

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DIFFERENCES AMONG MALE  
AND FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS:  
AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine differences between male and female African American high school students in an urban setting. The participants were from a senior academy located in a Southern state. Of the 270 participants in the study, 76 were seniors, 89 were juniors, 95 were sophomores, and 10 were freshmen. The gender composition consisted of 167 females and 103 males. The system database was used to identify the cumulative grade point average for each student. Also, the students completed the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R), which measures academic self-perception, attitudes toward teaches, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. A series of independent samples *t* tests were performed to assess differences in male and female academic achievement levels, academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes, toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. A multiple regression analysis was performed using gender and the five variables measured by the SAAS-R as independent variables and academic achievement as the dependent variable. The major findings were as follows.

Moderate positive correlations existed between (a) attitudes toward school and attitudes toward teachers, (b) academic self-perception and motivation/self-regulation, and (c) goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation. The means scores for academic self-perception and goal valuation were significantly more positive for African American females than African American males. Regression analysis revealed that academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation,

motivation/self-regulation were not significant predictors of academic achievement. The findings have practical implications for educators and identify areas warranting additional research.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

$\alpha$	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
$\beta$	Beta
$df$	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary with some restrictions
$r$	Pearson product-moment correlation
$<$	less than
$>$	greater than

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the 21st century, the gender gap between urban African American male and female high school students has widened considerably over the last 25 years (Garibaldi, 2007). In most instances, African American males are lagging well behind their female peers who are graduating from high school and college at higher rates (Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004). In order to compete in a global economy, African American students will need to acquire highly specialized skills. Currently, in the United States (U.S.), education achievement indicators reveal that, for the most part, the U.S. educational system is not preparing many urban African American male or female students for success in a knowledge based economy, nor is it equipped to prepare them for success in college, or develop those essential skills valued in today's global labor market. A disproportionate number of urban African American high school students are leaving school academically unprepared for an advanced economy. In order to maintain pace with the demands of an ever-increasing technological society, the US educational system must provide rigorous and relevant experiences in order that its citizens may advance efficiently and quickly (Le & Kazis, 2008).

The academic achievement of urban African American high school students and their attitudes toward school are phenomena worthy of an extended, comprehensive study conducted by the educational community. Presently, academic trends indicate that females at the secondary level continue to outscore their male counterparts in reading and writing, while males'

mathematical levels are higher than females' (NCES, 2008). Likewise, current trends in student attitudes as reported by male and female high school students indicate that positive feelings about school have declined between 1980 and 2001 and are becoming increasingly negative. In a study concerning trends in educational equity for females, it was revealed that nearly 36% of the males reported that schoolwork was not important and would not be relevant to them at a later date (NCES, 2004). As evidenced, the interplay between gender, attitude, and achievement within the scope of the urban African American high school student is complex, and must be further examined in order to understand how it affects the academic outcomes of these students.

Some researchers posit that gender differences in the academic achievement and attitudes toward school among African American high school students are influenced by several variables. One of these variables takes into account the history of the education of African Americans in the US. Upon their arrival, most Africans were quickly inducted into a system of 'chattel slavery' (Harris, 1993). Unlike most European Americans, African American men and women did not exist in separate domains. Therefore, the issue of race was not separate from gender (Perkins, 1993). Upon emancipation, racial uplift was a primary concern for African Americans who were hampered economically, politically, socially, and academically but realized that education was an essential key to their racial uplift campaign, and that the role of women was as critical to its success as the men in this endeavor (Nash, 2004).

Another variable to consider is academic self-perception. A study examining gender differences in relation to self-perceptions revealed that females had stronger academic skills and better grades than their male counterparts. The females also exhibited higher levels of interest in graduating from high school and reported higher levels of academic self-efficacy (Saunders et al., 2004).

Attitudes toward teachers are also significant factors in the academic achievement of urban African American high school students. Sullivan, Riccio, and Reynolds (2008) found that males report more negative attitudes toward teachers than females. Ding and Hall (2007) suspect this behavior may be related to the socialization of males and females. Since conformity appears more important to females than males, females are less likely to be confrontational with their teachers. McCoach (2002) also indicated that students' attitudes toward teachers are positively related to their academic achievement.

Attitudes toward school are another predictor of academic performance among African American students. In elementary school, gender differences are not as pronounced; but during middle school, some differences begin to emerge as evidenced by test scores of the males, which are lower than the females. For males, these differences may be influenced by their attitudes toward school, peers, and school climate, whereas, females may be affected by their cultural capital and socioeconomic status (Mickelson & Green, 2006). One reason for this phenomenon may be that their attitudes toward school are extremely negative (Sullivan et al., 2008). Between 1980 and 2001, the percentages of male and female students who had positive attitudes declined tremendously. Poor attitudes toward school may cause poor academic performance, which may also be a prerequisite for lower wages and socio economic status in the future (McCoach, 2002).

Another consideration is goal valuation. Research indicates that African American males and females value education and view it as a critical necessity today (Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2007; Taylor & Graham, 2007). Another study found that higher achieving females were more advanced in their goal setting behaviors than high achieving males (Adelabu, 2008).

Motivation is also a critical factor in the academic achievement of African American students. Gordon, Rouse, and Austin (2002) reported that high ability females exhibited higher

levels of motivation than high ability males. Gender differences related to academic self-regulation indicated that females are more self-regulated than males (Abar, Carter, & Winsler, 2009).

### Statement of the Problem

In a failing economy, it is critical for urban African American high school students to earn at least a high school diploma in order to pursue post secondary skills which will enhance their opportunities for obtaining gainful employment in a competitive market. Although this country continues to struggle with the centuries old dilemma of flagging urban African American high school student achievement, it remains crucial for society and the educational community to work diligently towards resolving this issue. Although students' attitudes seem to affect their academic achievement (McCoach, 2002), often the attitudes of urban African American high school students seem to demonstrate an indifference toward education.

Urban African American high school students generally claim that obtaining an education is important to them and is a determining factor in how successful they will be in life. At other times, they also report that they do not put forth much effort in school, which, at times, may account for their low academic achievement. Currently, it is imperative for the educational community to examine the discrepancy between what urban African American high school students say about school and what is actually put into practice (Ford, 2008). The differences and relationships between academic achievement, academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal-valuation, and motivation/self-regulation among urban African American high school students also warrant examination.

## Significance of the Problem

This study is relevant because in 2010 many urban African American students are still under-achieving academically compared to their European American counterparts. For some researchers, this experience remains an enigma, but the data delineates underachievement as a precursor to a lifetime of socioeconomic inequity affecting every aspect of one's life not only economically but also physically, psychologically, and emotionally (Clark, & Dugdale, 2008; McCoach, 2002). The following statistics provide further evidence of this issue. During the 2004-2005 school year for Grades 9-12, there were 512,702 dropouts of which 27% were African American (NCES, 2007). Midyear 2008, it was estimated that local jails as well as federal and state prisons housed 846,000 African American males and 67,800 African American females (BJS, 2009). In 2007, 9.1% of African American males were unemployed as well as 7.5 African American females (BLS, 2008). Unfortunately, these statistics do not mirror the inability of educators and policymakers to solve the achievement dilemma plaguing the urban African American population (Tatum, 2008).

Research suggests academic achievement is influenced by student attitudes which provide a justification for inclusion of urban African American student voices in future research efforts to alleviate this epidemic (McCoach, 2002; Tatum, 2008). To increase the academic achievement of these students, their educational needs must be addressed. At a glance, this problem may appear to be only an urban one, but it is not. Currently, it is burgeoning well beyond the urban areas vitiating the preservation of the American economy. Underachievement blight will spoil not only the hopes of many urban adolescents and may have far greater implications (Tatum, 2008).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine student academic achievement, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal-valuation, motivation, and academic self-perception of male and female African American high school students in an urban setting. To accomplish this task in a more comprehensive manner, some researchers advise that studies should also give urban African American high school students more of a voice concerning their achievement (Wiggan, 2007). It has been suggested by some researchers that students may be able to offer valuable input to improve their schools and create an environment more conducive for successful academic achievement (Noguera, 2007). Another consideration is that their perspectives on their educational experiences may facilitate improvement in their academic performance (Ding & Hall, 2007). Their perspectives may prove to be more reliable in describing the daily experiences in urban schools than many of the educational pundits who develop and implement the policies that shape their destinies (Kozol, 2005).

With the assistance of these students, educational administrators may generate research data that is relevant and unique to their particular situation (Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). Some researchers suggest that simply listening to them describe their school experiences is a productive way to embrace new pedagogical opportunities. Schools that effectively center African American students on their histories and philosophies while incorporating their culture and daily experiences may prove fruitful in the efforts to improve education. These efforts would target urban communities by empowering students to create successful school environments and enabling them to strive for successful futures (Graham & Robinson, 2007).



## Hypotheses

1. The academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
2. The academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
3. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males.
4. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males.
5. The goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
6. The motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
7. There is a significant relationship between the academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students in an urban setting.

## Definitions of Terms

*Academic self-perception.* Refers to how a student views his or her academic ability (Cokley, 2000).

*Attitudes toward teachers.* Refers to a student's self-reported interest in and affect toward teachers (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b).

*Attitudes toward school.* Refers to a student's self-reported interest in and affect towards school (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b).

*Goal valuation.* Refers to the perception that in any given situation where students value school, there is a chance that they may engage extensively in schoolwork more extensively (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

*Motivation.* Refers to the process of sustaining goal directed activity (Mortimore & Wall, 2009).

*Self-regulation.* Refers to the process of sustaining behaviors that are oriented toward the attainment of goals (Zimmerman, 1998).

#### Assumptions

1. Responses made by the students on the survey questions were truthful.
2. Grades assigned to students were a valid measure of their academic ability.

#### Limitations

1. The study relied on student reports.
2. The study was conducted in Atlanta Public Schools and may not be generalized to other populations.
3. The study used grade point averages as a measure of academic achievement. The use of other measures such as standardized testing may yield different outcomes.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Twenty-first century skills require workers who can think independently, solve problems, and make decisions (Silva, 2009). Various reports question whether public schools are providing adequate preparation to meet this challenge and question whether the United States is as competitive in the global market as it once was (Bybee & Starkweather, 2006). In 2006, the American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) was spawned to ensure America's continued technological leadership in the world (OSTP, 2006). Considering the demographic projections for 2040, the participation of women and minorities in a global competitive education is critical for the United States (Kandebo, 1989). At the beginning of the 21st century, globalization has caused a myriad of effects upon the African American community. One effect is the imposition of loss of unionized jobs experienced by many African American females as a result of deindustrialization (Calasanti, 2002). As the century progresses and employment opportunities become more competitive, it will become imperative for African American students to acquire skills in arenas of developing technologies to remain competitive in a global market (Mackie, 2003).

Besides and along with globalization, there is a gradual shift occurring in the wealth and power from African American males to African American females who have begun to assume leadership positions in various arenas. In employment, African American females are retained in more professional, managerial, and technical jobs than their African American male

counterparts while in some instances still earning less income. In education, African American females generally have a higher educational attainment than African American males. The implications of the educational disparity between African American males and African American females, as evidenced in this gradual shift of power, are visible in 2010 (Kaba, 2005).

For African American males, the educational and employment outlook appears grim, but the following observations may provide some insight towards efforts to improve conditions for them. Some researchers have examined the future outlook of African American males from a cost analysis by calculating the public savings earned when public educational investments are made in African American males. When equating the high school graduation rate of African American males to European American males, it was estimated that the public would save \$3.98 billion in lifetime public benefits in terms of increased tax revenues, decreased spending on health care, and reduced crime rates. This suggests that increased investments in the education of African American males are an economic priority (Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007). Also, in an age where the access and use of information technology is critical, other researchers found that some African American males were least likely to use a search engine or explore the Internet for information on a school report. These researchers suggest that African American males should be exposed to information technology at an early age (Jackson et al., 2008).

To respond to the challenges of globalization, high schools will have a significant role in the preparation of African American male and female students in this global age. However, African Americans will be expected to graduate with advanced degrees well beyond the secondary level in order to gain skills that will allow them to successfully adapt to an unpredictable global climate (Johnson, Jr., Burtney, III, & Ghorm, 2008). In addition to these concerns, there are two imperatives for the United States educational system. One is the

persistent underachievement of African American students, especially African American males. The other is preparing students for their roles in a globalized environment, which encompasses more than employment.

Globalization involves a global knowledge of other cultures and an intricate awareness of sophisticated communication skills (Jackson, 2008). Global competence extends well beyond the United States' emphasis on math, science, and technology. Understanding cultural development and its relationship with international trade is an example of how students will use their global knowledge to solve complex problems, using critical thinking skills to synthesize information from various sources. In some urban secondary schools, school districts are redesigning their schools with an emphasis on international studies. The mission of these schools is to promote global awareness among African American students and prepare them for college (Stewart, 2007).

When considering the role of African American students in a global environment, it is important to examine it in a reflective, comprehensive manner. This effort not only encompasses their attitudes toward school but also observes its relationship to their academic achievement while also investigating gender differences among them. In the first of nine sections of this chapter, there will be an historical analysis of the education of African Americans, urban education, and Atlanta Public Schools. The next section will provide an overview of the underlying theories related to this study, which includes the achievement goal theory, the expectancy value theory, and the theory of planned behavior. The third section examines gender differences between male and female students. The fourth section will investigate gender differences between African American male and female students' academic self-perceptions. There will be a review of their attitudes toward teachers in the fifth section, and the sixth section

will explore their attitudes toward school. Their goal valuations will be considered in the seventh section, while the eighth section will delve into their motivation and self-regulation and provide an overall summary of this chapter.

#### Historical Perspective: The Education of African Americans in the United States

Issues concerning the education of African Americans have dated back as early as the 1600s (Watkins, 2001). The first Africans, arriving in Virginia in 1619, were indentured servants, not slaves. Over the next 40 or 50 years, these African Virginians gained freedom, bought land, and enjoyed political rights. Also, some of them owned indentured Africans, though not in the same sense as European Americans. One of the earliest mentions of any educational opportunities for African Americans appears in 1634 in Louisiana. French Catholics advocate educating people of color, including slaves (Cowan & Maguire, 1994). By 1641, Massachusetts had legalized the slavery of “lawful captives” setting a precedent soon followed by the other New England colonies. By the 1660s, the law recognized the status of Africans as “chattel slaves.” Between 1680 and 1682, some of the first slave codes appeared prohibiting African Americans from owning property, bearing arms, assembling publicly, or being educated (Harris, 1993).

During the 1700s, many African Americans believed literacy was the key to acquiring freedom and power (Harris, 1992). In tandem, a schism emerged between African Americans and European Americans concerning literacy. For African Americans, literacy was a tool for emancipation and participation in society on an equal basis. For European Americans, illiteracy was a method for instilling subservience and maintaining social, political, and economic control. During slavery, education for slaves was prohibited (Makoni, Moody, & Mabokela, 2001), and

although it was against the law for any person to teach slaves how to read and write, many slaves learned anyway, at great risk to themselves or anyone caught teaching them (Anderson, 1988). On this account, Woodson (1919) credited various missionaries.

The first true group to take up the work of educating African Americans was clergymen interested in “propagating the gospel among the heathens” (Woodson, 1919). Their purpose was to engage African Americans in reading the “truth” for themselves thereby learning to appreciate the alleged supremacy of the Christian religion. As early as 1688, the Quakers were first to protest against slavery in Protestant America. By 1693, William Penn advocated the emancipation of slaves on the basis that they might have “opportunity for improvement.” And, by 1713, the Quakers had freed and returned many slaves to Africa to serve as missionaries. In 1716, the Jesuits were giving instruction to large numbers of slaves to enable the slaves to elevate themselves. At one time, it was believed that the Spanish and French did more than the English to educate their slaves. Therefore, many missionaries from the British colonies worked to arouse their countrymen to discharge those slaves that they held in bondage.

In 1743, Mr. Garden’s school to educate and train young African Americans opened in Charleston, South Carolina. In Virginia, in 1747, the Presbyterian Church began a program of education for African Americans (Woodson, 1919). By the Revolutionary era, amidst European cries of freedom, free Blacks and slaves were also demanding the abolishment of slavery and equality in schooling. In 1770, Anthony Benezet, another Quaker, sets up a school for African Americans in Philadelphia. Also, Benjamin Franklin, along with other Philadelphians, opened a school to educate slaves for eventual freedom in 1774. In March 1775, Patrick Henry, a member of the House of Burgess, Virginia’s landed elite, delivered his fiery speech at the Second Virginia Provincial Convention to convince delegates of the need for armed resistance. He would

not have been entitled to speak had he not been a slave owner, a paradox not lost on many slaves. In the same year, the British Governor of Virginia offered freedom to any slave who joined the British Army, and many escaped to do just that (Cowan & Magurie, 1994).

Although overall literacy rates were low for African Americans, from the earliest days of slavery, they demonstrated their own writing skills by petitioning colonial governments for their freedom. As Cowan and Maguire (1994) stated, “during the revolutionary era, black protestors made use of revolutionary propaganda to enhance their cause, pointing out, for example, the incongruity of certain European Americans shouting “liberty or death,” while holding hundreds of thousands of African Americans in bondage. By 1777, New Jersey initiated a program for the education of African American children, and by 1790 the Pennsylvania Abolition Society appointed a special committee to assure the education of free African Americans (Cowan & Maguire, 1994).

Between 1800 and 1859, literacy for African Americans progressed in several ways and accomplishments (Harris, 1992). One major accomplishment occurred simultaneously in 1826 with the graduations of John Russworm, of Bowdoin and Edward A. Jones of Amherst, two of the first African American males to graduate from mainstream colleges. In large cities such as Boston and New York, schools for African Americans were established. In situations where slave owners practiced miscegenation, they sometimes sent their slave offspring to Europe or other locations to receive an education. Another event was the appearance of African American pamphleteers such as David Walker and his publication *Appeal to Colored Citizens of the World*, which urged African Americans to seek an education and to participate in and pattern themselves after the successful liberation in Haiti. Some insurgents such as Nat Turner may have been influenced by Walker’s pamphlet. Turner’s rebellion and others like it led many European



Americans to the realization that African Americans would not be content to remain in a state of slavery and oppression. However, despite these advances there were also disappointments (Cowan & Maguire, 1994).

Technological advances in agriculture and factories such as the cotton gin speeded production, making growing cotton profitable in many places throughout the South, “thus instilling new life into the slave economy” (Cowan & Maguire, 1994). By 1860, only about 5% of the slave population had learned to read (Anderson, 1988). As a result, educational opportunities for African Americans were greatly diminished in the South, causing a migration to other locations where education was more accessible. After emancipation, African Americans continued to strive for an education. Former slaves realized that literacy was a vital component to their new found freedom and that this would allow them to proactively participate in society as well as provide them more of an opportunity to govern their own lives (Williams, 2005).

In 1865, Congress created the Freedman’s Bureau to assist specifically with the education of former slave. Although they benefited from the assistance from northern philanthropists, most freed slaves were also determined to become educationally self-sufficient on their own. When slavery ended, it was the intent of the landed gentry of the South to reestablish the caste system where African Americans were subservient. However, one of the prevailing philosophies of African American education was absolutely not to recreate the old southern caste system. Instead, they wanted to use education to ameliorate economic inequalities. Furthermore they had specific goals. One short-term goal of school for African Americans was to provide them with basic literacy skills with the rudiments of citizenship training for participation in a democratic society, while a major long-term goal was the intellectual and moral development of a

responsible leadership class to organize the masses and lead them to equality in all aspects of society (Anderson, 1988).

During the period of Reconstruction, African Americans were briefly enfranchised with privileges such as voting rights and the holding of political offices (Makoni et al., 2001). However, many European Americans claimed that African Americans were incompetent and inferior and “should not have dominion over the White race.” The resulting backlash was swift and brutal, giving rise to terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan whose purposes were, among others, to circumvent any efforts to educate African Americans. By 1868, laws originally designed to establish equality were gone, replaced by discriminating Jim Crow laws designed to disenfranchise African Americans. Despite these efforts, African Americans initiated and sustained schools with and without financial assistance from northern philanthropists and others. Sabbath schools sponsored through local church organizations provided literacy instruction. At one time, the African Methodist Episcopal Church reported an enrollment of over 200,000 students, and the primary subject studied was spelling, according to Anderson (1988). Nevertheless, segregation became the established way of life for 100 years after the end of the Civil War.

By 1885, most southern states had adopted laws that required separate education (Makoni et al., 2001). Beginning in 1890, many educators and scholars embraced the progressive movement (Johnson, 2000). G. Stanley Hall was an advocator of the theory of recapitulation, which assumed that human life reproduced the evolutionary history of the biological system. While in the womb, each human developed from a cell to amphibian. When born, the child was like primitive man and grew through the stages that paralleled the historic development of their race. If one were European American, for example, then one achieved the highest stages of

development. If one were African American, then one could only rise to the level of barbarism. As early as the 18th century, issues surrounding ethnicity began to appear as scientific racism, a rationale for rendering African Americans as inferior and maintaining white supremacy (Watkins, 2001).

In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld segregation under the premise of the “separate but equal” doctrine set forth by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Almost every venerable institution, the law, court systems, and schools in the South favored the rights of European Americans. Southern states seemed determined to keep African Americans subservient through dizzying combinations of intimidation, violence, segregation, and racist laws. However, political and legislative pressures to restrict opportunities in education for African Americans did not have the desired outcome that some European Americans had hoped for because those same restrictions directly resulted in the formation of segregated African American colleges, or historically black colleges or universities, as they are now called. The *Washington Bee* urged African Americans to emphasize school programs geared toward training them for positions as lawyers, doctors, scientists, and other professional positions. It publicly criticized industrial training in general and Booker T. Washington, specifically, by claiming that Mr. Washington had made himself wealthy by assuring European Americans that the African American’s place “is in the machine shop, at the plow, in the washtub” (Anderson, 1988, p. 65), a position viewed by many as one of subservience.

By the turn of the 20th century, literacy among African Americans nationwide was 55.5% (Cowan & Maguire, 1994). By 1900, over 2000 African Americans nationwide held college degrees and by 1910, there were 100 African American colleges, almost all open to women. Conversely, there were also 76 recorded lynchings in 1910 alone. And, out of an African

American population of over nine million at the time, more than half were engaged in farm work. In 1911, Frank Boas attempted to dispel theories of scientific racism in his book *The Mind of Primitive Man*, where he argued that there was no empirical evidence to indicate European Americans were racially superior (Johnson, 2000). In 1917, while the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) battled against segregated housing and President Wilson declared war on Germany, literacy became a requirement for citizenship (Cowan & Maguire, 1994). In a draft effort conducted by the military, African Americans and Ellis Island immigrants were administered an intelligence quotient (IQ) test in which African American scores were conceivably lower than their European American counterparts (Johnson, 2000). These data were used to illustrate that minorities were inferior to European Americans, which further supported scientific racism theories such as the theory of recapitulation (no longer in vogue by the 1920s) (Gould, 1975).

During the Jim Crow period, African Americans were provided with just enough formal education to maintain them in a subordinate status in society. Education at this time had very little equality, as evidenced by the disparate allocation of educational resources, still a popular complaint by the millennium (Makoni et al., 2001). By the 1930s, where public school segregation was legally mandated, \$44.31 was spent annually on each European American student versus \$12.57 on each African American student. Among the 117 African American institutions of higher education, 36 were public, 81 were private (of which 74 were church-affiliated), and only 5 offered graduate-level instruction. Government programs, such as the Works Projects Administration, initiated adult education programs that taught an estimated 400,000 African Americans to read and write (Cowan & Maguire, 1994).

In the 1950s, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was an effort to desegregate the public school system (Bell, 2004). However, *Brown II* (1955) allowed desegregated school systems “additional time” to prepare for the transformation. As a result, by the early 1960s, minimal desegregation had occurred. In their opposition to desegregation and busing, many European Americans participated in a mass exodus referred to as “White flight” where they appeared to be physically evading African Americans by retreating to a perceived safer haven in the suburbs. By the 1980s, many African Americans were not in favor of integration and quickly became disenchanted with this concept, claiming their children experienced racism regardless, as well as culturally blind curriculums. Unfortunately, as parents, they had minimal voice in school policy. From the 1990s onward, the restoration of apartheid in public schools has occurred in many systems (Kozol, 2005). In 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was mandated. Initially, it was perceived by some to be a panacea for public schools which would move schools progressively; however, that does not appear to be the case, particularly for African American students, who found their access to education threatened and their dropout rate increasing (Meier & Wood, 2004).

As history has illustrated, this system of education has not always served African Americans well. As a result of hundreds of years of discrimination and hardships, the attitudes of African American students toward education have been affected (Stinson, 2006). It is essential to consider how historical underpinnings have pervaded the attitudes of African American students today (Lynn, 2006).

### Urban Education

In the 19th century, most urban educational systems resembled village schools. Impressed with the technology surrounding them, urban educational leaders wanted to establish a

structured bureaucratic system. During the 1840s and 1850s, urban school leaders seemed interested in improving the educational system. By 1860, England, France, and Germany had surpassed the United States' industrial output. However by 1894, the United States was the world's leader in industrial output and its schools had multiplied in size (Tyack, 1974).

The educational system burgeoned from a bud of educational idealism to an educational bureaucracy. Some of the most pressing issues concerning this system were order, student conformity, classification of students, uniform courses, and standard examinations. Another concern was creating a facility conducive to the educational needs of its consumers. As a result, the "egg crate school" was born. The facility was usually four stories high and contained a large auditorium for about 700 students. This structure consisted of 12 classrooms, which accommodated about 56 pupils. Each teacher had a classroom, and every student had his or her own desk (Tyack, 1974).

In the 19th century, the public high schools were erected. They were primarily located in urban settings because rural areas did not have the tax base or population density. In cities, the creation of the high school assisted with the efforts to unify lower schools. A pedagogical pyramid was formed and created a hierarchy of schooling with an extremely limited clientele base. Initially, its purpose was to prepare students for the duties of life through rigorous academic training. During that time, students were not expected to attend college (Tyack, 1974).

Since this time, urban schools have been characterized by several educational reforms. The focus of being the one best system may not have changed. However, preparing urban students to meet the challenges of a global society is a primary concern of urban school systems today. This task is equally as difficult as the initial goal of being one best system.

## Atlanta Public Schools

Atlanta Public Schools was founded during the post-Civil War period, and Joseph E. Brown was one of its founders. In 1869, he served as a member of the Atlanta Board of Education. Brown surmised the education of African Americans in the south to be an acute problem for several reasons, one being people in the south presumed that the abolition of slavery was an egregious error. He also estimated that the enfranchisement of African Americans caused additional strife between African and European Americans. Ultimately, Mr. Brown believed that it was the responsibility of southern European Americans to enable African Americans to become good United States citizens. He felt that it was imperative to elevate African Americans from their current intellectual status, which he deemed as ignorant, to a higher level of intelligence in order that African Americans would have the opportunity to intelligently exercise their rights of freedom. To accomplish this endeavor, Brown realized that it would be necessary to educate African Americans well beyond the realm of public schools (Roberts, 1965).

In 1872, there were no schools for African American students in Atlanta Public Schools. Upon the urging of several African American members of the Republican Party, two grammar schools were opened for African American students. Although European American students were provided with two secondary schools, there were no high schools for African American students. Not until 1924, was an African American high school established, Booker T. Washington High School. In Atlanta Public Schools, the business of education operated under the assumption of “separate but equal.” However equality, as in most school systems in the southern portion of the United States did not exist, nor did it in Atlanta Public Schools. This notion was clearly evidenced in the educational facilities for African American students, which were significantly more inferior to those for European American students. As the years

progressed, inequalities for African American students became increasingly more pronounced (Plank & Turner, 1987).

In 1878, another milestone was achieved in Atlanta Public Schools when Atlanta hired its first African American teachers under the stipulation that only African Americans born and educated in the South were eligible for employment. Within the following decade, the number of African American teachers increased significantly, partially because the African American community in Atlanta felt that European Americans did not care for their children appropriately and petitioned for African American teachers to be assigned to their children. However, employing African American teachers was in accordance with the school board's efforts to limit expenditures in the African American school system, which indeed provided a financial saving for the school board (Plank & Turner, 1987).

As Atlanta Public Schools has evolved, residents of the African American community have struggled for educational equity. To achieve it, some African American residents in Atlanta pursued integration as a strategy for providing urban African American students in Atlanta an opportunity to experience the same educational services that were available to European American students in the Atlanta community. As the years progressed, Atlanta Public Schools became a system whose constituents were predominantly African American (Plank & Turner, 1987). Currently, the primary focus of this system is to provide its students with a quality education, which will enable them to be successful in a global economy. Some of the students in this school system are plagued with challenging issues. Therefore, one of the goals is to help them be successful in spite of the challenges that they may face. Unfortunately, an embarrassing issue overshadowing the success of Atlanta Public Schools is the "cheating scandal" where some



employees of this system have been accused of changing the some of the answers on the standardized tests that the students have taken.

### Theoretical Perspective

This study is not informed by one theory. However, several theories may be related to this study. The achievement goal theory, expectancy-value theory, and theory of planned behavior will be discussed in this section.

#### *The Achievement Goal Theory*

There are several variations of the achievement goal theory. It has been suggested that achievement goals influence academic achievement (Covington, 2000). Achievement goal theory also investigates the rationalizations for participating in achievement behaviors. Two types of goals have been the focal point of the research, which are task goals and mastery goals. Task goals are sometimes referred to as mastery goals (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999b). These goals reflect a concern for learning the material, developing new skills, and improving performance (Gutman, 2006; Nicholls, 1984). Ego goals are sometimes referred to as performance goals (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999b). These goals reflect a concern for outperforming others, a valuing of ability, and being judged (Gutman, 2006; Nicholls, 1984).

Research has suggested that schools that emphasize task goals are more conducive to African American students because these schools tend to emphasize learning and improvement (Kaplan & Maehr, 1993b). Whereas another study found that the use of ego goals among African American students was associated with self-handicapping strategies, which undermine school

success. In this scenario, these students would claim that they studied for an examination at the last moment as a justification for their academic failure (Midgley, Arunkumar, & Urdan, 1996).

Long et al. (2004) have suggested that neither learning nor performance goals contribute significantly to academic achievement at any grade level, which may be an indicator of the emergence of a cross-gender developmental trend. This phenomenon may be exclusive to African American students when their environment inadvertently influences early acquisition of avoidance goals for strategic reasons.

### *Expectancy-Value Theory*

There are several variations of the expectancy-value theory, which has been extended by various points of view. The inception of the model may be credited to the seminal work of John W. Atkinson in 1957 (Wigfield, 1994). This theory posits that the students' motivation to succeed and achievement behaviors are influenced by their beliefs about how successful they are able to complete an activity as well as how much they value the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

In the application of this theory, there are several points for African American students to consider. First, African American students may examine their beliefs about self, while considering whether or not they possess positive or negative views of themselves as students. They may also ponder their ability to achieve positive academic outcomes. Another consideration for them would be the cost of their academic experience by considering the significance of the academic actions and how these actions may or may not be perceived by their peers. In addition, they would examine any intrinsic interests such as whether or not their parents would be proud of them. One would also consider the attainment values, including reflective

contemplations concerning one's academic values. Finally, they would consider the utility of their academic efforts, which may include considerations of scholarship awards (Rodgers, 2008).

Taylor and Graham (2007) suggested that African American students seem to value school during the elementary years. However, in middle school, some African American male students appear to value school less, whereas African American females appear to value school consistently from elementary throughout middle school.

### *Theory of Planned Behavior*

In this framework, human behavior is determined by several considerations. One is the attitude toward behavior. Another is the subjective norm, which is the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior. The last one is perceived behavioral control, which involves the relationship between self-efficacy and the behavior. The combination of the three factors forms the behavior intention (Davis, Ajzen, Saunders, & Williams, 2002).

In one study, the beliefs and attitudes concerning one's decision to stay in school were studied. The results suggested that the difference between students who drop out of school and those who stay in school might be reflected in the student's belief about the consequences of staying in school (Davis et al., 2002).

### The Anatomy of Gender Differences

Amid ongoing public speculation about the reasons for gender differences in education, there is no single answer for gender differences in academic achievement. Instead, there are a plethora of variables to consider. Research has indicated the following scientific evidence for average and mean differences among the genders. Females obtain higher grades in school in

every subject but score lower than males on exams that are not related to material taught in school. Females also tend to excel in verbal abilities and have an advantage in writing as well as episodic memory where they can recall information concerning previous events and recognize faces, especially female faces. Males have an advantage over females on tests of verbal analogies and tend to outperform females on measures of visuospatial abilities, which gives them the ability to mentally rotate objects in three dimensions. Between the ages of 4 and 5, boys are better at solving mazes on standardized tests than girls (Halpern et al., 2008).

When considering variables, which may impact the cognition of males and females, the role of biology should not be overlooked. In some studies involving different animal species, it is presumed that hormones may have influenced the cognitive abilities of males and females as observed during prenatal development when high levels of testosterone are developed in the brain and patterns of cognitive performance in male behaviors are evidenced. Other studies have also indicated that hormones may influence cognitive development throughout life especially in individuals receiving large dosages of male or female hormones while preparing for sex change operations. Also, individuals undergoing female-to-male hormone treatments show “masculine changes” in cognitive processes involving visuospatial processing (Halpern et al., (2008).

Another consideration is that the brain structure and function may also influence cognitive differences between genders. For example, females have a higher percentage of gray-matter brain tissue with fast blood flow associated with performance in language processing. Males have a higher volume of white connecting tissue, which is associated with spatial performance and greater volumetric asymmetries than females do. Halpern et al. (2008) cautioned that sex differences in brain structure and functions do not imply that they are the sole

cause of cognitive differences among the genders because the brain indicates that learning may also occur from experiences.

While some researchers conclude that biological factors may be the sole or primary cause of gender differences, other researchers challenge the validity of their arguments. Geist and King (2008) question the assumption that there is a biological difference between genders and contend that both boys and girls have natural thinking ability, which they use differently depending on their developmental levels, preferences, and talents. These researchers also have concerns about how certain instructional methodologies may affect the learning of girls and boys. They claim that neither gender is benefiting from educational policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act which emphasizes a standardized skills based approach to learning and proficiency testing.

As a result of the recent media frenzy about boys lagging behind girls, which some refer to as the “boy crisis,” some suggest that single sex schools may help to close the gender gap. They report that one of the most reliable predictors of academic success in high school for males is whether or not they have a male figure as a role model (Tyre et al., 2006). In response, Halpern et al. (2007) suggest that none of the data as it relates to brain structure or function indicates that girls or boys benefit from single sex schools or that boys are failing as a result of coeducational experiences. Instead, the genders excel on different kinds of measures of learning.

### Academic Self-perceptions

Some educational pundits have defined academic self-perception as a student’s perception of their academic abilities and how they feel about themselves as students (Meltzer, Katzir, Miller, Reddy, & Roditi, 2004). Although empirical data suggests that academic self-perception is a critical determinant in school success, there is a dearth of educational studies,

which examine this issue among African American students (Jonson-Reid, Davis, Saunders, Williams, & Williams, 2005). Terms such as “academic self-concept,” “academic self-perception,” and “academic self-efficacy” are often referred to synonymously in the discourse of academic success or failure. These terms are further examined.

Academic self-concept refers to how students view themselves as learners (Fraine, Damme, & Onghena, 2007). It involves the student’s beliefs about the accomplishments of one’s peers in the same educational setting (Mortimore & Wall, 2009). In a study concerning African American college students, it was found that African American students did not lack academic self-concept. Instead, it was noted that the intrinsic motivation of these students was not related to their academic self-concept. A possible explanation for this situation is that some African American students do not understand that learning is an avenue for doing well in school and possibly earning income for ones academic efforts at a later date. In some instances, for them, knowing what to study to earn a good grade significantly sparks their interests. One explanation for this reaction is that their classes are viewed as irrelevant or inconsequential to their daily lives. However, when the subject material is made relevant to them, they become very interested in what is taught. Ultimately, encouragement is also an essential element of the learning environment for African American students and contributes to their positive academic self-concept (Cokley, 2003).

In another study involving the effects of gender and psychological disengagement on the academic achievement of African American college students, the results indicated that African American women had higher grade point averages than African American men. The study also revealed that African American males devalue academic achievement, which the researcher posited might be a result of gender socialization and the lack of male role models in the

classroom. It was also suggested that the paucity of infusion of African Americans in the educational curriculum might cause academic misidentification among African American male students (Cokley, 2007).

Academic self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given academic tasks and is also a component of the global psychological construct, self-concept, which is also comprised of other aspects of self (Schunk, 1991). In a quantitative and qualitative analysis involving 37 African American middle school girls, the academic self-efficacy of these students was measured quantitatively as moderately high. The qualitative analysis revealed how these young women used their academic self-efficacy to excel in their academic assignments (Pearson, 2008). Another study involving 20 African American male students at a predominantly African American university indicated that a significant relationship existed between black consciousness and academic self-efficacy. The results implied that positive role modeling might increase their academic self-efficacy while simultaneously allowing them to concentrate their energies on their academic potential and achievement (Okech & Harrington, 2002). In an inquiry involving 243 African American male and female high school students, the researchers found that females reported higher levels of academic self-efficacy. Also, females were rewarded more frequently than males for their academic efforts, which may in turn result in the advancement of the development of their academic skills as well as bolster their academic confidence (Saunders et al., 2004).

The relevance of academic self-efficacy to urban African American high school students is viewed as a critical factor to school success (Jonson-Reid, 2004), which is further underscored by researcher efforts to comprehend its role in the education of these particular students. In conjunction with this effort, sources of academic self-efficacy have been reported during the era

of de jure segregation in the South. African American educators successfully convinced many students that they could achieve at high levels and become accomplished members of society (Walker, 2000). As educational researchers continue to unearth evidence about academic self-efficacy as it relates to these students, invitational messages have been reported as a source of academic self efficacy in that students send and receive messages that provide a framing for perceiving efficacy information which influence students' academic self-efficacy beliefs. It has also been observed that African American students give more credence to the messages of others than to their own performance attainments (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Academic self-perception is the student's opinion of his or her academic abilities (Suldo & Shaffer, 2008). Academic self-perceptions of specific behaviors are presumed to influence sub-areas of self-concepts such as English or mathematics, which form the academic self-concept. It has been suggested that the framework of general self-concept in the academic arena also consists of non-academic domains such as social, emotional, and physical behaviors (Schunk, 1991). It is presumed that the perceptions students have about their academic skills influence the types of academic activities they select. These perceptions usually are within the categories of academic self-efficacy and academic self-concept (McCoach & Del Siegle, 2001).

School completion has also been associated with how well African American students feel about themselves. In a study examining gender differences in academic self-perceptions of African American high school students, both male and female students reported positive self-perceptions with intentions of completing their current year in high school. Females possessed greater self-efficacy than the males and had higher grade point averages (Sanders et al., 2004). In a study using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the perceived control factor of the TPB model proved to be a significant predictor of the students' intentions to remain in school for the



current school term. It was found that the greater the students' perceptions of their abilities to vanquish barriers pertaining to school completion, the greater their intentions were to complete the school year (Davis, Johnson, Cribbs, & Saunders, 2002).

Even as early as preschool, academic self-perception plays a significant role in the academic career of African American students. When African American students experienced high levels of academic achievement in preschool, they seemed confident in their academic ability (Justice, Lindsey, & Morrow, 1999).

#### Attitudes toward Teachers

Evidence implies that teachers are a critical aspect of academic achievement concerning African American students. It is important to understand African American students' attitudes toward teachers as it pertains to their general attitude toward learning (Haslett, 1976). One study found that African American students believed that teachers are very significant to their academic success as students. The students further expressed that learning was difficult when they perceived that teachers treated them unfairly. Most reported that their school experiences were better when teachers understood them (Ford & Harris, III, 1996).

In a study examining differences across gender, ethnicity, and age, African Americans students reported negative attitudes toward teachers, and the males had more negative attitudes than the females. The results of the study also indicated that negative attitudes towards teachers increased with age (Sullivan et al., 2008). It seems that teacher expectations for African American youth may influence the attitudes of African American students as some teachers tend to display biases toward African American male students as compared to African American female students (Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007). An example of this bias is evidenced in the

suspension rates of African American students, particularly African American male students (Arcia, 2007). Another perspective posits that students with positive academic self-perceptions may enjoy school more and have positive attitudes towards their teachers. In contrast, students with poor academic self-perceptions may not enjoy school and have negative attitudes towards their teachers (Ding & Hall, 2007).

Other factors such as the curriculum and teacher qualifications may also have an effect on African American student attitudes toward teachers. Some educational researchers suspect that these attitudes directly contribute to the achievement gap and may induce negative behaviors among these students, which contribute to their negative attitudes toward school. Unfortunately, during most of their academic tenure, most of these students are not always exposed to highly qualified, experienced teachers (Ford et al., 2008). Some researchers express that it is critical for teachers to empower African American students and encourage exploring opportunities beyond their present circumstance. By envisioning possibilities, students are afforded hope, which may cause them to excel well beyond their present mediocre state and to strive in school as well as develop positive attitudes toward their teachers and school (Milner, IV, 2007).

#### Attitudes toward School

Attitudes toward school are an important aspect of development among urban African American high school students (McNair & Johnson, 2009). Empirical evidence has suggested that some African American students report negative attitudes towards school, which increases with age. African American male students also report more negative attitudes toward school than African American female students (Sullivan et al., 2008). In another study investigating school-related attitudes among elementary-age African American students, the findings suggested

school experience plays a critical role in the development of school-related attitudes. In general, low-socioeconomic-status African American students have positive attitudes toward school. African American students also were more likely to indicate negative attitudes toward school if they were experiencing academic difficulties. The students revealed that many of their negative statements regarding attitudes were a result of their desire to avoid academic failure (Tyson, 2002).

Some social scientists are skeptical of the pro-school attitudes that African American students report. These scientists are unable to comprehend this optimism from African American students because of the disparities that plague some members of the African American community, which include residential segregation as well as unfair treatment in the labor market. One explanation for the positive attitudes expressed by some African American students may be that they represent an avenue for improving their conditions by investing in education as a means of becoming economically successful in an evolving global society (Downey, Ainsworth, & Quian, 2009).

In a study using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TBD), the researchers attempted to assess the factors that contribute to African American high school students' intentions to stay in school. They found that students' attitudes toward school were the most compelling predictor of their decisions to stay in school. For those students who believed that school was a rewarding, beneficial experience, they reported strong intentions to stay in school (Davis et al., 2002).

### Goal Valuation

Some researchers suspect that when students do not espouse school goals, they are less likely to put forth the necessary effort to achieve academically (McCoach & Siegle, 2003a).

They also believe that when students value school goals, they may be more likely to engage in their schoolwork (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

Mastery goals are associated with one's desire to learn by improving one's competence through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Performance goals are associated with one's desire to demonstrate competence compared to others. Although some researchers suspect that mastery goals have a positive consequence on achievement-related outcomes, research has not clearly demonstrated that academic success stems from mastery goals (Dompnier, Darnon, & Butera, 2009). Yet, Gutman (2006) reported that African American students whose parents endorsed mastery goals had higher-grade reports than their peers whose parents did not endorse mastery goals.

Under the construct future time perspective (FTP), which involves adolescents who are oriented toward the future as evidenced by their goal-directed behavior, African American students who are more oriented toward the future are more likely to achieve academically. Also, African American male students reported more negative views about their future (Adelabu, 2008). African American students with high levels of future orientations also have higher grades. It is worth noting that this construct also has important implications for the academic motivation of African American pupils. It seems that students with higher levels of future orientation and academic goals tend to possess higher academic motivation. African American students with strong orientations toward the future view education as an avenue to life success (Brown & Jones, 2004).

Many urban African American high school students support the philosophy that education is "very important;" however, many continue to underachieve academically (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Research has illustrated that students who devalue academic achievement often

pursue nonacademic endeavors, which usually conflict with academic success. This study also indicated that even though African American males valued education, it was deemed more appropriate for African American females (Hudley & Graham, 2001). In other studies, African American females valued academic effort and success more than African American males (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998). In a study investigating gender and grade differences in ethnic minorities, African American students valued high academic achievement in elementary school. During middle school, African American males view less academically inclined peers more favorably. African American females seem to continue to value achievement as the result of their socialization of experiences in a school context (Taylor & Graham, 2007).

#### Motivation/Self-regulation

Motivation has been defined as a specific set of processes, which provide energy for various types of behaviors. Therefore, when individuals feel strongly motivated, they become more deeply involved in various activities behaviorally and cognitively (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2007). Some researchers affirm that modern discussions of school motivation as it relates to African American students would include an expectancy-value framework. Under this orientation, African American students do not believe that academic efforts will result in upward social mobility or increased economic status. Therefore, they devalue education as evidenced by their poor academic performance and have limited expectations from school (Booker, 2006).

In a gender study concerning the academic motivation of African American male and female students' within-group differences, high ability African American females exhibited higher academic motivation (Gordon-Rouse & Austin, 2002). In another study on the achievement and academic motivation of urban adolescent students, the study found that some

students had moderate levels of motivational variables like goal orientation, interest, and self-efficacy. Grades appeared to be predicted by learning goals and levels of self-efficacy, another significant contributor to achievement. During high school, work-avoidant goals on achievement were very prominent. The effect of gender on motivation varied between grades. However, the researchers do note that the motivational variables of this study as well as gender represent a minute percentage of the variance in academic achievement. They assert that achievement is a complex phenomenon, probably composed of several factors, which were not included in their research model (Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007).

The role of gender has also influenced achievement motivation in educational and psychological research. Gender differences in some motivational theories indicate that females' and males' motivational related beliefs are comparable with most gender role stereotypes. These impressions suggest that boys report stronger abilities in mathematics and science, whereas girls have stronger interests in language arts and writing. Social and cultural influences also affect motivation. For African American students, factors such as discipline and academic problems may affect African American males more than African American females and cause gender differences in self-perceptions of their academic abilities. It may also affect their valuing of school success (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006).

Definitions of students' self-regulated learning consist of three features. One is the students' use of self-regulatory learning strategies. Another is the students' responsiveness to self-oriented assessments concerning learning effectiveness. Also, the students use interdependent motivational processes. Self-regulated students employ self-regulated learning strategies to attain desired academic outcomes from the feedback concerning the learning effectiveness (Zimmerman, 1990). Self-regulated learners employ self-generated actions and

thoughts to accomplish their academic goals. Successful learners use appropriate learning strategies to maintain high levels of motivation. In a study investigating delay of gratification and whether students differed in their use of self-regulation, motivation, and academic performance, it was found that academic delay of gratification was associated with students' motivation and self-regulation. The results also suggested that the presence of gender and ethnic differences in self-regulation was ambiguous. Among resource management strategies, one indicated a mean difference in effort regulation. In this instance, minority females had significantly higher effort regulation than minority males (Bembenutty, 2007).

### Hypotheses

After reviewing the literature, it is anticipated that African American female students will have higher grades than African American male students, that academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation will be more positive for females than males, and that these variables will impact African American students' academic performance in school. The relevant concepts and related literature are listed below (Table 1). The directional hypotheses tested appear after the table.

Table 1

*Studies Related to the Academic Achievement, Academic Self-perception, Attitudes Toward Teachers, Attitudes toward School, Goal Valuation, and Motivation/Self-regulation*

Concept	Author	Relevant Literature
Academic achievement	Halpern et al., 2008	Females have higher grades than males.
Academic self-perception	Saunders et al., 2004	African American females have higher academic self-perception than African American male students.
Attitudes toward teachers	Sullivan et al., 2008	African American males have more negative attitudes toward teachers than African American females.
Attitudes toward school	Sullivan et al., 2008	African American males have more negative attitudes toward school than African American females.
Goal valuation	Hudley& Graham, 2001	African American females value school more than African American males.
Motivation/Self-regulation	Rouse & Austin, 2002 Bembenutty, 2007	African American females have higher motivation/self-regulation than African American males.

1. The academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.

2. The academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.

3. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males.



4. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males.

5. The goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.

6. The motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.

7. There is a significant relationship between the academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students in an urban setting.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate gender differences among urban African American high school students' attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, goal-valuation, motivation, and academic self-perception. This chapter describes methods used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. A quantitative method was used in this research examination. This study was guided by the following hypotheses.

#### Hypotheses

1. The academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
2. The academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
3. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males.
4. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males.
5. The goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.
6. The motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.

7. There is a significant relationship between the academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students in an urban setting.

### Participants

The participants in this study were selected from four newly created small, public high schools. Each school is classified as a Title I school and is located in a low socioeconomic community in the northwestern region of Atlanta, Georgia. The inception of these schools is the result of a small school initiative to increase academic achievement in their school system. The former school is replete with historical significance. It was the first high school for African American students in the state of Georgia. Prominent leaders such as Dr. Martin King, Jr. attended this school as well as entertainers such as Lena Horne. In 1986, it was placed on the National Register for Historic Places. In 2002, Former President George W. Bush visited the school (Bush, 2002).

This school's name changed because it was divided into four new schools, which presently consists of students in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades and will be phased out after the sophomore class graduates in 2012. The remaining schools began the 2009-2010 school term with 100 freshmen per school. Each school will add a grade each year until it has Grades 9 through 12. Each school will have 400 students (Maciejewski, 2007).

Currently, there are 860 students enrolled at the new schools. Their population is 99.99% African American. A stratified random sampling consisting of 270 African American male and female students participated in this study. Participants were selected from their advisory sections. For each advisory, names of the students were written down on separate slips of paper. The slips

were divided by gender and placed into separate containers. The sample size for this study consisted of 270 students. Participants in the study were 76 seniors, 89 juniors, 95 sophomores, and 10 freshmen. The gender composition of this sample consisted of 167 females and 103 males.

### Instrumentation

The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) is a psychometrically sound instrument for measuring secondary students' "attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, goal-valuation, motivation, and academic self-perceptions." The survey was developed by D. Betsy McCoach and Del Siegle and has two sections (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b). In the first section, there are 35 items. Items 2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 20, and 22 pertain to academic self-perceptions and consist of items like "I am intelligent" and "I am smart in school". Items 1, 9, 14, 16, 17, 31, and 34 are concerned with attitudes towards teachers and contain items like "I relate well to my teachers" and "Most of the teachers at this school are good teachers". Items 6, 7, 12, 19, and 23 relate to attitudes toward school and contain items such as "This is a good school" and "I like this school". Items 15, 18, 21, 25, 28, and 29 pertain to goal valuation and contain items such as "I want to get good grades at school" and "Doing well in school is one of my goals". Items 4, 8, 10, 24, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33, and 35 pertain to motivation/self-regulation and contain statements such as "I work hard at school" and "I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork". Participants in this study used a 7-point Likert-type agreement scale to respond to the items, which ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*slightly disagree*), 4 (*neither agree nor disagree*), 5 (*slightly agree*), 6 (*agree*), and 7 (*strongly agree*). The second section of the survey contained two demographic questions. The first question was related to cumulative grade point average and

average grades. The second question inquired about the time spent completing homework assignments (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b). Also, a demographic section was attached to the survey, which referenced gender, age, grade, and cumulative grade point average.

To achieve construct validity on the SAAS-R, McCoach and Siegle (2003b) administered a pilot version of the SAAS-R to 942 ninth through twelfth grade students. The sample contained variability in the students' grades, attitudes, and variability. Using EQS 5.7, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The model fit was evaluated by common fit indices like chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) which is sometimes referred to as the Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index, and the standardized root mean square (SRMR) (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b).

After this analysis, one question was eliminated because it had a factor pattern coefficient less than .40 on its specified factor. Upon examining the modification indices, 14 other questions were eliminated because they appeared to be indicators for other factors too as evidenced by large chi square scores greater than 40 ( $\chi^2\Delta > 40$ ) on the Lagrange multiplier test. Another item was eliminated because it demonstrated many of the largest standardized residual covariances. Two other statements were removed because they seemed vague and misleading. One was "I can learn new concepts quickly" and was rewritten as "I can learn new ideas quickly in school". Another one was "The staff values me as a person" and was rewritten as "My teachers care about me."

The final SAAS-R instrument consisted of 35 statements. Of these, there are 24 statements from the original pilot version. Each item is an indicator of its hypothesized factors. The factor pattern coefficients were significantly distinct from zero and in the appropriate

direction, and the factor correlations were also notably different from zero. The final model exhibited reasonable fit,  $\chi^2(550) = 1,581.7$ , CFI = .911, TLI = .918, RMSEA = .059, SRMR = .057. The final instrument has 7 statements on academic self-perception (factor 1), 7 statements on attitudes toward teachers (factor 2), 5 statements on attitudes toward school (factor 3), 6 statements on goal valuation (factor 4), and 10 questions on motivation/self-regulation (factor 5). Goal Valuation and Motivation/Self-regulation were correlated at .741, which may be unsettling in terms of discriminant validity. However, the researchers offer a theoretical explanation for this issue, which deems that valuing the goals of school, is a precursor to motivation and the use of self-regulatory strategies employed to achieve those goals. Therefore, it is hypothesized that students who do not value the goals of school are less likely to put forth the necessary effort to achieve these goals. Yet, students who value school may or may not put forth the effort to and use motivation/self-regulatory skills to achieve goals. Factors 1, 2, and 3 exhibited positive correlations, which ranged from .30 to .65. Overall, these scores exhibit a classical theory internal consistency reliability coefficient of at least .85 on the five factors (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b).

To establish criterion related validity, a series of *t* tests were conducted on the mean scale scores of the five factors to examine the differences among academically able achievers and underachievers. To control the Type 1 error rate, a Bonferroni adjustment was used at an alpha level of .01. To test for equality of variances between these groups, a Levene's test was conducted. Factor 2 (attitudes towards teachers) demonstrated equal variances. To adjust the inequality in variance in the other factors, a Welch's *t* test was used to adjust the degrees of freedom. The findings of this study suggest the scores on the SAAS-R seem to demonstrate evidence of sufficient construct validity, criterion-related validity, and internal consistency

reliability as evidenced below in Table 2. Therefore, the use of the SAAS-R as a research instrument appears justifiable (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b).

Table 2

*Factor Pattern and Structure Coefficients for Each of the Five Factors on the Final Version of the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) (McCoach & Siegle, 2003b)*

Variable	Factor pattern					Factor structure				
	ASP	ATT	ATS	GOALS	MOT/S-R	ASP	ATT	ATS	GOALS	MOT/S-R
2. I am intelligent.	.631	.000	.000	.000	.000	.631	.229	.168	.232	.214
3. I can learn new ideas quickly in school.	.733	.000	.000	.000	.000	.733	.267	.195	.269	.248
13. School is easy for me.	.582	.000	.000	.000	.000	.582	.212	.155	.214	.197
20. I can grasp complex concepts in school.	.681	.000	.000	.000	.000	.681	.248	.181	.250	.231
37. I am capable of getting straight A's.	.628	.000	.000	.000	.000	.628	.229	.167	.230	.213
40. I am good at learning new things at school.	.700	.000	.000	.000	.000	.799	.291	.213	.293	.271
41. I am smart in school.	.802	.000	.000	.000	.000	.802	.292	.213	.294	.272
1. My classes are interesting.	.000	.702	.000	.000	.000	.256	.702	.423	.356	.456
9. I relate well to my teachers.	.000	.686	.000	.000	.000	.250	.686	.414	.348	.446
14. I like my teachers.	.000	.776	.000	.000	.000	.282	.776	.468	.393	.504
16. My teachers make learning interesting.	.000	.839	.000	.000	.000	.305	.839	.506	.425	.545
17. My teachers care about me.	.000	.704	.000	.000	.000	.256	.704	.425	.357	.458
31. Most of the teachers at this school are good teachers.	.000	.711	.000	.000	.000	.259	.711	.429	.360	.462
6. I am glad that I go to this school.	.000	.000	.883	.000	.000	.235	.532	.883	.309	.395
7. This is a good school.	.000	.000	.858	.000	.000	.228	.517	.858	.294	.384
12. This school is a good match for me.	.000	.000	.882	.000	.000	.219	.496	.822	.282	.367
19. I like this school.	.000	.000	.575	.000	.000	.153	.347	.575	.197	.257
42. I am proud of this school.	.000	.000	.831	.000	.000	.221	.501	.831	.285	.371
18. Doing well in school is important for my future career goals.	.000	.000	.000	.757	.000	.278	.384	.260	.757	.561
21. Doing well in school is one of my goals.	.000	.000	.000	.849	.000	.312	.430	.291	.849	.629
25. It's important to get good grades in school.	.000	.000	.000	.826	.000	.303	.419	.283	.826	.612
28. I want to do my best in school.	.000	.000	.000	.558	.000	.205	.283	.191	.558	.413
29. It is important for me to do well in school.	.000	.000	.000	.907	.000	.333	.460	.311	.907	.672
38. I want to make good grades in school.	.000	.000	.000	.846	.000	.310	.429	.290	.846	.627
8. I work hard at school.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.858	.291	.558	.384	.636	.858

*(table continues)*



Variable	Factor pattern					Factor structure				
	ASP	ATT	ATS	GOALS	MOT/S-R	ASP	ATT	ATS	GOALS	MOT/S-R
10. I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.817	.277	.531	.365	.605	.817
24. I complete my schoolwork regularly.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.755	.256	.491	.337	.559	.755
26. I am organized about my schoolwork.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.756	.256	.491	.338	.560	.756
27. I use a variety of strategies to learn new material.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.578	.196	.376	.258	.428	.578
30. I spend a lot of time on my schoolwork.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.828	.281	.538	.370	.614	.828
32. I am a responsible student.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.407	.138	.265	.182	.302	.407
33. I put a lot of effort into my schoolwork.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.886	.300	.576	.396	.657	.886
35. I concentrate on my schoolwork.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.888	.301	.577	.397	.658	.888
36. I check my assignments before I turn them in.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.707	.240	.460	.316	.524	.707

Factor analysis procedures supported the five factors, which represent the students' academic-self perceptions, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, motivation and self-regulation, and goal valuation. Criterion-related validity was supported by the mean differences on the SAAS-R as evidenced between groups of students with varying levels of achievement. Convergent validity was supported through correlations in the anticipated directions between the SAAS-R factors and the students' related assumptions about school and indexes of school behavior. Results support the validity of the SAAS-R, which can be used with high school students in general education as well as college preparatory curriculum programs (Suldo, Shaffer, & Shaunessy, 2008). Matthews and McBee (2008) concurred with the reliability measures from the SAAS-R. A copy of the School Attitudes Assessment Survey is attached in Appendix A.

### Data Collection

To participate in the study, parental and student permission was obtained through written consent forms, which were distributed to the students by their advisory teachers and returned to these teachers with the signatures of the students and their parents. The University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the participating school district's research team provided the guidelines for the development of the consent forms. Participation in the study was voluntary. In order to maintain confidentiality, the examiners ensured that the participants did not provide identifiable information on the surveys such as their names or identification numbers. However, numerical symbols only known to the surveyor were placed in the demographic information section of the survey, which is designated for student grade point averages in order that the

surveyor could later identify the participating student for the purpose of collecting their grade point average from the school counselors.

Before the administration of the survey, examiners were also given instructions for the administration of the survey and how the participants' responses should be recorded. Also, the participants received written and oral instructions explaining how the items on the survey should be answered and where to place the surveys when they were completed. The total administration of the survey was 20 minutes. Upon completion of the survey, the participants returned the surveys to their advisory teachers who then placed the surveys in an envelope, which was sealed. The surveyor then immediately collected the surveys from the advisory teachers at the end of the advisory period and collected the students' grade point averages from the counselor's office.

Data for the hypotheses was gathered in the following manner. The demographic attachment for the survey addressed the first hypothesis, concerning the differences in academic achievement between African American male and female high school students in an urban setting. Academic achievement was determined by the students' cumulative grade point averages from their cumulative academic transcripts, which were collected from the school guidance counselors. The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) provided data responsive to the following hypotheses concerning differences in academic self-perceptions, attitudes towards teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation among African American males and females in an urban setting. The instrument also determined if significant relationship existed between academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation and academic achievement among high school students in an urban setting.

## Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1 states that the academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. The data analysis for hypothesis 1 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in academic achievement.

Hypothesis 2 states that the academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. The data analysis for hypothesis 2 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in academic self-perception.

Hypothesis 3 states that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males. The data analysis for hypothesis 3 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in attitudes toward teachers.

Hypothesis 4 states that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males. The data analysis for hypothesis 4 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in attitudes toward school.

Hypothesis 5 states that the goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. The data analysis for hypothesis 5 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in goal valuation.

Hypothesis 6 states that the motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. The data analysis for

hypothesis 6 was summarized using an independent-samples *t*-test. This test examined gender differences in motivation/self-regulation.

Hypothesis 7 states that there is a significant relationship between the academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students in an urban setting. The data analysis for hypothesis 7 was summarized using a multiple linear regression. This test examined the prediction of one variable from several other variables. The dependent variable was academic achievement. The independent variables were academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement among African American male and female students in an urban setting. Table 3 summarizes the research hypotheses, independent variables, dependent variables, and statistical methods for this study.

Table 3

*Research Hypotheses, Independent Variables, Dependent Variables, and Statistical Methods*

Research Hypotheses	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Statistical Methods
1. The academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African males.	Gender	Academic Achievement	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> test compares the means of two samples
2. The academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.	Gender	Academic Self-Perception	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> test compares the means of two samples

*(table continues)*

Research Hypotheses	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Statistical Methods
3. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males.	Gender	Attitudes Toward Teachers	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> Tests compares the means of two samples
4. African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males.	Gender	Attitudes Toward School	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> Test compares the means of two samples
5. The goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.	Gender	Goal Valuation	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> Test compares the means of two samples
6. The motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males.	Gender	Motivation/Self-Regulation	Independent-Samples <i>t</i> Test compares the means of two samples
7. There is a significant relationship between academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students in an urban setting.	Academic Achievement	Academic Self-Perception	Multiple Linear Regression examines relationships between independent and dependent variables
		Attitudes Toward Teachers	
		Attitudes Toward School	
		Goal Valuation	
		Motivation/Self-Regulation	
Academic Achievement			

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Chapter 4 is an overview of the data analysis. Data are presented by the research hypotheses. Each hypothesis is presented independently followed by the data analysis.

#### Descriptive Statistics

The participants consisted of 270 urban African American male and female high school students. In this sample, 103 participants were males and 167 participants were female. A random stratified sampling procedure was used in this study. Table 4 provides grade level and gender for this study.

Table 4

*Gender and Grade Assessment for Study Sample*

Grade	Gender		Total
	Male <i>f/%</i>	Female <i>f/%</i>	
9th	7 2.6	3 1.1	10 3.7
10th	37 13.7	58 21.5	95 35.2
11th	32 11.9	57 21.1	89 33.0
12th	27 10.0	49 18.1	76 28.1
Total	103 38.1	167 61.9	270 100.0

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the means and standard deviations for grade point average, academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal-valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. The mean for grade point averages for the female students in the study was 2.25 with a standard deviation of .719, which was slightly higher than the male students with a mean of 2.17 and a standard deviation of .710. The females reported a higher mean in academic self-perception ( $M = 40.90$ ) with a standard deviation of 5.03, while the males reported a mean of 39.58 with a standard deviation of 6.70. For the variable attitudes toward teachers, the males had a slightly higher mean score of 34.97 with a standard deviation of 7.83, whereas the females had a mean score of 34.79 with a standard deviation of 8.12. The females also reported a higher mean score for attitudes toward school, which was 23.67, with a standard deviation of 7.11. Their counterparts reported a mean score of 23.21 with a standard deviation of 7.89. For goal valuation, the mean for the females was 39.13 with a standard deviation of 3.63, while the mean for the males was 37.83 with a standard deviation of 4.55. The females also reported a mean of 57.31 for motivation/self-regulation with a standard deviation of 8.66, which was slightly higher than the males. The males in this category reported a mean of 55.18 with a standard deviation of 8.49 see Table 5 below.

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Variables by Gender*

Variable	Males		Females	
	M	SD	M	SD
Grade point average	2.17	.710	2.25	.719
Academic self-perception	39.58	6.70	40.90	5.03
Attitudes toward teachers	34.97	7.83	34.79	8.12
Attitudes toward school	23.21	7.89	23.67	7.11
Goal valuation	37.83	4.55	39.13	3.63
Motivation/Self-regulation	55.18	8.49	57.31	8.66



## Reliabilities

The participants in this study responded to the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R). It is a 35-item Likert-type scale to measure student attitudes toward school. To test internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used. The five subtests of the SAAS-R. Academic self-perception had contained 7 evaluating items. Attitudes toward teachers had 7 evaluating items. Attitudes toward school consisted of 5 evaluating items. Goal valuation had 6 evaluating items. Motivation/self-regulation had 10 evaluating items. Table 6 show Cronbach's alpha for each variable and the number of items measured in the SAAS-R.

Table 6

*Cronbach's Alpha for Study Variables and the Number of Items Measured in the SAAS-R*

SAAS-R subtest items	Cronbach's alpha	Number of evaluating items
Academic self-perception	.79	7
Attitudes toward teachers	.85	7
Attitudes toward school	.91	5
Goal valuation	.80	6
Motivation/self-regulation	.88	10

## Correlations

Correlation analyses were performed for the relationship between academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement among African American male and female high school students in an urban setting. Several moderate correlations were found.

Table 7 indicates a moderate correlation was found ( $r(268) = .661, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between attitudes toward school and attitudes toward teachers.

Therefore, it may be inferred that as attitudes towards school increases, attitudes toward teachers

also increases. Other correlations were also found in this analysis. Another ( $r(268) = .560, p < .001$ ) indicated a moderately significant linear relationship between academic self-perception and motivation/self-regulation. Therefore, it may be suggested that as academic self-perception increases, motivation/self-regulation also increases. Also, Table 7 indicates a moderate correlation was also found ( $r(268) = .515, p < .001$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between goal valuation and motivation/self-regulation, which may suggest that as goal valuation increases, motivation/self-regulation also increases.

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation for Gender, Grade Point Average, Academic Self-perception, Attitudes toward Teachers, Attitudes toward School, Goal Valuation, and Motivation/Self-Regulation*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	--	.061	.112	-.011	.030	.156	.120
Grade point average		--	-.138*	-.060	-.005	-.15**	-.062
Academic self-perception			--	.383**	.386*	.448*	.560**
Attitudes toward teacher				--	.661**	.154**	.456**
Attitudes toward school					--	.159**	.353**
Goal valuation						--	.515**
Motivation/Self-regulation							--

### Data Analysis

Research Hypothesis 1 states that the academic achievement of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing the mean score of academic achievement and gender was calculated. No significant difference was found ( $t(268) = -.903, p > .05$ ). The mean of academic achievement for African American females ( $m = 2.25, sd = .719$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of

academic achievement for African American males ( $m = 2.17, sd = .710$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 8.

Table 8

*Independent Samples t Test for Academic Achievement and Gender*

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Female	Male		
Academic achievement	2.25 (.719)	2.17 (.710)	-.903*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 2 states that the academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean score of academic self-perception and gender found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(268) = -1.842, p < .05$ ). The mean of academic self-perception for African American females ( $m = 40.90, sd = 5.03$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of academic self-perception for African American males ( $m = 39.58, sd = 6.70$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 9.

Table 9

*Independent Samples t Test for Academic Self-Perception and Gender*

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Female	Male		
Academic self-perception	40.90 (5.03)	39.58 (6.70)	-1.842*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 3 states that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward teachers than African American males. An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing the mean score of attitudes toward teachers and gender was calculated. No significant difference was found ( $t(268) = .180, p > .05$ ). The mean of attitudes toward teachers for African American males ( $m = 34.97, sd = 7.83$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of attitudes toward teachers for African American females ( $m = 34.79, sd = 8.12$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 10.

Table 10

*Independent Samples  $t$  Test for Attitudes toward Teachers and Gender*

	Gender		$t$	$df$
	Female	Male		
Attitudes toward teachers	34.79 (8.12)	34.97 (7.83)	.294*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 4 states that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different attitudes toward school than African American males. An independent-samples  $t$  test comparing the mean score of attitudes toward school and gender was calculated. No significant difference was found ( $t(268) = .372, p > .05$ ). The mean of attitudes toward school African American females ( $m = 23.67, sd = 7.11$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of attitudes toward school for African American males ( $m = 23.21, sd = 7.89$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 11.

Table 11

*Independent Samples t Test for Attitudes toward School and Gender*

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Female	Male		
Attitudes toward school	23.67 (7.11)	23.21 (7.89)	.372*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 5 states that the goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean score of goal valuation and gender found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(268) = -2.579, p < .05$ ). The mean of goal valuation for African American females ( $m = 39.13, sd = 3.63$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of goal valuation for males ( $m=37.83, sd = 4.55$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 12.

Table 12

*Independent Samples t Test for Goal Valuation and Gender*

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Female	Male		
Goal valuation	39.13 (3.63)	37.83 (4.55)	-2.579*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 6 states that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly different motivation/self-regulation than African American males. An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean score of motivation/self-regulation and gender was calculated. No significant difference was found ( $t(268) = .804, p > .05$ ). The

mean of motivation/self-regulation for African American females ( $m = 57.31, sd = 8.66$ ) was slightly higher than the mean of motivation/self-regulation for African American males ( $m = 55.18, sd = 8.49$ ). The results are indicated below in Table 13.

Table 13

*Independent Samples t Test for Motivation/Self-regulation and Gender*

	Gender		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Female	Male		
Motivation/Self-regulation	57.31 (8.66)	55.18 (8.49)	-1.974*	268

*Note.* \* =  $p > .05$ . Standard Deviations appear in the parentheses below the means.

Research Hypothesis 7 states that there is a significant relationship between academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and academic achievement among African American male and female students in an urban setting. A multiple linear regression was calculated predicting the students' academic achievement based on their academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, and gender. The regression equation was not significant ( $F(6, 263) = 1.577, p > .05$ ) as evidenced below in Table 14.

Table 14

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Academic Achievement*

Variable	$\beta$	<i>Sig</i>
Academic self-perception	.034	.578
Attitudes toward teachers	.087	.311
Attitudes toward school	-.115	.163
Goal valuation	.104	.160
Motivation/Self-regulation	-.031	.708

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine student academic achievement, academic self-perception, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, goal-valuation, and motivation/self-regulation of male and female African-American students in an urban setting. This study utilized one survey instrument. The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised was used to measure the five variables in the study, which were academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation. Students' grade point averages were used to measure their academic achievement. This chapter will discuss the findings and make recommendations for future research.

#### Discussion of the Findings

The goals of the study were to identify gender differences among African American high school students in an urban setting. The students' grade point averages were used to measure their academic performance. The School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) was used to measure the academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation of these students.

Research Hypothesis 1 stated that the academic achievement of African American female high school students exceeds African American male. Surprisingly, in this study, there was no difference. Prior research has indicated that African American males were not performing as well academically when compared to African American females (Garibaldi, 2007). To close the gap,

Schellenburg and Grothaus (2010) argue that the core academics and school counseling standards should be integrated. Kaplan and Maehr (1993b) recommended emphasizing task goals as prescribed in the Achievement Goal Theory. Gutman (2006) pointed out that using mastery goals in the math classrooms has increased academic achievement among this population. Based on the findings of the present study, one might conclude that, due to the use of the above strategies or for some other reason, males may be closing the gender achievement gap.

Research Hypothesis 2 stated that the academic self-perception of African American female high school students in an urban setting would exceed that of African American males. An independent samples *t* test was used to test these hypotheses. There was a significant difference in the academic self-perception among this population. This finding is consistent with prior research. For example, Saunders et al. (2004) found that, compared to African American males, African American females had higher levels of academic self-perception, higher grade point averages, and more confidence in their academic abilities.

Research Hypothesis 3 stated that African American female high school students in an urban setting have significantly more positive attitudes towards teachers than African American males. There was no significant difference in the attitudes towards teachers among this population. It is pertinent to consider the significance of teachers as viewed by African American students. In the application of expectancy value theory, if this population does not value teachers in their educational process, then teachers are not relevant. It is important to build relationships between African American students and their teachers with hopes that this bond will be a positive effort in increasing academic achievement.

Research Hypothesis 4 stated that African American female high school student in an urban setting will have a significantly different attitudes toward school than African American



males. The results revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitudes toward school for these students. This finding contradicts earlier findings. Many studies have indicated that negative attitudes towards school play a definitive role in the academic success of African American students (Davis et al., 2002; Downey, Ainsworth, & Quain, 2009; McNair & Johnson, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2008; Tyson, 2002).

Research Hypothesis 5 stated that the goal valuation of African American female high school students in an urban setting is significantly different from African American males. An independent samples *t* test was used to test this hypothesis. The results revealed that there was a significant difference. As implied by the expectancy value theory, valuing school goals may be necessary for exerting motivation and employing self-regulatory strategies. Students who do not value the goals of school are less likely to put forth the needed effort (McCoach & Siegle, 2003a).

Research Hypothesis 6 stated that the motivation/self-regulation of African American female high school students in an urban setting exceeds African American males. There was no significant difference in the motivation among this population. Gutman (2006) suggested that motivated students who seem to value their school experience and believe in what they are doing have the ability to be successful. In their efforts to be successful, they employ self-regulating behaviors, set realistic goals, and USE strategies to accomplish these goals (McCoach & Siegel, 2005).

Research Hypothesis 7 stated that there is a significant relationship between academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation self-regulation, and academic achievement between African American male and female students

in an urban setting. A multiple linear regression was calculated, and the regression was not significant.

In summary only two of the expected outcomes appeared in the results. The female students reported more positive ratings for academic self-perception and valuing school goals than the male students. Despite these differences, there was no significant difference in the achievement levels of male and female students. The no-difference findings are to be celebrated. Ideally, there should be no gap between African American males and females in terms of academic self-perception, attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, motivation self-regulation, and academic achievement. Perhaps the most surprising finding was that the factors of concern for this study have no significant impact on academic achievement.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study were not as anticipated and, largely, ran contrary to the literature. Nevertheless, research examining variables that influence achievement for both male and female African students is needed. Due to the limited number of studies comparing differences in male and female high school students should be interpreted with caution. Many gender studies are concerned about European Americans. Also, investigations of academic self-perception tend to be conflated with academic self-concept and academic self-efficacy. Finally, there is a dearth of information involving African American attitudes toward teachers, attitudes toward school, goal valuation, and motivation/self-regulation.

Another aspect to consider is the lack of educational survey instruments relevant to this population. There is a need for the development of more survey instruments designed to investigate a broad continuum of issues related to African American students. Because some of

these students continue to lag behind other ethnic groups in academic achievement, it is alarming that more educational studies along the lines of this one are not conducted.

Because urban schools are replete with educational issues worthy of award winning research, one of the primary functions of the educational leader at the urban schools should be to conduct research concerned with reversing the trend of underachievement at his or her school. The educational leader at the school should address problems through empirical research using qualitative and quantitative measures.

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APPENDIX A  
SCHOOL ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT SURVEY-REVISED

## School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised

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**Instructions:** This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

**Part I:** Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. In answering each question, use a large letter (1) to (7) where 1 stands for strongly disagree and 7 stands for strongly agree. Please circle only one response choice per question.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
1. My classes are interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>2. I am inept.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
3. I can learn new ideas quickly in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>4. I check my assignments before I turn them in.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
5. I am smart in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>6. I am glad that I go to this school.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
7. This is a good school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>8. I work hard at school.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
9. I relate well to my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>10. I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
11. I am good at learning new things in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>12. This school is a good match for me.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
13. School is easy for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>14. I like my teachers.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
15. I want to get good grades in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>16. My teachers make learning interesting.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
17. My teachers care about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>18. Doing well in school is important for my future career goals.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
19. I like this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>20. I eat group projects correctly in school.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
21. Doing well in school is one of my goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>22. I am capable of getting straight A's.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
23. I am proud of this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I complete my schoolwork regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. It's important to get good grades in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I am organized about my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I use a variety of strategies to learn new material.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I want to do my best in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. It is important for me to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I spend a lot of time on my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Most of the teachers at this school are good teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I am a responsible student.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I put a lot of effort into my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I like my classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I concentrate on my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**PART III Please choose only one response choice per question.**

1. What is your cumulative GPA? What are your average grades?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4.0 or higher (All A's)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 2.9 to 2.99 (More B's than C's)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3.75 to 3.99 (Mostly A's)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2.0 to 2.49 (More C's than B's)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3.5 to 3.74 (More A's than B's)            | <input type="checkbox"/> 1.5 to 1.99 (More C's than D's)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3.25 to 3.49 (More B's than A's)           | <input type="checkbox"/> 1.0 to 1.49 (More D's than C's)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3.0 to 3.24 (Mostly B's, some A's and C's) | <input type="checkbox"/> less than 1.0 (Mostly D's and F's) |

2. On average, how much time per week do you spend doing homework?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour                   | <input type="checkbox"/> From 10 hours to less than 12 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> From 1 hour to less than 2 hours   | <input type="checkbox"/> From 12 hours to less than 20 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> From 2 hours to less than 3 hours  | <input type="checkbox"/> From 20 hours to less than 25 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> From 3 hours to less than 10 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 hours or more                    |

*Thank you for your time!*



APPENDIX B

SCHOOL ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT SURVEY--REVISED SCORING RUBRIC

# SCHOOL ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT SURVEY-REVISED

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## SCORING RUBRIC/CODEBOOK

Use mean scores as the subscale scores.

### **ACADEMIC SELF-PERCEPTIONS: 7 QUESTIONS**

Q2, Q3, Q5, Q11, Q13, Q20, Q22

### **ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHERS (AND CLASSES): 7 QUESTIONS**

Q1, Q9, Q14, Q16, Q17, Q31, Q34

### **ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL: 5 QUESTIONS**

Q6, Q7, Q12, Q19, Q23

### **GOAL VALUATION: 6 QUESTIONS**

Q15, Q18, Q21, Q25, Q28, Q29

### **MOTIVATION/SELF-REGULATION: 10 QUESTIONS**

Q4, Q8, Q10, Q24, Q26, Q27, Q30, Q32, Q33, Q3

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please respond to the following demographic items by checking the box that best describes you.

1. Gender:             Male         Female

2. Age                 14         15         16         17         18

3. Grade Level:     9         10         11         12

4. Race/Ethnicity

African American

Hispanic

Caucasian

---

**This section is to be completed by the student investigator. Please indicate the participants' cumulative grade point average.**

Cumulative Grade Point Average: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL

December 15, 2009

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

Livia A. Simmons  
ELPTS  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
R E S E A R C H

Re: IR3 # 09-OR-355 "Gender and Academic Performance Differences  
among African American Students: An Urban High School Study"

Dear Ms. Simmons:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted  
approval for your proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR  
part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as  
outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior  
(including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition,  
motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or  
practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview,  
oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation,  
or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on December 14, 2010. If your research will  
continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing  
Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application,  
complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the  
study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing  
Review and Closure.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to  
obtain consent from your participants.


Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this  
proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0117  
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Carpenito T. Myles, MSM, CIM  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office for Research Compliance  
The University of Alabama