Self-Concept in Arab American Adolescents: Implications of Social Support and Experiences in the Schools

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Since their immigration to the United States, Arab Americans have faced discrimination and stereotyping, especially through the mainstream media. After the events of September 11, 2001, these stereotypes progressed and reports of discrimination significantly increased. As reported by Ibish (2003), incidences of political injustice and ethnic hate crimes, after 9/11, have resulted in dire consequences for Arab American families, especially for their children in the public schools. Following the attacks, Arab American children and adolescents in the K-12 school system faced discrimination and violence from their classmates, teachers, and other school staff.

The purpose of this study was to investigate multiple domains of self-concept in Arab American adolescents in relation to their school experiences, including discrimination, self-perceived teacher and classmate social support, and actual teacher-perceptions. Self-concept was measured by using the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988). Results indicated that half of the sample experienced some form of discrimination, either personal or someone the subjects knew. Experiences of discrimination were significantly related to students’ Scholastic Competence and Physical Appearance. Self-perceived classmate support was significantly related to all domains of self-concept. Teacher related variables, however, deemed less significant, except for behavioral aspects of self-concept. Implications of these results are discussed,
as well as strategies for how to provide positive relationships with Arab American students and families will be outlined.
Dedication

In dedication to my family, who always loved and supported me unconditionally. Thank you for instilling strength, independence, and ambition in me.
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Table of Contents

Abstract............................................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication........................................................................................................................................ iv
Acknowledgments ..........................................................................................................................v
Vita ................................................................................................................................................ vii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................. x

Chapter 1: Introduction ......................................................................................................................1
  Statement of the Problem..............................................................................................................1
  Purpose of the Study.....................................................................................................................8
  Significance of the Study.............................................................................................................9
  Research Questions.......................................................................................................................10
  Limitations of the Study..............................................................................................................13
  Definition of Terms......................................................................................................................14

Chapter 2: Literature Review..........................................................................................................16
  Arab American Demographics .................................................................................................17
  Overview of the Arab American Culture....................................................................................20
  History of Cultural Stereotypes and Ethnic Discrimination.....................................................21
  Cultural Stereotypes....................................................................................................................22
  Ethnic and Racial Discrimination...............................................................................................26
  Cultural Stereotypes and Ethnic Discrimination in the Schools..............................................30
  The Symbolic Interaction Theory of Self-Concept.................................................................31
  Multi-dimensional Self-Concept.................................................................................................33
  Development of Self-Concept in Adolescence..........................................................................36
  Factors Related to Self-Concept.................................................................................................39
  Perceived Social Support............................................................................................................39
  Teacher Perceptions of Student...................................................................................................47
  Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination..........................................................................49
  Implications in Relation to Self-Concept of Arab American Adolescents............................54
List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of sample......................................................64
Table 2. Means and standard deviations of student and teacher measures.................86
Table 3. Means of self-concept domains by gender, school level, and discrimination....87
Table 4. Frequency of students who reported experiencing discrimination and being included in the multicultural realm.................................................................91
Table 5. Correlations for the seven self-concept domains, self-perceived social supports, and self-reported grade point average (GPA)..................................................94
Table 6. Pearson correlations for student self-concept domains and corresponding teacher perception domains.................................................................95
Table 7. Independent t-test for Athletic Competence by gender............................97
Table 8. Independent t-test for Scholastic Competence and Global Self-worth by school level.................................................................98
Table 9. Independent t-test for Scholastic Competence, Physical Appearance, and self-perceived classmate support by school level.........................................100
Table 10. Coefficients for Scholastic Competence Model.................................102
Table 11. Coefficients for Social Acceptance Model............................................103
Table 12. Coefficients for Athletic Competence Model.......................................104
Table 13. Coefficients for Physical Appearance Model.........................................105
Table 14. Coefficients for Behavioral Conduct Model........................................107
Table 15. Coefficients for Close Friendship Model………………………………………108
Table 16. Coefficients for Close Friendship with teacher-perceived Close Friendship………………………………………………………………………………109
Table 17. Coefficients for Global Self-worth Model…………………………………..110
Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The student population in the United States includes a significantly large population of Arab American students (Suleiman, 2001); however, limited research exists on their school experiences, learning styles, and academic achievement (Nieto, 2000). Banks (1997) reported that Arab Americans achieve higher academically than most ethnic groups. Furthermore, education is highly regarded in the Arab culture. Because they generally do not face failure in school, Arab American students have not been targeted in research (Nieto, 1996). Although this population may succeed academically, these students face other challenges as a minority in the school system. The literature refers to Arab American students as “the invisible minority” (Al-Khatab, 1999; Nieto, 2000; Suleiman, 2001); however, this population has been highly visible through negative images and stereotypes portrayed in the media (Nieto, 2000). These images are permeated in the minds of American society, making their way into the schools.

Arab American students have historically faced discrimination in the schools, especially after September 11, 2001 (Wingfield, 2006). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) published reports on discriminatory acts in the schools, documenting the most commonly occurring incidents as harassment, verbal abuse (i.e., derogatory names such as “towel head” and “camel jockey”), and the stereotyping of Arabs by students, teachers, and administrators (Ibish, 2001). Peers may
taunt Arab American students, associating them with events of terrorism and political
violence (Ibish, 2001). These incidents occurred before 9/11; such incidents have
increased ever since 9/11 and are lucidly associated with the attacks and the war in Iraq
(Ibish, 2008).

The ADC published a special report documenting incidents that occurred from the
day of 9/11 through over a year later. Hate crimes and discrimination were experienced
by students of all ages, including kindergarten through college. Along with individual
case stories, the report provided an overall synopsis of Arab American students’
experiences in the schools:

“On September 11, and the days and weeks that followed, students reported
physical assaults, death threats and overt ethnic and religious bigotry. Students
were beaten, cursed, kicked, spat upon, and insulted. There were knife attacks,
bomb threats, and vandalism. Many Muslim girls reported having their head
covering pulled off. Teachers and other students made fun of their Arab names
and made obscene and demeaning remarks. Students were harassed in
classrooms, hallways, cafeterias and restrooms, on school buses and walking
home from school. Sometimes teachers, administrators and coaches were more of
a problem than the other students. Arab-American students, even young children
in elementary school, were blamed for, or seen as being associated with the
attacks. A 5-year-old came home from school and asked her father, ‘What does it
mean, terrorist? The other kids called me a terrorist.’ Some school officials
actually went as far as calling the police or FBI to investigate students” (Ibish,
2003, p. 105).
Furthermore, Arab American Christians felt the need to wear Christian symbols conspicuously as to not be associated with their Muslim counterparts.

One hundred and fifteen acts of physical violence, threats, harassment, and bias in schools were reported in that year alone. As time went by, reported incidents began to decrease but were still significantly more than before September 11, 2001. Between the years of 2003 and 2007, eighty incidents were reported. Some of these incidences detrimentally affected the psyche of the victimized students. Parent reports to the ADC indicated that these incidents were causing students to exhibit “symptoms of stress, fear, tension, reluctance to go to school, bed-wetting, anger, and combativeness” (Ibish, 2003, p. 106).

The experiences of Arab American students in the schools may potentially harm their social-emotional well being; more specifically, their self-concept may become damaged after such experiences. Self-concept can be defined as the judgments people hold about the characteristics of their personal self in general and within distinct domains, such as cognitive competence, social acceptance, and physical appearance (Harter, 1999). According to symbolic interaction theorists, self-concept is a social construct developed through symbolic interactions or linguistic exchanges with others, including parents, teachers, and peers (Baldwin, 1897; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1925, 1934). A potential result of these interactions is that the person accepts the opinions that others are perceived to hold toward himself/herself, and uses these perceived judgments to define his/her sense of self as a person (Harter, 1999). Several social interaction factors that are related to self-concept have been found in the literature and include perceived social support, actual
perceptions from others, and stigma, or minority status. These socialization experiences can have positive or negative consequences on the development of self-concept, depending on the quality of the experience. For example, perceived judgments of approval would be internalized as acceptance of the self, whereas perceived judgments of rejection would be internalized as rejection of the self and deeming the self unworthy.

Research has long suggested that people’s general self-concept is influenced by perceived social support from others, or the attitudes they believe that others hold toward themselves (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1925). For example, if a person feels that they have strong support from their teacher at school, then that person is more likely to have a more positive self-concept. Harter (1990, 1993) investigated this relationship with older children and adolescents, which resulted in correlations between perceived social support from significant others and self-worth ranging from .50 and .65. As expected from the theory of symbolic interactions, those with the lowest levels of support report the lowest self-worth, those with moderate support had moderate levels of self-worth, and those with high support report the highest self-worth. Other studies have found similar relationships (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Demaray, Malecki, Rueger, Brown, & Summers, 2009; Forman, 1988; Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). Reddy, Rhodes, and Mulhall (2003) further found that perceptions of teacher support predicted general self-esteem in middle school students. Moreover, changes in perceptions of teacher support reliably predicted changes in self-esteem, i.e., increased perceived social support corresponded with increased self-esteem. An experimental study provided evidence that teacher-student and parent-child relationships have an effect on children’s self-esteem, with teacher support having
stronger effects than parent support (Martin, Marsh, McInerney, Green, & Dowson, 2007).

Another factor related to self-concept is the way others actually perceive the person. Students, especially in adolescence, become greatly concerned with the judgments of significant others in different roles (Elkind, 1967). Even more, the interrelationships built with others may lead to affective reactions to themselves (Harter, 1999). Depending on the quality of the relationship, these reactions include pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment of the self. Consequently, negative perceptions in the schools can create a sense of shame about students’ cultural heritage, inevitably leading to a negative self-concept. For example, when teachers and peers hold negative opinions about the Arab American culture and exhibit these perceptions in interacting with Arab American students, this may affect these students’ self-concept.

Sufficient literature on the relationship between actual perceptions of significant others and self-concept is lacking. The majority of the research on actual perceptions of teachers focuses on academic achievement (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Only two studies were found that examined teacher perceptions in relation to self-perceptions (Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990; Meltzer, et al., 2004). Meltzer, et al. (2004) reported a significant relationship between student academic self-perceptions and teacher perceptions of academic performance. Students who were judged by their teachers as making limited effort in school and achieving below average levels in comparison with their peers had negative academic self-perceptions. Similarly, students who were judged by their teachers as hard-working and achieving at or above average levels had more
positive academic self-perceptions. In a longitudinal study, Hoge, et al. (1990) found that teachers’ evaluations of students had a significant impact on students’ self-esteem.

Experiences of prejudice and discrimination have also been documented as being related to the self-concept (e.g., Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Ruggiero, Taylor, & Lydon, 1997): a relationship known as the stigma hypothesis. The stigma hypothesis states that the internalization of stigma, or minority status, leads to lower self-concept in minority groups (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). The status of being a minority becomes internalized with experiences of prejudice and discrimination. These experiences would be considered to be negative social interactions with others, according to symbolic interaction theorists. As a result, people of minority groups become affected psychologically.

Research has shown that people’s self-concept is closely linked to the devaluation of their ethnic minority groups (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). This relationship has been well documented in the literature for African, Latino, and Asian Americans. For example, Kenny and McEachern (2009) investigated self-concept among different cultural groups in south Florida, including White, Black (Haitian American), and Hispanic. They found that Haitian American children had lower self-concept than did Hispanic children. The researchers reasoning behind this finding was that the Haitian population in south Florida experienced and suffered from racial prejudice and discrimination in schools and the community. Haitian American children in the sample found it hard to identify with other Blacks in schools, causing a sense of isolation and devaluing of their culture. Other studies have found similar results with other ethnic
minority groups (e.g., Baez, 1997; Berger & Milem, 2000; Calhoun, Sheldon, Serrano, & Cooke, 1978).

Although there is a wealth of research on self-concept in various ethnic minority groups, the research on self-concept in Arab American students is limited. Al-Khatab (1999) conducted a study to explore the self-concept of a sample of Arab-American adolescents in grades 6 through 12. Results indicated that the overall self-concept profile of these students was positive, suggesting that Arab American students perceive themselves positively. However, over half of the sample was from a city where there is a significant population of Arab Americans. In other words, these students were considered the majority in that location. Perhaps that sample of students had a positive profile due to a large population of Arab Americans in that city, resulting in higher tolerance in school. In schools where there is a large community of Arab Americans, such as Dearborn and Detroit, fewer incidents of discrimination are reported (Ibish, 2003). Such communities are better equipped to prevent anti-Arab incidents due to an established working relationship between Arab American leaders city, school, and police officials, and other community organizations (Ibish, 2003). Consequently, that sample of students’ self-concept may be higher than students who have encountered such discrimination and prejudice. Al-Khatab did not investigate perceptions of external sources, such as teachers or peers, or experiences of discrimination making it impossible to conclude if these factors were related to the self-concept in that sample of adolescents.

Kovach and Hillman (2002) investigated the self-esteem in Arab, African, and European American high school students, as well as their experiences of discrimination.
Although self-concept and self-esteem are not interchangeable constructs, the literature indicates that the two are related. Therefore, it might be expected that if one has a high self-concept, the one would also have high self-esteem and vice versa. In terms of self-esteem, results from this study conflicted with the results from the study conducted by Al-Khatab (1999). The authors found that Arab American students had the lowest self-esteem compared to the other two ethnic groups. Arab American students were also more likely to attribute negative feedback from out-group members to prejudice. These students used prejudice to explain the causes for negative outcomes or feedback more frequently than African American students did. In addition, they frequently endorsed prejudice as a reason for failure like African American students, but unlike European American students. Experiences of discrimination were not analyzed in relation to the students’ self-esteem; however, the authors theorized that the lower self-esteem in Arab American students was related to their experiences of being stigmatized.

There is a lack of research on the relationship between experiences of discrimination in the schools and self-concept in Arab American adolescents. One study looked at this relationship in Arab American adults, ages 18 through 60 years (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Results indicated that reported discriminatory events were significantly and negatively related to self-concept. It is expected that similar results would be found with Arab American adolescents.

**Purpose of the Study**

Research suggests that perceived social support from significant others, actual perceptions of significant others, and experiences of discrimination are factors that are
related to self-concept. Thus far, no research exists on how any of these factors are related to Arab American adolescents’ self-concept. The importance of doing such research stems from the fact that a negative self-concept may potentially be related to social maladjustment and low achievement. Suleiman (1996) suggested that, due to negative perceptions of and prejudice towards Arab Americans in schools, Arab American students could be expected to be at-risk for both academic and social failure. To demonstrate such effects, Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003) found that African American adolescents’ academic and psychological functioning decreased with experiences of discrimination from teachers and peers in school. It is expected that Arab American students would suffer the same consequences with such experiences. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine Arab American students’ self-concept in relation to: their self- perceived social support from their classmates, their self- perceived social support from their teachers, their teachers’ actual perceptions of them, and their experiences of discrimination in school. These factors will all be collectively examined to determine their predictive abilities.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that no research exists on the experiences of Arab American adolescents in the school system and how these experiences affect their self-concept. Al-Khatab (1999) suggested the need for research examining the relationship of external factors with the self-concept of Arab American students. The current study will help demonstrate the relationships of several external factors that have been found in the literature to be related to the self-concept of other
minority groups. By doing this research study, the experiences Arab American students have in the schools and how these experiences are related to their self-concept can be learned. Hence, the results from this study will help researchers and educators determine what interventions need to be implemented in the schools to increase cultural awareness and improve the environment in schools to help these students learn at their full potential.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between self-concept in Arab American adolescents and the following four factors: (a) self-perceived social support from classmates, (b) self-perceived social support from teachers, (c) actual perceptions from teachers, and (d) experiences of discrimination. Seven domains of self-concept will be measured: (1) Scholastic Competence, (2) Social Acceptance, (3) Athletic Competence, (4) Physical Appearance, (5) Behavioral Conduct, (6) Close Friendship, and (7) Global Self-worth. Six domains of teacher perceptions will be measured that parallel the domains of student’s self-concept: (1) Scholastic Competence, (2) Social Acceptance, (3) Athletic Competence, (4) Physical Appearance, (5) Behavioral Conduct, and (6) Close Friendship. Experiences of prejudice and discrimination include personal experiences and experiences of others close to the adolescent. This study sought to find the answers to the following questions:

**Research Question One:** a) Do Arab American adolescents overall perceive themselves positively or negatively in each of the self-concept domains? b) Do Arab American adolescents perceive their classmate and teacher support as positive or
negative, overall? The following hypotheses were formulated according to these questions:

- Means of the self-concept domains were expected to be positive, except for Athletic Competence. This hypothesis was commensurate with the findings that Al-Khatab (1999) found in her study.

- Means of self-perceived social support were expected to be positive overall.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship of measures of self-perceived social support, teacher ratings of behavior, and experiences of discrimination with each of the seven domains of self-concept? Measures of self-perceived social support include perceived social support from teachers and classmates. Teacher’s ratings of behavior include the teacher’s actual perceptions of the student’s behaviors in six domains: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship. Experiences of discrimination include personal experiences and significant other experiences. Measures of self-concept include: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth. The hypotheses for this question were listed below:

- Self-perceived social support from teachers was expected to be moderately to strongly related to students’ self-concept in Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth.
• Self-perceived social support from classmates was expected to be moderately to strongly related to Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth.

• Teachers’ ratings of students in the six domains of Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship were expected to be moderately to strongly related to students’ self-concept in Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship, respectively.

• Experiences of discrimination in school was expected to be strongly, negatively related to students’ Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship and Global Self-worth. Athletic Competence was not examined in relation to discrimination because there was no theoretical rationale for such a relationship. Research provided evidence that such experiences influence academic and social factors; however, it was not clear how experiences of discrimination in the schools would influence the self-concept domain of Athletic Competence.

Research Question Three: Will measures of self-perceived classmate social support, self-perceived teacher social support, and experience of discrimination predict self-concept in each of the seven domains? The hypotheses were as follows:
Provided that it was expected that all three independent variables would significantly correlate with the dependent variables, self-perceived classmate support, self-perceived teacher support, and experiences of discrimination would be examined collectively to determine the predictive ability of each variable. Results were expected to indicate that the presence of the experiences of discrimination in the school would be the strongest predictor of the seven self-concept domains. Self-perceived social support from classmates would be the next strongest predictor, followed by self-perceived social support from teachers.

**Research Question Four:** Will teacher perceptions of student in the six domains predict student self-concept in the corresponding six domains? The hypothesis for this question was listed below:

- Provided that it was expected that teacher perceptions of student in the six domains would significantly correlate with the six domains of self-concept, each teacher domain would be examined to determine the predictive ability for the corresponding self-concept domains. Results were expected to indicate that the six teacher perception domains were strong predictors of the six student self-concept domains.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several potential limitations of this study. The first potential limitation is the use of a non-random, convenience sample. This type of sampling is necessary because access to the adolescent Arab American population is very limited. A convenience sample limits the generalizability of the results. The results from this study
will only be generalizable to the participating sample. The second limitation is the exclusion of potential related variables, as it is difficult to include every possible variable that may constitute a relationship. For example, the inclusion of a socio-economic status measure would have been interesting to investigate in relation to self-concept. Finally, because all surveys are self-report, there is no way to ascertain the level of truthfulness or honesty in the participants’ responses.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Self-Concept** - the judgments people hold about the characteristics of their personal self in general and within distinct domains, such as cognitive competence, social acceptance, physical appearance, and so on. Self-concept is discussed in terms of a multidimensional construct. There are several self-constructs discussed in the literature that are related to self-concept and are sometimes used interchangeably with self-concept. Although closely related, research shows that there are distinctions between these constructs. In particular for this study, research found on self-esteem that is relevant to this study is also discussed in the literature review because of the terms close relation with self-concept. Self-esteem is defined as a person’s general feelings of self-worth or self-value.

2. **Perceived Social Support** - the perception of positive regard from others or the regard that others manifest toward the self. The perceived social support from teachers and classmates are going to be measured in this study. Classmates are different than friends. Friends are those which students have an attachment to
whereas classmates are based on the classroom setting who students do not necessarily have an attachment to.

3. **Teachers’ Actual Perceptions of Student**- the teacher’s independent judgment of the student’s actual behavior and adequacy in different life domains.

4. **Experience of Discrimination**- an experience of irrational attitudes or hostility from a person or people that was directed against the adolescent due to their ethnicity or racial background.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Arab Americans have historically faced discrimination and stereotyping in the United States (Suleiman, 2001). Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, they faced these problems more than ever before. The impact of political injustice and ethnic hate crimes, as a result of the attacks, on Arab American families has shown to have dire consequences, especially for their children in the public schools. After the attacks, Arab American children in the school system faced discrimination and prejudice acts from their peers, teachers, and other school staff and administrators. With such negative interactions with teachers and classmates and being discriminated against in the schools, Arab American students are at-risk of having a low self-concept.

This chapter discusses the relevant literature on the relations of self-concept with perceived teacher and classmate support, actual teacher perceptions of student, and experiences of prejudice and discrimination. First, there will be a discussion about the Arab American demographics and culture. Second, there will be an overview of the history of prejudice and discrimination this ethnic group has experienced. This discussion leads to how stereotypes and discrimination have infiltrated the schools. Finally, a review of the literature relevant to the self-concept in adolescents will be presented. This review includes the definition of self-concept, the theory of self-concept
that will be the foundation of the current study, the development of self-concept in adolescent children, and the factors related to the development of self-concept.

**Arab American Demographics**

Arab Americans are people whose primary language is Arabic and who come from countries in the Middle East where the Arabic language has been traditionally spoken (J. A. Banks, 2003; Palacios & Trivedi, 2009). The Arab people inhabit most of Northern Africa and parts of Western Asia. Arab Americans have been immigrating to the United States for over a century. The literature discusses three major waves of Arab immigration to America (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2004). Between the 1880s and World War I, the first wave of immigration consisted mostly of Christian merchants and farmers from the Greater Syria region, now known as Syria and Lebanon. In 1948, the year Israel was created, a second wave began including more professionals, Muslims, and Palestinian refugees. The majority of the population from the first and second waves settled in Northeastern urban areas and Midwestern industrialized cities. The third wave began after the Arabs were defeated in the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The majority population of this wave was Muslim and they settled in areas all over the United States. The third wave of immigrants experienced a more negative reception and had more difficulty assimilating into mainstream society than did immigrants in the first two waves (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2004).

Arab Americans come from a vast cultural and religious background. They come from twenty-two different Arabic speaking countries in the Middle East including Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria,
Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Palacios & Trivedi, 2009). The 2000 United States (US) Census put the Arab American population at about 1.25 million (Samhan, 2007). The majority of the population per the Census consists of Lebanese at 39%, followed by 18% who identify as Arab in general, Egyptian and Syrian at 12%, Palestinian at 6%, and Moroccan and Iraqi at 3%. Seven percent of the population is labeled under “Other Arab,” which includes people from Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. People from Sudan, Somalia, or Mauritania were not included. These numbers were obtained by collecting data from the U.S. population who self-identified on an open-ended ancestry question as originating from an Arabic speaking country. This method has ultimately resulted in the under-representation of the Arab American population. One possible reason is that Arabs refuse to identify themselves a Arab in fear of being stigmatized or persecuted.

In contrast to the US Census, the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF, 2003) put the Arab American population at over 3.5 million, which leaves over half of the population unaccounted for by the Census. As reported by the AAIF (2003), the top ten states with the largest population are as follows from largest to smallest: California, Michigan, New York, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. California has an estimated population of 715,000 Arab-Americans with the majority residing in Los Angeles County. Michigan’s estimated population is 490,000 with the majority in Wayne County. At number three, New York has 405,000 estimated Arab Americans with the majority residing in Kings County. Florida is
estimated at 255,000 with the majority living in Miami-Dade County. New Jersey’s estimated population is 240,000, the majority in Hudson and Bergen Counties. Illinois estimates at 220,000 with the majority in Cook County. At number seven, Texas estimates around 210,000 Arab Americans with the majority in Harris County. Ohio ranks eight with estimated population of 185,000 with the majority residing in Cuyahoga and Franklin Counties. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania estimate at 175,000 and 160,000 with majorities in Middlesex and Allegheny Counties, respectively.

Arab Americans come from multiple religious backgrounds including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. Contrary to what Westerners may believe, the majority of Arab Americans are of the Christian faith (AAIF, 2003) with 35% Roman or Eastern Catholic, 18% Eastern Orthodox, and 10% Protestant. Only 24% of the Arab American population is of the Muslim faith. Thirteen percent are labeled as “Other religion/No affiliation.”

Samhan (2007) reported statistics on age, gender, family status, citizenship, place of birth, and income for Arab Americans from the US Census. The median age of Arab Americans is 30.8, which is younger than the total American population. There is a higher male to female ratio, slightly higher marriage rate, and slightly lower divorce rate in the Arab American population when compared with the American population as a whole. The average household size of Arab Americans is higher than that of the average American household, with more than one-third having over four members. Over 80% of Arabs in America are citizens. Fifty-four percent are natural born citizens, while 40% are foreign born. Arab Americans generally have higher incomes than that of the national
average. About 30% report annual household incomes of more than $75,000, as compared to 22% of all Americans.

Samhan (2007) also reported education statistics for the Arab American population. At least 85% graduate with a high school degree. Over 40% of Arab Americans have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 24% of Americans in general. At almost twice the American average, 17% of Arab Americans have a post-graduate degree. Thirteen percent of the school-age population are in preschool, 58% are in elementary or high school, 22% are enrolled in college, and 7% are engaged in graduate studies (Samhan, 2007).

Overview of the Arab American Culture

The Arab American population is diverse with respect to culture, race, and identity, making it difficult to define as one specific ethnic group. The literature on this ethnic minority group is relatively scarce as compared to the literature on other ethnic minority groups. Suleiman (1996) suggests that “the literature that provides an objective and comprehensive account about the Arab Americans is almost missing” (p. 9).

Similar to the African, Latino, and Asian American populations, Arab Americans come from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Arab Americans practice various religions with majority practicing Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths. The Arab world is divided into three major regions including Arabs from Northern Africa, Arabs from the Mediterranean region, and Arabs from the Arabian Gulf region (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2005). Each of these regions carries differences in dress, food, music, and dialect of language.
Cultural dress ranges dramatically from very modest (e.g., covering from head to toe) to more ostentatious (e.g., shorts and tank tops). Cultural foods also range verily from very spicy foods in the Gulf regions to more mild foods in countries near the Mediterranean. The music in each region varies in the same way the music varies in the United States (e.g., Rap, Country, and Jazz). The Arabic language has two forms: classical and colloquial. Classical Arabic is globally used for written language and in the media, whereas colloquial Arabic is used in everyday social life. Colloquial Arabic has many different dialects ranging widely according to country and city. For example, the Syrian dialect is different from the Lebanese dialect. Furthermore, even within Syria, people from Damascus have a distinct dialect than people from Aleppo.

Like other ethnic minority groups, Arab Americans are collectivist. Families rely on each other for financial and emotional assistance. Children typically do not leave their parents’ house until they get married, and have a family of their own. Children are responsible for taking care of their parents when they are elderly and providing financial and emotional support for them as well. The immediate and extended families are very important, valued, and respected. Arab Americans, as a whole, share certain cultural traits including generosity, hospitality, courage, and respect for the elderly (Al-Khatab, 1999).

**History of Cultural Stereotypes and Ethnic Discrimination**

Immigrants who came to the U.S. in 1967 were mostly of the Islamic faith and were perceived negatively by mainstream society (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2004). This group had the most experience with discrimination, as compared to the first two waves of
immigrants, and had the most difficulty assimilating to the mainstream culture.

“Discrimination is considered the most important barrier to assimilation for immigrants…Of course, an individual’s experiences of discrimination are important to the formation of individual identity, but they are also important for collective identity; it is the youth’s perceptions of treatment of ‘our group’ and ‘people like us’ that creates a sense of citizenship based on collective exclusion” (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, & Flanagan, 2008, p. 85). The perceptions of treatment of one’s group can potentially have detrimental effects on one’s self-concept. Arab Americans have historically encountered stereotypes and discrimination related to their ethnicity. The history of cultural stereotypes and ethnic discrimination of the Arab American culture are outlined below.

Cultural Stereotypes

The Arab American culture is often misunderstood and misrepresented through the media and various other sources. A common misconception is that all Arabs are of the Muslim faith, all Muslims are Arabs, and the two terms are interchangeable (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2005). Although the Islamic and Arab cultures are very similar in many ways, these terms are in no way interchangeable. The misconception disregards the other religious groups of this ethnicity, including those of the Christian and Jewish faith. In fact, only 20% of the world’s population of Muslims are Arab (Suleiman, 2000). There are large populations of Arab Christians, Arab Coptics, Arab Melokites, Arab Maronites, Jewish Arabs, and Arab Druze.

After 9/11, the misconception that all Arabs are Muslims was further “validated” due to the majority of the terrorists being Arabs of Muslim faith. This incident further
intertwined the constructs of “Arab” and “Muslim” and caused the media to portray all Arabs as the common enemy. The terrorist attacks made the Arab culture more misunderstood than ever before. The Arab culture has generally been portrayed in a negative light; however, after 9/11, portrayals were worse. American people of the Arab culture were labeled as “terrorists” and “enemies of the West.” “In the discursive realms of politics, popular media, and academia, the notion of *culture* continually recasts Arabs and other Muslims outside of the confines of civilization, enemies of freedom, tolerance, and pluralism. Of significance for this historical moment is the extra burden that Islam bears within this discourse of culture, a burden imposed in both popular and academic venues. For it is Islam that is posited as most culturally ‘Other,’ inimical to Western values and traditions in an essential clash of civilizations” (Abu El-Haj, 2006, p. 19).

Common stereotypes of Arab Americans exist due to the images portrayed in the media. Arabs are often portrayed as villains and terrorists in films, even prior to 9/11. Movies such as *Siege*, *Delta Force*, *Patriot Games*, *Back to the Future*, and *True Lies* are exemplary of the portrayals of Arab Americans in Hollywood films (Wingfield, 2006). In fact, Arabs have been stereotyped in the media as early as 1897 when Thomas Edison made a film in which “Arab” women wore provocative clothes while seductively dancing in front of a group of men (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2005). This just illustrates how women are perceived as subordinates of men in the Arab culture. Rainey (2004) posits that such portrayals of the media keep circulating because it is easy for movie makers to use “Arabs” as villains or terrorists: “When writers want to portray a terrorist, or someone who is threatening, they put them in Middle Eastern attire, give them an accent, and make
them look Arab. That’s a stereotype used often because it’s very quick and easy”.

Another misconception is that all countries in the Middle East are Arab. While the majority is Arab, there are non-Arab countries in that geographical region including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Moreover, not everyone living in Arab countries are Arab. These countries consist of other races and ethnic groups including Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Kildanis, Blacks, and Berbers (Suleiman, 2000).

Abu El-Haj (2006) discussed the cultural complexities of Arab Americans. The author argued that the media uses Arab culture to explain behaviors and norms of the Arab American people. “Arab culture is represented as a static set of traditions, values, norms, and practices to which Arabs adhere. Culture becomes the explanation for all kinds of behaviors from the exotic to the inexplicable. Culture explains everything from Arabs’ legendary hospitality to their alleged hostility to democracy” (p. 20). Abu El-Haj continued with an example of how culture was used to explain the reactions of Arabs to the incidents of Abu Ghraib detainees in Iraq. The media claimed that the men were humiliated by the interrogation practices because of their cultural beliefs against nudity, sexuality, and homosexuality; as if these acts were done to U.S. citizens, they would have been less humiliated.

Suleiman (2000) discussed the effects of cultural conditioning on Arabs in America. Cultural conditioning refers to the process by which people acquire attitudes and values that are passed on by society (Henderson, 1988), and the process in which people socialize according to their surroundings and current cultural values (Lim & Ang, 2008). This process affects the way people think about and act, react, and behave.
towards other people. Cultural conditioning is taught through families, government, media, schools, and other surroundings, and is required to integrate or assimilate successfully with society; however, cultural conditioning hinders society and allows them to follow blindly (Henderson, 1988). This is especially true in the case of American society in the portrayal of the Arab American culture.

Negative images of Arab American people and their culture in the media have permeated American society. Generally, the most contact that the American society has with Arabs and information they receive about their countries and culture is through the media (Suleiman, 1996). “In the United States, anti-Arab propaganda is a hot commercial item… and the media have done their part to encourage Arab-bashing” (Anderson, 1991, p. 29). The majority of what the American public sees in the media about Arab people and their culture is negative, and because they generally have no other contact with Arabs to contradict images in the media, the negative images usually prevail. Ultimately, “negative images about Arabs have been incubated in the minds of the public and carried into today’s classrooms” (Suleiman, 2000, p. 7). In other words, the American people have been culturally conditioned to see the Arab culture and its people in negative ways. Consequently, because Americans view Arabs negatively, it is difficult for Arabs in America to view themselves positively (Suleiman, 2000). With such cultural conditioning in addition to the historical standard of misinformation and misrepresentation of the Arab American culture, Suleiman (1996) suggests that the risk or threat of Arab American children’s social and academic growth in the multicultural society should be expected.
**Ethnic and Racial Discrimination**

Wingfield (2006) describes the Arab American situation as an anomaly. “They are an officially ‘white’ ethnic group from the Third World, a large part of which is assimilated and/or affluent and highly educated. Yet they are widely perceived as culturally alien, may be treated as Other if not Enemy, and are vulnerable to discrimination and violence” (Wingfield, 2006, p. 255). Arab Americans are rarely included in the multicultural paradigm. The majority of multicultural educators’ books, articles, and programs do not include them. More frequently included in this paradigm are the racial categories of White, African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian Pacific, and Native American. The lack of representation of the Arab culture in schools and the field of education leads to more misunderstanding and less tolerance of the culture. Furthermore, because Arab Americans are lumped with the European American or “White” category, they are highly underrepresented and made culturally and racially invisible.

When it comes to race, Arab Americans do not generally share some of the traits that make other ethnic groups more visible. According to Suleiman (2000), they are less “racially visible” than other minorities such as Asian or African Americans (p. 6). This trait allows them to “blend in” with the European American population, meanwhile preserving their idiosyncratic cultural traits. Although they are less identifiable physically, Arab Americans share other characteristics with other ethnic minority groups. Schaefer (1990) discussed five characteristics or properties that differentiate ethnic minority groups from majority or dominant groups including visible physical or
cultural characteristics, involuntary membership, in-group marriage, awareness of subordination, unequal treatment, and experience of prejudice. As an ethnic group, Arab Americans share with other ethnic groups all of these characteristics except for visible physical characteristics. Suleiman (2000) suggests that the most remarkable characteristic of Arab Americans as a group that is invisible is their unequal treatment and experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Regardless of their invisibility as an ethnic minority group and their labeling as a “White” ethnic group, they have experienced as much discrimination and prejudice as other racially visible minority groups.

Saloom (2005) examined the issues of race with Arab Americans. The author claimed that there is much confusion in the examination of race and Arab Americans and that this confusion is exacerbated by interchanging the terms of Arab and Muslim. The fact that Arab Americans are classified as Caucasian or White is tremendously problematic. Furthermore, the discrimination and prejudice that Arab Americans faced after 9/11 demonstrated that Arab Americans were non-whites and were considered as the “other”. “Some scholars contend that Arab-Americans are only considered white in an ‘honorary’ sense and that whenever a relevant national crisis occurs that ‘honorary’ status is revoked. This honorary white status is highly problematic because Arab-Americans are thereby whitewashed, and claims of racism and discrimination are not taken seriously” (Saloom, 2005, p. 59). The author further suggests that while the U.S. government technically considers Arab Americans as White, they are anything but White, especially after 9/11.
There is a lack of research on Arab Americans’ views of being labeled under the “White” designation; however, one study provides some insight on this issue in a small sample of Arab American adolescents (Ajrouch, 2004). Ajrouch (2004) conducted focus groups over a ten-day period with ten Arab American, Muslim adolescents. The participants formed a continuum of identity with the terms “boater” and “white” at either extreme, and themselves being somewhere in the middle. A “boater” was a person who was a recent immigrant to the United States and who was not yet familiar with the dominant culture. The term “white” was heavily tied with symbols of femininity. “The adolescents focused their discussion of ‘white’ on the behavior of individual girls and the interactions among girls as well as between girls and boys” (p. 381). Furthermore, the author stated that the category suggests a racialized identity formed by the adolescents. The terms “boater” and “white” were used to describe what the adolescents had identified as the “others,” and terms which they used to differentiate from being themselves.

In conclusion, Ajrouch (2004) found that the Arab American adolescents in this study distinguished themselves from White America, regardless of them being labeled as White by the government. The Arab American girls in this study further distinguished themselves from White girls. This suggests that gender also has a major role in identity formation for Arab American adolescent girls. Ajrouch claimed that this finding is similar to findings with children of immigrants from Ireland, Poland, Italians, Asian Indians, Mexicans, and Filipinos. “The overlap in experiences among second-generation immigrants from a variety of cultures suggests that a similar process of ethnic identity
formation operates through gender relations and also lends evidence to the role of girls as cultural carriers, transmitters, and bearers of identity” (p. 387).

Similar to other ethnic groups in the United States, Arab Americans have faced a long history of racism. In the 1920’s, they were often denied voting rights and were “disenfranchised in the South” (Saloom, 2005, p. 61). The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), during this time period, targeted Arab Americans because they were often identified as people of color. According to Saloom (2005), where the KKK had power early Arab immigrants, such as the Syrians, were discriminated against because they were “colored, Catholic, and foreign” (p. 62). Furthermore, Arabs generally do not exist as a distinct ethnic group in American society; however, when there is a crisis in the Middle East Arabs are certain to exist (Saloom, 2005).

Arab Americans have been victims of racial profiling even before 9/11. However, since the attacks, racial profiling has increased tremendously. Saloom (2005) reported that 80% of Americans were opposed to racial profiling before the attacks. After the attacks, 60% of the American population supported racial profiling especially in the case of Arab Americans. Advocators believed that profiling was necessary to prevent another attack and that doing so might have prevented 9/11 in the first place. If a person “looked” like an Arab (or a Muslim) then it would be necessary to profile him or her. Consequently, people who were neither Arab nor Muslim were profiled. For example, Indian Sikhs who wore turbans were profiled because the turban is commonly associated with Arabs.
Cultural Stereotypes and Ethnic Discrimination in the Schools

Stereotypes and ethnic discrimination of Arab Americans have made their way into the schools, leading to the maltreatment of students from this ethnic group. As reported by the ADC, Arab American students have reported experiences of physical violence, threats, harassment, and bias in schools. Such incidents occurred even before 9/11, but not as frequently. Students with such experiences also experienced traumatic stress and anxiety because of the incident in school. Making matters worse is the fact that the Arab culture is rarely included in the multicultural paradigm in schools. This in and of itself is considered a form of discrimination by ignoring that this culture exists (Suleiman, 2000); while other major cultures are represented in the schools, somehow the Arab culture gets dismissed or, perhaps even worse, misrepresented. This allows the culture to remain a mystery with no clarifications throughout generations and generations of children. The permeation of the negative perceptions of Arab Americans in the schools can be seen from the results of studies conducted by Wray-Lake (2008) and Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, and Cumsille (2009).

Flanagan, et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between experiences of prejudice among other factors in Arab American, African American, Latino American, and European American youth. Sixty-six percent of both Arab and African American youth reported experiences of prejudice, while less than half of Latino and European American youth reported such experiences. Experiences of prejudice based on race were common amongst all ethnic groups; however, more African and Latino Americans reported this type of prejudice than Arab or European American youth.
Wray-Lake, et al. (2008) conducted a study with adolescent youth of diverse backgrounds, including European Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans, Latino Americans, and other backgrounds, to investigate their perceptions of Arab Americans. The authors used open-ended questionnaires to collect data on sensitivity to images as enemies of America (e.g. “These days what groups do you think are shown as enemies of America?”), experiences of prejudice and discrimination (e.g. “Have you or someone close to you ever experienced prejudice?”), and times when participants felt American. Arab American student data were analyzed in comparison to the other group data. Over 69% of the Arab sample believed that Arabs in general or a specific Arab group are portrayed as enemies of America. Furthermore, results indicated that regardless of ethnic background, Arabs were nominated as enemies of America more than any other group. Out of the 93 Arab participants, 63 reported experiencing prejudice. Almost half of these experiences were related to “being physically or outwardly identified as Arab” (p. 89). The authors suggest that these negative experiences make it difficult for Arab American youth to identify with being an American citizen. These youths have to learn what it means to be American through “the context of negative images of their ethnic group” (p. 91). According to the symbolic interaction theory, these types of negative social interactions with others, especially in the schools, are expected to influence self-concept in Arab American adolescents.

The Symbolic Interaction Theory of Self-Concept

The symbolic interaction theory regards the self-concept as a social construction, conceived through social interactions or symbolic interactions with others (Baldwin,
According to this theory, an individual assumes the opinions that others are perceived to hold toward himself/herself. For example, if a child perceives that his mother feels that he is a good person, then the child will hold that opinion about himself. Likewise, if a child perceives that his teacher thinks he is not intelligent, then the child will hold that opinion about himself. Whereas Cooley (1902) theorized that significant others affect this process, Mead (1925) theorized that others in general could have the same affect. Research, which will be discussed later in this chapter, indicates that both significant others, such as parents and close friends, and general others, such as teachers and classmates, have an influence on self-concept (e.g., Demaray & Malecki, 2002, 2003; Forman, 1988). The focus and foundation of this study is based on the symbolic interaction theory with regard to general others in the adolescents’ lives.

The symbolic interaction theory has been supported empirically, and research has found that social interactions influence the self-concept, especially during the period of adolescence. Perhaps this is due to the dramatic developmental changes in adolescence that result from puberty, physical changes, cognitive development changes, and shifting social expectations (Harter, 1999). Evidence shows that adolescents report differing levels of self-esteem across different relationships. Harter, Bresnick, Bouchev, and Whitesell (1997) examined perceptions of self-worth in high school students across four contexts including parents, teachers, male classmates, and female classmates. The authors obtained a clear, four-factor solution indicating that the adolescents made clear distinctions among their feelings of self-esteem in these relationships. The differentiated
self-concept across relational contexts can be seen especially with youth from ethnic minority groups (Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, Lopez, & Dunbar, 1995). Cooper, et al. (1995) discussed the challenges of minority groups with having to move between multiple contexts, including members of their own ethnic group and members of the dominant culture. These challenges can be worse for some more than others, depending on the support from these social contexts. For youth who have teachers, peers, and families with congruent values, they can more easily move between their multiple contexts. When youth have social contexts with incongruent values, some develop a bicultural standpoint and adapt to the world of their ethnic group and the dominant group, while others find the transition more difficult and sometimes impossible (Harter, et al., 1997). Arab American adolescents might be expected to experience the same challenges.

**Multi-dimensional Self-Concept**

Marsh (1990) provides a historical overview of theories of the self. Prior to the 1980’s, the self was viewed as a single global construct. Defining the self as a global or general construct ignored the notion that a person could have multiple perceptions of competencies in several areas. For example, a person might perceive himself/herself as a good athlete, but perceive himself/herself as not competent in school. Therefore, this person would have a positive athletic self-concept, but a negative academic self-concept. Using a global self-concept impedes investigators from being able to measure these different constructs of the self. Consequently, several theorists (James, 1890; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) argued that the self was a multi-dimensional construct and could not be thought of as one whole construct. However, there was not enough evidence
at that time to support the idea of the self as a multi-dimensional construct. This was due in part to the inconsistent results obtained from studies conducted on self-concept prior to 1980. Empirical support was weak for self-concept in relation to age and sex, academic achievement, social support, self-attributions, and interventions. Although at the time, investigators were beginning to believe that self-concept was not as pertinent to the normative development of people as they thought. However, such inconsistent findings seem now to have been due to the fact that self-concept was being measured as a global construct, and the instruments being used to measure self-concept were not appropriate (Marsh, 1990).

As a result of these inconsistencies, the 1980’s began an era of research in the area of self-concept that focused on the provision of evidence to support the multi-dimensional self-concept. Researchers came to believe that self-concept cannot be understood fully without taking into consideration the multidimensionality of the self (Marsh, 1990). Shavelson et al. (1976) presented a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model developed from the review of existing research on self-concept and existing instrumentation. According to Shavelson et al., self-concept is a person's perceptions of him/herself, which are formed through experience with, and interpretations of, one's environment. Appraisals by significant others, reinforcements, and attributions for one's own behavior influence one’s self-concept. Shavelson’s model posits that self-concept is defined by seven other major factors:

“1. It is organized or structured, in that people categorize the vast amount of information they have about themselves and relate these categories to one another.
2. It is multifaceted, and the particular facets reflect a self-referent category system adopted by a particular individual and/or shared by a group.

3. It is hierarchical, with perceptions of personal behavior at the base moving to inferences about self in subareas (e.g., English and mathematics components contribute to academic self-concept, whereas physical, social, emotional components contribute to nonacademic self-concept), and then to inferences about the self in general.

4. The hierarchical general self-concept— the apex of the model— is stable, but as one descends the hierarchy, self-concept increasingly becomes situation-specific and less stable.

5. Self-concept increasingly becomes multifaceted as the individual moves from infancy to adulthood.

6. Self-concept has both a descriptive and an evaluative aspect, such that individuals may describe themselves (‘I am happy’) and evaluate themselves (‘I do well in mathematics’).

7. Self-concept can be differentiated from other constructs such as academic achievement” (Marsh, 1990; p. 83-84).

The multi-dimensional, hierarchical self-concept is currently well received in the literature and has incurred significant empirical support (e.g., Bracken, Bunch, Keith, & Keith, 2000; Delugach, Bracken, Bracken, & Schicke, 1992; Jackson & Bracken, 1998). For example, Bracken, et al. (2000) conducted a factor analysis on five established multidimensional self-concept instruments in attempt to restructure them into a proposed
model of self-concept consisting of a global self-concept factor and six domain factors: Physical, Competence, Affect, Social, Academic, and Family. Five different self-concept scales were administered to 221 students. A factor analysis of the resulting 29 derived subscales indicated strong loadings on the global factor and the six dominant factors, which corresponded with the proposed theoretical model. The results from this study provide strong support for a multidimensional self-concept model across the instruments that were investigated.

The current understanding of self-concept is that it is indeed a multi-dimensional construct. Such a multi-dimensional focus allows researchers to develop a profile of self-evaluations across multiple domains for individuals or for particular groups of interest (Harter, 1999). This focus also allows researchers to examine whether the perceptions of some domains are more predictive of global self-concept than are others. Consequently, self-concept in this current study is measured and defined as a multi-dimensional construct. This study assumes the theory that self-concept is comprised of discrete domains of various competencies for which people hold perceptions of themselves.

**Development of Self-Concept in Adolescence**

Harter (1999) outlines the development of self-concept throughout the period of adolescence including early, middle, and late adolescence. There is debate in the literature as to at what age adolescence begins (Ellis & Davis, 1982). Generally the age range is between 13 and 18 years of age; however, researchers have not come to an agreement on exactly when adolescence starts because each child develops differently. For example, whereas one child might reach puberty at 12, another might not reach that
level until the age of 14. Therefore, the age ranges in this discussion are not specified because there is no set age range for the three stages of adolescence.

Researchers claim that, during the early adolescent period, the self becomes increasingly differentiated with an abundance of selves that differ depending on the social situations, including the self with friends, classmates, teachers, siblings, parents, and the self as a student, employee, athlete, and so on (Ellis & Davis, 1982; Rosenberg, 1986). This multi-dimensional self results in adolescents having differing, and at times conflicting, views of themselves within different social contexts. For example, adolescents may like themselves a lot with friends, but dislike themselves with parents. Such conflicting feelings could be due to perceiving positive support from friends, but negative support from parents. In addition to having different feelings about themselves in different contexts, they are also likely to be treated differently by those in different social contexts. Consequently, “adolescents become very sensitive to the potentially different opinions and standards of the significant others in each context” (Harter, 1999, p. 67). The content of self-representations in early adolescents, is focused on social skills that affect interactions with others or the adolescent’s social appeal and interpersonal characteristics (Damon & Hart, 1988).

During the middle adolescent period, people become extremely consumed with what others think of them (Elkind, 1967). The self becomes further multiplied and differentiated with various social contexts. For example, the adolescent defines herself/himself differently with really close friends, with a general group of friends, as well as with family. This can further complicate development for adolescents making it
more confusing and challenging to decide who or what they are, especially if they receive potentially contradictory messages from others in their differentiated social context and become confused about which attributes to adopt (Harter, 1999). They begin to recognize that they have both positive and negative characteristics, which can lead to instability, confusion, and inaccuracies in their perceptions of their self (Higgins, 1991). Adolescents in this period begin to compare themselves with others in differential social contexts. For example, Buddin (1998) found that adolescents develop different levels of self-worth with their mothers and fathers in relation to the perceived feedback they received from each source. Furthermore, adolescents may attempt to change their behavior to seek approval from their social sources. For example, if an adolescent wanted to start doing her homework more often to please her parents she may also be displeasing her friends by doing well in school despite pleasing her parents (Harter, 1999). This example illustrates the struggles of adolescents during this period trying to gain approval from two contradictory social contexts. They struggle to decide which one to adopt.

During the late adolescent period, contradictory characteristics described in the previous period are no longer seen as contradictory, as the adolescent accepts these differences as something that is normal (Harter, 1999). The inconsistencies in their differentiated selves become normalized. More specifically, adolescents find value in their inconsistent differentiated selves (Damon & Hart, 1988). They begin to realize that it is normal to be different in various roles with others. Adolescents’ characteristics in this period begin to “reflect personal beliefs, values, and moral standards that have become internalized or, alternatively, constructed from their own experiences” (Harter,
Self-concept becomes more balanced with a stable view of both positive and negative attributes. Their selves are defined with more accuracy and they are able to accept limitations of their self. Finally, with a futuristic outlook, these late adolescents begin to construct their own standards of self and own ideas to guide their self aspirations.

As students progress through adolescence, they can become consumed with the opinions and expectations of others in various roles, such as parents, classmates, close friends, and teachers. Even more, the interrelationships and social interactions with others may lead to affective reactions to the self. Depending on the quality of the relationship, these interactions could potentially harm or improve the adolescent’s self-concept. For example, the literature discusses several factors that, in accordance with the symbolic interaction theory, are related to the self-concept in adolescents. These factors, perceived social support, actual perceptions from teachers, and experiences of prejudice and discrimination, are outlined throughout the rest of this chapter.

Factors Related to Self-Concept

Perceived Social Support

Perceived social support is defined as the perception of positive regard from others or the regard that others manifest toward the self. Beginning in the early 1900’s, Cooley (1902) theorized that a person’s self-concept is influenced by their social interactions with others. Since then, there has been a significant amount of literature and research supporting this relationship. Perceived social support from others has been found to be significantly related to students’ self concept. For this study, the discussion will be
focused on a sample of the relevant literature regarding the perceived social support of teachers and peers in its relation with the self-concept. Students spend the majority of their day at school with their teachers and classmates, who provide an important source of interpersonal relationships. The teacher-student relationship can influence academic achievement and psychological factors. According to the symbolic interaction theory, the quality of this relationship can have a significant affect on the self-concept of students. For adolescents who are struggling with their differentiated selves and are trying to negotiate the changing relationships with parents and peers, teachers can mediate these struggles and act as a protection to the adolescent self by providing support and guidance. This protection could potentially serve to improve the self-concept of adolescents. On the other hand, if no support is provided by the teacher, then this could serve to harm the self-concept.

Demaray and Malecki (2002) investigated the relationship between students’ perceived social support and self-concept. The study included a sample of 1,711 students (856 males) in grades 3 through 12 from schools in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Vermont, Washington, DC, and Nebraska. Ethnicities in the sample included White (1155), Hispanic American (151), Native American (161), African American (99), Asian American (50), and Other (16). The remaining 79 participants did not report their ethnicity. The authors used the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (Malecki, Demaray, Elliott, & Nolten, 1999) to measure perceived social support from parents, teachers, classmates, and friends. The Student Self-Concept Scale (Gresham, Elliott, & Evans-Fernandez, 1993) was used to measure self-concept.
Results indicated a significant positive relationship between self-concept and perceived social support from all four sources. The authors divided the sample into subgroups of high, average, and low perceived social support. Students with low perceived social support had significantly lower self-concept than those with average or high social support, while students with high perceived social support had significantly higher self-concept than those with average perceived social support. This finding was true with every source of support including teachers, classmates, close friends, and parents. There were significant differences in gender and grade level for social support. Girls reported more perceived social support than boys for teacher, classmate, and close friend subscales. Grade level differences were significant for all of the subscales. Younger students consistently reported higher levels of social support than older students across all subscales. Elementary students reported higher social support than middle and high school students for the classmate subscale, and higher social support than middle school students for the close friend subscale. Differences were also found according to ethnicity. Native American students reported significantly lower total perceived social support than all other ethnic groups. When analyzed separately, Native Americans were found to perceive less parent and teacher support than students of other ethnicities. African American students perceived higher parent and teacher support than European Americans. European Americans perceived high support from teachers than did Hispanic students. Native American students reported less classmate support than European and Hispanic students. European American students perceived significantly higher close friend support than Native American students.
Forman (1988) examined the relationship between self-concept in students with learning disabilities and perceived social support. The sample was comprised of 51 (17 girls) students in grades 2 through 10. Of the 51 subjects, 84% were Caucasian, 12% were African American, 2% were Hispanic, and 2% were Asian American. The Self-Perception Profile for Learning Disabled Children, a revision of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985a) was used to measure six domains of self-concept: athletic competence, social acceptance, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, general self-worth, scholastic competence-traits (i.e., intelligence), and scholastic competence-specific behavior (i.e., achievement in academic areas). The Social Support Scale for Children (Harter, 1985b) was used to measure perceived social support from classmates, teachers, parents, and friends.

Results indicated that for scholastic competence-specific behaviors, athletic competence, behavioral conduct, and general self-worth, subjects high in perceived social support exhibited higher levels of self-concept. Furthermore, results from multiple regression analyses indicated that the four sources of social support combined were significant in predicting five self-concept domains including scholastic competence-specific behaviors, behavioral conduct, athletic competence, physical appearance, and general self-worth. When analyzed separately, classmate support accounted for a significant amount of variance in general self-worth, scholastic competence-specific behaviors, athletic competence, and physical appearance. Parental support accounted for significant variance in behavioral conduct. Support from teachers and friends did not account for any variance in any of the self-concept domains.
With the nature of self-report surveys, the control of responding one way or another is difficult. To account for this the author asked teachers to complete the Teacher Rating Scale, a parallel form of the student scale for teachers (Harter, 1985a). Comparisons of the student and teacher forms resulted in the three discrepancy groups: those who rated higher than their teachers; those who rated lower; those who agreed with their teachers. When the author analyzed the differences between these groups, however, there were no significant differences. In conclusion, there was no generalized tendency for students to report one way or the other.

Likewise, Kloomok and Cosden (1994) also conducted a study with students who were diagnosed with learning disabilities. The sample consisted of 72 students (34 male) in third through sixth grade. Ethnic groups included in the sample were Latino (34), White (35), and African American (3). All students were identified as having learning disabilities. The Self-Perception Profile for Learning Disabled Children, a revision of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985a) was used to measure only two domains of self-concept: general self-worth and academic competence. The Social Support Scale for Children (Harter, 1985b) was used to measure perceived social support from classmates, teachers, parents, and friends.

Results varied from Forman’s study in that parent support was found to contribute most to the various self-concepts rather than classmates. The authors suggest this difference could be due to their sample being younger than the sample in Foreman’s study. Overall, they found that students who have low global and academic self-concept reported the least social support and the students who have high global and academic
self-concept reported the most social support. Students with high global and low academic self-concept rated themselves high on nonacademic competencies, similar to the students with high global and high academic self-concept. Children who were high in both areas of self-concept reported the most social support compared to the other groups. There were no group differences on the basis of grade, gender or ethnicity.

Martin, et al. (2007) examined the combined and unique effects of teacher-student and parent-child relationships in students’ self-esteem and academic self-concept. The sample consisted of 3,450 high school students in grades seven through 10 from six Australian high schools. Parent-child relationships were measured using a questionnaire drawn from the Self-Description Questionnaire II- Short (SDQ II-S; Marsh, 1990), and teacher-student relationships were measured using a questionnaire developed by the authors, which was used in a previous study (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Academic self-concept was measured using the Motivation and Engagement Scale- High School (Martin, 2001). The general self-esteem measure was derived from the SDQ II-S.

Correlational analyses resulted in significant associations between both teacher-student and parent-child relationships and general self-esteem. Results from structural equation modeling indicated that although both relationships are clearly influential, after controlling for gender, age, and the presence of both interpersonal relationships in the model, teacher effects were stronger for academic self-concept, whereas parent effects were stronger for general self-concept. For academic and general self-concept, the effects of teacher-student relationships were stronger for females than for males. Effects of teacher-student relationship on self-concept were stronger for older students than for
younger students. Finally, the effects of parent-child relationship on self-concept were stronger for females than for males.

Reddy, et al. (2003) examined solely the teacher-student relationship in relation to self-esteem. This study was longitudinal with a sample comprised of 2,585 students (50.3% girls) in the sixth grade. The sample was followed through to the eighth grade. The ethnicities of participants included European American, Hispanic American, Asian American, African American, and multiracial. The quality of teacher-student relationship was measured using a shortened version of the teacher support subscale of a revised Classroom Environment Scale (Trickett & Moos, 1973). The General Self-Esteem subscale of the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire (Dubois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996) was used to measure self-esteem. The adolescents completed the surveys once every year for three years.

Results indicated that changes in perceptions of teacher support significantly predicted changes in self-esteem. Students reporting increasing teacher support showed corresponding increases in self-esteem. The relationship was identical for both girls and boys. These results suggest that beyond parents, other adults can have an overwhelming influence on adolescents’ self-concept. Interestingly, students were asked to rate social support received from teachers in general. Thus, although strong effects were found, it may be the case that students are likely to have different experiences with different teachers in different classes and this study was not able to capture those differences.

Demaray, et al. (2009) investigated the relationships between frequency of social support, importance of social support, and self-concept in a representative sample of 921
students in grades 3 through 12. The authors used the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (Malecki, et al., 1999) to measure perceived social support from parents, teachers, classmates, and friends. This scale measures frequency and importance of the support from each source. The Student Self-Concept Scale (Gresham, et al., 1993) was used to measure self-concept.

The authors found significant relationships between the frequency of social support from parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends and students’ self-concept. However, when they analyzed the relationship between importance of support from each source and self-concept, the authors found that the perceived importance of social support from teachers was the only source significantly related to self-concept. These results suggest that teacher support is especially important for the development of students’ self-concept.

Results from the literature suggest that there is a significant relationship between perceived social support from different sources and self-concept. In general, the results obtained from this sample of literature on perceived social support in relation to self-concept indicate that perceived social support from parents, peers, and teachers can make an important impact on a student’s self-concept development. Specifically for adolescents, teachers and classmates/peers appear to have an overwhelming influence on the self-concept. Thus, it seems that the relationships and experiences students have at school, and how students perceive those relationships, can significantly impact how they perceive themselves.
Teacher Perceptions of Student

How students perceive teacher’s support seems to have a significant impact on their self-concept development. Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004) discussed the importance of the teachers’ role in students’ lives. Although the theoretical implications of teacher perceptions on students’ self-concept are thoroughly discussed in the literature, there is a lack of research on the direct relationship of these two factors. The majority of the literature focuses on the perceptions of support from teachers rather than teachers’ actual perceptions of students, or teachers’ actual perceptions in relation to students’ academic achievement. Moreover, no studies exist that measure this relationship with Arab American adolescents. A search of the literature was conducted for this topic and only two studies were found that examined this relationship empirically (Hoge, et al., 1990; Meltzer, et al., 2004). Results from these studies provide empirical support for the relationship between teacher perceptions and student self-concept, and the effects their perceptions can have on the self.

Meltzer, et al. (2004) examined academic self-concept in relation to teachers’ perceptions of students. The sample consisted of seven teachers and 92 students (47.8 percent boys) in grades six through eight. The authors did not report any sample statistics for ethnicity. Forty-six students were diagnosed with a learning disability, while the remaining 46 did not have a diagnosis. Students were asked to complete an effort questionnaire and an academic competence questionnaire developed by the authors. The teachers were asked to complete a two item survey asking the teacher to rate each student on their performance and effort exerted in the classroom.
Results indicated that teachers viewed students with learning disabilities who had positive academic self-perceptions as working as hard as and performing at a similar academic level as their peers without learning disabilities. In contrast, they viewed students with learning disabilities who had negative academic self-perceptions as making limited effort and as achieving at a below-average level in comparison with their peers. The authors suggest that this relationship implies that there is a “cyclical relationship” between teacher perceptions and student’s self-perceptions. There were no significant differences in self-perceptions according to gender; however, results indicated that teachers tended to perceive girls as applying more effort than boys and being better students than boys. There was a significant positive relationship between grade level and academic self-perceptions. Students in higher grade levels tended to rate themselves stronger academically, while reporting less effort in school.

Hoge, et al. (1990) examined teacher evaluations and student self-esteem using a longitudinal study design to measure the effects over time. The sample consisted of 322 students (55% girls) in the sixth and seventh grade of two schools. Of the 322 students, 95% was White and 5% belonged to other racial groups. Students and teachers completed questionnaires in the fall and spring of the sixth grade and fall and spring of the seventh grade. Student self-esteem was measured at several levels. Global self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965). Academic self-esteem was measured with the Self-Concept of Schoolwork Ability-General Scale (Brookover, Paterson, & Thomas, 1962). This scale also was used to measure students’ self-concept in specific academic areas such as mathematics and
science. Ratings by teachers of the students were gathered from student files. Teachers’
ratings of students’ work and social habits were sent home to parents each grading
period. The ratings ranged from 1 to 5, with high scores indicating good habits. Some
examples of the work and social behaviors rated by teachers include: comes prepared to
work; works independently; respects property; and, cooperates with teacher and group.

Results indicated that self-esteem remained stable over time. Results also
suggested that there were significant effects depending on the school that students were
attending. These results were not consistent, however, and they varied from one
academic subject to another and from year to year. The authors concluded that these
effects were due to specific teachers and experiences and not the characteristics of one
school in general. For both grade levels and after controlling for gender, teacher
perceptions significantly predicted student academic and global self-esteem. In other
words, teacher evaluations had significant effects on student self-esteem.

There is theoretical and empirical support for the relationship between actual
teacher perceptions of students and students’ self-concept. Because no research exists on
this relationship in Arab American adolescents, there is no way to determine how teacher
relationships affect Arab American students. Although no research exists on this
relationship with Arab American students, results for Arab American adolescents are
expected to be similar to the results demonstrated in the studies discussed in this section.

Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination

The Stigma Hypothesis. The stigma hypothesis states that the internalization of
stigma, or minority status, leads to lower self-concept in minority groups (Twenge &
Crocker, 2002). The status of being a minority becomes internalized with experiences of prejudice and discrimination. According to the stigma hypothesis, levels of self-concept in ethnic minority groups should correspond to the degree to which members of these groups are stereotyped or devalued by the majority or dominant group. The stigma hypothesis stems from the symbolic interaction theory in that self-concept develops from other people’s perceptions of the self.

Research has shown that people’s self-concept is closely linked to the devaluation of their ethnic minority groups (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). The relationship between self-concept and minority status has been well documented in the literature for African, Latino, and Asian Americans. For example, Kenny and McEachern (2009) investigated self-concept among different cultural groups in south Florida, including White, Black (Haitian American), and Hispanic. The sample consisted of 214 students from four classrooms in grades 4 through 5. Students were asked to complete the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (Piers, 1994). The Piers-Harris scales measures six dimensions of self-concept including Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Intellectual and School Status, Behavior, Happiness and Satisfaction, and Popularity. They found that Haitian American children had lower self-concept than did Hispanic children on Total Self-Concept. They also scored lower than both Hispanic and White children on the behavioral self-concept. The researchers reasoning behind this finding was that the Haitian population in south Florida experienced and suffered from racial prejudice and discrimination in schools and the community. Haitian American children in the sample found it hard to identify with other Blacks in schools, causing a sense of
isolation and devaluing of their culture. Other studies have found similar results with other ethnic minority groups, as discussed below.

Calhoun, et al. (1978) examined self-esteem in Portuguese American, Mexican American, and European American boys and girls in grades five through eight. Participants completed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1959). Results from chi-square analyses indicated that Mexican and European self-esteem were not significantly different for either boys or girls. Self-esteem in Portuguese girls did not differ from the other two groups of girls; however this was not the case for the boys. Portuguese boys had higher self-esteem than did Mexican and European American boys. Interestingly, after further investigation, it turned out that only 11 of 31 Portuguese American boys were American born. The rest were born in Portugal. When these two groups were compared, boys born in the United States had higher self-esteem scores than boys born in Portugal. The authors theorized that the low self-concept in the foreign born boys may be due to them struggling to fit in between the two cultures.

Zirkel and Moses (1971) investigated self-concept differences in 120 African American, Puerto Rican, and White fifth and sixth graders. The subjects completed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1959). Results indicated that African American students had higher, although not significantly, self-esteem than did White students and Puerto Rican students. White children had higher self-esteem than did Puerto Rican children. The authors attribute the low self-esteem in the Puerto Rican children to linguistic, cultural and social factors that may lead to them having difficulty
fitting in with the others in their schools, similar to the Haitian sample in the study done by Kenny and McEachern (2009).

Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000) examined available research on racial comparisons of self-esteem between Whites and Blacks, collectively. They conducted a meta-analysis of 261 studies and hypothesized that Blacks would have less self-regard than Whites. Results revealed higher self-esteem scores for Black children, adolescents and young adults than for White. The authors suggest this difference is due to Blacks having stronger ethnic identities than do Whites, which in turn increases the self-esteem. In addition, these adolescents might not be necessarily comparing themselves with the dominant group, especially if they are in a region where they are the dominant group; they might be comparing themselves to members of their own ethnic group. The authors found that certain demographic characteristics, such as age and socioeconomic status, account for these differences. For example, for young participants, Whites had higher self-esteem. However, by age 10 and older, Blacks appear to have higher self-esteem than Whites. This increase is attributed to the transition to adolescence, a period when individuals begin to choose social contexts with similar values and standards.

In addition to examining the differences in self-concept between ethnicities, research has examined the direct relationship between reports of prejudice and self-concept (e.g., Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Ruggiero, et al., 1997; Swim & Stangor, 1998). Recently, Armenta and Hunt (2009) examined the effects of perceived personal and group discrimination on self-esteem in Latino(a)
adolescents. To measure perceived personal discrimination, participants were asked to respond to the following statement: “I experience discrimination because of my ethnicity.” A similar statement was used for group discrimination: “Other people of my ethnicity experience discrimination because of their ethnicity.” Participants were asked to respond to these two items on a 6-point scale where a rating of 1 means the subject strongly disagrees and a rating of 6 means they strongly agree. Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenburg, 1965). Subjects who perceived high perceptions of personal discrimination had low self-esteem. However, high perceptions of group discrimination were related to higher self-esteem. The author posits that this is in line with the Rejection-Identification model, which states that discrimination of one’s ethnic group leads them to identify more strongly with that group which in turn leads to higher self-esteem. However, this is just a theoretical basis for this finding; more research needs to be conducted to test this theory.

There is a lack of research on the reported experiences of prejudice and discrimination in the schools and how those relate to Arab American adolescents’ self-concept. One study looked at this relationship in Arab American adults, ages 18 through 60 years (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). The sample consisted of 108 Arab American participants (53% women). The majority of participants were students in college. The Schedule of Racist Events (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996) was used to measure the frequency of experiences of reported racist events. To measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965) was used.
The prevalence of racist events was overwhelming. “Fifty-three percent of the sample reported being treated unfairly by strangers because they were of Arab descent, 47% reported that they had been in an argument about something racist done to them, and 46% reported that they had been called racist names at least once in a while within the past year” (p. 422). Results indicated that reported discrimination events were significantly and negatively related to self-concept. There were no differences found on the basis of demographic variables. This finding indicates that experiences of discrimination may have had a profound and psychological affect on this sample of Arab American individuals. The replication of this study is imperative in order to determine the generalizability of these findings with different groups. These results pertain to adults; however, similar outcomes are expected to be found with Arab American adolescents.

**Implications in Relation to Self-Concept of Arab American Adolescents**

Although there is a wealth of research on self-concept in various other ethnic minority groups, the research on self-concept in Arab American students is very limited. Only two studies that investigated the self-concept in Arab American students were found in the literature and the results are conflicting. Al-Khatab (1999) conducted a study to explore the self-concept of a convenience sample of 237 Arab-American adolescents (119 female) in grades 6 through 12. Students were from Detroit, Michigan, Lexington, Kentucky, and San Diego, California. Participants were asked to complete the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985a) to measure self-concept in six domains
including scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct.

According to Al-Khatab, scores above 2.5 indicated a positive self-concept and scores below that indicated a low self-concept. This interpretation differs from other researchers’ interpretations of Harter’s scale where scores 3 and above were positive and scores below 3 were considered a negative self-concept (Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). Results indicated that the overall self-concept profile of these students was positive, suggesting that Arab American students perceive themselves positively. All responses were above 2.5 in all domains, indicating a positive self-concept according to the author’s interpretation of the scores. Athletic competence and physical appearance scores were significantly higher for boys than girls, while behavioral conduct was significantly higher for girls. Social acceptance scores for sixth graders were significantly higher than all the other grades. Al-Khatab suggests that this finding is comparable to other findings in that self-concept decreases when children reach adolescence.

There are several limitations to this study that call for a cautious interpretation of the results. First, over half of the sample was from a city where there is a significant population of Arab Americans. In other words, these students are considered the majority in that location. Perhaps that sample of students had a positive profile due to a large population of Arab Americans in that city, resulting in higher tolerance in school. In schools where there is a large community of Arab Americans, such as Dearborn and Detroit, fewer incidents of discrimination are reported (Ibish, 2003). Such communities are better equipped to prevent anti-Arab incidents due to an established working
relationship between Arab American leaders city, school, and police officials, and other community organizations (Ibish, 2003). Consequently, that sample of students’ self-concept may be higher than students who have encountered such discrimination and prejudice. Additionally, this study examined self-concept alone, without investigating the relationship with external factors. Finally, this study was conducted before the events of 9/11; examining the self-concept in these children after such events is necessary.

Kovach and Hillman (2002) examined self-esteem among other factors in Arab, African, and European American high school students. As mentioned in the previous chapter, self-concept and self-esteem are not interchangeable constructs; however, they are related. An individual with high self-concept might be expected to also hold high self-esteem, or low self-concept and low self-esteem. Kovach and Hillman (2002) found results that conflict with the results from the study conducted by Al-Khatab (1999). Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965) to measure self-esteem. The authors found that Arab American students had the lowest self-esteem compared to the other two ethnic groups. They were also more likely to attribute negative feedback from out-group members to prejudice. Arab American students nominated prejudice as a causal explanation for negative outcomes or feedback more frequently than African American students. In addition, they frequently endorsed prejudice as a reason for failure like African American students, but unlike European American students. Girls had significantly higher scores for self-esteem than did boys for all groups, unlike Al-Khatab’s (1999) findings. It should be noted that there was unequal sample sizes for the ethnic groups examined. The sample of African American students
was much larger than the Arab and European American sample. Additionally, the Arab American sample was not representative of all the countries in the Arab world with the majority being from Iraq and Lebanon. This limits the generalizability of the results to various Arab populations. Finally, this study used samples from only three different schools, which also significantly reduces the generalizability of the findings. This study warrants replication with the use of a larger, more representative sample of youth from various Arab countries of origin.

Because studies conducted on the self-concept of Arab American adolescents have obtained conflicting results, it is unclear as to whether or not Arab Americans self-concept is low in general. The current research study will be attempting to clarify these differences, as well as determining how external social interactions with teachers and peers are related to their self-concept. In addition, groups that have experiences with prejudice and discrimination, according to the stigma hypothesis, may be expected to have low self-concept. Because their ethnic group has been critically devalued through negative images in the media and negative social interactions with others, Arab Americans may be expected to have negative feelings toward themselves. In conclusion, this study is going to examine the relationships of four factors with the self-concept of Arab American adolescents including self-perceived teacher support, self-perceived classmate support, actual teacher perceptions, and experiences of discrimination in the schools.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between self-concept in Arab American adolescents and the following four factors: (a) self-perceived social support from classmates, (b) self-perceived social support from teachers, (c) actual perceptions from teachers, and (d) experiences of discrimination. Seven domains of self-concept will be measured: (1) Scholastic Competence, (2) Social Acceptance, (3) Athletic Competence, (4) Physical Appearance, (5) Behavioral Conduct, (6) Close Friendship, and (7) Global Self-worth. Six domains of teacher perceptions will be measured that parallel the domains of student’s self-concept: (1) Scholastic Competence, (2) Social Acceptance, (3) Athletic Competence, (4) Physical Appearance, (5) Behavioral Conduct, and (6) Close Friendship. Experiences of prejudice and discrimination include personal experiences and experiences of others close to the adolescent. This study seeks to find the answers to the following questions:

Research Question One: a) Do Arab American adolescents overall perceive themselves positively or negatively in each of the self-concept domains? b) Do Arab American adolescents perceive their classmate and teacher support as positive or negative, overall? c) Do teachers overall perceive students positively or negatively? d) What is the prevalence of discrimination as reported by the students? The following hypotheses were formulated according to these questions:
• Means of the self-concept domains were expected to be positive, except for Athletic Competence. This hypothesis was commensurate with the findings that Al-Khatab (1999) found in her study

• Means of self-perceived social support were expected to be positive overall.

• Means of teacher perceptions of student were expected to be positive overall.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship of measures of self-perceived social support, teacher ratings of behavior, and experiences of discrimination with each of the seven domains of self-concept? The hypotheses for this question were listed below:

• Self-perceived social support from teachers was expected to be moderately to strongly related to students’ self-concept in Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth.

• Self-perceived social support from classmates is expected to be moderately to strongly related to Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth.

• Teachers’ ratings of students in the six domains of Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship are expected to be moderately to strongly related to students’ self-concept in Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship, respectively.
Experiences of discrimination in school is expected to be strongly, negatively related to students’ Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship and Global Self-worth. Athletic Competence will not be examined in relation to discrimination because there is no theoretical rationale for such a relationship. Research provides evidence that such experiences influence academic and social factors; however, it is not clear how experiences of discrimination in the schools will influence the self-concept domain of Athletic Competence.

Research Question Three: Will measures of self-perceived classmate social support, self-perceived teacher social support, and experience of discrimination predict self-concept in each of the seven domains? The hypotheses were as follows:

- Provided that it is expected that all three independent variables will significantly correlate with the dependent variables, self-perceived classmate support, self-perceived teacher support, and experiences of discrimination will be examined collectively to determine the predictive ability of each variable. Results are expected to indicate that the presence of the experiences of discrimination in the school will be the strongest predictor of the seven self-concept domains. Self-perceived social support from classmates will be the next strongest predictor, followed by self-perceived social support from teachers.

Research Question Four: Will teacher perceptions of student in the six domains predict student self-concept in the corresponding six domains? The hypothesis for this question is listed below:
Provided that it is expected that teacher perceptions of student in the six domains will significantly correlate with the six domains of self-concept, each teacher domain will be examined to determine the predictive ability for the corresponding self-concept domains. Results are expected to indicate that the six teacher perception domains are strong predictors of the six student self-concept domains.

**Research Design**

This study was conducted using a non-experimental design. A non-experimental design was the most appropriate for this study because no treatments or interventions were used, and because there was no manipulation of variables (Vogt, 2005). This study measured the associations of the variables and focused on a predictive model, characteristic of a correlational design (Spata, 2003). Correlational designs are used when variables cannot be investigated experimentally. This design was most appropriate for this study because the variables in this study could not be manipulated since they were personal characteristics of the participants that could not be changed by the researcher. This type of design allowed the variables to vary freely and allowed the researcher to investigate how change in one variable was related to change in another variable (Crano & Brewer, 2002).

**Sample**

A convenience sample was recruited from adolescents all over the country who volunteered to participate. Eligible adolescents had to be enrolled in either a public school or private school setting and identified as Arab American on the Multigroup
Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) (see Appendix A). Two-hundred and forty surveys were mailed to subjects who volunteered to participate in the study. Seventy-seven students participated in the study (32.1%); however, for nine of these students, only the teacher’s survey was received. Therefore, a total of 68 students completed their part of the study (28.3%). Of these 68 students, two students did not meet the eligibility criteria for age, one student attended home school, and four students did not complete the self-concept forms correctly. This resulted in a final sample number of 61 students ranging in ages between 12 and 18 years (M=15.30), and in grades six through 12. The sample consisted of 28 males (45.9%) and 33 females (see Table 1). The sample consisted of students who practiced the following religions: Islam (83.6%), Christianity (14.8%), and No Affiliation (1.6%). Participants ranged from eight different states with the majority (over 77%) from the Midwest. The majority of the sample (67.2%) was first-generation born Americans. Nationalities of the sample included the following: Palestinian (34.4%), Syrian (23.0%), Arab Mix (14.8%), Mix (13.1%), Egyptian (4.9%), Iraqi (4.9%), Jordanian (3.3%), and Yemeni (1.6%). These statistics were compared to the national statistics on Arab American nationality demographics provided by The Arab American Institute (AAI) to assess representativeness of the sample (Birman, 1998). The AAI reported the following national percentages: Lebanese (32%), Egyptian (11%), Syrian (10%), Palestinian (5%), Moroccan (5%), Iraqi (4%), Jordanian (4%), General Arab (17%), and Other Arab (12%). While obtaining a representative sample was almost impossible due to the convenience sampling procedure used, several of the national statistics were in line with this study’s sample statistics (e.g., Iraqi, Jordanian, general
Arab mix). However, overall, the percentages widely differed and the conclusion of having obtained a representative could not be made.

Of the 68 students who participated, 15 (22.1%) students noted that they did not have a teacher to whom they felt comfortable giving the survey. Forty-eight students indicated that they asked a teacher to participate. Four students did not indicate whether or not they asked a teacher to participate. Of the 57 teachers asked by their students to participate (including the nine surveys received with no corresponding student survey), 41 (71.9%) completed the survey. Twenty-nine of these surveys corresponded to eligible student participants; therefore, 29 was the final sample number of teacher respondents.
Table 1

Demographic characteristics of sample

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<tr>
<td>Second</td>
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**Sampling Procedure**

The sample used for this study was a non-random, convenience sample. This method was necessary because the Arab population was difficult to identify. Arabs being categorized under the White or Caucasian ethnic category proved especially difficult in identifying participants. Arab students could not be identified as such in the schools. Furthermore, as discussed previously, Arab Americans are generally afraid to identify as Arab in fear of persecution. Finally, Arab Americans are skeptical about participating in research because they generally fear that the information may be used against them. Arab American organizations around the country were contacted by email and phone about the study. Five organizations in particular demonstrated interest in helping to recruit participants and included the member organizations of the National Network of Arab American Communities (NNAAC): the Arab American Family Services of Chicago, the Center for Arabic Culture in Massachusetts, and the Alif Institute. Several mosques and Arabic language learning centers were also contacted, including the Noor Islamic Cultural Center in Columbus, Ohio, the Islamic Center of Cleveland in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Alif Ba Arabic Learning Center of Columbus. The three organizations allowed the researcher to advertise and recruit participants during their youth group sessions. The researcher also utilized snow ball sampling with friends and family members, advertising to those who were possibly interested in participating. The researcher emailed friends and family members and asked them to email their family and friends about the study while providing the researchers phone and email address for interested participants. Participants then contacted the researcher by phone or email expressing their interest in
the study. They provided their mailing addresses to have the surveys sent to them. Eligible participants identified as Arab American, were between the ages of 12 and 18, and had to be enrolled in a public or private school setting.

**Study Variables**

**Demographic/Descriptive variables**

The demographic variables collected in this study included age, school level, grade, self-reported grade point average, state of residence, religious affiliation, generation born in the United States, country or countries of origin, and inclusion in the multicultural realm at school. These variables were collected by asking the participant to indicate the demographic on a form (see Appendix A). Age was a ratio scale and was collected using an open-ended question asking for the age of the participant. Age was collected only for descriptive purposes. Gender was categorical with two levels, male and female. School level was dichotomous with Middle School (0; 6th, 7th, and 8th grades) and High School (1; 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades). Grade point average was ordinal. Religious affiliation was categorical with five levels, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, No Religious Affiliation, and Other Religious Affiliation. Country of origin was categorical. The question was open-ended asking the adolescent to report country of origin for each parent. Inclusion in the multicultural realm at school was a nominal and dichotomous variable. Adolescents were asked if their school teaches about the Arab American culture either in their classes or through events, such as cultural awareness week. Answers were coded 1 for “Yes, my school teaches about the Arab
American culture” and 0 for “No, my school does not include Arab Americans in their teachings about culture”.

**Dependent variables**

Self-concept has been defined in the literature in various ways and researchers largely concur that it is constructed of multiple components (Cooley, 1902; Delugach, et al., 1992; Ellis & Davis, 1982; Harter, 1999). For this study, self-concept was defined as the perceptions an adolescent has about himself or herself regarding multiple competencies. The dependent variables in this study were seven domains of self-concept as measured by the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988). This instrument assesses nine domains of self-concept; however, only seven of these domains were measured in this study. The variables were ordinal with values ranking from 1 (lowest judgment of self) to 4 (highest judgment of self).

**DV1) Scholastic competence.** Scholastic Competence measured the adolescent’s perception of his/her competence or ability within the realm of scholastic performance, such as class work and intelligence.

**DV2) Social acceptance.** Social Acceptance measured the degree to which the student felt he or she was accepted and liked by peers, had a lot of friends, and felt popular.

**DV3) Athletic competence.** Athletic Competence measured the perceptions of athletic ability and competence at sports.

**DV4) Physical appearance.** Physical Appearance measured the degree to which the adolescent was happy with the way he or she looked.
**DV5) Behavioral conduct.** Behavioral Conduct measured the extent to which the adolescent liked the way he or she behaved and did the right thing.

**DV6) Close friendship.** Close Friendship measured the adolescent’s perceptions of his or her ability to make close friends with whom they were able to share personal thoughts and secrets.

**DV7) Global self-worth.** Global Self-worth measured the extent to which the adolescent liked himself or herself as a person, was happy with his or her life, and was happy with the way he or she was as a person. Global Self-worth was a global judgment of one’s worth as a person, rather than domain-specific competence or adequacy.

**Independent variables (IV)**

Ten independent variables were measured in this study. They are outlined below.

**IV1) Self-perceived social support from classmates.** Perceived social support from classmates was operationally defined as the perception of positive regard from classmates. The independent variable self-perceived social support from classmates was ordinal with values ranking from 1 (lowest perceived social support) to 4 (highest perceived social support).

**IV2) Self-perceived social support from teachers.** Perceived social support was operationally defined as the perception of positive regard from teachers. The independent variable self-perceived support from teachers was ordinal with values ranking from 1 (lowest perceived social support) to 4 (highest perceived social support).

**IV3) Teacher’s perception of student.** Teachers’ perception of students was operationally defined as the teacher’s independent judgment of the student’s actual
behavior and adequacy in different life domains. There were six variables of teacher’s perceptions of students. Each teacher perception variable was parallel to each of the student’s self-perception variable. These six independent variables of teacher’s perception of the student were ordinal with values ranking from 1 (lowest perceived social support) to 4 (highest perceived social support).

**IV3a) Scholastic competence.** Scholastic Competence measured the teacher’s perception of the student’s abilities in the area of scholastic performance. Examples included how well they were doing in school and how intelligent they felt they were.

**IV3b) Social acceptance.** Social Acceptance measured the degree to which the teacher felt the student was accepted by classmates, was popular, had many friends, and was easy to like.

**IV3c) Athletic competence.** Athletic Competence measured the teacher’s perceptions of the student’s athletic ability and competence at sports.

**IV3d) Physical appearance.** Physical Appearance measured the degree to which the teacher felt that the student was good looking.

**IV3e) Behavioral conduct.** Behavioral Conduct measured the extent to which the teacher was content with the way the student behaved, believed that the student acted the way he or she was expected to, and avoided getting into trouble.

**IV3f) Close friendship.** Close friendship measured the teacher’s perception of the student’s ability to make close friends with whom to share thoughts and secrets.

**IV4) Experiences of prejudice and discrimination.** Two types of discrimination were included in this variable: personal experiences of discrimination and experiences of
significant others. Personal experience of discrimination was operationally defined as an experience of irrational attitudes or hostility from a person or people directed against the adolescent due to their ethnicity or racial background. Experiences of prejudice and discrimination of significant others was operationally defined as an experience of irrational attitudes or hostility from a person or people directed against someone close to the adolescent due to their ethnicity or racial background. For personal experiences, students were asked the following question: “Sometimes people treat other people badly and/or differently because of their ethnicity, race, gender, religion or other things. Has anyone treated you badly or differently in your school because of your ethnicity or being Arab American? Please circle one. Yes or No”. For experiences of significant others, students were asked: “Now think about other people who are close to you in your life. Has someone close to you ever been treated badly or differently in their school because of their ethnicity or being Arab American? Please circle one. Yes or No”. Both questions were dichotomous, categorical variables: Yes (1) and No (0). The two questions were combined into one dichotomous, categorical variable: Yes (1) and No (0). If the student answered “Yes” to either question, then they were assigned under the Yes (1) category.

**Instruments**

Five questionnaires were used to measure demographic variables and the variables of self-perceived social support, teacher ratings of competence, student’s self concept, and school experiences of discrimination. These instruments are outline below.
Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents

Self-concept was measured by asking the participant to complete the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988). This instrument measured the perception of adolescents’ self-concept in seven domains: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth.

This questionnaire used a Likert-scale format. The questions were posed in either positive or negative wording on one side and negative or positive on the other side of the form, respectively (e.g., Some kids have parents who treat their child like a person who really matters BUT Other kids have parents who don’t usually treat their child like a person who really matters). This was considered a structured alternative format and was used to counter the answering of items for social desirability (Harter, 1988). For each item, the participants were required to choose which side better represented themselves and answered that side of the questionnaire only. They then decided if the statement was only “sort of true” for them or “really true.” Items were scored either 4, 3, 2, or 1 with 4 representing the most adequate self-judgment and 1 representing the least adequate self-judgment. Each domain consisted of five items. The mean of the scores was calculated for each of the seven domains, which represented the participant’s profile. Internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales were high with ranges between 0.74 and 0.92. The SSPA has been validated in numerous studies (Harter, 1988), and has been used nationally and internationally with diverse cultural groups (e.g., Birman, 1998; Canpolat, Orsel, Akdemir, & Ozbay, 2005; Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; Putnick, et al., 2008; Thomson & Zand, 2002).
Social Support Scale for Children

Perceived social support from classmates and teachers was measured by asking the participants to complete Harter’s (1985a) Social Support Scale for Children (SSSC). Perceived social support from classmates was measured using the classmate support subscale. This was a six item scale that measured the extent to which the student felt that: (a) classmates liked them the way they are, (b) he or she could become friends with classmates, (c) classmates didn’t make fun of them, (d) classmates listened to what they said, (e) classmates asked him or her to play games, and (f) classmates asked him or her to join them at recess.

Perceived social support from teachers was measured using the teacher support subscale. This was a six item scale that measured the extent to which the student felt that: (a) teachers helped them if they were upset, (b) teachers helped them do their very best, (c) teachers cared about them, (d) teachers were fair to them, (e) teachers cared if he or she felt bad, and (f) teachers treated them as a person. This instrument was standardized with elementary and middle school aged children and resulted in high internal consistency reliabilities ranging between 0.72 and 0.84 for teacher and classmate support.

The teacher and classmate scales of the instrument correlated moderately with the Global-Self worth scale on the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1985a), with correlations ranging from 0.28 to 0.48. Scores from the classmate support scale were also correlated with scores from the Social Acceptance scale of the SPPC, resulting in a strong correlations ranging between 0.62 and 0.69. Because these two
scales were identical to the scales in the SPPA, correlations were expected to be similar to the SPPC. The items in the teacher and classmate subscales were in a Likert-scale question format. Similar to the SPPA, the questions were posed in either positive or negative wording on one side and negative or positive on the other side of the form, respectively (e.g., Some kids have parents who treat their child like a person who really matters BUT Other kids have parents who don’t usually treat their child like a person who really matters). For each item, the participants were required to choose which side better represented themselves and answer that side of the questionnaire only. They then decided if the statement was only “sort of true” for them or “really true.” The question items were scored either 4, 3, 2, or 1, where 4 represented the most support or regard and 1 represented the least support or regard from the source. Items within each subscale were counter-balanced such that three items were worded with the most positive statement on the left and three items were worded with the most positive statement on the right. The item scores for those with the most positive description on the left were scored 4, 3, 2, 1 whereas the item scores for those with the most positive description on the right were scored 1, 2, 3, 4. Consequently, items were recoded so that higher numbers represent positive self-perceptions. These scores were then calculated to obtain a mean for each subscale, which defined the participant’s profile.

**Teacher’s Rating Scale of the Student’s Actual Behavior**

Teacher’s perception of student was measured using the Teacher’s Rating Scale of the Student’s Actual Behavior from Harter’s (1988) Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents. The Teacher’s Rating Scale of the Student’s Actual Behavior is a 16-item
instrument developed in parallel with the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents so that the two forms could be compared. The subscales on this instrument mirror the same subscales on the adolescent profile, except for Global Self-worth: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship.

The teacher’s questionnaire was set up in the same manner as the SSSC discussed above. For each item, the teacher had to decide which side better represented the student and answered that side of the questionnaire only (e.g. This individual is intelligent OR This individual is not that intelligent). They then decided if the statement was “sort of true” or “really true” for that student. Scores were determined in the same manner as the SSSC described above, with 4 constituting a positive or high perception and 1 constituting a negative or low perception of the student. These scores were then calculated to obtain a mean for each subscale, which defined the teacher’s profile of a student.

**Experiences in the schools questionnaire**

Experience of prejudice and discrimination was measured using a questionnaire developed by the researcher (see Appendix E). Participants were asked questions about their personal experiences in the school and experiences of people close to them in school. They were also asked how much they were affected by these experiences.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Participants were sent packets enclosed with parental consent and assent forms and the surveys described above. Participants were asked to sign assent forms and
parents were asked to sign parental consent forms for their children to participate in the study. After signing the parental permission and assent forms, student participants were asked to complete the surveys. There were a total of four questionnaires that the participants were asked to complete. The estimated time of completion was about 45 to 60 minutes. The Social Support Scale for Children asked the participants to answer some items on how they felt about the social support they received from their teachers and classmates at school. The second questionnaire asked the participants to answer questions about experiences they had with ethnic prejudice and discrimination in school and how these experiences affected them and made them feel. The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents asked the participants to answer some items on how they felt about their own competencies including academic skills, social skills, athletic skills, physical appearance, and behavior. The fourth questionnaire asked the participants to answer some demographic information. When the participants completed all the questionnaires they were asked to mail them back to the researcher in a pre-paid envelope. The participant was then asked to designate one teacher he or she respected and deliver a survey packet to the teacher in a sealed envelope. If the student was not able to designate a respected teacher then he or she indicated that on the demographic form. Designated teachers were asked to sign a consent form and complete the survey. They were then asked to send it back directly to the researcher in the provided pre-paid envelope as to ensure confidentiality.
Issues with Validity

Internal validity for correlational studies refers to the accuracy and quality of the study (Creswell, 2009). Some threats to internal validity were identified for this study. First, the variables in this study could be operationally defined in various ways. For example, different definitions and means of measurement exist for self-concept. The failure to accurately define the variables in this study operationally may have constituted a threat to internal validity. Second, the instruments that were used to measure the variables in this study were self-reported. Participants may have provided socially desirable answers to the items rather than what they truly felt. Third, because this study was a correlational design, it was not possible to discern or measure all variables that were related to the dependent variables.

External validity was defined as “the extent to which the findings of a study are relevant to subjects and settings beyond those in the study” (Vogt, 2005, p. 114). In other words, external validity referred to the extent that the results could be generalized to the population. Campbell and Stanley (1963) suggested that threats to external validity are not easily resolved. They also proposed that there is no justification for generalizability. Threats to external validity in this study were due to the selection process for obtaining a sample. There was no enumerated list of Arab American students in the population to choose from randomly. Even more, access to the Arab American population was limited. Therefore, the sample had to be chosen purposively by accepting volunteers. This selection process affected the generalizability of the findings. Findings were only generalizable to the sample of this study. The characteristics of the sample were
compared to the characteristics of the population to assess the representativeness of the sample and to counter threats to generalizability.

**Data Analysis**

To address the research questions for this study, several statistical procedures were utilized and are outlined below. All data analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Descriptive statistics and frequencies**

Overall means of self-concept, self-perceived classmate and teacher social support, teacher perception ratings, and self-reported GPA were also calculated. The frequency of students who attended a school that included Arab American culture in their multicultural curriculum was calculated. The number of students who experienced discrimination exhibited toward the self and/or toward significant others were determined. Then, the overall percentage of the sample that experienced either form of discrimination was calculated.

**Correlational analyses**

Correlational analyses were utilized to answer Research Question One. The sample was divided into two groups of discrimination: “Experience” and “No Experience”. The sample was also divided by gender and school level. Then, Pearson’s product moment correlational analyses were conducted for all relationships. First, the relationships between the dependent variables and the independent variables were examined. Then, relationships between discrimination, gender, and school level and self-concept measures were investigate.
Independent Sample \( t \)-tests

To further investigate significant relationships, independent sample \( t \)-tests were conducted on dichotomous variables that were found to be correlated with any dependent variables. Three assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance, and independence were examined to ensure the data were appropriate for the analysis (Lomax, 2007). The assumption of normality states that the conditional distributions of the scores on the dependent variable, or the prediction errors, are normal in shape. To test this assumption a normal probability plot was developed. The assumption of homogeneity of variance is that the conditional distributions have a constant variance for all values of the independent variables. This assumption was tested by running Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance in SPSS. If the test resulted in insignificance, then the null hypothesis that the variances are equal was retained. In this case, the SPSS results corresponding to the “Equal variances assumed”, or the independent \( t \)-test, were interpreted. If the test resulted in significance, then the null hypothesis is rejected and unequal variances are assumed. In this case, the SPSS results corresponding to the “Equal variances not assumed”, or the Welch \( t' \) test, were interpreted. Finally, the assumption of independence is that the observations are independent of each other. By nature of the design of this study, observations were independent of each other. The independent sample \( t \)-test is denoted by the following equation:

\[
t = \frac{\bar{Y}_1 - \bar{Y}_2}{s_{\bar{Y}_1 - \bar{Y}_2}}
\]
where $\bar{Y}_1$ is the mean for sample one, $\bar{Y}_2$ is the mean for sample two, and $s_{Y_1-Y_2}$ is the standard error of the difference between two means (Lomax, 2007). The null hypothesis was that there was no difference between the two means. If the $t$ statistic exceeded the critical value, then the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion was made that there was a significant difference between the two means.

**Regression analyses**

To address Research Questions Three and Four, individual standard multiple regression analyses were conducted with respect to each dependent variable (Birman, 1998). For question three, models were created containing the student variables. The independent variables, including demographic variables that were found to be correlated with the dependent variables were entered into the multiple regression equation. Then, for question four, models were created containing the teacher perception variable. There was one model for each dependent variable, which resulted in a total of seven models for student variables and a possible six models for the teacher variables. For each multiple regression model, the correlated independent variables were entered simultaneously to obtain a simultaneous regression model. This method of entry was chosen because predictor variables were chosen a priori and this method allowed for simultaneous estimation of the regression parameters (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). This method was chosen over other methods, such as hierarchical, because this study was exploratory and there was no method of determining a logical hierarchy of entry. For each of the seven models, six tests of assumptions were conducted. Lomax (2007) listed
six assumptions that need to be tested to determine the appropriateness of multiple regression for the data.

**Independence.** The first assumption was that the observations are independent of each other. To test for independence, plots of the residuals versus the predicted dependent variable and of the residuals versus each independent variable are going to be examined. If the residuals fall into a random pattern, then that means the independence assumption is satisfied. If residuals form a pattern then the assumption is violated and this violation results in the estimated standard errors of the models being affected.

**Homogeneity of variance.** The second assumption was homogeneity of variance. For multiple regression, this assumption is that the conditional distributions have a constant variance for all values of the independent variables (Lomax, 2007). To examine homogeneity a plot of the dependent variable scores or the residuals versus the independent variables is made. If this assumption is met, then the conditional residual variance will be constant for all values of the independent variables. If this assumption is violated then the estimates of standard errors are larger and the conditional distributions may not be normal. Furthermore, the validity of the significance tests is affected.

**Normality.** The third assumption was normality, which states that the conditional distributions of the scores on the dependent variable, or the prediction errors, are normal in shape. To test this assumption a normal probability plot will be developed. If the assumption has been violated, then the result is outliers. Lomax (2007) indicated that the easiest detection of outliers is by looking for observations that are more than two standard
errors from the mean. If the normality assumption is violated, then the partial slopes and coefficient of determination may be imprecise.

**Linearity.** The fourth assumption to be tested was linearity, which means there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables (Lomax, 2007). The assumption is that the dependent variable will change at a constant value with the change in the independent variables. If it is not constant, then there is no linear relationship and the assumption has been violated. This assumption is tested through the examination of residual plots. If the assumption has been met, then there will be no systematic pattern of points. If the plot results in a systematic pattern, then there is a non-linear relationship and the sample partial slopes and intercept are unbiased estimators of the population.

**Fixed independent variables.** The fifth assumption was that the values of the independent variables are fixed, not random (Lomax, 2007). The models were only valid for the sample that was observed and only predicted the dependent variable values of the sample obtained; there was no extrapolation beyond the sample predictor data of this study.

**Noncollinearity.** The last assumption was noncollinearity. Collinearity is the “expression of the relationship between two or more independent variables. Two independent variables are said to exhibit complete collinearity if their coefficient is 1, and complete lack of collinearity if their coefficient is 0” (Hair, et al., 2006, p. 170). Noncollinearity, then, is the lack of a strong relationship between independent variables. Violation of this assumption results in the increase of the standard errors of the regression
coefficients and the increased difficulty to achieve statistical significance (Lomax, 2007). A violation also results in the restriction of the use and generalizability of the estimated regression model. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each predictor to test for collinearity. If the VIF value was close to 10.00 for an independent variable, then collinearity was considered a problem. At this point, the independent variables that resulted in this value were removed from the model.

After all the assumptions were tested and the decision was made that multiple regression was appropriate for the data, all correlated independent variables as well as significant demographic variables were simultaneously entered into the model. Lomax (2007) described the steps necessary for a multiple regression analysis.

First, the partial slopes and intercept of the line were determined by calculating the least squares criterion, so that the prediction model could be used to predict the dependent variable from the independent variables when the values of the dependent variable were unknown. “The least squares criterion arrives at those values for the partial slopes and intercept such that the sum of the squared prediction errors or residuals is smallest” (Lomax, 2007, p. 391). By interpreting the partial slope and intercept values, the change in the dependent variable was predicted by the change in the independent variable. The significance of each individual partial slope or regression coefficient was tested to investigate whether or not the individual regression coefficients were statistically significant from zero. If the null hypothesis was rejected, then the individual partial slope was significantly different from zero. This test was carried out using the univariate $t$ statistic:
\[ t = \frac{b_k}{s(b_k)} \]

where \( b_k \) was the individual partial slope or regression coefficient and \( s(b_k) \) was the standard error for each \( b_k \). The obtained \( t \) statistic was compared to the critical value of \( t \) at the desired significance level. If the \( t \) statistic exceeded the critical value, then the null was rejected and the conclusion was that the individual regression coefficients or partial slopes were significantly different from zero.

Second, was to determine how well the dependent variable was predicted by the set of predictor variables using a multivariate model. This was conducted by calculating the coefficient of multiple determination, which provided the proportion of total variation in the dependent variable that was predicted from the set of the predictor or independent variables:

\[
R^2_{Y,1,...,m} = b_1^*r_{Y1} + b_2^*r_{Y2} + ... + b_m^*r_{Ym}
\]

where \( R^2_{Y,1,...,m} \) was the coefficient of determination, \( Y \) was the dependent variable, \( X_1,...,m \) were the independent or predictor variables, \( b \) was the sample partial slope or raw regression coefficient, and \( r \) was the correlation of the dependent and independent variable. According to Lomax (2007), there was no standard as to how large the coefficient of determination needed to be in order to determine if a significant proportion of variation was predicted. The coefficient can vary from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power of the regression equation and better prediction of the independent variable (Hair, et al., 2006). Then, the significance of the overall regression model or the coefficient of multiple determination was tested. The
significance test of the coefficient of multiple determination was a test of all the partial slopes or regression coefficients simultaneously. The null hypothesis was that none of the regression coefficients were significantly different from zero. This test was carried out using the multivariate F statistic:

\[
F = \frac{R^2 / m}{(1 - R^2)/(n - m - 1)}
\]

where \( m \) was the number of predictors, \( n \) was the sample size, and \( R^2 \) was the coefficient of multiple determination (Lomax, 2007). If the \( F \) statistic exceeded the critical value, then the null hypothesis was rejected, and the conclusion was made that one or more of the regression coefficients was significantly different from zero.
Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, results of the quantitative analyses are presented. First, results of descriptive analyses are presented in answer to research question one. To answer research question two, correlational analyses were utilized followed by t-tests to explore the means of demographic variables that were significant with the dependent variables. Then, research questions two and three were answered by the use of regression analyses for each dependent variable.

Descriptive statistics

Overall means of the seven self-concept domains, six teacher perception domains, self-perceived classmate support, self-perceived teacher support, and self-reported grade point averages were presented in Table 2. Mean scores by gender, school level, and discrimination category can be found in Table 3. Mean scores for the self-concept domains, self-perceived classmate and teacher support, and teacher perceptions were considered negative if they fell between 1.00 and 2.99 and positive if they fell between 3.00 and 4.00. Students tended to have positive self-concept in all domains, except for Athletic Competence and Physical Appearance. The means of self-perceived classmate support and self-perceived teacher support were both positive, which means that students felt they had adequate support from the teachers and classmates. The mean for self-reported grade point average was 3.63.
Table 2

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the seven self-concept domains, six teacher perception domains, self-perceived classmate and teacher support, and self-reported GPA.

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<tr>
<td>Scholastic Competence</td>
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<td>3.15</td>
<td>.692</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Acceptance</td>
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<td>.560</td>
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<td>Behavior Conduct</td>
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<td>Close Friendship</td>
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<td>.637</td>
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<td>Global Self-worth</td>
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<td>.640</td>
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<td>Classmate Social Support</td>
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<td>.517</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.578</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Measures</strong></td>
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<td>Social Acceptance</td>
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<td>.635</td>
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<td>Athletic Competence</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Behavior Conduct</td>
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<td>.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Friendship</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked to rate students’ actual behavior in six domains. Overall, the means of teacher perception domains were all positive, indicating that teachers held positive perceptions of the students. In Table 2, it can be seen that teachers were unable to answer all questions about students; all were able to complete items about Scholastic
Competence, and most were able to complete the Behavioral Conduct, Physical Appearance, and Social Acceptance items. However, Athletic Competence and Close Friendship questions were more difficult for teachers to answer, perhaps because they spend little class time with students in middle and high school. In middle and high school, some teachers only have students for one period each day, suggesting that not enough time is available to fully get to know their students.

Table 3

Means of self-concept domains by gender, school level, and discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S.C.</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
<th>A.C.</th>
<th>P.A.</th>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>C.F.</th>
<th>G.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>3.221</td>
<td>3.329</td>
<td>3.121</td>
<td>3.007</td>
<td>3.064</td>
<td>3.086</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3.097</td>
<td>3.236</td>
<td>2.497</td>
<td>2.733</td>
<td>3.261</td>
<td>3.188</td>
<td>3.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.450</td>
<td>3.450</td>
<td>2.975</td>
<td>3.113</td>
<td>3.413</td>
<td>3.388</td>
<td>3.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.049</td>
<td>3.218</td>
<td>2.716</td>
<td>2.769</td>
<td>3.084</td>
<td>3.053</td>
<td>3.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.974</td>
<td>3.207</td>
<td>2.607</td>
<td>2.652</td>
<td>3.136</td>
<td>3.155</td>
<td>3.097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: S.C. is Scholastic Competence; S.A. is Social Acceptance; A.C. is Athletic Competence; P.A. is Physical Appearance; B.C. is Behavioral Conduct; C.F. is Close Friendship; and, G.S. is Global Self-worth.

Students were asked to report their experiences of discrimination. A little over half of the sample (50.8%) experienced some form of discrimination. Twenty-four students experienced discrimination personally. Of these students, many reported being called a terrorist or being told to go back to their country. Several Muslim Arab students
reported having their head coverings pulled off by their classmates. Christian Arabs in the sample reported being taunted and called “Muslim terrorist” even though they are not Muslim. Students reported being treated differently because of the way they “look” or dress. Several students who reported not experiencing any personal discrimination also reported that people are not aware that they are Arab because they do not “look” Arab. Twenty-two students knew someone close to them who experienced discrimination or witnessed discrimination against another individual (see Table 4). One student witnessed a fellow student being beaten to unconsciousness because the student was defending his religion. Other students reported overhearing classmates making fun of other Arab students because of the way they talked or dressed. Specific reports of incidences as written by participants are quoted and outlined below. Further clarifications or translations of Arabic transliterations are provided in brackets:

- “I have been called a terrorist on many occasions since 9/11. Especially since I wear the hijab, I have heard comments such as ‘she is a woman terrorist who is hiding a bomb under her hijab.’ In fact, during my sophomore year when I ran for class president, an opposing campaign said, ‘Don’t vote for a female terrorist as a class president- she’ll blow you up with the bomb she is hiding under her hijab!’

- “Some kids found out I was Arab so they called me Mohammad (even though I’, Christian) for one months until I told my head master.”

- “A friend from my church who has an accent and doesn’t have many friends at school gets sad because he wants to be welcomed here but I always try to make him feel welcomed.”
• One time my friends told me I didn’t look “Arab enough…it hurt because I love my culture and have so much pride. Also, Arab ≠ Muslim.”

• “A girl in my class was divided up in teams in countries and she was on a Arabic team. When she found out she said, “Hey [name], I’m on a terrorist team and kept repeating it until I got mad. Another story is our librarian in our school treats Americans a lot better than Muslims and other of my Arabic friends.”

• “They make fun of a young Syrian boy, age of 9. He has a strong accent when he speaks English, so the children make fun of him. They tease him very much.”

• “Sometimes people would say ‘you’re a stupid Arab’ and I would just ignore. Other time they would say that I’m gonna bomb the school. Some people would joke around and say some of that but it still hurt my feelings.”

• “People in my school use the term towel heads and terrorist. And when I was younger no one wanted to be my friend because of my race, they also bullied me after Sept. 11th.”

• “People automatically think I’m a dirty person (no hygiene) they think I’m pretty radical when it comes to religious values.”

In terms of inclusion of the Arab culture in multicultural curriculum, 59 students answered the question. The majority of the sample (57.6%) reported that their school did not include Arabs in the multicultural curriculum. From students who reported that their school did include Arabs in curriculum, six reported that the teachings of the culture were inaccurate. Students’ reports are quoted and outlined below:
• “I think that most of what they teach is right and true but the overall impression they give is that it is all Islamic and that its not a whole lot of fun. While the Middle Eastern majority is Muslim, there are a lot of Christians there, and the churches are beautiful. Easter and Christmas are bigger in Syria than they are here.

• “Sometimes they make it sound like we worship different Gods from Christians and Jews. Or our God told us to kill, or that women can't show their faces...stereotypical things.”

• “Sometimes they say "arranged marriage", forced to wear hijab, women aren't treated fairly.”

• “They don’t provide factual information that makes us look good. we are always portrayed as the bad guy.”

• “They dont teach anything. everything and anything they talk to us about that includes araby is always negative. They always say we killed this or bombed this but they never show how many middle eastern people die everyday. I hate this subject cuz u know everyone is look at you and thinkin all those things. But they dont realize that America started it all. They put the bad name on everyone but themselves. Yes I am proud of what I am but sometimes I get so frustrated because I thought there was a seperation between church and state. but they always bring up islam as it its wrong we dont gor around say ohh hey convert all the time. I have a history teacher who i will ask a question and he will avoid answering it. And its not just me it 3 other students yes (muslim) students. we're
the only ones in the class. I just feel that if there is not going to tell the truth then the subject should not be brought up. Yes 9/11 was a horrible thing, but there has to be a reason behind everything right? Also they never teach about the culture is either Black History month or something else the only time the middle east in mentioned is with 3 things "oil, war, 9/11" thats it. Not once do you hear about our food, music, traditions, or why we fast or what eid is or anything. but yet christmas is celebrated and thanksgiving are and we get off but yet there hallmark holidays? whats that about. and we get marked absent for take (emphasized 1) day off for eid [holiday]? and some of us who only miss that can lose the attendance award i think thats not fair. but again lifes not fair I guess. But I hope I stayed on topic and help you understand somewhat. And thank you for doing this.”

- “They said we believe in Islam but the way they described our beliefs were wrong. Example, we pray to Mohamed (PBUH [peace be upon him]) Astaghfirullah [God forgive].”

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination of Self</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination of Other</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Discrimination</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Discrimination is the combination of self and other. Students who reported experience discrimination in at least one of these forms were included in the discrimination group.
**Correlational analyses**

Pearson product moment correlational analyses were conducted to answer the second research question. Pearson correlations ($r$) of the seven self-concept domains, self-perceived classmate support, self-perceived teacher support, self-reported grade point average, gender, school level, and experience of discrimination were calculated. Results from these analyses were presented in Table 5. Pearson correlations ($r$) of the six student self-concept domains and the corresponding teacher perception domains (Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship) are presented in Table 6.

**Dependent vs. independent variables.** Several significant relationships were found. Self-perceived classmate support was significantly, positively related to all student self-concept domains. The higher the classmate support students perceived the higher their self-concept was in all domains. Classmate support was the most strongly related to Social Acceptance. Self-perceived teacher support was significantly and positively related to Behavioral Conduct. Students with higher perceptions of teacher support also felt more positively about their own behavioral conduct. Self-perceived teacher support was not related to any other self-concept variables. Students’ self-reported GPA was significantly, positively related to Scholastic Competence, Behavioral Conduct, and self-perceived teacher support. Students who reported higher GPA’s also reported feeling more academically competent, perceived their own behaviors more positively, and reported higher perceptions of teacher support. Gender was significantly and negatively related to Athletic Competence. Although not statistically significant, gender also had
negative correlations with Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Physical Appearance, and Global Self-worth, and positive correlations with Behavioral Conduct. School level was significantly and negatively related to Scholastic Competence and Global Self-worth. School level was also negatively, but not significantly, related to Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance, Behavioral Conduct, and Close Friendship. Finally, there was a negative trend in the relationship between discrimination and six of the seven self-concept variables; however, discrimination was only significantly and negatively related to Scholastic Competence and Physical Appearance. Furthermore, discrimination had a significant, negative relationship with self-perceived classmate support. The variables gender, school level, and discrimination and their relationships with the reported self-concept variables were further explored by independent $t$-tests and were presented later in this chapter.
Table 5

*Correlations for the seven self-concept domains, self-perceived social supports, and demographic variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. GPA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Scholastic Competence</td>
<td>.492**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Social Acceptance</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Athletic Competence</td>
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<td>.182</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Physical Appearance</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.417**</td>
<td>.316*</td>
<td>.369**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Behavioral Conduct</td>
<td>.449**</td>
<td>.515**</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Close Friendship</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.373**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.374**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Global Self-worth</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.584**</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.644**</td>
<td>.465**</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>9. Classmate Support</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.455**</td>
<td>.573**</td>
<td>.302*</td>
<td>.321*</td>
<td>.392**</td>
<td>.443**</td>
<td>.447**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Teacher Support</td>
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<td>.139</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>-.084</td>
<td>.398**</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.284*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Gender</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-.362*</td>
<td>-.187</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>.232</td>
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<td>12. School Level</td>
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<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.208</td>
<td>-.236</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>-.346**</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Discrimination</td>
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<td>-.266*</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>-.209</td>
<td>-.290*</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>-.155</td>
<td>-.295*</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>-.139</td>
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</table>

*Significant at the .05 level
**Significant at the .01 level
N=61
**Student self-concept vs. actual teacher-perceptions.** The correlations between student self-concept and teacher perceptions are presented in Table 6. The correlations overall have positive trends, except for Physical Appearance, which has a negative trend. The only significant relationship found was between students’ self-concept in Close Friendship and teachers’ perception of the students’ Close Friendship. The predictive ability of teachers’ perception of Close Friendship was further examined in the regression section of this chapter.

**Table 6**

*Pearson product moment correlations for student self-concept domains and corresponding teacher perception domains.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Perceived Domain</th>
<th>Teacher-Perceived Domain</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Scholastic Competence (N=29)</td>
<td>1. Scholastic Competence</td>
<td>.117</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Social Acceptance (N=27)</td>
<td>2. Social Acceptance</td>
<td>.250</td>
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<td>4. Physical Appearance (N=26)</td>
<td>4. Physical Appearance</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Close Friendship (N=18)</td>
<td>6. Close Friendship</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.516*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the .05 level

**Dependent vs. dependent variables.** Several of the dependent variables had significant relationships with each other (see Table 5). Athletic competence was significantly and positively related to Social Acceptance and Physical Appearance. Adolescents who felt more athletic also felt more socially accepted and more physically
attractive. Scholastic Competence was significantly related to Physical Appearance, Close Friendship, and Behavioral Conduct. Behavioral Conduct and Close Friendship were also positively and significantly related, indicating that adolescents who felt they were well-behaved also felt they were more able to develop close friendship with others. Global Self-worth was positively and significantly related to all of the remaining domains, except for Athletic Competence.

**Independent t-tests**

Independent $t$-tests were conducted to further investigate the relationships between the following variables: gender and Athletic Competence; school level and Scholastic Competence; school level and Global Self-worth; and, discrimination and Scholastic Competence, Physical Appearance, and self-perceived classmate support. The results from these analyses were outlined in this section.

**Gender.** Results from the correlational analyses signified that gender was negatively related to Athletic Competence. To test for homogeneity of variance, Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance was conducted and resulted in significance (see Table 7). Therefore, the assumption that the variances were homogeneous was rejected. Consequently, the results of the “Equal variances not assumed”, or Welch $t'$, were interpreted. The Welch $t'$ test indicated that the Athletic Competence means were significantly different by gender ($t=3.060$, $df=57.583$, $p=.003$), with males (N=28, M=3.121, Standard Deviation (SD)=.665, Standard Error Mean (SE)=.126) having higher Athletic Competence mean scores than females (N=33, M=2.497, SD=.932, SE=.161).
Table 7

Independent t-test for Athletic Competence by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>10.332</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>3.060</td>
<td>57.583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The equal variances assumed row was interpreted when Levene’s test was insignificant. In this case, the independent $t$-test was conducted. Otherwise, the equal variances not assumed row was interpreted, in which the Welch $t'$ test was conducted.

School level. School level was significantly related to both Scholastic Competence and Global Self-worth. Levene’s test for school level and scholastic competence was insignificant (see Table 8). The independent $t$-test indicated that the means for scholastic competence by school level were significantly different ($t=2.043$, $df=59$, $p=.046$). Middle school students (N=16, M=3.450, SD=.539, SE=.135) had significantly higher scholastic competence than did high school students (N=45, M=3.049, SD=.715, SE.107). The homogeneity of variance test for school level and Global Self-worth was significant. The Welch $t'$ test indicated that the means of Global Self-worth were significantly different by school level ($t=3.582$, $df=44.816$, $p=.001$), with
middle school students (N=16, M=3.562, SD=.395, SE=.099) having higher Global Self-worth than high school students (N=45, M=3.062, SD=.663, SE=.099).

Table 8

Independent t-test for Scholastic Competence and Global Self-worth by School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholastic Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>2.133</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.334</td>
<td>34.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Self-worth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>4.384</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>3.582</td>
<td>44.816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The equal variances assumed row was interpreted when Levene’s test was insignificant. In this case, the independent t-test was conducted. Otherwise, the equal variances not assumed row was interpreted, in which the Welch t’ test was conducted.

**Discrimination.** Experience of discrimination was negatively related to Scholastic Competence, Physical Appearance, and self-perceived classmate support.

Tests for homogeneity of variance were insignificant for both Scholastic Competence and
Physical Appearance, indicating that the variances were equal (see Table 9). The independent $t$-test indicated that the means for scholastic competence ($t=2.123$, $df=59$, $p=.038$) and the means for physical appearance ($t=2.323$, $df=59$, $p=.024$) were significantly different by discrimination experience. Students who experienced discrimination had significantly lower scholastic competence ($N=31$, $M=2.974$, $SD=.724$, $SE=.112$) than students who did not experience discrimination ($N=30$, $M=3.340$, $SD=.615$, $SE=.112$). They also had more negative perceptions of their physical appearance ($N=31$, $M=2.651$, $SD=.790$, $SE=.142$) than students who did not experience discrimination ($N=30$, $M=3.073$, $SD=.613$, $SE=.112$). Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance was significant for classmate support. The Welch $t$’ test implied that students who experienced discrimination ($N=31$, $M=3.080$, $SD=.564$, $SE=.101$) had significantly lower perceptions of classmate support than students who did not ($N=30$, $M=3.383$, $SD=.420$, $SE=.077$).
Table 9

*Independent t-test for Scholastic Competence, Physical Appearance, and Classmate Support by Discrimination*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Mean Diff.</td>
<td>Std. Error Diff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholastic Competence</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.129</td>
<td>58.033</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Appearance</td>
<td>1.847</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>2.323</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>56.395</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>4.724</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>2.370</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.382</td>
<td>55.413</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The equal variances assumed row was interpreted when Levene’s test was insignificant. In this case, the independent *t*-test was conducted. Otherwise, the equal variances not assumed row was interpreted, in which the Welch *t*’ test was conducted.
Regression

To answer the third and fourth research questions, regression analyses were conducted. One model was developed for each self-concept domain containing student-related variables, yielding seven regression models. For each model, the independent variables and demographic variables that significantly correlated with the domain were entered simultaneously. Then, models were developed to determine the ability of teacher perceptions to predict each student domain. The only variable of actual teacher-perceptions that related to a student self-concept domain was Close Friendship. The results from this model are presented under the Close Friendship section. For all domains, Normal P-P Plots and residual plots were constructed and resulted in no serious violations of homogeneity of variance, independence, and/or normality. Linearity was satisfied by including only variables that shared a significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. Consequently, the data were deemed appropriate for regression analyses.

Scholastic competence. Variables that were found to correlate with Scholastic Competence were school level, GPA, discrimination, and self-perceived classmate support. Results were presented in Table 10. The reference categories in this model were “Middle School” for school level and “No Discrimination” for discrimination. The model was significant (F=11.579, df= 4, 56, p<.001) with all four variables explaining 45.3% (R²=.453) of the variance. The standard deviation of the residuals, or standard error (SE) was .530. The unstandardized partial slopes of the four variables were significantly different from zero: grade point average was the best predictor (\(b=.686, t=4.224, df=56\),
p<.001), followed by discrimination ($b=-.345, t=-2.361, df=56, p=.022$), school level ($b=-.356, t=-2.243, df=56, p=.029$), and classmate support ($b=.336, t=2.309, df=56, p=.025$). VIF values ranged from 1.056 to 1.211 indicating no collinearity problems.

Results indicated that students who had experiences of discrimination had significantly lower scholastic competence than students who did not, and that high school students had significantly lower scholastic competence than middle school students. Students with higher grade point average and higher classmate support had significantly higher scholastic competence.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients for Scholastic Competence Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Scholastic Competence
**Social acceptance.** The only variable that correlated significantly with Social Acceptance was self-perceived classmate support. The model was significant (F=28.851, df=1, 59, p<.001) with 32.8% (R²=.328, SE=.463) of the variance being explained by classmate support. As presented in Table 11, the unstandardized slope was significantly different from zero (b=.620, t=5.371, df=59, p<.001). Higher classmate support was associated with higher social acceptance. Because there was only one variable in the model, collinearity was not a problem (VIF=1.000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.275</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>3.377</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>2.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>5.371</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Dependent Variable: Social Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Athletic competence.** Gender and self-perceived classmate support significantly correlated with Athletic Competence and were entered into the model. The reference category for gender was “Male”. The model was significant (F=7.088, df= 2, 58, p=.002) with 19.6% (R²=.196, SE=.790) of the variation being predicted by the two variables. The unstandardized partial slopes of classmate support (b=.433, t=2.175, df= 58, p=.034) and gender (b=-.565, t=-2.757, df= 58, p=.008) were significantly different from zero (see
Table 12). Higher classmate support was associated with higher athletic competence. Furthermore, females had significantly lower feelings of athletic competence than did males. The VIF value for both variables was 1.018, indicating no problem with collinearity.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Coefficients for Athletic Competence Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unstandardized Coefficients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Athletic Competence

**Physical appearance.** Discrimination and self-perceived classmate support encompassed the Physical Appearance model (see Table 13). “No Discrimination” was the reference category for discrimination. The model was significant (F=4.894, df= 2, 58, p=.011) with 14.4% (R²=.144, SE=.690) of the variation being predicted by the two variables. The unstandardized partial slope of classmate support (b=.365, t=2.026, df= 58, p=.004) was significantly different from zero; however, discrimination (b=-.311, t=-1.680, df= 58, p=.098) was not significant and did not demonstrate additional predictive ability. This is a result of the significant intercorrelations between classmate support and discrimination. Because both variables were significantly correlated with Physical
Appearance the discrimination variable was retained in the model, and a statistical procedure presented by Dunlap and Landis (1998) was implemented to examine the importance of discrimination to Physical Appearance. For this model, the goal was to understand the underlying relationship rather than obtaining the most parsimonious model (Dunlap & Landis, 1998). Loadings, or structured coefficients, were calculated to determine how well each predictor correlates with the dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 12, discrimination is almost as strongly related to Physical Appearance as is classmate support. Therefore, the discrimination variable was retained in the model. Self-perceived classmate support and discrimination both contributed significantly to the explained variance in the model. The VIF value for both variables was 1.095, indicating no problem with collinearity.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.837</td>
<td>.674</td>
<td>2.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>-.311</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>-.214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Physical Appearance
**Behavioral conduct.** The Behavioral Conduct model included the variables teacher support, self-perceived classmate support, and GPA (see Table 14). The set of variables predicted 33.0% ($R^2=.330$, SE=.518) of the variance. A significant proportion of the total variation was predicted by the variables together ($F=9.365$, $df=3, 57, p<.001$). The unstandardized partial slopes for classmate support ($b=.307$, $t=2.250, df= 57, p=.028$) and GPA ($b=.447, t=2.720, df= 57, p=.009$) were significantly different from zero. The partial slope for teacher support ($b=.234$, $t=1.851, df= 57, p=.069$) was not significantly different from zero. While teacher support was significantly correlated with Behavioral Conduct, the variable did not have adequate predictive ability. This is a result of the significant intercorrelations between classmate support and teacher support. Because both variables were significantly correlated with Behavioral Conduct the teacher support variable was retained in the model, and structured coefficients were calculated (Dunlap & Landis, 1998) to obtain an understanding of the underlying relationship. As can be seen in Table 14, teacher support is equally related to Behavioral Conduct as is classmate support. Therefore, the teacher support variable was retained in the model. Self-perceived classmate support, self-perceived teacher support, and GPA significantly contributed to the variance in the Behavioral Conduct model. The VIF values ranged from 1.112 to 1.188, indicating no collinearity problems.
Table 14

Coefficients for Behavioral Conduct Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-.203</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Support</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Behavioral Conduct

Close friendship. Self-perceived classmate support was the only variable found to be significantly related to close friendship and was entered into the regression model. Classmate support predicted 19.6% ($R^2=.196$, SE=.576) of the variance and a significant proportion of the total variation in close friendship scores ($F=14.399$, $df=1$, $59$, $p<.001$). As can be seen in Table 15, the unstandardized slope was significantly different from zero ($b=.545$, $t=3.795$, $df=59$, $p<.001$). Higher classmate support significantly predicted higher close friendship scores.
Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.380</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>2.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Close Friendship

**Student self-perceived Close Friendship vs. teacher-perceived Close Friendship.** To explore the ability of teacher perceptions of students' Close Friendship to predict students’ self-perceived Close Friendship, regression analyses were conducted (see Table 16). Teacher perceptions predicted 26.6% (R^2=.266, SE=.523) of the variance in students’ Close Friendship scores. The model was significant (F=5.810, df=1, 16, p=.028), indicating that a significant proportion of the variation was predicted by teacher perceptions of Close Friendship. The unstandardized slope was significantly different from zero (b=.662, t=2.410, df=16, p=.028). Higher teacher perceptions of students’ ability to make close friends also resulted in higher students self-perceptions of ability to make close friends.
Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>1.037</td>
<td>-.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher perceived Close Friendship</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Global Self-worth. Two variables were found to significantly correlate with Global Self-worth: self-perceived classmate support and school level. The reference category for school level was “Middle School”. These two variables were able to predict 28.4% ($R^2=.284$, SE=.552) of the variance in the regression model. Furthermore, the variables predicted a significant proportion of the total variation in Global Self-worth ($F=11.479$, $df=2$, 58, $p<.001$). The unstandardized partial slopes for classmate support ($b=.505$, $t=3.640$, $df=58$, $p=.001$) and school level ($b=-.422$, $t=-2.605$, $df=58$, $p=.012$) were both significantly different from zero (see Table 17). High school students had significantly lower Global Self-worth than middle school students. Higher classmate support significantly predicted higher Global Self-worth. The VIF values for both variables were 1.018 indicating no problems with collinearity.

a. Dependent Variable: Close Friendship
Table 17

Coefficients\(^a\) for Global Self-worth Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>(Beta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.872</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate Support</td>
<td>.505</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Level</td>
<td>-.422</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>-.292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Dependent Variable: Global Self-worth
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school factors and multiple domains of self-concept in Arab American adolescents. Research with this population is scarce, especially research related to their school experiences. Only one study to date has investigated self-concept in Arab American adolescents (Al-Khatab, 1999; Moradi & Hasan, 2004); however, this study did not investigate the relationship of self-concept to external school factors, such as teacher and classmate social support and experiences of discrimination. Moradi and Hasan (2004) did examine the relationship between reports of discrimination and self-esteem; however, this study was conducted with a sample of adults, not adolescents.

This was the first study to examine the relationship between self-concept and perceived social-support from peers and teachers, teachers’ perceptions of the student, and experiences of discrimination in Arab American adolescents. Surveys were mailed to adolescents who volunteered to participate in the study. Each adolescent nominated a well-liked and respected teacher to complete a survey about his/her competencies. Both teacher and student were provided with pre-paid return envelopes. Completed surveys were returned separately to ensure confidentiality. A total of 61 students and 29 teachers participated in this study.
Descriptive characteristics of student and teacher variables

The means of the multiple self-concept domains obtained in this study were consistent with the findings of Al-Khatab (1999). While Al-Khatab (1999) interpreted means above 2.5 as positive self-concept, the current study utilized an interpretation scale similar to Kloomok and Cosden’s (1994) where means of 3.00 and above were considered a positive self-concept. The means of Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Behavioral Conduct, Close Friendship, and Global Self-worth indicated that students generally hold positive perceptions of themselves in those areas; however, means for Athletic Competence and Physical Appearance, indicated that students held negative perceptions of themselves in those areas. Al-Khatab (1999) and Harter (1985) noted that adolescents generally hold more negative perceptions of their athletic abilities and physical appearances relative to their perceptions of academic, social, behavioral and overall competencies. The reason for these findings should be further investigated; however, one likely rationale for this sample holding lower self-perceptions of their physical appearance may be related to their experiences of being treated differently because of the way they “look”. These experiences could contribute to the development of negative thoughts about their physical appearance. Consistent with this line of thought, many adolescents reporting discrimination reported being discriminated against because of the way they “looked” or dressed.

There is strong evidence that Arab American students, in general, are high achieving (Haboush, 2007; Kovach & Hillman, 2002; Samhan, 2007; Suleiman, 2001; Wingfield, 2006; Wingfield & Salam, 1993; Wray-Lake, et al., 2008). In this study, Arab American adolescents were asked to self-report their cumulative GPA. The mean
of all reported GPA’s was 3.63 on a 4.00 scale. While there were several students who reported a GPA lower than a 3.0, the majority of the sample reported above a 3.0. This finding is consistent with findings of the literature cited previously.

Teachers were asked to rate students’ actual behaviors and competencies to examine their perceptions of students. Within each teacher domain, obtained means indicated that teachers held positive perceptions of students, overall. In the instructions of how to complete the survey, teachers were told to skip questions in which they did not have enough information to answer. Inevitably, several teachers were not able to answer all of the items, especially the Close Friendship and Athletic Competence. Perhaps these teachers did not know the student well enough because they only have the student for a small portion of the day.

**Relationships of demographics, school factors and multiple domains of self-concept**

Several demographic variables were related to various self-concept domains including GPA, gender, and school level. There was a significant positive relationship between GPA, Scholastic Competence, Behavioral Conduct, and self-perceived teacher support. As mentioned earlier, Arabs are highly committed to educational achievement (Samhan, 2007); therefore, this may be why participants in this study had positive Scholastic Competence and high GPA scores on average. Research has long suggested a positive relationship between GPA and scholastic or academic competence (Brookover, et al., 1962; Hoge, et al., 1990). Whether higher achievement leads to higher competence or higher competence leads to higher achievement is still being investigated and remains unclear. The relationship between Behavioral Conduct and GPA has also been
demonstrated in the literature (Baydala, Rasmussen, Birch, Sherman, Wikman, Charchun, Kennedy, & Bisanz, 2009). Baydala, et al. (2009) suggest that positive self-perceptions of behavioral conduct may serve as an “academic enabler that supports academic achievement” (p. 29). Finally, perceived teacher support has been identified in multiple research studies as a critical component to students’ academic achievement (Martin, et al., 2007; Reddy, et al., 2003). This study provides further evidence that teacher support was important for the academic achievement of this sample of Arab American adolescents.

Gender was negatively related to Athletic Competence with females holding significantly lower perceptions of themselves than males. Similar results were obtained by researchers looking at other populations (Al-Khatab, 1999; Harter, 1985a; Thomson & Zand, 2007). It is not clear, however, why females would have lower perceptions of athletic abilities than males. Perhaps females’ lower perceptions of athletic abilities are related to the fact that women have fewer large venues available to them wherein they receive adulation from the crowds. Attendance at male sports events tends to be higher than female sports events. Given this, it would be harder for room to integrate positive perceptions of athletic abilities. This phenomenon warrants further investigation.

School level was negatively related to Scholastic Competence and Global Self-worth with middle school students holding significantly higher perceptions than high school students for both domains. Researchers examining the development of self-concept suggest that as individuals move through adolescence, their self-concept becomes more differentiated and more complicated (Delugach, et al., 1992; Ellis &
Davis, 1982; Harter, 1999; Rosenberg, 1986). Cantin and Boivin (2004) found that as students progressed into junior high school, their scholastic competence and global self-worth decreased. The authors speculate that a decrease in scholastic competence may be related to the increased academic expectations and changes in the school environment once these students enter middle school. Perhaps once students enter high school these demands increase further and the environment changes even more. Subsequently, their scholastic competence further decreases. Cantin and Boivin (2004) also suggested that students who had to cope with transitions, such as progressing to middle or high school, are at greater risk for maladjustment and decreases in global self-esteem. Adolescents have more difficulty determining who they are or what kind of person they want to be with different people. In turn, as they become older, their overall self-concept decreases. This may explain the difference in means by school level in the current sample: with increasing demands and need for coping strategies, these high school students felt less competent overall.

The correlations between the dependent variables were similar to the correlations that Harter (1988) reported for her samples in the development of the SPPA. Athletic competence was significantly and positively related to Social Acceptance and Physical Appearance. Adolescents who felt more athletic, also felt more socially accepted and that they were more physically attractive. Scholastic Competence was significantly related to Physical Appearance, Close Friendship, and Behavioral Conduct. Similar to Harter’s (1988) conclusion about the relationship between Scholastic Competence and Behavioral Conduct, adolescents who feel that they behave appropriately also report feelings of
doing well in school. Contrary to Harter’s (1988) speculations about school becoming less important to an individual’s popularity and peer status in the adolescent years, it seems that academic status was fairly relevant to popularity and peer status for this sample of adolescents. Behavioral Conduct and Close Friendship were also significantly related, indicating that adolescents who felt they were well-behaved also felt they were more able to develop close friendship with others. Finally, Global Self-worth was significantly positively related to all of the remaining domains, except for Athletic Competence. Similar to Harter’s findings, Athletic Competence was less highly related than the other domains and may indicate that being athletic for this sample did not influence how competent these students felt overall.

Research has long suggested that a person’s general self-concept is influenced by the attitudes he or she believes that others hold toward the self (Cooley, 1902). In this study, students were asked to rate their perceptions of support they receive from their classmates and teachers. Results indicated that, as expected, self-perceived classmate support was related to all seven self-concept domains; however, self-perceived teacher support was only related to Behavioral Conduct. Harter (1985) suggested that students in middle and high school are spending less time with teachers, whereas elementary students spend a full day with one teacher. When students transition to middle school they begin to strive for their classmates’ support more than their teachers and other adults. They no longer seek adults’ acceptance to feel competent as much as they seek their peers’ acceptance (Harter, 1990). In terms of Behavioral Conduct, however, self-perceived teacher support was equally as important as classmate support. Students who
felt they had higher teacher support also felt they were better well-behaved. This finding suggests that teachers played an important role in the behavioral conduct of these students. According to Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004), the provision of caring and supportive relationships by teachers is critical in student’s behavioral development.

Research also suggests that direct perceptions of others may relate to a person’s self-concept (Harter, 1999). In this study, teachers were asked to rate their perceptions of students’ behavior and competencies. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ competencies were examined in relation to students’ self-perceptions of their competencies. Research on the relationship of direct teacher perceptions of students and students’ self-concept is scarce; however, there is some evidence that teachers’ perceptions are directly related to students’ perceptions of themselves (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004; Hoge, Smit, & Hanson, 1990; Meltzer, et al., 2004). The only significant finding was the relationship between teachers’ perception of students’ ability to make close friends and the students’ self-perception of their ability to make close friends. No remaining relationships were significant; however, a positive trend was evident for all domains except Physical Appearance, indicating that students held negative perceptions of their physical appearance while their teachers held positive perceptions. From these results, one might assume that teacher perceptions may not be a critical factor in relation to students’ multiple domains of self-concept. Perhaps investigating these relationships with a larger sample, though, may provide more statistical power to make this conclusion.
The stigma hypothesis states that self-concept may be adversely affected in people of minority status who have experienced discrimination (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). The relationship between discrimination and self-concept were examined in the current study in a sample of Arab American students. Experience of discrimination was related to scholastic competence and physical appearance. Students who reported discrimination had lower Scholastic Competence and Physical Appearance means than students who reported no experience. Contrary to expected, discrimination was not related to social aspects of self-concept, such as Social Acceptance and Close Friendship. It seems that self-perceived classmate support triumphed over discrimination in these areas, and possibly served as a protective factor. These findings are consistent with Rejection-Identification model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), which hypothesizes “that individuals often respond to perceptions of discrimination by becoming more highly identified with their targeted ingroup, which can help to preserve psychological well-being in the face of societal devaluation” (Armenta & Hunt, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, it would be worthwhile to investigate identity in relationship to the social aspects of self-concept. The relationship between discrimination and self-concept and self-esteem has been documented by several studies (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Kovach & Hillman, 2002; Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Moradi and Hasan (2004) reported a relationship between recent racist events and lower self-esteem in Arab American adults. In a more recent study, Armenta and Hunt (2009) found that perceived personal discrimination was significantly related to personal self-esteem in Latina/Latino adolescents. Although the authors did not measure the direct
relationship between self-concept and discrimination, Kovach and Hillman (2002) found that Arab and African American students largely perceived discrimination as a reason for academic failure.

**Predictors of the multiple self-concept domains**

Results were not completely as expected pertaining to the ability of the independent variables, experience of discrimination, self-perceived classmate and teacher support, and teacher perceptions of student, to predict the multiple self-concept domains. Self-perceived classmate support seemed to play the most significant role in predicting the domains of self-concept, except Scholastic Competence. Several studies investigating social support also found that self-perceived classmate support was the most critical predictor when compared to parent, teacher, and friend support (Forman, 1988; Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). Self-perceived teacher support and actual teacher-perceptions were also expected to hold significant predictive abilities; however, this was not the case in this study.

The Scholastic Competence model was perhaps of most significant in this study. In terms of independent variables, GPA was the best predictor of Scholastic Competence followed by experience of discrimination, self-perceived classmate support, and school level, respectively. Experience of discrimination was a better predictor than classmate support for Scholastic Competence. This finding provides some statistical evidence and support for researchers’ claims that discrimination affects students’ academic self-concept and achievement (Al-Khatab, 1999; Suleiman, 2001).
As for social aspects of self-concept, self-perceived classmate support was the best and only predictor for Social Acceptance and Close Friendship of all the independent variables measured in this study. As mentioned earlier, the fact that discrimination was not related to these two domains may be related to the Rejection-Identification model as proposed by Branscombe, et al.(1999). This finding demonstrates the importance of classmate relationships in students’ perceptions of their social abilities.

Results for Athletic Competence were as expected in terms of self-perceived classmate support being the most significant predictor variable of the measured independent variables. However, in terms of demographic variables, gender was a better predictor of Athletic Competence than self-perceived classmate support, with females having significantly lower perceptions. Again, this phenomenon warrants further investigation.

Discrimination was expected to be the best predictor of Physical Appearance. While both classmate support and discrimination were significantly related to Physical Appearance, self-perceived classmate support was the only significant predictor of Physical Appearance. However, structured coefficients regarding these variables indicated strong correlations with the Physical Appearance. Consequently, one may conclude that classmate support and discrimination play an equally significant role in relation to students’ perceptions of their physical appearance.

Similarly, while GPA, self-perceived classmate support and self-perceived teacher support were significantly correlated with Behavioral Conduct, only classmate support and GPA were significant predictors of this domain. However, structured coefficients
indicated that teacher support contributed as much as classmate support to the variance in the model. Conclusively, students who reported higher GPA’s and higher classmate and teacher support also reported higher self-perceptions of behavioral conduct.

Self-perceived classmate support and school level were significantly correlated with Global Self-worth. As expected, classmate support was the best predictor of Global Self-worth, with higher levels of support predicting higher levels of Global Self-worth. School level was the next best predictor with high school students holding significantly lower perceptions of Global Self-worth.

**Implications for schools and school psychologists**

The results of this study suggest significant consequences for Arab American adolescents’ psychological well-being. Reported experiences of discrimination in the school environment from teachers and peers were associated with low self-perceptions in academic ability and physical appearance in this sample of Arab American students. In addition, self-perceived classmate support was related to all the domains of self-concept investigated in this study. Results suggest that the school environment is critical to the psychological development of these students. If students do not feel safe and feel a sense of belongingness in school, their self-concept may be adversely affected. Several studies have demonstrated this effect, qualitatively. Kenny and McEachern (2009) found that Black students in the sample had significantly lower self-concept than White students. Many of the Black students were Haitian and were considered the minorities in their school and were treated differently by their classmates, thereby creating a sense of isolation from the majority. A recent study by the National Education Association
investigating school environment effects in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender youth, suggests that students who do not feel safe in school and are alienated tend to drop out of school at a higher rate (Kim, Sheridan, & Holcomb, 2009). In this study, students reported being stigmatized by school staff, parents, and classmates because of their sexual orientation. Parents of these students tended to search for schools with supportive environments so their children would not be affected academically and/or socially. These cases may be similar to those of Arab American students in that Arab American students may feel isolated and unsafe in schools that are not set up to counter discrimination or stigmatism by staff or classmates. To mediate these consequences it is necessary to implement interventions to promote Arab American cultural awareness in the schools. Multiple strategies, as discussed in previous literature by Tabbah and Mendelson (2010), are outlined below.

The literature provides an outline of how best to serve Arab American children and their families in the schools when it comes to psychological and mental health (e.g., Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2004; Haboush, 2007; Palacios & Trivedi, 2009). These resources also provide a general overview of the Arab American culture. Haboush (2007) suggested strategies specific to school psychologists to help Arab American students, such as “educating school personnel about relevant cultural values as well as intervening at the individual and systems levels to foster safe learning environments” (p. 196). In other words, school psychologists must use culturally competent practices when working with Arab American children and their families. This is no different than strategies suggested for use with other minority groups.
Other literature provides specific strategies for schools to use in general with Arab American children. For example, Wingfield and Salam (1993) discussed strategies that schools may utilize to decrease discrimination towards Arab American children and adolescents. A main theme from this discussion was the utility of culturally relevant and representative curricula and textbooks. According to Schwartz (1999) and Suleiman (1996b), schools have not actively acknowledged Arab culture or tried to counteract stereotyping against Arabs. The problem with the inclusion of Arab culture and history in the curriculum of public schools is two-fold: it is insignificant or nonexistent in many situations (Wingfield, 2006); yet, when present it often contains inaccurate information about the culture and history of Arabs. Proof of this was presented in the reports of students from the current studies’ sample about relevant cultural materials presented at school. To counter this problem, Wingfield and Salam (1993) published a guide to help schools in the transformation of curriculum and instruction to include culturally relevant materials that may be beneficial to the needs of Arab American students. Arab American content can be easily added to courses currently being implemented in the curriculum (Wingfield, 2006). School psychologists may utilize this guide to help their schools incorporate accurate Arab American ethnic content into the curriculum. This may help counter discrimination in schools by helping to inform educators and students about the Arab American culture.

Wingfield and Salam (1993) also suggested that schools would benefit from requesting Arab American figures to participate in the provision of cultural knowledge to school personnel. These figures may teach culturally competent practices and help
schools create a school climate that is welcoming for Arab American students. School psychologists and other school personnel may also seek out Arab American organizations for help with workshops or conferences aimed at building awareness in their school system (Tabbah & Mendelson, 2010). Some examples include local American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee chapters, the Arab American Institute, and the Arab World and Islamic Relations organization. In addition, the National Network of Arab American Communities is composed of organizations based around the country that work to build cultural awareness in their communities. These organizations also offer resources and trainings to help teachers and school personnel develop cultural competence with regard to the Arab world and culture (Wingfield & Salam, 1993). By taking such action, school staff can also help their schools to actively work against prejudice and discrimination towards Arab American students.

**Limitations and directions for future research**

There were several potential limitations of this study. The first limitation was the use of a non-random, convenience sample. A convenience sample limited the generalizability of the results. In addition, the relatively sample size was a limitation to the study. This study warrants replication using larger, random sample of students to increase power and generalizability of the results. The second limitation was the exclusion of potentially related variables, as it was difficult to include every possible variable that may constitute a relationship. For example, the investigation of ethnic identity in relation to the various self-concept domains would have been interesting; especially in terms of the social aspects of self-concept to find whether or not identity
played a protective role. Third, the cross-sectional design may be considered a weakness by researchers. Longitudinal designs allow for multiple observations of subjects over a long period of time; hence, allowing researchers to observe changes in the variables. Future research should focus on using a longitudinal design to examine how changes in perceived social support, teacher ratings, and experiences of discrimination affect changes in students’ self concept. Finally, self-report measures constituted a weakness in that response bias is difficult to control. Although Harter’s surveys were developed especially to control for response bias, the experiences of discrimination questionnaire does not have that same quality. The researcher could not control the way participants responded to this questionnaire one way or another. It also was not possible for the researcher to control for social desirability bias, in which the participants responded with a socially desirable answer. Future research should focus on using different means of collecting this type of information by controlling response and socially desirability biases.
References


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Appendix A: Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and Demographics Questionnaire

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF:

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Arab American, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, American Indian, Mexican American, Caucasian or White, Italian American, and many others. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be ________________

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

(4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs. ______
2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group. ______
3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me. ______
4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership. ______
5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. ______
6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. ______
7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. ______
8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. ______
9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group. ______
10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. ______
11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. ______
12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. ______
1.) How old are you? _____________________

2.) What grade are you in now? _________________

3.) Do you go to a private school or public school? Circle one below.
   - Public
   - Private

4.) Are you in middle school or high school? ______________________

5.) What state do you live in? _______________________________

6.) What city or town do you live in? ____________________________

7.) Are you male or female? Please circle one:   MALE       FEMALE

8.) What religion do you practice? Please circle one:
   a. Christianity
   b. Islam
   c. Judaism
   d. No religion
   e. Other religion: Please specify __________________________

9.) What country or countries do your parents come from?

   Mother: __________________________

   Father: __________________________

10.) Are you first, second or third generation Arab American? Please circle one.

       a. First generation
       b. Second generation
       c. Third generation
11.) There is a mail packet that has “Teacher” written on the front of the envelope. Please pick a teacher that you respect and like and give this envelope to him or her. Tell your teacher that you are in a study that is asking you to give the envelope to him or her and that the study needs some information from him or her. If you do not have a teacher that you respect and like please check the box below.

☐ I DO NOT have a teacher that I like and respect at school.

OR

☐ I DO have a teacher that I like and respect at school and I have given him/her the envelope that says “Teacher” on it.
Appendix B: Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination Survey

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL

1.) Sometimes people treat other people badly and/or differently because of their ethnicity, race, gender, religion or other things. Has anyone treated you badly or differently in your school because of your ethnicity or being Arab American? Please circle one.

   a. Yes
   b. No (If No, Skip to Question #7)

If yes, please describe what happened on the lines below. If you need more space please use the back of this paper.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2.) If yes, how much did this affect you on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 3 (very much)? Please circle one.

   1---------------------2-------------------3
   Not at all              A little bit           Very much

3.) If yes, how did this make you feel?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
4.) Did it make you feel like you did not belong in your school? Please circle one.
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #1)

5.) Did it change the way you felt about your classmates?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #1)

6.) Did it change the way you felt about your teachers?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #1)

7.) Now think about other people who are close to you in your life. Has someone close to you ever been treated badly or differently in their school because of their ethnicity or being Arab American? Please circle one.
   a. Yes
   b. No (If No, skip to Question # 13)

If yes, please describe what happened on the lines below. If you need more space please use the back of this paper.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
8.) If yes, how much did this affect you on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 3 (very much)? Please circle one.

1---------------------2-------------------3
Not at all           A little bit           Very much

9.) If yes, how did this make you feel?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

10.) Did it make you feel like you did not belong in your own school? Please circle one.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #7)

11.) Did it change the way you felt about your own classmates? Please circle one
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #7)

12.) Did it change the way you felt about your own teachers? Please circle one.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not applicable (circle this if you answered NO to question #7)
Now I want you to think about your classes and what you learn in school.

13.) Does your school teach about the Arab American culture either in your classes or through events like cultural awareness week? Please circle yes or no.
   a. Yes
   b. No

14.) If you circled yes, do you think that what is taught about the Arab culture is right or true? Please circle yes or no.
   a. Yes
   b. No

If you circled no for #14, can you tell me what they teach about the culture that is wrong?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If there is anything else you would like to share, please use the rest of this page and backs of pages. Thank you!!