help shape adolescents' perceptions, viewpoints, and images of themselves and their future is important in understanding the role of gender differences and experiences during development.

Personal viewpoints and self-concept have been viewed as multidimensional, developmental, and progressive as they vary across age and gender (Byrne & Shavelson, 1987; Marsh, Smith, & Barnes, 1985; Wigfield & Karpathian, 1991). Shavelson et al. (1976) divided self-concept into non-academic and academic areas, such as mathematics, English, and science, and also acknowledged gender stereotypes associated with the achievement of boys and girls in these areas. Gender differences indicated that boys' mathematical self-concept produced higher math achievement scores and girls' higher level of self-concept resulted in higher verbal achievement scores, supporting previous research assumptions about the indirect influence of sex stereotypes on achievement (Marsh et al., 1985; Shavelson et al., 1976). Initial research on gender differences and experiences related to academic self-concept was conducted with elementary school children and adolescents; however, subsequent studies revealed an overall shift and decrease in both genders' mathematics self-concept as they progressed to high school (Byrne & Shavelson, 1987; Meece, Parsons, Kaczala, Goff, & Futterman, 1982). Examining gender differences encompasses many facets, and previous research has

indicated a need to acknowledge the influence of those constructs that help to form an individuals' self-concept.

Akos and Galassi (2004) researched the psychological adjustment of students transitioning from middle to high school to explain the significance of environmental change on students' academic achievement, as well as on personal, social, and emotional aspects of the students' well-being. The results indicated gender differences in connectedness and comfort after the transition as girls felt more connected to school than did boys (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Findings of this study also yielded cultural implications because the participants included Latino, Asian American, African American, multiracial, and Caucasian students. Specifically, Latino students experienced a greater challenge with school transition than did Caucasian and African American students (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

School Interactions of African American Students

While it is important to consider the overall relationships and interactions of students in school settings, it is also necessary to explore the social construct of race as it relates to the experiences of African American students. Racial socialization is a term used to describe efforts made by African American parents to educate their children about Black culture and prepare them to interact with others who may be from other cultures in settings outside of the home (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997). The ideals taught by parents may be associated with peer and teacher interactions of Black students in academic environments. Davis et al. (2004) described Black students who attended predominately White higher education institutions and indicated that low retention rates could be attributed to lack of social interactions and peer relationships as many students reported loneliness and isolation. The college students reported a lack of connection with other students and the constant need to initiate relationships with peers of other races, but were often left feeling disconnected from

other students (Davis et al., 2004). Thus, academic performance can be impacted by relationships and interactions among peers and teachers.

Peer Interactions

Motivation toward school and successful academic achievement can be attributed to students' relationships and interactions with peers, in addition to how well a student adapts or feels connected and supported in the school environment. Goodenow (1993) examined sixth- through eighth-grade middle school students to explore their sense of classroom belonging and support by fellow students and by their teachers. Results indicated that although peer relationships were significant in the academic experience of students, teacher support was more closely related to the overall academic motivation and achievement of the students (Goodenow, 1993). Enhancement in cognitive abilities and self-perceptions that occur during the adolescent developmental growth period, along with heightened awareness of potential influences from peer and social groups, may also impact students' motivation to achieve in school settings (Elkind, 1967; Goodenow, 1993).

Teacher Interactions

Teachers' interactions with students are influenced by teacher expectations and perceptions. Often students are not adequately embraced by teachers, which could contribute to a number of factors leading to low performance in schools (Ferguson, 2003). Teacher expectations were shown to have a significant effect on student achievement among students in a physical education class as students tended to perform well when positive teachers expectations were expressed (Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Martinek, & Guillet, 2002). In essence, students' perceived ability was heavily influenced by teacher perceptions because poor performance resulted for those students who had low teacher expectations. Hence, it is important for teachers to understand the impact of their evaluations and expectations on both student performance and student beliefs about ability (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002; Trouilloud et al., 2002).

School Mobility Influence on Academic Achievement

Another influence on academic achievement and educational performance is school mobility, which may be associated with parents seeking a higher quality school and educational experience for their children (Gruman et al., 2008; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Few studies have focused on the experiences of African American students while examining the influences of school mobility and urban to rural school transitions (Mehana, 1997; Temple & Reynolds, 1999). Mehana and Reynolds (2004) identified explanations for changes in academic achievement as a result of school mobility. School mobility can (a) create a fluctuation in student learning and instruction as curriculum varies across schools, (b) generate a disturbance or disruption in a student's peer relationships and social interactions, and (c) be impacted by the family's economic status as this is often a rationale for change in schools (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Temple and Reynolds (1999) acknowledged that school mobility is a prevalent variable in U.S. education and expressed that although residential relocation in rural and suburban areas may not warrant a change in schools, relocation to an urban area would most likely result in considerable changes in school setting and academic environment due to the vast population in cities. Specifically, Temple and Reynolds examined the relationship between school mobility and academic achievement in inner-city children from low income families to determine the influences of school mobility over time, and the results indicated that a higher frequency of mobility was associated with lower achievement scores throughout the students' academic progression (Temple & Reynolds, 1999). Other research has indicated that intervention strategies and programs such as parent education and orientation for families of high-risk students could be used to decrease the effects of mobility on student achievement (Mehana & Reynolds, 1995). Additionally, improving relationships between parents and schools could lead to early notification of upcoming moves to allow for better facilitation of student transitions, including forwarding of

school records, initiating new student/family orientation, and establishing support services where needed (Smardo, 1987).

School transition involves a combination of experiences: Students may have a physical change in school environment, a social change in peers and teachers, and a change in academic curriculum. Transitioning students may experience a decrease in motivation toward school and a change in personal academic performance goals after transitioning, which can lead to a decline in academic measures such as grade-point average and standardized test scores (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). Simmons, Black, and Zhou (1991), in a study examining the difference between black and white children transitioning from elementary to junior high school, found that Black students, especially Black males, had a significant decrease in positive feelings about school after transitioning between schools. Students' achievement measures such as grade-point average may also decline with the transition from elementary to middle school (Gutman & Midgley, 2000).

Historical Trends and Transitions of Urban Students

School desegregation policies aimed to dismantle separate and unequal educational systems that were created when segregation was legally sanctioned in the South and ignored in the North (Wells & Crain, 1997). Government interventions such as affirmative action were needed to chip away at segregated housing, employment, and social interactions. Wells and Crain (1997) researched the influences on educational outcome of transporting inner city students to suburban schools in St. Louis, Missouri, for the purpose of improving educational opportunities in response to court rulings associated with Brown v. Topeka Board of Education (1954). Evidence from this research showed that disparities in the academic achievement of children continued to exist as many did not remain in the transition programs due to racial conflicts with peers and educators and overall discomfort with the transition experience, although other

children found benefits and positive outcomes as a result of participating in the transition programs (Wells & Crain, 1997).

Urban Relocation Programs

In addition to exploring factors contributing to academic performance of Black students, it is also necessary to understand the influence of geographic location on educational outcome when students' families experience a transition from urban environments to rural environments or choose not to transition. Sanbonmatsu et al. (2006) examined the relationship of changes in residential neighborhoods to students' academic achievement. A random housing mobility experiment was used to determine the relationship between moving out of high poverty neighborhoods and educational outcomes through the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing program established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Sanbonmatsu et al., 2006). Researchers have argued about the influence of residential mobility on educational outcomes. Some have emphasized that environmental conditions, individual attributes, and family background influence academic performance (Bouchard, 1997; Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), whereas others have asserted that peer influences, role models, and school and community resources affect academic achievement (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1992). However, in a study on the effect of children moving out of public housing in Chicago, Jacob (2004), found no effect on children's test scores and reported only small changes in neighborhood circumstances despite relocation from public housing. Jacob's study discussed demolitions in areas where families resided and the influence on children's educational outcomes after they moved to neighborhoods and schools similar to those they left. Therefore, it is difficult to determine a specific rationale for students' achievement deficits without examining the details of each family's experience and exploring the influences of environmental transitions.

Summary

This review of research addressed academic achievement, performance, and educational outcomes of Black students based on findings in the literature regarding achievement disparities, limitations in resources, and promotion of educational success. It is also necessary to understand the influence of urban to rural environmental transitions on students' academic self-concept and academic achievement. Relationships with peers, family, and society may serve as influences during adolescence (Choudhury, Blakemore, & Charman, 2006). These relationships contribute to the adolescent's self-understanding and social cognitive development (Choudhury et al., 2006). Considering that self-understanding includes insight and contributes to the development of self-esteem, shame, guilt, and personal identity, the adolescent's account of personal attributes should be evaluated (Hart & Damon, 1988). For that reason, understanding the influences of geographic mobility, more specifically urban to rural school transitions, and the relationship of academic self-concept to academic achievement might provide a greater comprehension of the effects of the transition experience on African American students. Analyzing the influences of mobility on academic self-concept and academic achievement, as well as the relationship of these variables to gender and length of time since transition, was the purpose of this research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American sixth- through eighth-grade students who had and had not experienced geographic transitions from urban to rural environments. This study also explored specific demographic characteristics, such as gender and length of time since transition, and how they related to academic self-concept and academic achievement.

Research Design

This study utilized quantitative analysis to compare self-concept and academic achievement of transitioned and non-transitioned students. The covariates used in the analysis included gender, standardized test scores, letter grades or grade-point averages, and length of time since transition.

Recent educational reports have indicated growth in the K-12 minority student population in Iowa public schools from 5.5 % in 1990 to 17.6% in 2010 (Iowa Department of Education, 2005, 2010). This increase includes the relocation of Blacks from urban areas such as Chicago, Illinois, to more rural Iowa communities, which is evidenced by significant percent growth in population concentrated mainly in four counties: Dallas, Johnson, Linn, and Polk (Iowa Department of Education, 2005). Black student enrollment in Iowa public schools has increased from 2.7% in 1990 to 5.1% in 2010 (Iowa Department of Education, 2010). This demographic change in school composition and growth necessitates a closer examination of the academic performance of students based on the existing literature related to school mobility and academic achievement. Exploring potential variations in educational performance and overall student well-being since transition could be helpful in understanding the outcome of minority student relocation. Therefore, these four counties were the targeted counties for research; however, only two counties agreed to participate in the study.

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory was applied throughout this study to examine the development of the participants in addition to the social cognitive components related to the influence of geographic mobility on academic self-concept and academic achievement. Social cognitive development comprises many aspects of a child's environment, including parental involvement or parent-child interaction, decision-making skills, communications skills, social skills, peer interactions, and other factors that may be included in a child's developmental process (Miller et al., 1970). Changes in the environment may influence the overall stability of the child; thus fluctuations in life circumstances were examined, specifically relocation from urban schools to rural schools. Bandura (2002) discussed human interactions and emphasized the idea that people do not exist autonomously without the interactions of others. Therefore, interactions with others include all those involved in the daily functioning of a person. In the case of the adolescents in this study, interactions among peers and teachers along with others who contribute to the academic self-concept and academic performance of students were explored.

Research Questions

This study explored factors related to academic self-concept and academic achievement of transitioned and non-transitioned students. Questions guiding this research study included:

1) What is the relationship between academic self-concept (ASCS) and academic achievement (ITBS and GPA) of African American students in Grades 6 through 8 who have experienced transition from an urban to a rural environment and those who have not?
2) What are the gender differences in the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement among these transitioned and non-transitioned students?

3) Are academic self-concept and academic achievement related to students' academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions (modified SAAS/SAAS-R) for transitioned and non-transitioned students?
4) How do the students' attitudes toward teachers (modified SAAS/SAAS-R) relate to academic self-concept and academic achievement?
5) How does the length of time since transition relate to academic self-concept, academic achievement, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscales?
6) How does the transition from an urban to a rural environment relate to the students' attitudes toward school and their motivation/self regulation in the school setting (modified SAAS/SAAS-R)?

Variables

The variables considered were the students' transition experience, academic self-concept, and academic achievement. Specific demographic characteristics, such as gender and length of time since transition, were also considered, as were students' attitudes toward school, academic self-perception, peer perceptions, and motivation toward school. Additional information about student academic achievement, such as grade-point average (GPA) and standardized test score results (ITBS), were collected from permanent school records.

Participants

There were approximately 12,240 Black students in Dallas, Johnson, Linn, and Polk Counties based on the 2010 *Iowa Annual Condition of Education Report* (Iowa Department of Education, 2010). An estimated 2,601 Black students in Grades 6 through 8 could have been included in the study. Approximately 25 to 30 students per county had recently transitioned within the past 24 months, and about 60-1410 students per county had been enrolled in Iowa schools for more than 24 months. Participants in this study were African American male and female, sixth- through eighth-grade students in two Iowa county school districts that agreed to participate in the study (n =101). These

participants were from Iowa county school districts identified by the 2005 *Iowa Annual Condition of Education Report* as experiencing growth in student population due to minority student relocation (Iowa Department of Education, 2005). Academic achievement research has been conducted on students in age groups ranging from elementary school to those enrolled in college. This study examined adolescent junior high/middle school students because it allowed for a middle ground in the educational progression and human development of a person.

Demographic Information

The total sample of 101 participants was recruited from two Iowa county school districts, Johnson and Linn. Demographic data were obtained from each participant through self-report information on the demographic form and information obtained from students' cumulative file, which included age, gender, grade, cumulative GPA, ITBS composite scores, information about current/previous school location, and length of time since transition. All students were primarily identified as African American based on self-report and school record for ethnicity. The sample consisted of 53 females (52.5%) and 48 males (47.5%). The age range of participating students was 11 to 14 years, with the largest number of students being 13 years old (41.6%). Participants' grade levels included sixth graders (n=27), seventh graders (n=35), and eighth graders (n=39). A summary of essential demographic information obtained in this study is presented in Table 1.

Two groups were compared, an experimental group of students who have recently transitioned from an urban to a rural school within the past 24 months (n=28) and a control group of non-transitioning students who had been in Iowa schools longer than 24 months (n=73). Inclusion criteria for the experimental group were based on transition from an urban school within the past 24 months and being identified primarily as African American based on school record or self-report. Only students from Johnson or Linn County school districts were included in the study due to district-level agreement to

participate in this research project. The control group was also based on students who were identified as African American and were those who had continuous residency and attendance in Iowa schools for longer than 24 months. Students from ethnicities other than African American, those attending school in counties other than Johnson or Linn County, and those in grades below six and above eight were excluded from the study. The gender representation in the group of students who recently transitioned was equally distributed, with 14 males and 14 females who resided in Iowa for less than 24 months. There were 34 male students and 39 female students who indicated being in Iowa longer than 24 months.

Table 1. Demographic Information for Participants

Variable	Frequency (*n*)	Percent
Gender		
Female	53	52.5
Male	48	47.5
Age of Participants (years)		
11	9	8.9
12	28	27.7
13	42	41.6
14	22	21.8
Grade Level of Participants		
6	27	26.7
7	35	34.7
8	39	38.6

Approach

Quantitative data included information gathered through the administration of the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds et al., 1980), a modified format of the

School Attitude Assessment Survey (SAAS; McCoach, 2002), and the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Reynolds et al. (1980) discussed the importance of academic self-concept to an individual's affective and emotional status, which can be influenced by situational and environmental stimuli. A modification of the SAAS and SAAS-R (McCoach, 2002; McCoach & Siegle, 2003) was used to obtain more concise information about students' academic experiences in schools.

Instruments

Data collected were used to compare self-concept and academic achievement. The covariates in the analysis were gender, standardized test scores, and length of time since transition. Demographic data were obtained through permanent student records and self-report. Factors influencing academic achievement were measured by the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds et al., 1980) and a modified version of the School Attitude Assessment Survey (SAAS; McCoach, 2002) and the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The ASCS was developed to measure general self-concept as it relates to academic achievement and the student's perception of academic success (Reynolds, 1988). Marsh and Yeung (1997) conducted a longitudinal evaluation of self-concept and academic achievement and examined influences of school grades and teacher ratings on student's academic performance, resulting in a more critical understanding of causal effects on self-concept. McCoach (2002) developed the SAAS to measure students' self-concept, self-motivation, and self-regulation along with attitudes toward school and teachers to examine the effects on academic achievement. Evaluating students' global scores on the ASCS and their subscale scores on the modified SAAS/ SAAS-R also provided insight into influences on academic achievement and performance.

Academic Self-Concept Scale

The ASCS is a 40-item scale that measures the academic component of general self-concept of students. The instrument uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), and the global scores from this scale indicate academic self-concept. Reynolds et al. (1980) utilized the ASCS to determine the self-concept of college students; however, this scale was adapted to evaluate African American junior high/middle school students in this study. A revision of specific terms was necessary to explore the unique experiences of middle and junior high students. Therefore the term "exams" was replaced with "tests" in item 5, "college" was replaced with "school" in items 8, 14, 15, and 37, the terms "courses or major" was replaced with "classes" in items 10, 24, 33 and 39, and "instructors" was replaced with "teachers" in item 13. Item 35 was reworded to reflect the end of the trimester/quarter or grading period instead of finals week, which was previously used to refer to the end of a course for college students. Factor analysis of the ASCS yielded a seven-factor solution that accounted for 52.6% of total variance (Reynolds, 1988). The ASCS yields one global score and seven subscale scores. The items are keyed in a positive direction for academic self-concept. The seven factors have been tentatively described in the following way: factor 1: grade and effort dimension; factor 2: study habits/organizational self-perceptions; factor 3: peer evaluation of academic ability; factor 4: self-confidence in academics; factor 5: satisfaction with school; factor 6: self-doubt regarding ability; and factor 7: self-evaluation with external standards. Test-retest reliability for the ASCS is reported to be .88 with an internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of .91 (Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds et al., 1980). The reliability coefficients for the subscales range from .59 to .92 (Reynolds, 1988). Validation of the scale was achieved through the administration of the instrument to undergraduate college students in New York who were predominately white; convergent validity, after correction for attenuation, was reported to be .44 (Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds et al., 1980). However, the scale has been administered to ethnic minorities including African Americans and students from various geographical regions and states in the U.S. since its development (Cokley, 2000; Zorich & Reynolds, 1988). Sample items include: (a) if I try hard enough, I will be able to get

good grades; (b) I often expect to do poorly on exams; (c) all in all, I feel I am a capable student; (d) at times I feel like a failure; and (e) I enjoy doing my schoolwork.

School Attitude Assessment Survey and

School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised

The SAAS originally consisted of 20 items, but has been revised and contains 35 items in the current edition, which allows for a more concise description of students' academic experiences (McCoach, 2002; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). However, the instrument was modified and contains 40 items for the purpose of this study. The School Attitude Assessment Survey–Revised (SAAS-R) is composed of questions related to subscales, each of which is an indicator of one of the five factors related to students' attitudes toward school and teachers, academic self-perceptions, and motivation toward school. The tool uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with a neutral response of 4 (*neither agree nor disagree*) as a possible response, and subscale scores are used to determine a student's overall school attitude. The original 20-item SAAS had a reliability coefficient of .80, and the subscales of academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward school, peer attitudes, motivation/self-regulation, and the Cronbach's alpha exceeded .85 and ranged up to.90 for all subscales (McCoach, 2002). Factor analysis was used to validate the 35-item SAAS-R, specifying a priori that each question was an indicator of only one factor (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The validation study consisted of students from various ethnic backgrounds, including Hispanic students. The reliability coefficients for the subscales of academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, goal valuation, and motivation ranged from .85 to .91 (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Sample SAAS and SAAS-R items include: (a) I am confident in my scholastic abilities; (b) I am glad that I go to this school; (c) my teachers make learning interesting; (d) I am confident in my ability to succeed in school; and (e) my friends are good students. The surveys were modified in order to obtain participants' self-report of perceptions in areas included in both editions

of the instrument. The items related to the perceptions of peers originally found on the SAAS were added to the end of the SAAS-R, creating a modified SAAS/SAAS-R tool to gather information about the multiple influences and experiences of transitioned and non-transitioned students. Subscale scores identified as a result of administering the modified SAAS, SAAS-R (40 questions total) included the Academic Self-Perceptions (ASP), Attitude toward Teachers and classes (ATT), and Attitude toward School (ATS), Goal Valuation, Peer Perceptions (PEER), and Motivation/Self-Regulation (MOT/S-R) subscales.

The subscale of academic self-perceptions is related to students' confidence about skills which may lead to engagement in activities related to those abilities (Ames, 1990; Bandura, 1977; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Schunk, 1981, 1984). The results from the attitude toward teachers and classes subscale may affect students' achievement; therefore, students with positive relationships and perceptions toward teachers and classes are expected to have positive academic performance outcomes (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Peters, Grager-Loidl, & Supplee, 2000). The attitude toward school subscale is composed of self-reported interest in the school setting and environment, along with student perceptions and beliefs about school, which is indicated by student responses to questions related to this concept (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Previous research indicated that student goals and achievement values influence self-regulation and motivation in school due to the manner in which goals and values impact the academic activities students choose to become engaged in while at school (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Wigfield, 1994). McCoach and Siegle (2003) referred to the goal valuation subscale as a measure used to analyze students' perceptions of goals and values related to achievement. The peer perception subscale seeks to obtain information regarding students' perception of peers and peers' attitudes toward school, as research has indicated that peer interactions may influence students' academic achievement (Elkind, 1967; Goodenow, 1993; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The motivation/self-regulation subscale gathers

information about students' self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions related to goals associated with school in addition to students' motivation to achieve academic goals (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Zimmerman, 1994). Gaining insight into these factors helped to generate a better description of how transition influences the academic performance of these students.

Procedures

Participant Enrollment and Recruitment

Permission to conduct research was granted by written consent from the district level and school administrator level, and by the university's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Office. To achieve a moderate level of power, approximately .7 for detecting moderate effect sizes, power analysis indicated a minimum sample size of 60 in each of the two groups of interest in this study (Cohen, 1988). The focus of recruitment for the study was to obtain as many participants as possible to increase the statistical power. Therefore, 520 information packets were mailed out as suggested to allow for a 50% response rate (Rea & Parker, 1997). African American students from Grades 6 through 8 were invited to participate in the study based on recent transition criteria ranging from 0 months to 24 months, along with the comparison group of students who had attended the same Iowa schools longer than 24 months. Selection of these students involved school district administrators, school principals, school counselors, and other pertinent school personnel identified as liaisons to students or schools in the targeted counties and school districts. These individuals were contacted via email and in person to explain the purpose of the study, the focus area, and the desired population (see Appendix F). Research packets containing a research invitation letter (see Appendix B) and the informed consent document (see Appendix C) were mailed by the schools to the parents of each African American sixth- through eighth-grade student in each school to encourage participation. Students also could obtain a packet from the guidance office or other designated area if they were interested after hearing school intercom

announcements that encouraged participation in the study. After completing the consent form, parents retained a copy of the letter and the consent form for their records, and students returned the signed consent forms to the guidance office. The students signed the assent form (see Appendix D) the day of data collection prior to being read the participant script (see Appendix E). The participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Prior to data collection, the researcher also visited neighborhood/community centers and churches to solicit participation in the study as an additional means of recruitment. This method was used to reiterate the significance of the study being conducted in the local school districts and the potential implications of research findings. Other recruitment methods included requesting to be present in school buildings during parent-teacher conference nights and visiting student classrooms to encourage participation in the study. This allowed the researcher to explain the purpose of the study, to emphasize that information was mailed home to parents, and to request student participation. Coordination occurred with principals, teachers, and school counselors for optimal times to schedule parents' nights or be visible in school buildings during parent-teacher conferences to conduct the research. The researcher requested to be included in school newsletters or information distributions as another means of encouraging participation in this study (see Appendix G). Students were identified by school counselors or school welcome centers responsible for tracking and identifying new or transitioning students. Consent was obtained from the students' parents/legal guardians and the school principals for the researcher to conduct the study, along with students' assent to participate in study.

Due to the initial low response rate from the mailing of research information packets, the researcher requested permission to modify the approach procedures. A follow-up with eligible participants was done in the schools, along with the solicitation of additional schools in the participating counties. The researcher visited study halls and

classrooms as a follow-up to explain the research project and the information packet that was mailed home. This allowed students to receive another information packet in order to consider involvement in the project. Students were also able to ask questions about the specific procedures enabling them to make a more informed decision about participation in the project. For example, 120 students were seen in one school over the course of 2 days, and 27 consent forms were returned as a result of personal follow-up. Consistent communication with school-based personnel, such as principals, school counselors, and other individuals working closely with students, helped to increase student participation. These individuals encouraged student involvement in the study as a means of sharing information about individual experiences in school due to having a more established relationship with students in the school building.

Data Collection

A sample of 28 male and female sixth- through eighth-grade students who had transitioned to Iowa were administered the scales, and the analysis was based on gender and the length of time since transition as reported by the students. The researcher converted time since transition into months for data analysis. A length of time beyond 24 months was not considered as a recent transition. A control group of 73 students who had not transitioned within the past 24 months were also administered the scales to serve as a comparison group for determining the influence of urban to rural transition on academic self-concept and academic achievement.

Students were asked to sign an assent form (see Appendix D) agreeing to participate in the research as a means of allowing the students to understand the procedures for the study. Students were asked to complete a demographic form (see Appendix A), the Academic Self Concept Scale (ASCS), and the Modified School Attitude Assessment Survey/School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS/SAAS-R). The surveys were administered in paper and pencil format, and students had a maximum time of 30 minutes to complete the measurements. Research was conducted in

the school's guidance office or designated confidential area in the school building. Prior to distributing the survey, the researcher read a script to the student describing the process of the study and indicated the student's right to decline participation (see Appendix E). The signed consent indicated that the parents were allowing the students to participate in the study and that the students had agreed to participate, but that they could choose not to participate or could end their participation at any time. Students who completed the measures were entered in a drawing for an incentive that was given to one student per participating school. Academic measures such as the adolescents' Iowa Tests of Basic Skills scores and actual cumulative grade point averages were also obtained. Academic achievement information was obtained by examining the students' permanent school records. Permission to obtain this information from school records was granted through parental/legal guardian consent in addition to student assent to gather materials from permanent student files.

The ASCS and the modified SAAS/SAAS-R were administered to sixth- through eighth-grade African American students at the participating schools who had completed informed consent and assent documents. Due to the sensitive nature of the material included in a student's cumulative academic file along with the information obtained in from the study, each survey and demographic form contained the same pre-coded numbers. This was also done to ensure that neither school personnel nor the researcher could identify student responses. Students completed the surveys during a free period or other designated time during the school day. The administrations of the surveys occurred in both individual and group settings. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research study. Information was kept in a locked and secured file cabinet throughout the research project. Students were entered into a drawing for a $25 Visa gift card as an incentive for participation. A gift card was awarded to one student at each of the participating schools.

Statistical Analysis

The following analyses were used to answer the research questions related to this study. The relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of transitioned and non-transitioned students (Research Question 1) was investigated by correlating (a) the global scores of the ASCS, (b) ITBS composite scores, and (c) cumulative GPAs. A two-factor MANOVA was used to estimate how gender differences related to ASCS and academic achievement measures (ITBS and GPA), with gender and transition/non-transition as the independent variables and academic self-concept and academic achievement as the dependent variables (Research Question 2). Correlation was also used to indicate how academic self-concept scores and academic achievement measures related to the modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscale measures of academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions (Research Question 3). Correlation was used to examine the relationship between students' attitude toward teachers and their academic self-concept and academic achievement (Research Question 4). Correlation was also used to determine how the length of time since transition related to academic self-concept scores, modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscales, and academic achievement measures (Research Question 5). The relationship between school transition to the modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscale measure of attitude toward school and modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscale measure of motivation/self regulation in school (Research Question 6) was identified through a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), using independent variables of time since transition and dependent variables of motivation/self regulation and attitude toward school.

Summary

Chapter III provided an overview of the research design and procedures used by the researcher to examine the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of transitioned and non-transitioned African American students in Grades 6 through 8. Chapter IV presents the results of data collection and analyses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American students transitioning from urban to rural schools. The results of this study were used to examine if there was a relationship between academic self-concept, academic achievement, and other variables influencing these factors. As discussed in Chapter III, participants were a convenience sample of 101 male and female middle school/junior high students within counties that were identified with large minority student populations and with a significant increase in students transitioning to those school districts. Of the 520 information packets that were mailed, 101 were returned, yielding a 19.42 % response rate.

Descriptive Analysis

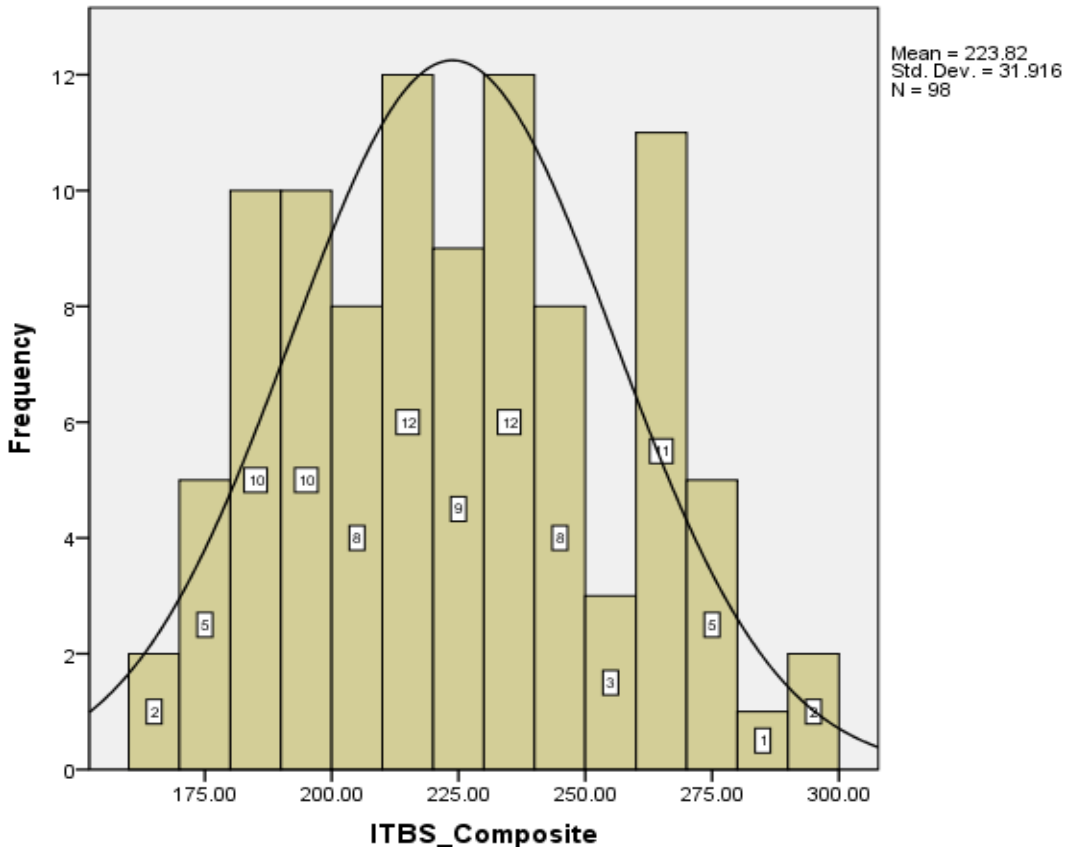
Cumulative grade-point averages were obtained at the time of data collection (*n*=88); however, 13 students were enrolled in schools that did not provide numerical grades for students (Mean=2.87, SD= .704; see Table 2). Composite ITBS scores were obtained from the students' files and the most recent scores were reported (Mean=224, SD=31.91; see Figure 1). Three students did not have complete cumulative files, and their scores were not reported in their student records. Transition information included the length of time since transitioning, which was divided into ranges of 0 months (*n*=1, 1%), 1 to 6 months (*n*=5, 5%), 7 to 12 months (*n*=7, 6.9%), 13 to 18 months (*n*=7, 6.9%), 19 to 24 months (*n*=8, 7.9 %), and more than 24 months (*n*=73, 72.3%).

Students who had resided in Iowa for less than 24 months represented 27.7% (*n*=28) of the sample, and those who had resided in Iowa for more than 24 months represented 72.3% (*n*=73) of the sample. The participants who transitioned to Iowa within the past 24 months were primarily from Chicago, IL (*n*=8, 7.9%), with one student

Table 2. Grade-Point Average of Participants

GPA Range	Frequency (*n*)	Percent
Less than 1.0	1	1.0
1.0 to 1.49	3	2.9
1.5 to 1.99	7	6.9
2.0 to 2.49	12	11.8
2.5 to 2.99	18	17.9
3.0 to 3.24	18	17.9
3.25 to 3.49	12	11.8
3.5 to 3.74	11	10.9
3.75 to 3.99	5	4.9
4.0 or higher	1	1.0
No grades	13	12.9
Total	101	100.0

Figure 1. ITBS Composite Scores



indicating Illinois (*n*=1, 1%) as the location of the previous school, and the other students indicating areas such as Cleveland, OH (*n*=1, 1%), East St. Louis, IL (*n*=1, 1%), Mississippi (*n*=1, 1%), Nigeria (*n*=1, 1%), Columbia, SC (*n*=1, 1%), Texas (*n*=1, 1%), Virginia (*n*=1, 1%), California (*n*=1, 1%), and Sudan, Africa (*n*=1, 1%). However, some participants did not indicate the exact location of their previous school but self-reported being a resident of Iowa for less than 24 months (n=10, 9.9%). Information related to the length of time since transition and the location of the participants' previous school is provided in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Length of Time since Transition

Time Range	Frequency (*n*)	Percent
Less than 24 months	28	27.7
0 months	1	1.0
1 to 6 months	5	5.0
7 months to 12 months	7	6.9
13 months to 18 months	7	6.9
19 months to 24 months	8	7.9
More than 24 months	73	72.3

Table 4. Location of Previous School

Location	Frequency (*n*)	Percent
Iowa	73 [a]	72.3
Did not indicate	10 [b]	9.9
Chicago, IL	8	7.9
Illinois	1	1.0
Cleveland, OH	1	1.0
East St. Louis, IL	1	1.0
Mississippi	1	1.0
Nigeria	1	1.0
Columbia, SC	1	1.0
Texas	1	1.0
Virginia	1	1.0
California	1	1.0
Sudan, Africa	1	1.0
Total	101	100

[a] Indicated living in Iowa for more than 24 months

[b] Indicated living in Iowa for less than 24 months but did not indicate previous location by city or state

Results of Statistical Analysis

Additional descriptive statistics for surveys used in this study are presented in Table 5 and Figure 1. Information about the overall sample of students participating in the study is provided for statistical analysis. The information was derived from the students' scores on the ASCS, ITBS, cumulative GPA, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R. The Cronbach's alpha for this study's administration of the ASCS was .93, slightly higher than the instrument's initial consistency reliability estimate of .91 (Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds et al., 1980). The Cronbach's alpha for the SAAS/SAAS-R was also .93.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Frequency (*n*)	Mean	Standard Deviation
ASCS Composite	101	118.27	16.5
Academic Measures			
ITBS Composite	98	223	31.91
Cumulative GPA	88	2.87	.70
SAAS/SAAS-R Scores			
Self-Perceptions	101	5.54	.89
Peer Perceptions	101	5.34	1.09
Attitude toward Teachers	101	5.24	1.06
Attitude toward School	101	5.51	1.36
Goal Valuation	101	6.51	.66
Motivation/Self Regulation	101	5.48	.99

Results for Research Question 1

What is the relationship between academic self-concept (ASCS) and academic achievement measures (ITBS and GPA) of African American students in Grades 6 through 8 who have experienced transition from an urban to a rural environment and those who have not? Results for this question were obtained by computing the correlations for (a) ASCS global scores, (b) ITBS composite scores, and (c) cumulative GPAs. The overall sample mean for academic self-concept in this study was 118.27, with a standard deviation of 16.5. The relationship between academic self-concept and cumulative GPA was statistically significant at the .01 significance level (r =.35). However, ITBS composite scores were not significant (r =.147, p >.05; see Table 6). A significant relationship also resulted when comparing students' cumulative GPA to ITBS composite scores, providing additional information about the influence of GPA on other academic measures.

Table 6. Correlation between ASCS, ITBS, and GPA

Measure/Variable	ASCS Composite	ITBS Composite	Cumulative GPA
ASCS Composite	1		
ITBS Composite	.147	1	
Cumulative GPA	.350**	.520**	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

The length of time since transition was also addressed in this question to determine if time influenced ASCS measures or academic measures. The relationship between time and ASCS, ITBS, and GPA scores was not significant; however, ITBS scores were statistically significant at the .05 significance level with cumulative GPA for those students who had transitioned within the past 24 months (r=.454, see Table 7). For

students whose length of time since transition was more than 24 months, there was a significant relationship between the ITBS and GPA at the .01 level (r=.527, see Table 8).

Table 7. Correlation between Time since Transition (less than 24 months)

Measure/Variable	ASCS Composite	ITBS Composite	Cumulative GPA
ASCS Composite	1		
ITBS Composite	.026	1	
Cumulative GPA	.225	.454*	1

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8. Correlation between Time since Transition (more than 24 months)

Measure/Variable	ASCS Composite	ITBS Composite	Cumulative GPA
ASCS Composite	1		
ITBS Composite	.177	1	
Cumulative GPA	.394**	.527**	1

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Results for Research Question 2

What are the gender differences in the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement among these transitioned and non-transitioned students? To determine whether the gender differences between participant groups were significant, a two-factor MANOVA was run with independent variables (gender and length of time since transition) and dependent variables (ASCS global scores, ITBS composite scores, and cumulative GPAs). Three multivariate tests were run: (a) the gender effect λ=.912, F

(df = 3, 80) =2.574, *p*=.60, (b) the time effect λ=.957, F (df = 3, 80) =1.204, *p*=.314, and (c) the interaction λ=.938, F (df = 3, 80) =1.763, *p*=.161; see Table 9). The results of the multivariate effects were not statistically significant.

Table 9. Summary of Between-Group Differences (Gender)

Measure/Variable	Less than 24 months		More than 24 months	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
ASCS Composite	116.3	114.8	117.23	120.17
	(20.47)	(14.23)	(15.07)	(18.27)
ITBS Composite	234	198	229	230
	(36.35)	(32.71)	(28.69)	(31.60)
Cumulative GPA	2.72	2.54	2.76	3.06
	(.77)	(.68)	(.65)	(.70)

Note: ( )=Standard Deviations

Results for Research Question 3

Are academic self-concept and academic achievement related to students' academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions (modified SAAS/SAAS-R) for transitioned and non-transitioned students? A correlation analysis was used to identify how ASCS and academic achievement measures of ITBS and GPA related to SAAS/SAAS-R subscale measures of academic self-perception and peer perception of transitioned and non-transitioned students. The results were significant between academic self-perceptions and academic self-concept (r=.694, *p*=.01) and academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions (r=.513, *p*=.01, see Table 10.) for those students who had lived in Iowa for less than 24 months. For those students who had lived in Iowa for more than 24 months, there was a significant correlation between academic self-concept and academic self-perception (r=.637, p=.01, see Table 11). As expected, there was a significant correlation between ITBS scores and GPA for both groups of students.

Table 10. Correlation Summary of Academic Self-Concept, ITBS Composite, Cumulative GPA, Self-Perception, and Peer Perceptions (less than 24 months)

Measure/Variable	*ASCS Composite*	*ITBS Composite*	*Cumulative GPA*	*Academic Self-Perceptions*	*Peer Perceptions*
ASCS Composite	1				
ITBS Composite	.014	1			
Cumulative GPA	.230	.454*	1		
Academic Self-Perceptions	.694**	-.054	.205	1	
Peer Perceptions	.337	-.218	-.326	.513**	1

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 11. Correlation Summary of Academic Self-Concept, ITBS Composite, Cumulative GPA, Self-Perception, and Peer Perceptions (more than 24 months)

Measure/Variable	*ASCS Composite*	*ITBS Composite*	*Cumulative GPA*	*Academic Self-Perceptions*	*Peer Perceptions*
ASCS Composite	1				
ITBS Composite	.177	1			
Cumulative GPA	.394**	.524**	1		
Academic Self-Perceptions	.637**	.176	.231	1	
Peer Perceptions	.227	.016	-.075	-.013	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Results for Research Question 4

How do the students' attitudes toward teachers (modified SAAS/SAAS-R) relate to academic self-concept and academic achievement? Determining the relationship between academic self-concept, academic achievement, and attitude toward teachers required correlating the ASCS global composite scores, ITBS composite, cumulative

GPA, and SAAS/SAAS-R subscale score on students' attitude toward teachers. There was statistical significance between several measures and variables as indicated in Table 12: academic self-concept and cumulative GPA (r=.349, *p*<.01), academic self-concept and attitude toward teachers (r=.486, *p*<.01), and ITBS and GPA (r=.520, *p*<.01).

Table 12. Correlation between ASCS, ITBS, GPA, and Attitude toward Teachers

Measure/Variable	ASCS Composite	ITBS Composite	Cumulative GPA	Attitude toward Teachers
ASCS Composite	1			
ITBS Composite	.149	1		
Cumulative GPA	.349**	.520**	1	
Attitude toward Teachers	.486**	-.175	.022	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Results for Research Question 5

How does the length of time since transition relate to academic self-concept, academic achievement, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscales? To identify a potential influence of time since transition with all measures and variables (ASCS, SAAS/SAAS-R, ITBS, GPA) obtained, correlations were calculated. Results indicated that time since transition was not significantly related to other variables. However, several measures and variables were found to have strong significance with each other as presented in Table 13. For example, motivation and self-perceptions were strongly correlated with academic self-concept, and attitude toward school was significantly related to attitude toward teachers.

Table 13. Correlation between Time since Transition and Other Measures and Variables

Measure/Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. ASCS Composite	1									
2. ITBS Composite	.149	1								
3. Cumulative GPA	.349**	.520**	1							
4. Attitude toward Teachers	.486**	-.175	.022	1						
5. Self-Perceptions	.640**	.114	.229	.353**	1					
6. Attitude toward School	.332**	-.014	.035	.678**	.046	1				
7. Goal Valuation	.427**	.176	.254*	.365**	.313**	.359**	1			
8. Motivation	.699**	-.062	.225*	.636**	.620**	.378**	.591**	1		
9. Peer Perceptions	.258**	-.060	-.139	.302**	.195	.253*	.088	.291**	1	
10. Time Since Move	.121	.180	.105	.063	.187	-.003	.043	.182	.123	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed)

Results for Research Question 6

How does the transition from an urban to a rural environment relate to the students' attitude toward school and motivation/self regulation in school (modified SAAS/SAAS-R)? A MANOVA was used to determine how transition was related to ASCS and SAAS/SAAS-R subscale measures of motivation and attitude toward school. The independent variable was time since transition, while the dependent variable was SAAS/SAAS-R subscale scores of motivation/self regulation and attitude toward school. Tests were run to determine the multivariate effect of time, λ=.991, F (df = 2, 98) =.453, *p*=.637; see Table 14. The result was not statistically significant for either group.

Table 14. Summary of Between-Group Differences (Transition, ASCS, Motivation, and Attitude toward School)

Measure/Variable	Less than 24 months	More than 24 months
Attitude Toward School	5.56	5.49
	(1.32)	(1.38)
Motivation	5.36	5.53
	(1.12)	(.95)

Note: ( )=Standard Deviations from the mean

Summary

Chapter IV provided results and major findings related to the statistical analyses that were conducted to understand relationships between factors influencing academic self-concept and academic achievement. There were significant relationships between academic self-concept and cumulative GPA of students; however, ITBS composite scores were not influenced by academic self-concept (Question 1). The length of time a student was enrolled in an Iowa school did not alter the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement measures but time did have a significant relationship with ITBS and GPA. Upon completing the multivariate analysis of variance to determine if gender differences existed between transition groups, the results indicated no

significant difference in the effects of gender, time, and interaction among variables of ASCS, ITBS, and GPA (Question 2). The analysis of the relationship between academic self-concept, academic achievement measures, and students' academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions yielded significant associations between academic self-concept and academic self-perceptions for students in both transition groups (Question 3). Students attending Iowa schools for less than 24 months had a significant relationship between peer perceptions and academic self-perceptions. Determining the relationship between students' attitude toward teachers, academic self-concept, and academic achievement measures generated significant relationships between ASCS scores and attitude toward teachers, thus supporting previous findings regarding the connections between academic self-concept and GPA (Question 4). Examining the relationship between length of time since transition, academic self-concept, academic achievement measures, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R measures produced significance among several variables such as academic self-concept's strong relationship with motivation and self-perceptions (Question 5). However, length of time since transition did not influence academic self-concept global scores, ITBS composite scores, cumulative GPAs, attitude toward teachers, self-perceptions, attitude toward school, goal valuation, motivation, or peer perception variables that were examined in this question. Analyzing the group differences between students' attitude towards school and motivation indicated no significance in the effects of time or the interaction among variables (Question 6). The findings of the study and potential implications of this research will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American students transitioning from urban to rural schools. The results of this study, reported in Chapter IV, explained the relationships between academic self-concept, academic achievement, and other variables influencing these factors for African American middle school/junior high students who had transitioned from urban to rural schools. Chapter V provides (a) an overview of the study; (b) a discussion of the findings obtained through statistical analysis; (c) limitations of the study; (d) implications for school-based personnel practitioners, counselor educators, and counselors in training; and (e) suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Study

The number of minority students enrolled in Iowa public schools has increased over the past 10 years, and a large number of students have relocated to Iowa from more urban areas (Iowa Department of Education, 2005, 2010). The literature has described how transitions can influence the academic performance of students relocating from one school to another (Gruman et al., 2008; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Understanding how to meet the potential needs of students transitioning from more urban schools to more rural schools was the motivation for this study. This study was intended to increase knowledge and awareness of the changes in academic self-concept and achievement measures for students who had relocated within the past 24 months compared to those who had not. Specifically, African American sixth- through eighth-grade students were asked to respond to surveys related to their personal feelings about themselves academically and to answer questions about potential influences on their education. The research questions were designed to explore students' academic self-concept, overall scores for academic measures, gender differences, academic self-perceptions and peer perceptions, and relationship to time since transition. Overall academic self-concept was

found to be related to academic measures of the ITBS and GPA. However, there were no significant differences related to gender. The significance of length of time a student had attended an Iowa public school varied when compared to measures of academic self-concept and students' school attitude assessment subscale measures.

Discussion of the Findings

The following questions were considered in this study. First, what is the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American students who have experienced transition from an urban to a rural environment and those who have not? Second, do gender differences exist in the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement among the transitioned and non-transitioned students? Third, are academic self-concept and academic achievement related to students' academic self perceptions and peer perceptions for transitioned and non-transitioned students? The fourth question, does the students' attitude toward teachers relate to academic self-concept and academic achievement? Fifth, does the length of time since transition relate to academic self-concept, academic achievement, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscales? Finally, does the transition from an urban to a rural environment relate to the students' attitude toward school and motivation/self regulation in school?

Previous research addressed the academic self-concept of students and the influence of mobility on academic achievement (Cokley 2000; Gruman et al., 2008; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between transition, academic self-concept, and academic achievement measures of the 101 participants in the sample. Correlation analysis and multivariate analysis of variance were the primary means of obtaining the results of the study. Variables of the study were length of time since transition, gender, cumulative student grades, composite ITBS scores, scores on the ASCS, and modified SAAS/SAAS-R instruments. The data

collected provided results that supported previous information about the academic performance of African American students.

Academic Self-Concept, Academic Achievement, and Transition

Research Question 1 sought to measure the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement measures of transitioned and non-transitioned students. Academic self-concept was measured by the Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds et al., 1980) which produced global scores. Academic achievement was measured by composite scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and cumulative grade point averages (GPAs). The transition group consisted of students who had been in Iowa less than 24 months (n=28) and the non-transition group were students who had been in Iowa schools longer than 24 months (n=73). Academic self-concept was explained as the students' attitudes, feelings, and perceptions about their intellectual or academic skills, often when compared to other students (Cokley, 2000; Lent et al., 1997). To answer this question, correlation was used to analyze the relationship between academic self-concept, achievement measures, and transition groups.

The results regarding Question 1 suggest strong relationships between students' perceptions of personal academic skills and actual performance indicated by student academic self-concept scores and the academic measure of GPA. The overall sample mean for academic self-concept was 118.27, with a standard deviation of 16.5. The cumulative GPA of students from schools reporting grades (n=88) was 2.87 with a standard deviation of .70. Based on the results, students with strong attitudes toward their ability had high overall academic performance. Furthermore, the students in this study had a higher academic self-concept score when compared to those in other studies (Cokley, 2000; Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds et al., 1980).

The relationship between academic measures and self-concept was not influenced by the amount of time a student was enrolled in an Iowa school. This outcome was unexpected because new students tend to require time to adjust to a new school environment, and academics are typically impacted as a result of this transition (Mehana, 1997; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Temple & Reynolds, 1999). The relatively small sample size may be a possible rationale for this result, or students may have transitioned from schools with similar curriculum and expectations for students. The mean ITBS composite score for students whose scores were reported in their permanent school records (*n*=98) was 223 with a standard deviation of 31.91. The ITBS composite scores were consistently related to the cumulative GPA of both student groups. This result was not surprising since most achievement measures are strongly related to students' overall skills.

Gender Differences

Research Question 2 sought to measure gender differences between academic self-concept and academic achievement of the transition groups. The transition group (n=28) consisted of 14 females and 14 males. The non-transition group consisted of 39 females and 34 (*n*=73). To answer this question, a two-factor MANOVA was used to determine the between group differences based on gender.

Examining gender differences in Question 2 resulted in no significant relationship among academic self-concept or achievement of students, suggesting possible equality in the measures of male and female students regardless of their length of time in Iowa schools. The results were unique because previous research on gender and academic achievement yielded differences between how females and males perform academically (Abrams, 2002; Akos & Galassi, 2004; Honora, 2002). As indicated in previous literature, gender and race influence academic achievement based on how students respond to academic expectations, social, and cultural constructs. However, the current research study sample sizes may have influenced the non-significance in gender and

academic achievement. Furthermore, the small sample size may also be the reason for no relationship between gender and academic self-concept because previous research indicated significant differences in gender experiences and self-concept of students (Byrne & Shavelson, 1987; Meece et al., 1982).

Academic Self-Perceptions and Peer Perceptions

Research Question 3 sought to measure the relationship between academic self-concept, academic achievement, academic self-perceptions, and peer perceptions of the transitioned and non-transitioned groups. Academic self perceptions and peer perceptions were measured by the modified SAAS/SAAS-R (McCoach, 2002; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The scores on the academic self-perceptions subscale were comprised of responses to questions about students' confidence in academic skills, with a mean score of 5.54 and a standard deviation of .89 (Ames, 1990; Bandura, 1977; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Schunk, 1981, 1984). The scores on the peer perception subscale provided information about students' perception of peers and peers' attitudes toward school, with a mean score of 5.34 and a standard deviation of 1.09; research has indicated that peer interactions may influence students' academic achievement (Elkind, 1967; Goodenow, 1993; McCoach & Siegle, 2003). To answer the research question, a correlation analysis was used to compare the relationships between academic self-concept scores, ITBS scores, cumulative GPAs, academic self-perception subscale scores, and peer perception subscale scores.

Exploring academic self-concept and achievement in Question 3 led to comparing academic self-perception and peer perceptions in an attempt to find a link between these factors and transition groups. Students attending Iowa schools for less than 24 months showed a strong connection between the students' beliefs about academic ability and the students' confidence about academic skills. Students in this group also had a strong relationship between personal beliefs about academic skills and peer attitudes about the school setting. Hence, students in this group not only had positive feelings about

themselves academically, but they also possessed confidence about their academic skills and shared these values with their friends. These findings support previous research about peer interactions and positive academic achievement (Elkind, 1967; Goodenow, 1993).

Students attending Iowa schools longer than 24 months had a similar relationship between beliefs about academic ability and confidence associated with academic skills. It should be noted that the peer perception subscale was based on four questions instead of five due to an error in the questions on the modified SAAS/SAAS-R. Therefore, peer perceptions were measured with fewer items, which may have slightly influenced the validity of that subscale. As expected, both transition groups had a strong relationship between ITBS scores and cumulative grade point averages, and this is also supported by the students' positive feelings about academic abilities and skills.

Attitude toward Teachers

Research Question 4 sought to measure students' attitude toward teachers, academic self-concept, and academic achievement. The results from the attitude toward teachers and classes subscale were significantly related to students' relationships and perceptions toward teachers and classes (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Peters et al., 2000). The overall mean score for the attitude toward school subscale was 5.24 with a standard deviation of 1.06. To answer Question 4, a correlation analysis was used to compare the relationships between academic self-concept scores, ITBS scores, cumulative GPAs, and attitude toward teachers subscale scores.

Factors explored in Question 4 were found to be significantly associated with academic self-concept. As indicated in previous research on interactions of students and teachers (Cokley, 2000; Ferguson 2003), there is a significant relationship between students' beliefs about academic skills and feelings about interactions with teachers. Positive relationships with teachers can be responsible for better student performance. This finding continues to confirm the necessity of positive relationships among students

and teachers. This question also found connections between students' feelings about academic abilities and overall scores on academic measures of students' grades and skills testing, as previously described in another analysis in this study.

Length of Time since Transition

Research Question 5 sought to measure the length of time since transition to Iowa schools and examine the relationship between academic self-concept, academic achievement measures, and students' school attitude assessment. The groups in the study were divided into two groups, students in Iowa schools for less than 24 months and students in Iowa schools for more than 24 months. Overall mean scores related to this question are goal valuation (Mean= 6.51, SD=.66) and motivation/self-regulation (Mean=5.48, SD=.99). The goal valuation subscale was used to analyze students' perceptions of goals and values related to achievement (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The motivation/self-regulation subscale was comprised of students' thoughts and feelings about goals associated with academic performance, along with students' enthusiasm to achieve those goals (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Zimmerman, 1994). To answer the question, a correlation analysis was used to compare the relationships between academic self-concept scores, ITBS scores, cumulative GPAs, attitude toward teachers subscale scores, academic self-perceptions subscale scores, attitude toward school subscale scores, goal valuation subscale scores, motivation subscale scores, peer perception subscale sores, and time since move.

The results regarding Question 5 showed a non-significant relationship between time since move and other variables from the study. This could be due to the relatively small sample size or the proportion of students in the comparison groups. However, several measures were found to have strong connections with each other. For example, students' motivation toward school and perceptions about academic skills were strongly connected with student beliefs about academic ability. Students' feelings about school were also connected to students' feelings about teachers and classes. Students' beliefs

about their academic ability were also strongly related to grades, perceptions about academic skills, values about goals and goal achievement, and enthusiasm about school. These results support previous literature related to the influence of student feelings regarding academic abilities and skills, along with student values and motivation to excel academically, associated with academic achievement (Lyon, 1993; Marsh et al., 1988; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Shavelson et al., 1976; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982).

Attitude toward School and Motivation/Self Regulation

Research Question 6 sought to measure the differences between transition and non-transition student groups' attitude toward school and motivation. The attitude toward school subscale was comprised of self-reported interest in the school setting and environment, along with the student perceptions and beliefs about school (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). The motivation/self-regulation subscale information was related to students' self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions connected to goals associated with school in addition to the students' motivation to achieve academic goals (McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Zimmerman, 1994). Mean scores related to this question are attitude toward school (Mean= 5.56, SD=1.32, less than 24 months; Mean= 5.49, SD=1.38, more than 24 months) and motivation/self-regulation (Mean=5.36, SD=1.12, less than 24 months; Mean=5.53, SD=.95, more than 24 months). To answer Question 6, a MANOVA was used to obtain information about group differences related to academic self-concept scores, attitude toward school subscale scores, motivation subscale scores, and transition variables.

The multivariate effects were not significant for either transition group, indicating that time had no influence on students' feelings about or motivation toward school. However, findings discovered in Question 5 supported previous research on influence of motivation on academic performance because motivation was strongly coupled with many variables including academic self-concept, cumulative GPA, attitude toward teachers, self-perceptions, attitude toward school, goal valuation, and peer perceptions

(Lyon, 1993; van Laar, 2000; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). This is notable because sustaining or increasing student motivation could lead to increased academic outcomes.

Implications of the Study

Implications for School-Based Personnel and Practitioners

Student responses on items related to attitude toward school and attitude toward teachers were relatively high. As noted in the literature, the expectations of teachers can significantly influence the educational outcome of students (Ferguson, 2003). Therefore, school-based personnel such as principals, teachers, and guidance counselors must be willing to embrace new students and establish activities to engage the students in the educational process.

School administrators, as the leaders of the school, should be willing to help foster a school culture and climate that will encourage student morale and motivation toward school. As Rogers-Sirin and Sirin (2009) suggested, there should be a willingness to foster cohesiveness between school-based professionals and students. Determining a way to assist minority students in adjusting to a school culture can be done in numerous ways. Students in this study reported strong attitudes toward school; therefore, identifying the school characteristics that create students' feelings and connection to the school environment would be essential in supporting student values toward education.

Additionally, reflecting on student skills, strengths, and achievement in school can continue to boost student motivation toward school and goal valuation. Although many students in this study indicated significant motivation/self-regulation to attaining academic desires, school-based professionals could increase recognition of student achievement. Reflection on student achievements and recognition can serve as an acknowledgement of student accomplishments and a catalyst for students to continue striving for success in school. For example, having a student highlight board on display in the school building could be helpful for encouraging student achievement, along with having individual meetings with students who are identified as needing more academic

assistance. Acknowledging students who are motivated and achieving in school not only helps to build student morale but also serves as an appreciation of teachers and others involved in the student's life.

Because Iowa public schools have historically been predominately White settings, it is also important to acknowledge the influence of culture in the school setting. Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) addressed the influence of teacher attitudes on school climate in settings where multiple ethnicities are represented and reiterated teachers' responsibility to assist in fostering an organizational culture that respects others regardless of cultural background and emphasizes the significance of diverse cultures in the educational process. Teachers' and other school professionals' attitudes about multiculturalism can impact how minority students are introduced into new school settings (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002). Teachers can help change students attitudes about education and provide meaningful learning environments by being prepared to effectively teach diverse students and incorporate a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy in response to the change in cultural demographics in Iowa public schools (Townsend, 2002).

Townsend (2002) suggested the need for teacher education program curricula and practicum experiences that encompass multicultural education to increase teachers' knowledge of values, beliefs, and norms of different minority cultures, along with enhancing teacher skills and instructional practices in developing academic and social interaction strategies to engage culturally diverse student learners. For example, having a new student orientation program would allow (a) students to be welcomed into the school and given pertinent information such as class schedule, locker assignment, and homeroom teacher; (b) students to be assigned to a student buddy who would be willing to show the students around the school and introduce them to other students; and (c) follow-up with the students periodically to ensure that the transition experience has been successful. An orientation program such as this would warrant some consideration of

school culture and building dynamics; however, student follow-up could take place in group settings based on how many new students have arrived on a monthly basis, and students could complete a handwritten evaluation about their transition experiences. The student responses could be reviewed, allowing for further follow-up if necessary. The intention would be to bring the potential challenges of student transitions to the attention of others and allow for resolution of student or teacher concerns.

Establishing interactive workshops between school-based professionals could be used to generate awareness, knowledge, and skills for those working with minority students. These workshops could also be designed to develop initiatives to increase collaboration among schools, community, and parents as each entity is crucial to the development and advancement of students. Objectives for these workshops would be to evaluate educator ideology about educating minority students, assess curriculum to determine the presence of cultural considerations, and understand teaching strategies and techniques used when educating minority students. The format of workshop series would be divided into three portions of the academic school year—pre-planning, mid-school year evaluation, and post-planning after school—to provide consistent evaluation of effectiveness of multicultural interventions and implement any necessary adjustments. Specific case studies may be utilized during workshops to establish recommendations for students, initiate interventions, discuss strategies for individuals, and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

Pre-planning workshops would be used to introduce aspects that may impact minority students and discuss characteristics of students, while providing information about personal interactions with these individuals in order to establish how the educators can assist in students' academic success. Mid-school year workshops would be used to assess the progress of students based on implementations prescribed in pre-planning workshops, along with determining the effectiveness of the interventions with students and providing modification suggestions if needed. Post-planning workshops would be

designed to troubleshoot workshop methodology, plan for upcoming academic year, and develop a contingency plan for minority students.

School counselors can also be involved in meetings to help facilitate student centered academic objectives and assist students with self regulation and attainment of goals, in addition to ensuring that students remain motivated in school. ASCA (2005) guidelines for student planning suggest that school counselors assist in coordinating ongoing activities designed to aid students in establishing personal goals and monitoring the progression towards those goals. School counselors also should have a personal role in the transition of new students as they provide services to acclimate students and parents to the new school environment.

Developing training workshops with teachers on how to work with new students and engage minority students in activities to foster relationships can also be an initiative for school counselors who are interested in improving student/teacher relationships. Facilitating individual or group meetings between students, parents, or guardians that can serve as a means of identifying students' needs could also be implemented by school counselors to enhance the students' experience in the school building (ASCA, 2005). Guidance lessons for classes with new students, in addition to small group meetings with new students, can be used to help students adjust to the new environment. This concept can also be used to address the needs of minority students in a school building. Another means of facilitating a personal connection between new students and teachers could be establishing an orientation activity among new students to allow them to be introduced to others in the building. Students could be spotlighted on a display board in the school along with a teacher or another student who may share common interests with the new student. This would help to connect individuals with similar backgrounds and interests, in hopes of fostering positive relationships. School personnel should be encouraged to continue to evaluate school climate and student moral, along with being willing to implement programs and activities to engage both new students and minority students in

the school building. Establishing programs and initiatives are useful because schools can be prepared to meet the needs of the students entering the school building.

Implications for Counselor Educators and Future Counselors

Promoting multicultural counseling competence is an ethical mandate, a professional standard, and a client-responsive position that is essential for continued growth in the counseling profession. As counselor educators and supervisors, the role of gatekeeping encompasses educating counselors-in-training with essential skills and techniques for counseling diverse clientele. Counselors in training develop competencies through areas such as coursework and practicum or internship experiences. Establishing a foundation for clinical strategies for special populations can be helpful for counseling students.

Counselor education programs are responding to the increase in diverse clientele by integrating courses into counselor training that promote counseling students' cultural competence (CACREP, 2009). Hill (2003) recommended that counselor educators attempt to infuse and integrate multicultural issues, models, and authors into all course work to promote increased competence. It is also important for instructors to provide learning environments in which counselors-in-training can apply these techniques and skills to various populations (Constantine, 2002). Training guidelines for counseling professionals encourage the infusion of multiculturalism in courses taught in counselor preparation programs. Constantine (2002) also suggested that counselors should consider aspects of clients' cultural identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class when counseling minorities. Supervisors of counselors in training have an important function in the overall development of counselors. Assisting counseling students in developing awareness, reducing bias, and creating effective inventions for clientele are some of the tasks supervisors have in developing culturally competent counselors.

School counselors have a vital role in assisting schools with embracing multicultural outlooks in the schools based on their ethical obligation as outlined by the

American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2004). School counselors interact with many individuals within the school context, including students, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel; therefore, counselors can serve as liaisons between groups in order to foster unity among the groups, facilitate discussions about culture and diversity, and assist with conflict resolution (Pedersen, 2003). School counselors are responsible for helping to create a school climate that embraces new students and offers assistance to those students in becoming acclimated to a new school environment.

As gatekeepers of the profession, supervisors of counselors are expected to monitor the skill levels of counseling supervisees. While attempting to develop culturally competent counselors, supervisors may suggest culturally sensitive interventions to counseling supervisees in the supervision process that will aid in providing interventions that include cultural considerations. Miville, Rosa, and Constantine (2005) emphasized that "supervisors need to assess racial and cultural identity attitudes of both themselves and their supervisees" (p.197). Understanding how a supervisor can assist supervisees in becoming culturally competent counselors, and thus effectively serving special client populations, is necessary to gaining unique knowledge of such clients. Comprehension of how this knowledge of cultural skill in counseling sessions relates to therapy is necessary to move the profession of supervision forward.

Awareness of supervisee biases or misperceptions about counseling minority client populations can create a forum for discussion of behaviors or countertransferences which could create interference in the therapeutic process. It is imperative for supervisors and supervisees to engage in discussions such as this in order to support supervisee development during clinical supervision. Additionally, these discussions contribute to the overall competency level, self-awareness, and professional development of future counselors. Training implications, guidance through clinical experiences, discussion of supervision issues, and advisement of counseling students is important in the development of counselors who are prepared to work with minority clients. Course

curriculum and design, along with the infusion of multiculturalism, can be helpful in educating future counselors who will be working with diverse populations.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research in the area of acculturation of students would add to existing knowledge in order to determine if the outcomes of this statistical analysis were based on student adjustment to the academic environment. Increasing the sample size of students who have recently transitioned and stratifying the length of time since transition in a replication study would also add more specific insight into how transitions influence academic measures and self-concept. Additional research is also needed to determine the relationship of Iowa county characteristics to more urban areas in order to understand the potential environmental differences of communities and schools.

Exploring the variables related to academic achievement and student beliefs about school could also be done using qualitative methodology. Allowing students to provide narratives about their personal experiences would also be useful in determining precise interpretations about factors influencing student performance. Including parent and teacher feedback may also add to existing research on students who transition from one school setting to another. Furthermore, providing a mixed methodology could be utilized to determine more concise information about student transition from urban to rural schools. Mixed methodology could be applied to investigate a sample of the students in the study; those with higher or lower scores on the ASCS and modified SAAS/SAAS-R subscales could be engaged in a follow-up interview in order to determine more information about the students' experience in school.

Another option for future research could be examining students in a more urban area who are preparing to transition and determining their perception of academic self-concept and attitude toward school prior to a move and revaluating the students after a move takes place. Additional follow-up would be useful to periodically evaluate the students to discover if the transition influenced the academic self-concept and academic

achievement of the students. Consideration of the school environment prior to the move and the characteristics of the new school could be helpful in determining additional information about the students' perception of transitioning from an urban to a rural school.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by examining only the specific schools identified in the Iowa Educational Report that had experienced an increase in minority student population. Most students reported being from more urban areas such as Chicago, IL, East St. Louis, IL, and Cleveland, OH. However, some students were from more rural areas such as Columbia, SC and Mississippi, which created fewer urban to rural school transitioning students in the study sample. Additionally, differences in educational practices, curricula, teaching techniques, and grading standards for school districts were not considered.

As noted in Chapter IV, the students' responses to questions about academic self-concept and attitude toward schools were relatively high and strongly correlated with academic achievement scores. It is encouraging to see the strong relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement scores; however, understanding more about student responses would be useful in interpreting the data collected. Having a larger sample size could be a factor in the findings of the study, and including more students may yield different results.

Examining the transition experiences of majority Caucasian students or other minorities would add to the implications of this study by providing additional comparison groups. The small size of the comparison groups should also be noted given that the sample size was reduced based on the number of returned consent forms. On the survey instruments, students were not given the opportunity to provide rationale or explanations for answers to questions, thereby limiting additional insight from students regarding their feelings about themselves academically and about the school environment.

As reported in Chapter IV, the length of time since transition and gender did not have a significant influence on student responses to questions about academic beliefs or skills. Allowing students to provide more information about specific transition experiences, along with receiving information from teachers and parents, may have been helpful in discovering why the length of time since transition did not impact students' grades, beliefs about academic abilities, or attitudes toward school. Additionally, examining why gender differences did not exist with the students in this study and receiving more information about previous school characteristics would be helpful in explaining the outcome of the data collected.

Conclusion

Chapter V presented a synopsis of the data that were collected and the potential implications for the data associated with the academic performance of students. The results suggest a significant relationship among variables of academic self-concept, academic achievement, and other factors influencing student outcomes. However, gender and the length of time since transition were not shown to be linked to students' academic ability or performance in school. This research supports enhancing the quality of interactions between students and teachers and encouraging others associated with students' education to be involved as these factors relate to student perceptions of academic ability and actual performance on academic measures. School administrators and school counselors are vital in helping to foster a school climate that engages new students and students from diverse cultures.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability and as accurately as possible. Feel free to skip any question that you feel uncomfortable answering or leave it blank if it does not apply to you. Please choose only one response choice per question.

Age: ☐ **10** ☐ **11** ☐ **12** ☐ **13** ☐ **14** ☐ **15** ☐ **16**

Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Grade: ☐ **6** ☐ **7** ☐ **8**

What is your cumulative GPA (grade point average)?

☐ 4.0 or higher (All A's)
☐ 3.75 to 3.99 (Mostly A's)
☐ 3.5 to 3.74 (More A's than B's)
☐ 3.25 to 3.49 (More B's than A's)
☐ 3.0 to 3.24 (Mostly B's, some A's and C's)
☐ 2.5 to 2.99 (More B's than C's)
☐ 2.0 to 2.49 (More C's than B's)
☐ 1.5 to 1.99 (More C's than D's)
☐ 1.0 to 1.49 (More D's than C's)
☐ less than 1.0 (Mostly D's and F's)

Where is your current school? _____

Where was your previous school? _____

Approximately what date/month did you transfer to a new school? _____

Length of time since transition:

☐ 0 months
☐ 1 to 6 months
☐ 7 months to 12 months (one year)
☐ 13 months to 18 months (one year to a year and a half)

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INVITATION

Research Invitation

Dear Parent and Student:

My name is LaShawn C. Bacon and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education Ph.D. program at the University of Iowa. I will be conducting a study to understand how moving from a large city school to a smaller city school influences the way 6th through 8th grade African American students feel about themselves as a student and their grades.

I am especially interested in identifying the relationship of relocation to academic measures such as grades, motivation toward school, peer relationships, and attitudes toward schools. Additionally, I am examining how transition influences students' academic self-concept, which includes beliefs about academic abilities.

A goal of this research is to assist schools in developing specific programs and initiatives to help African American transitioning students excel academically.

I am seeking African American students who have either recently relocated to Iowa within the past 24 months or been enrolled in Iowa schools for more than 24 months.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to complete a short demographic form containing questions regarding: age, gender, grades, length of time since transition, etc., and completing two surveys that ask specific questions related to your experiences at school. This process will take about 45 minutes to an hour to complete and can be done during a free period or study hall during school hours.

Please be aware that the information obtained will be confidential and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

If you think you might be interested, or would just like more information, please sign the attached informed consent document and return it to your school's guidance office.

Sincerely,

La Shawn C. Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC
The University of Iowa
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision
Cell: 678-438-9808
Email: lashawn-bacon@uiowa.edu

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

FOR IRB USE ONLY
APPROVED BY: IRB-02
IRB ID #: 201012752
APPROVAL DATE: 01/31/11
EXPIRATION DATE: 01/31/12

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American students transitioning from urban to rural schools

Principal Investigator: La Shawn C. Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC, The University of Iowa

Research Team Contact: La Shawn C. Bacon 678-438-9808 email: lashawn-bacon@uiowa.edu

- If you are the parent/guardian of a child under 18 years old who is being invited to be in this study, you will be asked to read and sign this document to give permission for your child to participate.

This consent form describes the research study to help you decide if you want your child to participate. This form provides important information about what your child will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your child's rights as a research subject.

- If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the research team for more information.
- You should discuss your child's participation with anyone you choose such as family or friends.
- Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research team has answered your questions and you decide that you want your child to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This is a research study. We are inviting you to participate in this research study because he/she is an African American 6th, 7th, or 8th grade student in Johnson or Linn County**.**

The purpose of this research study is to understand moving from a large city school to a smaller city school influences the way African American students feel about themselves as a student and of their grades.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 200 people will take part in this study conducted by a student researcher from the University of Iowa.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to allow your child to take part in this study, their involvement will last **approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

Your child will be given a short survey that asks about how they see themselves and their academic abilities. The survey asks questions about their feelings about themselves and their feelings toward their school environment.

- You will be given a demographic form to complete which asks you to provide your age, gender, and information about your academic background.
- You will be given two surveys that will take approximately one hour to complete.

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APPROVAL DATE: 01/31/11
EXPIRATION DATE: 01/31/12

- The survey will be given at school.
- You are free to skip any questions on the survey that you prefer not to answer.

I will obtain scores for the standardized test, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and current Grade Point Average (GPA) from your child's school.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?
Your child may experience one or more of the risks indicated below from being in this study. In addition to these, there may be other unknown risks, or risks that I did not anticipate, associated with being in this study.

It is possible that your child may feel uncomfortable answering questions about him/herself or their classroom experiences. Your child may skip any questions that he/she does not wish to answer and stop participating at any time.

Your child may be concerned that his/her decision whether or not to be in the study or his/her responses on the survey may affect class grades or standing in school. I will not reveal his/her answers to the teachers or anyone in the school.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?
Your child will not benefit from being in this study. However, I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because of the information your child provides.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?
Your child will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?
Your child will not be paid for participating in this study. Your child will be entered into a drawing for a $25.00 Visa gift card. The winner will be drawn at the conclusion of the survey administration and the card will be delivered to the winner that day.

WHO IS FUNDING THIS STUDY?
The University and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?
I will keep your child's participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people such as those indicated below may become aware of your child's participation in this study and may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies him/her.

- federal government regulatory agencies,
- auditing departments of the University of Iowa, and
- the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies)

To help protect your child's confidentiality, I will use a number and not his/her name to identify study information. Your child's survey form will have a number and will be returned in an envelope so that no one can see his/her answers. There will be a document that links your child's name with the survey number. This document will be stored so that

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only the researcher can see it. I will destroy the list once your child's data has been entered into the computer. I will store all study materials and information in locked files and in password protected computer files. If I write a report or article about this study or share the study data set with others, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

IS BEING IN THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. Your child may choose not to take part at all. If your child decides to be in this study, he/she may stop participating at any time. If your child decides not to be in this study, or if he/she stops participating at any time, your child won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which he/she otherwise qualifies. Your child's decision whether or not to be in this study will not affect the grades he/she receives in classes.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

I encourage you and your child to ask questions. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: LaShawn C. Bacon (678) 438-9808. If your child experiences a research-related injury, please contact Dr. David Duys (319) 335-5281.

If you or your child has questions, concerns, or complaints about his/her rights as a research subject or about research related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 105 Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, 600 Newton Road, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242-1098, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu. General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Info for Public" on the Human Subjects Office web site, http://research.uiowa.edu/hso. To offer input about your child experiences as a research subject or to speak to someone other than the research staff, call the Human Subjects Office at the number above.

This Informed Consent Document is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to allow your child to participate. You are not waiving any legal rights by signing this Informed Consent Document. Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to allow your child to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subject's Name (printed): _____

Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative's Name and Relationship to Subject:

_____ _____
(Name - printed) (Relationship to Subject - printed)

Do not sign this form if today's date is on or after EXPIRATION DATE: 01/31/12.

_____ _____
(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

APPENDIX D

ASSENT DOCUMENT

FOR IRB USE ONLY
APPROVED BY: IRB-02
IRB ID #: 201012752
APPROVAL DATE: 01/31/11
EXPIRATION DATE: 01/31/12

ASSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Academic self-concept and academic achievement of African American students transitioning from urban to rural schools

Investigator: La Shawn Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC

I am doing a research study. A research study is a special way to find out about something. We are trying to find out moving from a large city school to a smaller city school influences the way African American students feel about themselves as a student and their grades.

If you decide that you want to be in this study, this is what will happen. You will be given a short survey that asks about how you see yourself and your academic abilities. The survey asks questions about your feelings about yourself and your feelings toward your school environment.

- You will be given a demographic form to complete which asks you to provide your age, gender, and information about your academic background.
- You will be given two surveys that will take approximately one hour to complete.
- The survey will be given at school.
- You are free to skip any questions on the survey that you prefer not to answer.

I will obtain your scores for the standardized test, The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and your current Grade Point Average (GPA) from your school.

I want to tell you about some things that might hurt or upset you if you are in this study. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering questions about yourself or your classroom experiences. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer and stop participating at any time.

You may be concerned that your decision whether or not to be in the study or your responses on surveys may affect your class grades or standing in school. I will not reveal your answers to the teachers or anyone in the school.

I don’t know if being in this research study will help you. But I hope to learn something that will help other people some day.

When I am done with the study, I will write a report about what we found out. I will not use your name in the report.

FOR IRB USE ONLY
APPROVED BY: IRB-02
IRB ID #: 201012752
APPROVAL DATE: 01/31/11
EXPIRATION DATE: 01/31/12

You don't have to be in this study. It's up to you. If you say okay now, but you change your mind later, that's okay too. All you have to do is tell me.

If you want to be in this study, please sign or print your name.
I, _____, want to be in this research study.
(Child's name)

_____ _____
(Sign or print your name here) (Date)

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT SCRIPT

Participant Script

Dear Student:

My name is LaShawn C. Bacon and I am currently enrolled in the Counselor Education Ph.D. program at the University of Iowa. You have been identified by personnel at your school as being eligible for this study due to either recently relocating to Iowa within the past 24 months or being a student who has been enrolled in Iowa schools for more than 24 months.

Your parent/guardian has completed the informed consent document and you have signed the assent document agreeing to participate in this research study. I will ask you to complete a short demographic form containing questions regarding: age, gender, grades, length of time since transition, etc., and you will be asked to complete two surveys that ask specific questions related to your experiences at school. This process will take about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop participating at any time.

Please be aware that the information I obtain will be confidential and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

La Shawn C. Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC
The University of Iowa
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision
Cell: 678-438-9808
Email: lashawn-bacon@uiowa.edu

APPENDIX F

EMAIL TO PRINCIPAL

Email to Principal

Dear Principal,

This email is to seek your permission to conduct research in your school building. My name is La Shawn Bacon and I am a doctoral student at The University of Iowa, conducting a research study with African American 6th through 8th grade students in Dallas, Johnson, Linn, and Polk counties. I am examining the influence of transition on those students. I would like to seek students who have recently relocated within the past 24 months and compare those students to those who have been in the Iowa school system beyond 24 months. It is my hope to use this data to present a report to the schools and the districts involved on how to assist these students. I would appreciate your assistance with helping me to gather information.

I have received district level approval to conduct research in schools in this county and would like to have your school included in the study. The research would involve administering two surveys to students during an available class period. This process would take no longer than 45 minutes to an hour. Please indicate your willingness to allow your school to participate via email or I would be happy to schedule a meeting to discuss this project in more detail.

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

La Shawn C. Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC
The University of Iowa
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision
Graduate Assistant, University Programs Coordinator
Belin Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development
Email: lashawn-bacon@uiowa.edu

APPENDIX G

NEWSLETTER INVITATION

Newsletter Invitation

Dear Parent and Student:

LaShawn C. Bacon, a doctoral candidate at the University of Iowa will be conducting a study in to investigate the influence of urban to rural school transition on academics of 6th through 8th grade students.

She is especially interested in identifying the relationship of relocation to academic measures such as grades, motivations toward school, peer relationships, and attitudes toward schools. She is also examining how transition influences a students' academic self-concept which are beliefs about academic abilities.

A goal of this research is to assist schools in developing specific programs and initiatives to help African American transitioning students excel academically.

She is seeking African American students who have either recently relocated to Iowa within the past 24 months or have been a student enrolled in Iowa schools for more than 24 months.

If you agree to participate, she will ask you to complete a short form containing questions regarding: age, gender, grades, etc., and two surveys that ask specific questions related to your experiences at school. This process will take about 45 minutes to an hour to complete and can be done during a free period or study hall during school hours.

Please be aware that the information obtained will be confidential and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

If you think you might be interested, or would just like more information, please obtain an information packet from your school's guidance office or homeroom teacher.

Sincerely,

La Shawn C. Bacon, ABD, LPC, NCC
The University of Iowa
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision
Cell: 678-438-9808
Email: lashawn-bacon@uiowa.edu

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