2012

Factors Associated with Educational Mobility;Voices of Highly Transient Elementary Students

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Recommended Citation

Vaslavsky, Rebecca Anne, "Factors Associated with Educational Mobility;Voices of Highly Transient Elementary Students" (2012). *ETD Archive*. 296.
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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY:

VOICES OF HIGHLY TRANSIENT ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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May 2002

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May 2006

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION:

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

At the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

December, 2012

This dissertation has been approved for

the Office of Doctoral Studies,

College of Education and Human Services

and the College of Graduate Studies by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Frankie. Momma loves you very much.

Follow Your Dream

By: Amanda Bradley

Follow your dream.

Take one step at a time and don't settle for less,

Just continue to climb.

Follow your dream.

If you stumble, don't stop and lose sight of your goal

Press to the top.

For only on top can we see the whole view,

Can we see what we've done and what we can do;

Can we then have the vision to seek something new,

Press on.

Follow your dream.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the people who have supported me during this long journey. First, and foremost I thank my family. Whether you are family by blood, or family by choice, I could not have accomplished this dissertation without you. I thank my daughter, Frankie for her constant energy and reminders about what is really important in life. Frankie, you give me a reason to wake up each morning and to be thankful for my most precious gift and accomplishment in life – you. My mother has borne the brunt of my struggles and has provided me with love, support, guidance, positive thoughts and above all, perspective. Mom, the greatest gift you have ever given me is the desire to help others and to stand up for those whose voices are not being heard, valued or recognized.   My father has been a "walking advertisement" for higher education for as long as I can remember. All he ever wanted was for his daughters to make it "one step more" than he did. His faith in me and his unconditional love during many of my life struggles has helped me to reach my goal. I could not have completed this journey without the love and support of my two sisters. I always have said that my parent's greatest gift to me was giving me Mandy and Jacqui. Mandy, you provided me with peace of mind when I needed you to take care of Frankie, a shoulder to lean on when I needed to cry, and many humorous remarks when I needed to laugh (e.g. "It must be lonely at the top." and "This is the worst dissertation ever!"). Jacqui, you have supported my efforts along this journey and constantly checked in on me to see how I was doing at each phase. Miles separate us physically, but I have always felt your love as if you were right next to me. I also thank my brothers-in-law, godmother, aunts and

participate in this study and for trusting me to report the voices of highly mobile students

so that we can learn more about their experiences.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY:

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ABSTRACT

Student mobility – students changing schools for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level – is often correlated with negative academic, social and emotional consequences (Sanderson, 2004). Reporting transient students' voices and their experiences in the early grades is crucial to providing educators and other school personnel with highly valuable qualitative data of the struggles and coping strategies of these students that they can then use to craft prevention and intervention strategies. This study describes the experiences of highly mobile, urban elementary school students and provides educational professionals with an in-depth view of mobile students' experiences. Using a phenomenological approach, fourth and fifth grade highly mobile (have changed schools at least three times) students (n=15) were interviewed. Analyzing interview data involved searching for themes from students' responses. Analysis revealed an emphasis on the following domains: facilitating factors, complicating factors, academic factors and needs/suggestions.

Participants reported that school personnel, family members, friends and peers provided assistance measures assistance during their transitions. Several participants mentioned that coping strategies and seeing the benefits of a school change proved to be helpful during transitions. Participants reported that challenges often included anxiety about school changes, bullying, leaving friends and others behind, and obstacles in their home environment. Participants mentioned challenges related to academic life at school

including attendance and differences in curriculum and grades between schools attended. Participants revealed several ways that they would assist mobile students if they were given the chance (as a principal, teacher, student, etc.) Students mentioned helping them to feel safe and protected, giving encouraging and supportive advice and helping them make connections at their new school.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student mobility – students moving from school to school for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level – is widespread in the United States (Rumberger, 2003). In fact, The United States has the highest mobility rates of all developed countries (Sanderson, 2004), and these rates are correlated with negative academic, social and emotional consequences in the school environment. A fifth grade student from the current study was asked to explain how she felt when she transferred to her new school – "I was kind of scared that nobody would like, nobody would recognize me, like it seemed like I was invisible." Also invisible were the lived experiences of these students in the current literature. Only one study (Rhodes, 2008) was found that used students' voices to deepen the level of understanding of the mobility experience. This study focused on high school students' perceptions of the mobility experience. To date, there have been no studies that have focused on representing the voices of younger students who are experiencing high levels of mobility. Reporting highly transient students' voices and their experiences in the early grades is crucial to providing educators and other school personnel with highly valuable qualitative data of the potential struggles and coping strategies of these young students that they can then use to craft prevention and intervention strategies.

Reasons for Mobility

Imperative to understanding mobility is understanding the reasons *why* the student left a particular school (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). In a California study (Rumberger, Larson, Ream & Palardy, 1999) parents listed three main reasons for moving their children to another school: they moved to another residence, they (students or families) wanted to switch schools, or they were asked or forced to leave their school (often for disciplinary reasons).

Some mobility research has focused on the reasons that many students are "uprooted" and shifted to another school. Gutloff (1998) claims that, while families often move for a variety of reasons, most of the blame is directed toward family instability and poverty (1998). Findings from a study by the Council for Aid to Education list unemployment, immigrant status and a shortage of low income/affordable housing as being three key factors contributing to mobility (Kerbow, 1996). Kerbow posits that those who change schools sometimes leave for "exit reasons", such as trouble with other students, teachers or academic difficulties, and sometimes for "attraction reasons", such as better academic, sports or extracurricular programs that are offered. Other research (Cookson, 1994; Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman, 1996) expands on the "attraction reasons" by stating that the rise in educational mobility is partly the result of increases in opportunities to choose alternatives to public schooling such as charter schools.

It is not exclusively residential moves that play a role in the transience of our students. Recent research has also unveiled some of the schools' role in mobility. Overcrowding, class size reduction, suspension/expulsion policies, school choice and the overall academic and social climate are all suspected of playing a role (Rumberger, 2003). Kerbow (1996) adds reasons such as lack of safety, trouble with other students, and other

dissatisfactions with their previous school. In addition, some students exit a school in favor of an alternative school that seems especially attractive.

Across the nation, many districts are contemplating closing school buildings to save money. According to Consortium Research Report (2009), teachers, parents and other community members have become increasingly unhappy with the number of school closings. This frustration is understandable given that the receiving schools do not look much different from the schools that have been closed and given that some receiving schools are later closed for academic underachievement themselves. Further, some of the higher achieving schools, because they were not adequately prepared to deal with high numbers of new students, often turned away displaced students. The closing of schools leaves some students displaced, which can also lead to higher levels of mobility. According to the Consortium Report, displaced students were more mobile than they were before their school closed and were found to be more mobile than the comparison group (those students that were not displaced). It is further suggested in this report that students who were forced to change schools due to school closings may have found it hard to fit into the new schools, thereby prompting a cycle of further mobility.

According to Swanson and Schneider (1999), researchers often attribute the negative outcomes experienced by students who switch residences to the challenges associated with adjusting to a new neighborhood and new school environment. They believe that while the processes of changing schools and changing residences likely share some important characteristics, there may also be critical differences between the two. They posit three distinct types of student mobility: movers (involves change in residence only), changers (involves change in schools only) and leavers (involves change residences and schools concurrently).

Research indicates that elementary students are more likely to move than high school students (Black, 2006). The 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that 34 percent of all students in the fourth grade, 21 percent of all students in the eighth grade, and 10 percent of students in the twelfth grade changed schools at least once in the previous two years (Black, 2006). Knowledge of elementary students' experiences from the current study will help fill this gap and provide educational professionals in the urban environment with a thick description representing the academic life of the highly mobile student. Representation of mobile elementary students' perspectives may improve educators' abilities to develop and implement strategies to mitigate the negative effects of mobility.

Student mobility is commonplace in the United States and affects large numbers of students, families and schools (Rumberger et al., 1999). The causes and consequences of this phenomenon are very complicated. Although it is sometimes assumed that mobility is the inevitable result of family relocation, some mobility results from the policies and practices of schools and districts (i.e. open enrollment, overcrowded schools, school closings, vouchers/magnet schools and other schools of choice).

The Relationship Between Mobility and Achievement

Regardless of the reasons for transfers, highly mobile students have a much higher probability of experiencing academic, social, and emotional problems compared to less mobile students (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). For example, students who move frequently have higher absentee rates (twenty percent). This results in their missing valuable academic lessons and content (Walls, 2003). The academic consequences associated with high mobility are severe. It may take four to six months for a mobile student to recover academically from a transfer (Walls, 2003).

Further, according to a study from the American Medical Association (1993) students who move frequently are significantly more likely to fail a grade.   Finn (1989) concludes that unless students are able to feel a sense of belonging to their school and feel welcomed, respected and valued by their peers and school staff, they may begin the disengagement process, which could lead to various academic and social problems. Evidence also suggests that highly mobile students experience lower academic achievement, higher retention rates, higher chances of being referred to special education and lower graduation rates (Rumberger, 2003). Findings from Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano and Flemming (2008) indicate that changing school during the elementary years predicts declines in classroom participation and academic performance, even when potentially confounding predictors are included in the models. Mobility not only impacts the students who change schools; it also impacts classrooms and schools that work with mobile students.

 Schools With High Proportions of Mobile Students

Sanderson (2004) posits that high mobility rates are linked with deep consequences not just for the mobile students, but also for their stable classmates and the schools' overall academic attainment. High student turnover is correlated with a host of added challenges for teachers and schools. Highly mobile schools in many urban areas throughout the United States are dealing with a "revolving door phenomenon" (Conniff, 1998). Some highly mobile schools can experience up to a 50% turnover rate in a single year. Such high levels of transfers can be disruptive to a school's academic routine and are associated with schools experiencing depressed levels of student performance (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). Further, schools with high student turnover rates are more likely to experience problems matching needed services to students in a timely

manner, are more prone to classroom disruptions caused by students coming and going throughout the year, and often incur significant costs: continually processing students in and out of school and covering the costs of uncovered textbooks and other school materials (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). According to a report from the U.S. Department of Education (2002), schools that house large proportions of transient students often have lower expectations of student performance, less consistent standards and assessments, and less experienced teachers than other schools.

Teachers who work with mobile students have the challenge of integrating newcomers into already established classes several times throughout the year (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). New students need to become part of a class (or classes) that have already built a history, including a sense of purpose, a common understanding of rules/procedures that guide activities and learning, and a shared knowledge base acquired from previous instruction. This challenge is complicated because new students bring educational histories and knowledge of subject matter that may or may not match up with the shared experiences of the class (or classes) they enter. Teachers must contend with the difficulties of integrating new students in a way that maintains continuity in learning for both the new student and the rest of the class.

Responses and Interventions

To improve outcomes for mobile students, a vast array of practices have been suggested, including: intensive tutoring (Jason, Weine, Johnson, Warren-Scohlbergh, Fillippelli, Turner & Lardon, 1992), informing parents about the possible problems that can result from mobility, limiting policies such as redistricting that contribute to unnecessary mobility (Rumberger, 2003), better preparing and supporting teachers and administrators who work in highly mobile schools (Conniff, 1998), providing a student

"buddy" and other welcoming supports for mobile students (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990) and building relationships (between schools, local agencies and families) that can help foster a sense of stability and support on behalf of mobile students' needs.

Even with an awareness of the negative relationship between high mobility and achievement, many schools do not have systematic programs to help transient students through a potentially very difficult transition period (Nelson, Simoni, & Adelman, 1996). Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, and Splittgerber (2000) suggest that educators can do a great deal to facilitate successful school transitions, though, unfortunately, few efforts have been made to do so. Researchers have indicated that schools play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of mobility and suggest that school personnel should be doing more to support students, especially given the high level of risk associated with school transfers (Mantzicopoulos & Knutson, 2000; Nelson et al. 1996). While high transient rates are considered to be commonplace in many school districts (Temple & Reynolds, 1999), can schools dismiss this problem as uncontrollable and thus abandon efforts to mitigate its effects? According to Temple and Reynolds (1999), a higher level of awareness regarding mobility's negative relationship to academic achievement could lead to a greater effort among education professionals to assist students going through this experience.

The findings from Gruman et al. (2008) and Jason et al. (1992) suggest that effective interventions for transfer students should include 1) intensive tutoring of school personnel to address the academic deficits of students and 2) professional training to raise awareness of hardships encountered by mobile students. This may help to increase caring responses, and make peer acceptance in the classroom a priority. Efforts are also being made in some schools and districts to align curricular components and instructional

pacing guides that may help students who travel from school to school within the same district (and in some cases neighboring districts) to adjust to academic content. With a district-wide curriculum in place, children who move frequently are more likely to find their new classmates at (or close to) the same place in their coursework as the ones they left (Stover, 2000). While this may help students fall more easily into the academic curriculum, there are potential dangers in the use of these types of practices. Such practices have the potential to be beneficial, but we must remember that student learning is at the center of our efforts as opposed to keeping up with the rest of the building, district, state, etc. Educational professionals must take caution to ensure that lessons are not being rushed through or hurried just to keep up with the pacing guide. They must also make sure that they allow time for re-teaching and revisiting of difficult concepts and higher level thinking and questioning that will allow for meaningful learning to occur.

According to Gruman et al. (2008), teacher support is related to children's positive attitude toward school but is particularly important for those children who experience multiple school changes. Therefore it is imperative that the educational community better provide for the needs of transient students and ensure appropriate supports for smooth transitions to occur. These efforts might be even more effective through the utilization of voices of highly transient students, such as the ones represented in the current study. The current study helped uncover what has been invisible – the facilitating and complicating factors of the mobility experience as well as the needs and suggestions of highly transient elementary students.

Inconsistencies in the Research

The relationship between student mobility and various school related outcomes has been researched to a moderate degree; however, the results from these studies often

produce contrasting and/or inconclusive findings (Jennings, Kovalski, & Behrens, 2000). Despite its importance, there is disagreement among researchers about how to calculate mobility and this disagreement results in different ways of defining it. According to Heinlein and Shinn (2000), mobility is difficult to define and quantify. They state that researchers have included aspects such as cause, distance, amount, regency and location when studying mobility. They also state that while the number of moves is the factor most often specified in the literature, even this factor is not straightforward and has multiple definitions.

Rhodes (2008) classified "high mobility" as having changed schools three or more times in addition to promotional moves, and similarly, Temple and Reynolds (1999) and Sanderson (2004) studied the relationship between mobility (as measured by the number of times a student moves) and the academic achievement of individual students. On a different note, Heywood, Thomas & White, (1997) computed mobility at the classroom level and entitled it *aggregate mobility* (defined as the sum of entrants and exits in a particular classroom) while Nakagawa, Stafford, Fisher & Matthews (2002) studied "city migrants" – students who move numerous times throughout the year from school to school within the same district or between neighboring districts. The different methods and calculations used by researchers are only the first of many obstacles one may come across when researching mobility. Because researchers have studied the same topic in different ways, it is difficult to compare their findings.

Jennings et al. (2000) report that the lack of consistency in defining mobility limits researchers' ability to determine the effects of mobility as a predictor of academic success. There is also evidence that not all schools and districts are required to record or collect data on mobility. According to Sanderson (2004), although school districts often

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report some form of student mobility rate, findings from the state department of education research and assessment officials disclose that few state departments of education report student mobility rates; therefore national data on the subject is particularly scarce. Adding to this point, Nelson et al. (1996) argue that scarcity of longitudinal studies on this topic is due to the schools' insufficient system of tracking students who have left, often resulting in incomplete data.

While the majority of the research has shown mobility to be negatively associated with achievement (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989; Kerbow, 1996; Nelson et al., 1996), earlier research by Barrett and Noble (1973) failed to find sufficient data relating mobility to student performance in school. Other researchers suggest that mobility interacts with variables such as socioeconomic status (Blane & Spicer, 1978 as cited in Jennings et al., 2000) and still others (Heinlein &Shinn, 2000; Nelson et al., 1996) suggest that poor school functioning and mobility may both be associated with another factor – at-risk family traits.

Although the existing literature on mobility suggests that 1) Mobility (though often hard to define and calculate) is a crucial variable that is associated with achievement, and 2) Children who are more mobile experience a disadvantage in academic achievement when compared to their stable peers (Audette & Algozzine, 2000; Jennings et al., 2000; Kerbow, 1996). Through the existing literature we learned that mobile students are likely to encounter educational hardships, but as a teacher, I believed we could really find out what the mobility experience entails by asking the students themselves to talk about their transitions. It was crucial for these experiences to be documented in the literature because, according to Rhodes (2008), it is students (and teachers) who have borne the brunt of high mobility without support. Further, if we wish

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to see any positive change in school procedures or policies that support mobile students and their schools, it is important that we look at research that includes an analysis of data from those who have been on the front lines of that experience.

Qualitative Studies on Mobility

Before the current study, there had been three studies that used (at least partially) qualitative methods to obtain important information on the topic of mobility. Through teacher interviews, Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) concluded that teachers view student mobility as unpredictable, chaotic, and sometimes disruptive. Results also indicated that teachers who were interviewed were making efforts to integrate new students quickly so that they could become part of the classroom community as soon as possible, but this was often seen as a challenge due to the short notice they were given regarding new students. While teachers shared their concerns and frustrations regarding working in a highly mobile school (i.e. gaps in instruction, waiting for paperwork to catch-up with new students, having to re-teach material, extra paperwork and prep-work, etc.), they also shared their strategies on how to cope with these issues and best help the new students entering their rooms. Their strategies included assigning new students a classroom "buddy" to help them learn rules and procedures of the school and classroom, being as prepared as possible with extra supplies readily available and formally assessing them to see where they are academically.

While studies that utilize the teacher perspective on mobility are important, equally so are the perspectives of other professionals in the educational arena. As part of their study, Nakagawa et al. (2002) interviewed teachers, support staff, and administrators from three highly mobile schools to determine what their perceptions of mobility were as well as how they were reacting to the highly mobile school environment.

The general responses by school personnel to the issue of high mobility rates fell into one of three categories – 1) No control. For example, a principal stated that he had no control over kids coming and going and that his school did not address the issue nor provide mobile students with any type of assistance measures. 2) Isolate the problem. Late-entering students were placed in a transition classroom for 6 to 8 weeks where they were assessed for proper placement and then eventually transitioned into a "regular classroom" 3) Address school and student needs. This school had a "welcome room" for newly arriving students. They were in this welcome room for one week, quickly assessed for academics and integrated into a regular classroom. Cultural activities were organized to help students and parents feel welcome at the school. Other helpful services were provided to mobile students and their families such as counseling and tutoring. While these two studies (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Nakagawa et al., 2002) provided qualitative data from the perspective of school personnel, only one study to date had utilized students' voices to gain further insights into the transition experience.

Rhodes identified de facto learning as the process that occurs when the student's own experiences (such as those that occur during the transfer process), overtake the formal curriculum, providing informal and often unexpected opportunities for learning that can overshadow, compete with, or even supersede academic learning (Rhodes, 2008). She utilized the voices of highly mobile urban high school students and found that they experience school and learning in ways different from than their stable classmates. Repeated moves were associated with discontinuity of instruction as well as relationships with teachers and peers. The students in this study expressed their achievement challenges; however, social and emotional needs (i.e. fitting in and making friends) were their primary areas of concern when arriving at a new school.

In Rhodes' (2008) study we heard directly from highly transient students that a good (transfer) situation was one in which the classroom teacher was introduced to them and they were allowed to converse, ask questions and make a connection before they enter a new classroom. Students also spoke of introductory type activities and games that teachers sometimes utilized which helped them to learn students' names and a little something about them that they could later use in conversation with them. A bad transfer experience left them feeling "invisible" on the first day because nobody really acknowledged the fact that they were there and they were given no introductions at all. Some students believed the transfer experience resulted in stress, insecurity, and a lack of focus because they were often trying to play "catch up" in both academics and social relationships.

Students from this study revealed that there is often a lack of staff assistance in supporting and accommodating the mobile student through the most intimidating aspect of school change, that is, negotiating the school social maze (Rhodes, 2008). Therefore, because students viewed the establishment of peer relationships as important following a school transfer, educational professionals should not attempt to short cut the social adjustment process by diving in too quickly (or exclusively) to the academic concerns. Following this study (Rhodes, 2008) the author was left with some answered questions that my research attempted to uncover – Which intake processes were helpful? How can high mobility schools provide more "student friendly" intake processes? Including student experiences and their perceptions as part of the foundations of the research added a very different perspective to those already gathered from school personnel. And while Rhodes (2008) study used perceptions from highly transient high school students, what was missing were the perceptions of younger students.

Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the *ecology of human development* as involving the study of mutual interactions being human beings and the properties of the environmental systems in which they interact. The theoretical framework for this study was influenced by Bronfenbrenner's perspective. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory defines development as a continuous interaction between developing organisms within their environment/context. That is, interconnections occur between individual and environment, as well as within different levels of environment. Further, because this study focuses on highly mobile students, we are further drawn to Bronfenbrenner's view on transitions. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), transitions involve changes in one's setting, roles, or expectations. Thus, when children change schools, they experience an ecological transition. One could argue that when changing schools there is the likelihood of a change in one's setting, roles, *and* expectations.

The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) views the individual as being nested within a set of interconnected systems. The multisystemic levels include individual factors, such as roles and characteristics of the individual (microsystem), the immediate social environment, such as peer groups and family structure (mesosystem), and the social environment with which the individual does not interact directly, but does have an impact on the individual, such as school board and school administrative issues (exosytem), and finally at the outermost level (macrosystem), are the broad societal issues components, such as socioeconomic status and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory evolved to a *bio-ecological theory of human development* to emphasize a child's biology as the primary environment fueling his or her development. In the theory, development is defined "as the person's evolving conception of the ecological

environment and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover sustain, or alter its properties" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 9). Most importantly, this theoretical model acknowledges that humans do not develop in isolation but in relation to their family, home, school, community and society. Each of these ever-changing and multilevel environments, as well as interactions among them, plays a crucial role in an individual's development. How parents, caregivers, teachers and politicians do their work makes a critical difference in the development of young children.

The goodness-of-fit between the individual and the environment influences whether outcomes (i.e. successful transition to a new school) are successful or strained. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework can be utilized so that new knowledge, understanding and interventions regarding the experiences of highly mobile elementary students can occur at the appropriate systems level and to better ensure that more transitions are successful for students. Because students' experiences regarding mobility are very complex in nature (and the factors that influence student mobility expand outward from the individual) reflecting on Bronfenbrenner's theory provided a more in-depth theoretical lens. I used this as a tool to describe the experiences of mobile students in a multidimensional manner.

The purpose of the study was to describe the mobility experience by utilizing the underrepresented voices of highly transient students. The lived experiences of these students may better prepare school professionals to make conscientious efforts to recognize and prepare for highly mobile students' social and emotional needs. In doing so, schools may be more adequately equipped to facilitate successful transitions for these students. The overarching research question for this study was: What are the lived

experiences of highly mobile elementary students? Listed below are the four sub

questions that further guided my research.

Research Questions

      1.   What are the facilitating factors associated with mobility?

      2.   What are the complicating factors associated with mobility?

      3.   What are the school achievement implications associated with mobility?

      4.   What are the needs of highly mobile students?

Hypothesis

It was likely that the facilitating factors associated with mobility would include,

but would not be limited to, a student's family members and friends, his/her school

environment, teachers/principals and other staff and his/her classmates. It was also likely

that the complicating factors would include the same factors as listed above. I expected

that struggling with grades, attendance, and keeping up with school/home work would be

academic implications of mobility. I also believed that mobile elementary students

would share concerns about making friends and fitting in just as Rhodes (2008) found of

high school students. Lastly, because there was evidence through the existing research

and from my own teaching experiences, that efforts were being made to assist mobile

students, I believed the students would unveil examples of these interventions. I also

thought they would share which ones they liked and/or disliked and thought examples

might include teachers and students greeting them on their first day, having a "buddy" to

help them on first day or through the first week, having supplies ready for them, etc. I

was most interested in finding out mobile students' suggestions because this was likely to

bring to the forefront current methods that are of assistance to mobile students as well as

new ideas on how to help make transition a better experience for students.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to elementary students from a large, urban district in a Mid-western state. For this study, I interviewed fifteen highly mobile students from the 4th and 5th grade. To be considered highly mobile, these students must have made at least three non-traditional moves in their academic lives thus far. Non-traditional moves were defined as moves that were *not* caused by "traditional" occurrences of a child's academic life (i.e. a child moved from a K-2 building to a 3-5 building as he/she enters third grade). My participants varied by gender, age, grade level, family composition, and experience.

Limitations

While this study sought to reveal students' mobility experiences, there were recognizable limitations. A relatively small sample size (n=15) made it somewhat difficult to generalize findings. Also, the expressive language skills of younger students contributed to the quality of the responses given during the interviews. My selection procedures were somewhat limiting in that I selected only students that were capable (from asking their teachers) if they were be able to verbally express rich data regarding their experiences.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student mobility – students making non-promotional school changes – has become commonplace in many school districts throughout the United States (Rumberger, 2003). While there are several different types of student mobility such as change in residences, change in schools, change in residence and schools; the evidence supports the notion that any type of mobility requires a period of adjustment on the part of the student (San Antonio, 2004) and that mobility is correlated with negative threats to academic achievement and the school environment (Biernat & Jax, 1999; Kerbow, 1996; Rumbereger, 1998; Sanderson, 2004). Students who transfer schools during the academic year are bringing a great deal of stress with them (Sanderson, 2004) and moving from school to school often elicits feelings and experiences of uncertainty, frustration, major anxiety and academic failure (Queen, 2002). While there are many inconsistent findings in some of the existing mobility research, possibly due to varying ways to define and calculate mobility, the majority of researchers (Kerbow, 1996; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Paik & Phillips, 2002) have found negative consequences associated with high levels of student mobility not just for the mobile students themselves but for the schools they attend as well. Because of these findings, some research (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990;

Nakagawa et al., 2002) has addressed the ways schools are attempting to assist with this phenomenon by making valiant efforts to create a welcoming environment and finding various creative ways to gain and maintain rapport with students. Further, there are some (though few) studies (Rhodes, 2008; Temple & Reynolds, 1999) that take a qualitative approach to better understanding issues regarding high levels of mobility. Further qualitative research that focuses on students' perspectives of this complex issue was needed to understand the true nature of the experience.

Reasons for Mobility

Every year one in six persons in the United States changes residences (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). The mobility rates for young children of elementary school age parallel those for the U.S. population, however, low-income children who are the most (economically) disadvantaged are the most mobile (Nelson et al., 1996). The occurrence of student mobility varies by race, ethnicity, and family income (Rumberger, 2003). For example, one study found that 45% of Black fourth grade students and 41% of Hispanic American students changed schools in the last two years, while only 33% of Asian American and 27% of White fourth grade students changed schools (Schneider, Schiller & Coleman, 1996). Further, 43% of economically disadvantaged students switched schools in the last two years yet only 26% of students who were not economically disadvantaged switched schools (as based on child's eligibility for free/reduced lunch).

According to Rumberger (2003), mobility seems to be directly related to family structure. Families without both parents have higher incidences of residential moves (Tucker, Marx, & Long, 1998) and higher rates of school moves (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Foster care students are also more likely to move and experience longer delays in these transfers than their non-foster peers (Conger & Finkelstein, 2003).

Mantzicopoulos and Knutson (2000) studied the relationship of two mobility indices (school changes and parental perceptions of mobility effects) to second grade academic achievement. Their sample consisted of 90 children (40 boys and 50 girls) who had attended Head Start and then moved on to public elementary schools. School mobility was defined as the number of school transfers over three years. Participants were 90 children (and their mothers) from three cohorts (n=35, n=36, n=19) who attended a Mid-western suburban community Head Start center. The majority of the children were White (78%). The minority groups included African American (19%), Hispanic (1%) and Biracial (2%). As part of the study, parents' responses to the mobility questionnaire were used to provide descriptive information about the circumstances surrounding the family moves. According to the data collected, the majority of families (79%) had moved within city limits during the three years of the study. About 2% of the families had moved outside the state at least once, while the remaining families had moved somewhere within the state.

Parents were asked to comment on the reasons they moved. About 66% reported they moved because they were seeking a better place to live and nine mothers reported they moved for a better job opportunity. Additional reasons noted included (a) cost considerations (20 responses); (b) forced to move (14 responses); (c) a new household was formed (24 responses); (d) their home was bought or sold (12 responses) and (f) expired rental lease (9 responses). This study is consistent with other work on mobility (Kerbow, 1996) in that the results indicate that the majority of families that are moving are doing so within the city limits. Most students shifted within the same school system with a radius of less than five miles.

There are reasons for mobility that extend beyond those that are linked with residential moves. The following section will shed light on the notion that educational policies of schools play a role in mobility rates as well. Although public schools have little, if any, control over the characteristics of students, resources, and structural features, they *do* have control over their organization and management, teaching practices, and the climate they create for students' learning (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). Rumberger and Thomas (2000) argue that it is not uncommon for schools with high percentages of minorities to "get rid of" difficult students by expulsion or other modes of forced transfers so that they do not have to be accountable for them when test day arrives.

School choice (vouchers, magnet schools, open enrollment policies) plays a role in the numbers of students transferring schools. Many states now have choice programs that allow parents to transfer their children to another public school district (Welsch, Statz & Skidmore, 2010). Schools and school districts differ according to range of factors including teacher quality, composition of peers, achievement levels and other components that make a school or district more or less attractive to a given student (or the student's family).

The Relationship Between Mobility and Achievement

According to Scully, Tosi & Banning (2000), the Social Readjustment Scale or SRRS (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), consisting of 43 commonly reported stressful life events, ranks "change in residences" and "change in schools" as numbers 28 and 32, respectively. This indicates that no matter what the reason for the mobility, it is likely that the experience of changing schools (which can encompass one or both of these events) can be stressful for students. Most of the empirical research available on the topic of mobility focuses on the quantitative relationship between mobility and achievement in the

academic arena. This relationship is complex but findings suggest that changing schools complicates school adjustment and slows academic progress (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). For example, it may take four to six months for mobile students to recover academically after a change in schools, and they are half as likely to earn a high school diploma as their non-mobile peers (Walls, 2003). The majority of studies that focus on this relationship have found that frequent mobility (not occasional mobility or a single move) is linked with unfavorable academic outcomes (Sanderson, 2004; Tucker et al., 1998; Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Simpson & Fowler, 1994; Wood et al., 1993; Coleman, 1988).

Findings from Sanderson's (2004) study suggest that there is a strong correlation between mobility and academic achievement. This study analyzed 5th grade students' scores in Reading taken from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in a highly transient elementary school building. This state assessment provides information regarding student learning and achievement in relation to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards. These PSSA scores were then disentangled based on enrollment year and the findings revealed that the stable students from this particular elementary school outperformed the transient students. For example stable students (students who have not changed schools at all) scored an average of 1311, students who changed schools once scored an average of 1232, and the scores continue to decline as the number of moves goes up. Students who changed schools five times had an average score of 984. Looking more closely at individual students, it was found that the more moves a student experienced, the lower their test score. Sanderson concludes that the students who have experienced their entire academic careers at this particular school are learning what the state assesses to a greater degree and that this news should be looked upon favorably by

the school's faculty. While Sanderson states this is good news, because those students

who remain in this school are performing better academically, what is not addressed

sufficiently is the notion that our job as educators is to teach every child (stable or

transient) and that, while it is great to celebrate successes of one population (in this case

stable students), efforts to intervene and assist transient students in their academics

should be a top priority.

Controlling for a number of factors that influence both achievement and mobility

(i.e. parent education, family SES, school poverty rate), Temple and Reynolds (1999)

found evidence to suggest that the number of school moves (in this case between

kindergarten and grade 7) is negatively associated with math and reading achievement (in

this case by the end of Grade 7). The data for this study was extracted from the Chicago

Longitudinal Study (CLS). The CLS tracks the academic and social development of a

kindergarten cohort of 1,539 predominantly (over 90%) African-American children living

in high-poverty neighborhoods in the Chicago Public schools. Low-income, African

American students (n=1,087) in grades kindergarten through seventh grade were the

focus of this study. All students in this sample attended some form of an enrichment

program in kindergarten for children from low-income families. A series of statistical

regressions was used to estimate the effects of school mobility on seventh grade

achievement. Between these grades, 73% of students changed schools at least once

during elementary school and 21% changed schools three or more times. According to

the study, the latter fact is crucial to understanding mobility's relationship with

educational attainment because it is frequent (not just occasional) mobility that

considerably increases the risk of underachievement. For example, the average reading

achievement score (as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) at the end of 7th grade

for "non movers" was 143.79 (n=295) while the average score for students who have moved 3 or more times was 131.24 (n=92). Further, this study revealed that for seventh grade reading and math achievement, each additional school move (above one) resulted in a reduction in achievement by 1.34 and 1.19 points respectively.

Temple and Reynolds' (1999) study is also significant in that they found that those who moved frequently have lower test scores *both* before and after they move, however, the achievement estimates they found suggest that school mobility is still associated with lower subsequent achievement even when this prior achievement is accounted for. In the case of reading achievement, there was no difference in achievement between students changing schools once and those changing schools three times, but moving four or more times was associated with a 6.65 point drop in test scores, which was equivalent to 6 months of performance in grade-equivalent scores. When analyzing math scores, moving three times had a greater negative effect on achievement than moving twice, and moving four or more times was associated with a drop in score by 5.17, which was estimated to equal a deficiency of 5 months performance in terms of grade level scores.

Temple and Reynolds (1999) found that the harmful relationship between mobility and achievement varies according to the type of move and sometimes the quality of schools that are attended. Some (but not all) suggest that students who moved from regular, public, low-income neighborhood schools into schools with selective admission policies (i.e. charter, magnet) were more likely to have higher test scores compared to students who did not move at all. A limitation of this study is that mobility was investigated in terms of the quantity of moves, but did not address the reasons children changed schools or look at the pre and post mobility school environments the students

attended. For some students, a change in schools may have been desirable (to the student, the parents or both) and the change may have elevated their academic performance. For others, the change or changes may have been forced or not desired. The answers to these important questions were less likely to be revealed, if we did not ask the mobile students themselves. The qualitative study I conducted helped to reveal more about the reasons students change schools. Through my study, I also found out how the students felt about the moves.

Kerbow (1996) found that there are both short-term and long-term effects on the academic growth of mobile students. Using data from the elementary schools in Chicago, he found that the immediate effect associated with mobility on math achievement for "frequent movers" is lower achievement than that of their stable counterparts, and the differences increase as school changes accumulate. By the 6th year of his longitudinal study, students who have moved several times (four or more times) are academically approximately one year behind the stable school population.

Alexander and Entwisle (1996) traced school transfers through the first 5 years of elementary school for a large, diverse sample of students who attended the Baltimore City Public Schools using data from the Beginning School Study (BSS). They found that more moves were associated with poorer adjustment indicated by lower test scores, lower grades, elevated risk of retention and receipt of more special education services. Children who switched schools lagged behind those who did not switch on the California Achievement test for Reading (CAT-R) by almost 14 points.

Finally, Heinlein and Shinn (2000) are in the minority of researchers who have studied mobility using a longitudinal design. Achievement data (from the California Achievement Tests in math and reading) of 764 sixth-grade, low-income, largely

minority students from one of the most mobile New York City Community school districts, was utilized. Only students who had entered the NYC school system in their Kindergarten year were included in the sample (so that moves could be calculated accurately). Multiple Regression analysis results indicated a strong association between third-grade achievement and high mobility (two or more moves before grade three). Students with high mobility scored 6.2 percentile points lower in math achievement and 3.0 percentile points lower in reading achievement. For math, 49% of children with low mobility performed at or above grade level, while only 35% of high mobility students performed at or above grade level. Further results also indicate that high mobility was associated with the achievement of these students in sixth grade as well. Students with high mobility scored 3.8 percentile points lower in math achievement and 5.5 percentile points lower in reading achievement. The authors posit that earlier mobility is more disruptive to student achievement because the earlier years of education are a particularly critical period in children's lives. It is during this period that students attain a foundation in basic skills and so disruptions during this time may have more detrimental effects. Students who change schools frequently are more at risk (than those who are non-movers) of educational difficulties and they should be the primary target of intervention and further investigation into the consequences and nature of this risk (Temple & Reynolds, 1999).

Schools With High Proportions of Mobile Students

While high levels of mobility can create challenges for the mobile students themselves, some research argues that the negative effects associated with mobility often extend to the overall learning environment of the individual school and the district as well (Kerbow, 1996; Sanderson, 2004). According to Sanderson (2004) highly transient

students strain school personnel's capacities to provide optimal learning experiences for all students. Kerbow (1996) further posits that mobility's effects can be deep because they encompassing the essential activity of schools, the interaction of teachers and students around learning. Using data from the Chicago public elementary schools, Kerbow (1996) compared a relatively stable school (School A) to a more typical Chicago elementary school where transiency is more common (School B) in order to get a sense of how mobility affects classroom life. He found that in School B there were significant constraints on the instructional approach of teachers and that assessment of instructional impact became clouded because teachers were less able to observe the effects of their practices as students exited and entered lessons "midstream". Further, survey data gathered for this study indicate that 68% of Chicago teachers devote portions of their lesson plans specifically to new students and 77% report that they review materials during class due to the entrance of mobile students. This suggests that a high percentage of teachers are making valiant efforts to assist mobile students as they enter their classroom, however, it may be disruptive and repetitive to the flow of instruction for the more stable students.

According to Nakagawa et al. (2002), high levels of student mobility create additional stresses for school administrators, support staff and teachers. High mobility has caused some schools to slow down their instructional pace in an effort to review or keep new students up to date with material being covered in class. Fenwick, Smith, & Blackman (2002), suggest that instruction in transient schools tends to be less innovative, slower and repetitive. According to Sanderson (2004), this type of practice limits the amount of material to which all students are exposed.

Numerous mobility occurrences challenge a teacher's ability to keep an even pace during instruction (Sanderson, 2004) and often make adoption of new practices or innovations quite difficult (Kerbow, 1996). Schools experiencing high rates of student turnover are likely to have teachers who are often frustrated and overwhelmed (Fenwick et al., 2000), who report lower levels of collaboration with peers, and are more review-oriented in their lesson plans (Kerbow, 1996). Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) further support this notion, and include in their findings various ways they believe mobility is negatively linked with classroom life, including extra paperwork and assessment for teachers, too much time spent going over rules and procedures, and "re-teaching" material that has already been covered. According to teachers, student mobility affected classroom climate by creating a sense of "restlessness" and "constant change and upheaval." (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990 p. 186). Rumberger (2003) reports that various school personnel used the word "chaos" to describe mobility in their schools and implied that it greatly affects classroom learning and achievement of all students in the school.

In regards to the buildings themselves, school mobility is especially high in large, predominantly minority, urban, schools (Rumberger, 2003). In a typical Chicago elementary school, fifty percent of its students moved during a three-year period. In extreme cases of mobility, a school could lose up to two-thirds of their students given the same time frame (Kerbow, 1996). According to Nakagawa et al. (2002), high mobility schools had higher populations of minorities, low achievers and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, lower levels of parent involvement, and enrolled 50 to 150 more students than did schools with lower mobility.

The previously mentioned research (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Kerbow, 1996; Sanderson, 2004; Temple & Reynolds, 1999) has identified the importance of the

relationship between mobility and achievement, as well its effects on the entire school community (Kerbow, 1996; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Nakagawa et al., 2002; Sanderson, 2004). According to Alexander and Entwisle (1996), prospects for student success better when children get off to a good start than when they have to recover from a shaky one, so the circumstances that either complicate or smooth this transition deserve special attention.

Responses and Interventions

Anderson-Butcher, Lawson, Bean, Boone, and Kwiatkowski (2004) list family mobility rates as an example of a non-academic barrier that can impact students' learning. The Carnegie Task Force on Education's recent policy statement addresses the situation regarding schools' responsibilities for non-academic barriers. While school systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students, when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004).

Some research has addressed the ways schools are attempting to assist with adjustment (Nakagawa et al., 2002) including valiant efforts to create a welcoming environment for transferring students and finding ways to gain and maintain positive rapport with students.

Specifically, Nakagawa et al. (2002) studied "city migrants" – students who move many times throughout the year from school to school within the same district or between neighboring districts. Survey data from 174 elementary school principals from a southwestern urban area and interviews along with interviews and observations at three highly mobile schools was examined. This study's goal was to investigate and report findings on how highly mobile schools were dealing with the issue of mobility and what,

if any, attempts were being made to build a sense of community and assist the mobile students and their families.

Results indicated three distinct approaches to dealing with the issue of mobility from three different schools that had experienced high levels of student mobility (as self-reported by principals from each school). One schools' way (School A) was to address school and student needs. The main sources of mobility from this school were homeless shelters and an array of low-income apartments. In an effort to create easier transitions for mobile students as well as provide greater stability for stable students, class assignments were determined by each student's date of entry. This left two stable classrooms and three to four mobile classes at each grade level. Further, when a new student arrived, they were placed in a "welcome room" for less than a week so that they could be academically assessed and then transferred to a mobile classroom. This school took many steps to help ease transitions for students and their families (i.e. partnership programs with homeless shelters, counseling services, food and clothing assistance and educational and vocational training for parents), espousing the belief that meeting the needs of mobile students and their families would address school needs by somewhat stabilizing the population.

Another approach (School B) was to isolate the mobility problem. The primary sources of mobility in this school were a variety of low-income rental housing options and Mexican immigrant families periodically returning to Mexico. At this particular school new students entering after the start of the school year were placed in a diagnostic-prescriptive classroom for up to 8 weeks to address any deficiencies that may have resulted from curricular differences between schools and absences. This classroom was literally isolated from the rest of the school (in the basement of the school). Many

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teachers seemed concerned that this transition classroom had the unintended consequence of creating yet another transition for these students to go through.   If the students were still at the school after the 8 weeks, they were transitioned into a regular classroom.

Lastly, personnel from School C largely felt they had "no control" regarding the issue of mobility. The primary sources of mobility at this school were a nearby government-owned apartment building that served as transition housing for lower-income families, Mexican immigrant families periodically returning to Mexico, and students switching schools due to discipline issues. The general response from this school was that the school personnel had no control over mobility and that there were no programs or practices put in place to address the issue. There was no organized way of welcoming a child or providing them with assistance during the transition.

Nakagawa et al. (2002) provided a rich description of how some highly mobile schools are grappling with mobility. While their study included principal and teacher survey and interview data along with observations of the mobile schools themselves, they did not include any student data regarding transitions. Their data revealed the kind of efforts (or lack thereof) being made in some mobile schools. My research specifically asked the mobile students what factors were helpful during their transitions (and which factors were not). This qualitative data added to the existing literature and filled in the gap with information from students about what worked and what didn't work when it came to helping them as they transitioned.

Research shows that some schools with high mobility rates are addressing the issue and are providing extra support for transient students and their families. Some schools have a "welcome room" for new students, assign students a classroom buddy, and provide more organized classrooms because the teachers are given prior notice of the

new student's arrival (Nakagawa et al., 2002). Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) also found that teachers often prepare a few extra desks filled with supplies just in case a new student arrives so that he or she has all the supplies they need. Stover (2000) explains that several highly mobile schools are encouraging their teachers to spend additional time with new students in an effort to gain rapport, assigning student guides to new students and attempting to implement district-wide curriculum in an effort to keep academic content consistent for intradistrict movers.

Findings from Gruman et al. (2008) indicate that while teacher support is, in general, related to children's positive attitude toward school, it is especially crucial for students who experience school changes. Further venues for assisting transitioners posited by Queen (2002) include supportive friends, a transition team, and information provided to students regarding the transition (preparedness). Some encouraging findings in relation to Queen's suggestions can be found in the literature. A Los Angeles elementary school is attempting to assist highly transient students by creating a "culture of caring" at their school (Rumberger, 2003). Their efforts are focused on such aspects such as: immediate assessment of the needs of incoming students, team structures to support teachers, students, and parents, and a buddy system for new students. In addition, a California high school implemented a plan to help mobile students by interviewing them, assessing their needs, and inviting them to join a "Newcomers Club" that meets weekly. While Stover (2000) reports that some in the educational arena believe that there is little that schools can do to stop high mobility rates, some districts are making great attempts at assisting (mobile students).

The Ohio Community Collaboration Model lists *feeder systems and transitions* as a key principle/strategy for improving school performance (Julianelle & Foscarinis,

2003). The model further states that efforts are in place to make transitions (i.e., from elementary to middle school, fourth to fifth grade, school-to-college) smooth for students and families. While these types of transitions do indeed require attention, the model does not specifically mention any efforts regarding non-traditional school transitions.

Mobility is a phenomenon that is deeply embedded in the urban context and thus, no single policy approach alone is likely to reduce its prevalence or ameliorate its effects (Kerbow, 1996). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act passed in 1986 in Ohio was established to help protect the educational rights of children and youth in homeless situations. This Act states that homeless students must be allowed to attend their school of origin (last school enrolled in) to the extent feasible. Further, if a student moves into permanent housing during the school year, the student is permitted to stay at their current school until the end of the academic year. The Act also requires schools to enroll students experiencing homelessness immediately, even if the student is unable to provide documents that are typically required for enrollment. Students must be permitted to attend classes and fully participate in all school activities. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) website points out that these provisions were put into place because of the overwhelming evidence that changing schools significantly impede students' academic and social growth. This component of the Act is meant to help provide students with continuity of instruction, teachers and peers.

The Federal Education Rights and Privileges Act (FERPA) allows schools to release student records without parental permission to schools to which a student is transferring. This could potentially help teachers determine transfer students' educational abilities and needs much faster than waiting around for the proper paperwork (ODE website).

Inconsistencies in the Research

It is difficult to definitively conclude that a high level of mobility directly impacts academic achievement but most studies on mobility (Kerbow, 1996; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Rhodes, 2008; Sanderson, 2004) have proven a strong correlation between the two (Iserhagen & Bulkin, 2010). Some studies (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996) argue that highly mobility is not related to students' underachievement but rather that other factors like socioeconomic status and preexisting underachievement are more relevant to underperformance (Heinlin & Shinn, 2000).

To add to the confusion, Jennings et al. (2000), reported findings that suggest mobility should not play a role at all when predicting academic achievement when poverty, LEP (Limited English Proficient) and absence rates are known. It is possible that poverty may be a central factor that creates conditions for mobility and is further compounded by related factors (i.e. under-resourced schools and neighborhoods). Also reported is that, when measures of SES and prior levels of achievement are adjusted for, mobility's affects typically decline, and sometimes disappear completely (Blane, Pilling, & Folgelman, 1985). Temple and Reynolds (1999) found that half of the achievement differences between mobile and stable students were attributed to differences between students that were evident *before* their transience (SES, academic performance, etc.). Complementing these findings, Heinlein and Shinn (2000) found no impact of mobility on sixth grade achievement when third grade achievement was controlled.

Several other studies support the notion that mobility does have a negative correlation with aspects of schooling. For example, Kerbow (1996) and Mantzicopoulos and Knutson (2000) support findings of a direct and negative link between mobility and student learning over time even after controlling for students' socioeconomic background.

Several studies (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Swanson & Schneider, 1999) demonstrated that student mobility is negatively related to test scores even after the effects of family background, residential mobility, and prior academic achievement have been controlled for. Most recently, Gruman et al. (2008) found that this relationship is robust and remains significant when other factors associated with mobility are included in the equation.

There are even a few studies in the literature that found no relationship between mobility and academic achievement. However, these studies were looking specifically at children of military families and some (Merchant & Medway, 1987) failed to control for SES. As reported by Walls (2003), this subgroup of highly mobile students (students from military families) consistently performs at academic levels equal to or surpassing the national average for public schools. In the military, high mobility is the norm and students and families are all in it together. Various strategies devised by military branches have helped promote academic success.

Qualitative Studies on Mobility

Only three studies have been located to date that have utilized a qualitative approach to studying mobility. The first utilized teacher interviews to get an inside view of how mobility influences the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) examined 21 classes in a single urban elementary school using structured interviews with teachers. These interviews allowed a "teacher lens" view of how mobility affected their classroom instruction and management. The school, located in a medium-sized California city in a neighborhood composed of primarily rental housing, serves a diverse group of students (43% Black, 25% Hispanic, 18% White and 13% Asian). All teachers of regular and bilingual classes (N=21) participated in the interviews.

The school's mobility was typical for its district – but extreme for the state – because, like many other urban districts, it experienced more mobility than most of those in California.

To gather information on how teachers integrated new students into their curricula and classes, Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) asked them to describe (a) how they prepared for new students, (b) the information they needed about new students and where they acquired it, and (c) the information new students needed and how teachers communicated it to them. Results indicated that teachers at the school did not typically prepare for new students because often they did not know in advance when they would arrive. Only a few (n=3) teachers ever received advanced notice, and the notice was never more than a day prior to the child arriving. According to the teachers, standard protocol amounted to the secretary walking a new student down to the classroom on his or her first day. Very informative were teachers' insights as to what they would do if they had received prior notice of a newcomer to their class. Several teachers (n=11) would have prepared necessary supplies for the student that day (i.e. a desk, various school supplies, nametag), would have prepared the other students in the class for the arrival of a new classmate (n=3), would have prepared lessons that may allow them alone time with the new student (n=4), and would have gathered background information from a school file or from a previous teacher and/or a parent (n=3). The information provided by teachers can be helpful in several ways. Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) found that it is often common for an elementary student to be walked down to his or her new classroom by a stranger, and then often looked upon surprisingly by his or her teacher and classmates who did not realize they were coming. It is then quite possible that the student may have no seat or supplies ready for them. It seems that while many teachers

try their hardest to be welcoming and accommodating to new students, it is quite difficult for teachers to do this with such little prior notice of a new student's arrival.

Further findings from Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) reveal that a majority of teachers stated that class and school rules (n=16) and procedural routines (n=13) were the most important information students needed to learn, and mentioned that students also needed to know the physical layout of the building and classroom (n=3). Teachers said that they often relied on the other students and sometimes a "buddy" or helper to relay this information to the new students and to guide them for the first few weeks or so. Additionally, several teachers mentioned the importance of immediately introducing the new student to one or two students who will then be that child's helper. Some teachers also preferred to tell the students themselves about policies, routines and school layout, while a few wanted them to observe the class and watch and learn as they go along. The varied responses by teachers were interesting in that it may leave one wondering which of the teachers' approaches were most effective? Which made the child feel secure, welcomed, acknowledged? Asking mobile students to recall their transition experiences as my study did, provided us with imperative information regarding the current practices being implemented, and whether or not practices were helpful for the students as they transitioned.

The interviews for this particular study focused on the relationship between student mobility and the classroom environment (as seen through the lens of the teacher). Missing from the current body of literature was information regarding how this relationship played out on a daily basis (as seen through the lens of the mobile students). Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) recommend that those involved with teacher preparation and development examine more closely the strategies developed by teachers working in

highly mobile settings in order to provide new teachers with adequate skills for working in a mobile school. I would argue that, in addition, it was highly beneficial to conduct a qualitative study that asked students about their transition experiences. The data from the study revealed insights on teacher (and other school personnel) strategies that seemed helpful and/or hindering.

Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011), as part of their study, interviewed classroom teachers, specialized teachers, and administrators from highly mobile public high schools in a Great Plains state during the 2008-2009 school year which illuminated some of the strategies and feelings of those working in the trenches of high mobility. One administrator revealed that his school had transition programs in place to support the mobile students and that counselors interview the student and the parents about their past experiences. Common steps in these transition programs included (a) obtaining records, (b) connecting students to the new environment and (c) connecting students to peers.

Another principal shared that it is much easier when a new student is coming from a school within the district because it is easier to obtain his or her records and assess where the student is academically. If the student is transferring from outside the district, a great deal of time is spent making phone calls and trying to track down academic records. One danger is that missing information and miscommunication could result in students being placed in programs that are not appropriate for them (e.g. remedial or advanced courses).

Many teachers admitted being frustrated by high levels of mobility. Some stated that they felt bad because they often viewed themselves as being ineffective in helping kids catch up with where they should be. One teacher from this study reported that she thinks the biggest challenge for the newly entering students is for them to adjust to the

school and make connections with their peers. Counselors from the school said they support this by teaming new students up with other students who give them a tour of the building and help them with their schedule, etc. Another strategy teachers reported was working and collaborating in teams. While the interview data revealed that mobility is the biggest issue that the school deals with, the district supports their teachers by allowing them extra time to work together and give each other feedback and ideas on how to work with and support highly mobile students. They also send teachers to workshops and seminars that are thought to be of value. In successful schools, teachers and staff demonstrated empathy for mobile students and their families who are often in difficult situations.

The teacher insights from Temple and Reynolds' study (1999) and input from other school personnel from Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) on how mobility affects students and classrooms was somewhat helpful in determining what the experience may actually be like for a transitioning student. However, these studies asked only the adults who were in the schools about the challenges of mobility. It was of further benefit to ask mobile students themselves about their experiences so that their voices can be heard, recognized, valued and taken into consideration when policy and procedures that could help or hinder them are being put into place.

Before the current study, Rhodes (2008) was the only study found that utilized the qualitative approach by allowing transient students' voices to be heard. Rhodes' (2008) study focused on a small sample (n=8) of high school students (ages 14-17) from a large urban high school in the Midwest. The study used a purposeful sampling method in order to select the most mobile students. The students selected were primarily African American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds with a range of standardized

test scores.   Each student was interviewed and asked to recall memorable transfer experiences, including the reason for the move and the actual experience of leaving the old school, then entering the new one. The questions also focused on finding out how long it took students to feel comfortable in their new school as well as how they went about adjusting to their new settings. Lastly, students were asked for their expert opinion and suggestions on how schools can do a better job helping students like themselves.

The students who participated in the study had moved 4-14 times and shared a myriad of reasons why they moved (e.g. domestic violence, eviction, and attempts to find a better school). Rhodes found that the students spoke of academic and emotional challenges. What the students focused on the most in their interviews were the friendships they left behind, their strategies to make new ones, their relationships with supportive adults and the many uncertainties that come with being a highly mobile student.

Rhodes (2008) found that mobile students often experience feelings of fear, loneliness, embarrassment and anxiety when faced with changing schools. They often found themselves unable to concentrate on academic work until they could secure a group of friends that provided social and emotional support. These undesirable circumstances are often exacerbated by multiple mobility occurrences. However, this study also found that, while the transition experience can often result in negative outcomes, it might also have benefits. One student from this study believed she was more versatile and flexible because of her transition experiences and further, that she really enjoyed moving to different parts of the country and meeting new people.

As students described how they felt their first day at a new school (sometime during mid-year), words that were used included overwhelmed, weird, confused, alone,

anxious and invisible. Many students shared that they had developed a strategy for their first day, which may have included sitting back on the first day and observing so they would know what was expected of them. Students also shared that they had to have a strategy for making new friends. Some tried seeking out students who didn't have many friends and making friends with them, while others waited for students to approach them first. Not all attempts at making friends were successful. One student mentioned that she would be sort of a "class clown" in order to get any kind of attention, which she said only led to bad grades and bad social relationships.

Students from Rhodes' (2008) study suggested that assigning a buddy to transfer students during their first week to help them find areas of the school and get to know the school procedures, rules, etc. seemed to be a way that might help ease feelings of anxiety. Other ideas included having a welcoming committee, playing get-to know-you activities on the first day in their classroom and having teachers be a little more sensitive and aware of what students like them may be experiencing.

Students' adjustment techniques, complaints, and suggestions illuminated the mechanisms that operate in the relationship between mobility, social development and achievement. Because this study included student experiences and perceptions, it added a very different perspective to the existing research that had either taken a quantitative approach or gathered qualitative data only from school personnel. I proposed that adding elementary school students' perspectives would bring a much-needed dimension to the current body of literature on the topic of mobility. These students' perspectives and experiences related to high mobility will allow elementary school personnel the opportunity to see and better understand what it is like for the mobile students in their

schools, and consequently, better assist students through these potentially difficult adjustment periods.

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of highly mobile elementary school students in an urban district.   Interviews from a purposeful sample of 15 students from two elementary (K-5) schools in a large urban district in the Midwest, composed primarily of African American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds was used for this study.   Students in 4th and 5th grade were asked to participate (students in the lower grades were likely to be less verbally expressive). A phenomonogical approach was utilized in an effort to capture the essence of what it meant to be a highly mobile student. For this study, a highly mobile student was defined as a student who has made 3 or more non-traditional school moves thus far in his or her educational experiences. A non-traditional move is one that involves changing schools not due to normal school transitions that occur (e.g. advancing to 3rd grade in a new building because the other building was K-2 only).

The overarching question for this study was "What are the transition experiences of highly mobile elementary school students?" Listed below are the four research questions:

1.   What are the facilitating factors associated with mobility?

2.   What are the complicating factors associated with mobility?

3.   What are the school achievement implications associated with mobility?

4.   What are the needs of highly mobile students?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of highly mobile, urban elementary school students. While there was a moderate degree of empirical research available regarding the causes and consequences of student mobility, there was little research that accounted for the mobile student's voice and the lived experience of this phenomenon. This study sought to understand more deeply the transition experiences of these students. This information seemed important to consider for the planning of interventions and assistance measures. The voices of mobile students regarding the transition experience will allow educational professionals to see through a "mobile student's lens" when making important decisions about how to best assist these students.

As a graduate student studying qualitative research, I realized the great importance that my values, biases and professional background would have on properly conducting this type of study. According to Morrow (2005), effectively evaluating the quality of one's research is, in great part, dependent on the anchoring paradigm.

Qualitative research is composed of many different individuals with varying perspectives who all bring different lenses and experiences to their studies (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research requires that the researcher make explicit his or her

assumptions, paradigms and frameworks as well as how these will influence the study. In addition, it is important for the researcher to be up front with his or his positions, worldviews, values, and experiences so that the reader can judge the outcomes of the study with all the necessary information.

Qualitative inquiry is often described as understanding lived experience within its sociohistorical context and is characterized by the awareness that the researcher, in pursuing understanding, is an interpreter rather than a reporter (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Researchers who partake in qualitative research take a philosophical stance that provides a basic set of beliefs that will guide the actions they take during the study (Crewell, 2007). This is important because it defines how the researcher views the very nature of the world, their place in it, and further, the various assortments of relationships to that world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Being explicit about one's paradigmatic base provides readers with a basis for assessing the credibility of the results (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Because qualitative research should include the philosophical assumptions that the researcher uses (Creswell, 2007), I now turn my efforts to defining and describing my own. The following paragraphs provide the reader with the various epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research. I also provide a detailed description of the constructivist paradigm as well as how this particular worldview influenced my decision making throughout the aspects of conducting this phenomenological study.

Philosophical Assumptions

Drawing on other researchers and their attempts to be up front with their worldview or paradigm, I found that Denzin and Lincoln (1994) include their

epistemological, ontological, and methodological assertions and that Crewell (2007) adds to this list the axiological and rhetorical assumptions as well.

My ontological perspective embraces the notion of multiple realities, and further, that my intent was to report the multiple realities of students who have experienced high levels of school mobility. My epistemological assumption involved getting as close as possible to my participants while conducting research in the field (in this case, their school) in an effort to obtain firsthand knowledge.

The axiological assumption I embrace allowed my personal values and biases to be brought to the forefront of the study by actively reporting them and admitting that they likely influenced how I conducted the study and interpreted findings.

The rhetorical assumption I embrace posits that the study be written in a personal and literary fashion (Creswell, 2007). For example, qualitative researchers often write in the first person and use metaphors as they write their study. This assumption also posits that the researcher use quotes that represent the multiple views of the phenomenon using the participants' actual language. Lastly, the methodological assumption I hold is that my research be considered inductive (from the ground, up) and that it was fashioned by my experiences in collecting and analyzing data.

Paradigm

Now that I have articulated my philosophical assumptions, I will disclose my positions regarding the social constructivist paradigm that guided the actions of my research. Social constructivism posits multiple, equally legitimate realities (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Knowledge and meaning are co-constructed and cannot be observed directly, but rather, must be interpreted. My efforts focused on inductively developing a theory or pattern of meaning regarding the experiences of mobile students; therefore I

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relied on the participants' views to broaden my perspective of the mobility experience. Throughout my study, I centered my attention on understanding the historical and cultural settings in which the participants lived and attended school. The constructivist worldview allowed me to interpret my findings regarding the meanings participants have about mobility. I fully recognized that my personal, cultural and historical experiences likely shaped this interpretation.

The constructivist worldview is consistent with philosophical hermeneutics in that understanding is an active, constructive process (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). An important aspect of this approach is the thought that the interpreter does not abandon his or her own perspective to capture another's perspective, but rather engages in philosophical hermeneutics to pursue a broadening of his or her viewpoint to blend with that of the other such that understandings are co-constructed. This approach led to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of mobility.

While I demonstrated the constructivist nature of this study, I was quite aware that my study might not adhere to all aspects of the paradigm. I preferred to take Morrow's (2007) stance here when she claimed that qualitative researchers often venture into other paradigms knowledgably, carefully and in a way that he or she feels best will represent the research and its emerging data.

Research Design/Qualitative Approach

This research was conducted using a phenomenological approach. Through phenomenology one learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience and to move toward an intersubjective recognition of things, people and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology provides the richest and most descriptive data (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) and thus was the ideal approach for

understanding what the mobility experience entailed. To better assist transient students and their needs, it was helpful to explore their lived experiences in this fashion.

My efforts were geared toward describing the mobility experience in an attempt to best capture the essence of this particular phenomenon. Phenomenology is deeply rooted in philosophy and is popular in many arenas of research (Creswell, 2007). According to Wertz (2005) Edmund Husserl is credited with developing phenomenology research that involves methods that are uniquely fashioned to assist researchers in the investigation of human experience and behavior. Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge in a phenomenology and its commitment involves describing experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

For this study, I took a transcendental approach to phenomenology, which is more heavily focused on the description of the experiences of participants. Moustakas (1994) is credited with this type of approach that is viewed as a highly structured and detailed approach to phenomenology. It involves identifying a phenomenon, bracketing out one's experiences, collecting data from several participants who have experienced the chosen phenomenon, analyzing the data (which involves searching for themes from the information), and finally developing both a textural and structural description of the overall experience.

Evidence collected from a phenomenology is derived from first-person reports of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This particular phenomenological study described the transition experiences of highly mobile students. The purpose of this method was to describe what the participants had in common as they experienced these transitions. In summary, the researcher in this type of study identifies a phenomenon (high mobility, in this case), collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon (in this case,

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mobile students), and develops a thick description of the essence of the experience for all the participants of the study. This description consisted of what the students experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The "what" was a textural description of the mobility experience that included verbatim examples from participants. The "how" was the structural description that I produced reflecting on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.

Colaizzi (1978) believed that the success of phenomenological research questions depends on the extent to which they touch lived experiences separate from theoretical explanations. Investigating the various facets of the transitional lives of mobile elementary students tapped into an area not previously examined.

Researcher as Instrument

When conducting qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to demonstrate reflexivity, that is, the researcher explicitly informs the reader of biases, values and experiences that are brought into the research (Creswell, 2007). This is a crucial aspect of the qualitative approach because the researcher is seen as the key instrument of the study. Qualitative researchers collect and analyze data using observations and interviews of participants that allow for a subjective stance. It is imperative then, that the researcher be open and up front regarding the values, judgments, experiences, etc. that he or she brings so that the reader is aware and can draw his or her own conclusions about the study. Researchers use reflexivity throughout all the phases of the study to self-examine the ways that their biases may influence the probes used during an interview, the assumptions at work during the interview and the tendency to hear a participant's response in a certain way.

I came to be interested in the topic of student mobility while teaching in an urban district. I have nine years of experience teaching in early childhood classrooms with extremely high transience rates. The school at which I once taught had one of the highest turnover rates in the district. The anecdotal evidence I received from students and their families about why they moved (or would move to another school) included eviction, moving in with a relative, and switching to another school in the district or city (charter or magnet) for attraction reasons, or moving to another city or state.

During my teaching experiences in this district, I often grappled with issues regarding mobility. At first, I had great difficulty organizing my classroom, welcoming latecomers, and keeping up with the constant flow of students coming and leaving. As a white, middle class woman who grew up in suburbia (making only traditional school moves), I had little to no idea of what the experience of changing schools frequently entailed. I began examining literature on this topic several years ago as a master's student because it directly applied to my day-to-day experiences, and I hoped it would shed light on some information that would be of use to classroom teachers like myself. While the comings and goings of students was often a topic of conversation in my school, the discussions seldom involved strategizing how to help mediate the negative factors associated with mobility. While some teachers offered great ideas on how to cope with latecomers and how to maximize time-on-task in the classroom, others found it easier to simply deal with it and keep moving.

During the school year of 2011-2012, I had three instances of student mobility in my third grade classroom. I had a student who had attended five different schools already in his short academic career. He was being tested for a learning disability because he was severely behind his peers (both academically and socially). The Intervention Assistance

Team (IAT) and I grappled with the fact that he was promoted to third grade without being tested for a learning disability. We were not sure if it was due to a lack of effort by other schools, or perhaps because he moved so often, that he was not tested before he changed schools again. Regardless, he came to my class with no paperwork other than his 4th quarter report card from his previous school. When I called his previous school, which was in another district, the secretary informed me that his second grade teacher was no longer employed there and they could not find any of his records. I also had a student with special needs (identified with a specific learning disability) that moved to another part of the city last December. Because of school boundary rules, she was forced to attend another school in the district. Neither the student nor her family wished to change schools and the student's mother asked for my assistance in helping her daughter remain at our school. Unfortunately, because of transportation issues (mom could not drive her school because she did not have a car), there was no way to transport her to the school. The district was willing to let her stay in my classroom at the school, but they would not provide transportation outside the boundary lines. I have seen firsthand how mobility has affected students (as well as the anticipation of the mobility). Frustration and perhaps anxiety have affected her academics in the classroom. I also welcomed a little boy on an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) because of a learning disability. He was well liked by his new classmates and had just really started to get acclimated to his new teachers, peers and the curriculum. I found out a week later that he was changing schools and would be attending a different elementary school in the same district. He was accidentally sent to the wrong school by the board of education. My experiences and desire to learn more about the lives of highly mobile students led me to this particular

study and it was my hope that the data gathered will provide a means to better discussions about how to meet the needs of these particular students.

Because qualitative research involves a certain level of subjectivity, I utilized a self-reflective journal throughout the various stages of research and made use of the other members on my research team (my dissertation committee). I also read my participants a summary of my findings as a way to provide a participant check.

Because I taught in the district while conducting this research, taking leave happened to a degree, but not completely. I still saw some of these students on a regular basis if they were the students who attended school in the building at which I taught. It is important to note that I did not interview my own (current) students, but I did have one former student and two students who were siblings of my (current) students in my pool of participants. Although our interview sessions ended, parts of our relationship remained. For example, I was still an authority figure in their school building and someone whom they saw at special school events (i.e. our annual family fun nights, and reading/math game nights). I made sure that I carefully planned an exit strategy as to not surprise or potentially harm students with an abrupt ending to our sessions. This allowed students to mentally prepare for our sessions together to end at some point. I also sent a letter home with the students after the study was over that thanked them for their willingness to participate in the study.

Context

As of the census of 2000, there were 52,717 people, 24,353 households, and 13,491 families in the city where the participants for this study live. The racial makeup of the city was 66.36% White, 30.57% African American leaving about only 3% to other races. There were 24,353 households of which 24.9% had children under the age of 18

living with them, 36.3% were married couples living together, 15.2% had a female householder with no husband present and 44.6% were non-families. 39.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 16.1% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.14 and the average family size was 2.89. The median income for a household in the city was $35,151 and the median income for a family was $45,278. The per-capital income for the city was $19,664. About 7.1% of families and 9.7% of the population were below the poverty line, including 11.9% of those under age 18 and 11.2% of those ages 65 or over.

The context used for this study was two elementary schools (K-5) in an urban district located in northeast Ohio. The districts' report card ratings have not met the states criteria for being an effective district as far as academic progress is concerned. The district has, however achieved a Continuous Improvement Rating by the state (2010) because students' achievement test scores are showing improvement. The student body represents various racial backgrounds (78% Black, 16% White and 6% Multiracial). While this data indicates that the district is indeed a diverse one, it has seen a dramatic shift in the racial composition of its students over the last 12 years. For example, during the 1995-1996 school year the diversity was more balanced and the "dominant" group was different (55% White, 43% Black and 2% Multiracial). The economic background of the students entering this district has changed over time as well. The data from ODE indicates that, while only 12% of students were placed in the Economically Disadvantaged category during the 1995-1996 school year, over 67% of students were placed in this category last year (2010-2011).

All elementary school students are eligible to receive free breakfast, and many are eligible for free or reduced lunches based on their social economic status. The

percentage of students who are categorized as Economically Disadvantaged fluctuates from 64% to as high as 78% according to the ODE building reports from the 2008-2009 school year. The seven elementary schools in this district received the following designation from the ODE for the 2009-2010 school year: Effective (n=1), Continuous Improvement (n=2), Academic Watch (n=2) and Academic Emergency (n=2).

The district has also dealt with rising mobility issues over the last decade or so. The ODE website provides mobility reports at the district level (data on student mobility between schools within a district and into/out of a district) as well as at the school building level (data on students moving into/out of a school). It is important to note here that the mobility figure represents the percentage of students in the district (or school) that have remained for an entire academic year. During the 2010-2011 school year, 82% of students remained in this **district** for an entire school year while only 79% of students remained in the same **school** within the district. This means that some students are remaining in the district but changing schools within the district (which is referred to as intradistrict mobility). However, during the 1999-2000 school year 99.5% of students remained in the **district** the entire school year, and 87% of the students remained in the same **school** within the district. This data reveals evidence aligned with intradistrict mobility as posited by Kerbow (1996), which involves students shifting from school to school within the same district. Intradistrict mobility occurrences continue to prevail in this district as the data reveals an 8% increase over the last 10 years of students "bouncing from school to school" (Conniff, 1998) within the district itself. Mobility rates as reported by ODE for the district as a whole are up 17% over the last ten years.

In the past, district data used to be compiled and put into a formula – total # of the enrollments + total # of withdrawals divided by the total number of students in

attendance during ADM (average daily membership) week. This building level mobility rate was then passed on to the administrator at each building. A district wide mobility rate was then calculated using the same formula as listed above for the combined elementary, middle and high schools. According to district personnel, the last time they were asked to calculate this rate was for the 2005-2006 school year.   School level mobility rates were always between 35% and 38% when they were being calculated.

As far as the individual buildings are concerned, several similarities exist between the two schools where I conducted interviews with students. For example, over the last three years, the buildings both had a mobility rate of approximately 22%. This means that 22% of students did not stay at their school for a full academic year. The schools also had the same attendance rates over the last three years (approximately 95%). The racial backgrounds of the children at each school are very similar. Both schools have approximately 88% Black students, with the rest of the percentages comprising of Multiracial and White students. Lastly, both schools had a large percentage of students who came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (approximately 75%).

While there are many similarities, there are some noteworthy differences between the two schools. While School #1 enjoyed a more positive rating from the state over the last three years (Continuous Improvement) because of its gains in student performance, School #2 has had much lower rankings over the same time frame (Academic Watch and Academic Emergency) because of lower levels of student performance. However, going back two more years, School #1 was given the rating of Academic Watch (during the 2006-2007 and 2007-8008 school years). During this same time frame, it was School #2 that received the ranking of Continuous Improvement. There are many possibilities for this shift in test scores. As an insider to the district, I know that a very strong leader was

placed at School #1 to turn things around. While this administrator was at School #1 (when they received the Continuous Improvement Rating) there seemed to be more teacher accountability, higher expectations, higher levels of collaboration among teachers, higher levels of support for teachers, etc. which can all affect the overall climate of a school building. This leader was recently moved to School #2 (this last school year) to turn things around and improve test scores there. Also, School #1 was a small school compared to School #2. It had two sections of each grade level, whereas School #2 had between 3-4 of each grade level. It is likely that it may be harder to manage a bigger school. Also, it is likely that students, families and teachers had a closer connection to one another at a smaller school. While School #1 and School #2 had many students who live in apartment buildings and other rental properties, School #1 had a more suburban feel. It is located up on a hill on the far west side of the city near the Metroparks. This environment is more removed the busyness of the main streets.

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of 15 students from the elementary schools described above. While the racial backgrounds of the students were homogenous (all students were of African descent), the participants varied according to age (from 9-12 years old), gender (7 girls and 8 boys), grade level (6 fourth grade students and 9 fifth grade students) and school (eleven students from school #1 and four students from school #2). In order for participants to qualify for the study they needed to fit the highly mobile criteria (must have changed schools at least three times by the fourth or fifth grade). See Appendix A (highly mobile criteria form) that was sent home with students so that their parents could decide if their child was eligible to participate. See Appendix B

(demographic survey) that asked students to identify background information including the names of previous schools attended and the cities in which these schools were located.

Sources of Data

Semi-structured interview. Phenomenological studies primarily use in-depth interviews for the collection of data (Creswell, 2007), so I conducted a semistructured interview of multiple participants to gather data on the mobility experience (see Appendix C).

Individual interviews. The purpose of this study was to describe the meaning of the mobility experience for a small number of individuals who have experienced high levels of this phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). I used a semi-structured interview (approximately 30-45 minutes in length for each due to age of the participants). The interview questionnaire for this study was constructed using previous literature findings (particularly from the qualitative studies mentioned in chapter 2) as well my professional experiences while working in a highly mobile school district. The interview questions asked students to identify particular people (teachers, friends, family members, etc.) that may have helped make their transition easier as well as particular people or circumstances that made their transition more difficult. Further, the questions were selected in an attempt to uncover how mobility affected students' schoolwork and homework, grades, behavior and friendships. Lastly, students were asked to identify what they would do to help other students like themselves if they were a parent, teacher, or principal. The interviews were conducted face-to-face on a one-on-one basis in a quiet location at the school(s). This procedure allowed me to ask broad questions with prompts but also allowed for flexibility to occur. All interviews were audio recorded so that I could focus my attention on the student and not on taking excessive notes. I did however

take some field notes after each interview to capture some of the nonverbal aspects of the interview. I transcribed the audio recordings shortly after each session. Results from a mini-pilot test and suggestions from several professors allowed me to refine the questions and interview protocol. Minor modifications including word choice, order and organization of the questions were made after collaborating with my professors.

Using the overarching question I attempted to grasp the story of mobile students. The question was: What is it like to change schools? After this prompt, I asked the students to reflect on what they liked and didn't like about these experiences. I also informed them that they were the experts on this subject and that, with their help, I hoped to better understand what it was like for students to change schools so that, as a teacher, I would be able to better help other students who may change schools or are new to our school.

Procedures

Students selected for this study were chosen based on the assumption that they would provide rich data in the form of relevant descriptions of the mobility experience. This idea was highly influenced by Polkinghorne (2005) and is known as purposive selection of participants because it poses that selection should not be random or left to chance.

For purposes of this study, I used a sample of students in a district where I had established professional relationships with educators and to which I had relatively easy access. This approach to sampling is listed as convenience sampling because it involves the researcher choosing sites and individuals that he or she can easily access and collect data (Creswell, 2007). Because all students must fit the "highly mobile" criterion, I also utilized criterion sampling (Creswell, 2007).

In an effort to create a list of students who fit the "highly mobile" criterion, I needed to obtain permission from IRB, the school district and individual schools, as well as parents and students to gather necessary data. The highly mobile criteria form (Appendix A), informed parental consent form (Appendix D), and student assent form (Appendix E) were sent home with all fourth and fifth grade students from the two schools. These forms (Appendix A and B) mentioned to parents and students the purpose of my study, the length of the interview, that the interview would be audio-recorded and that the data collected may be published in a dissertation and/or other publications. The forms also indicated that if their child wished to leave the study at any time, he/she was free to do so without penalty.

I attended a school meeting at each participating school to briefly discuss my research and gain support from the teachers. I also spoke in almost all of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms from the two schools (n=12) to briefly explain my research and to encourage eligible students to participate. The necessary documents were returned to the school's office in an envelope. No identifying information was on the front page being returned to the office.

I selected 15 students who fit the criteria and had turned in all the proper consent and assent forms. I inquired with the students' teachers to find out if the selected students would be able to verbalize and share information about their experiences. This procedure is in direct response to Creswell's (2007) notion that participants need to be able to articulate their lived experiences. Due to limited time throughout the school day (I teach all day and also needed to find time to interview students and sometimes travel to the other school), as well as limited access to students (only 2 schools), I began interviewing students immediately after they returned the proper forms and verifying that

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they met the highly mobile criteria. Students were asked to fill out a short demographic

survey (Appendix B). Including this type of information (age, gender, race, family

members, etc.) provided background information on the students that was helpful in

establishing a rapport and better formulating questions during the interview. It also

provided me with a context for understanding participants' experiences. Additionally, I

used this information to describe the sample for the data analysis section of the study. I

did not, however, use this data for selection criteria. After I had collected data from the

interviews, I sent a letter home to students who were not selected for the study, thanking

them and their families for their time and willingness to participate in the study. A letter

was sent home to the students who were selected for the interviews so that families were

aware that their child actively participated in the study. Upon completion of the study, a

letter was sent home to participants and their families thanking them for their

contribution to the knowledge of the nature, quality, meaning and essence of the mobility

experience.

Data Analysis and Writing

Organization of data begins when the researcher places the transcribed interviews

before him or her and studies the material using the procedures of phenomenological

research (Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis consists of preparing and organizing the data

for analysis, reducing the data into themes by coding and representing the data

appropriately such as in tables or figures (Creswell, 2007). For this study, I followed the

procedures further outlined by Creswell (2007) specifically dedicated to the practice of

conducting a phenomenology. I created and organized files for data, read through

interviews and bracketed out sections, formed codes (assigned names for meaningful

segments of data), described the coding categories, and presented a table of categories.

Interviews were transcribed one at a time and I used pencil to bracket and code sections of interviews that fell into certain themes surrounding the experiences of mobile students. Some sections of interviews were "double coded". This means that certain sections of the interview potentially fell into more than one category. I used the process of Phenomenological Reduction to construct a complete textural description of the mobility experience. I also assembled a differentiated description of the most essential constituents of this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

In order to maintain immersion in data, I made sure to set aside reasonable time frames each day to analyze it. I believe that my position at the school allowed me to be immersed in the data more easily because my day-to-day experiences with students provided me with a constant reminder of my study's importance.

Throughout the analysis procedures, I searched for codes that emerged from the interviews as well as codes that emerged from the existing literature. In qualitative language, this meant that I used a method that involved searching for both emergent categories and *a priori* codes. These codes came from both the literature review and the interview responses. I represented information that was expected (from previous literature) as well as new information that emerged from the interviews. This process is highly encouraged by Creswell (2007). The four subquestions that I established by reviewing the literature provided a means of organizing data. For example, participants' answers fell into the categories of facilitating factors, complicating factors, school achievement implications, and needs of transient students.

Following the organization, presentation and analysis of data obtained from this study, I summarized the study in its entirety and considered its possible limitations,

distinguished my findings from prior research, outlined future research implications and discussed the implications for theory and practice.

I kept a journal during all portions of the research to manage and reflect on the data throughout the study. Morrow (2005) states that one of the best ways to achieve reflexivity, or awareness as a researcher is to keep a self-reflective journal from the inception to the completion of the investigation. This way, the researcher can keep an on-going record of his or her experiences, reactions and awareness of any biases so that they can be examined and then consciously incorporated into the analysis.

In order to provide substantiating evidence, researchers using qualitative methods often use triangulation to shed light on a perspective of the study (Creswell, 2007). According to Morrow (2005), researchers use various strategies to fairly represent participants' realities including asking for clarification and delving more deeply into the meanings of participants and taking the stance of a naïve inquirer. Morrow also highly suggests using participant checks to learn from the participants how well the researcher's interpretations reflect the interviewee's meanings. I used a participant check that allowed students to provide feedback on a summary of my results of their descriptions. Following interviews and data analysis, students were permitted to listen to a summary of my findings as a form of triangulation. They were given a chance on a one on one basis) to agree and/or disagree with my findings. When I read my findings I received many head nods (indicating "yes"), thumbs up gestures, and smiles. One student verbalized that the findings sounded very familiar while another said- "That sounds like everything I said!" Most students said it sounded "right" or something similar. One student mentioned that he couldn't believe anyone felt happy about changing schools because all of his changes were challenging. This gave me a chance to explain that I interviewed several students

and that not all students felt the same way or experienced the same things during their transfers. This procedure was important because it was imperative to make sure that the interpretation of my findings was truly representative of the participants' voices (Creswell, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

Regardless of the approach to qualitative research, the investigator faces many ethical issues that emerge during data collection, analysis and publishing the study (Crewell, 2007). I had been teaching at the elementary level in this district for eight years and my closeness helped me gain easy access as well as enabled me to come to the study having "lived" the role of the teacher of transient students.

The students participating in this study (and their parents/guardians) were aware of what the study entailed, participated on a voluntary basis and were informed that they were permitted to leave the study at any point in time if they felt uncomfortable or wished to be dismissed for any reason. They were made aware that their decision not to participate or to leave the study at any time would not affect their grade or school status in any way. All aspects of the study were provided to IRB for approval. Because I work in the district where the study was conducted, I was careful to honor students' privacy and protect their identities to the best of my ability. Pseudonyms were used in place of names, and letters were used to disguise school locations (ex. "School X"). I made certain that that during the course of the study I carefully used language that would not lead to identifying factors of students. I informed students and families that none of the information would be shared with anyone else and that their identity was protected. I honored the ethical principle of "doing good" and was adequately prepared should any difficulty arise which may have brought up unpleasant memories for the students. I was

ready to provide support and empathy for students during the interviews. I also used my previous knowledge and experiences in working with students and appropriately dealt with these issues. I was ready to refer any student to the school counselor had a more serious issue emerged.

It is important to explain that the potential benefits of a study outweigh the potential negative effects. In this particular study, I wished to highlight that sometimes it feels good to talk about things and to open up to others. It may make students feel good to express their feelings while telling someone about their experiences. They may also feel very valued because an adult is expressing great interest in their stories. They might simply enjoy being pulled out of class (perhaps a break from a busy day) to receive one-on-one attention during the school day. Many positive feelings may result from the fact that and adult is telling them that their stories are very important and that they are the experts.

Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, I turn my efforts to describing how I offered safeguards to students. It was important for the researcher to be aware of how to handle the emotional reactions that this interview could have evoked in students. Also, it was important to have a plan for how to deal with these reactions including acknowledging that a student may have been feeling uncomfortable. For this reason, I began the interviews by explaining to students that the questions in the interview may make them feel happy, sad, excited, upset, etc. and that all of those feelings are O.K. and normal. I also told the students that they could tell me as much or as little as they wanted to about the situation. As discussed previously, I also was ready to refer students to our school counselors had I felt a situation had occurred that required his/her attention or expertise.

The question "What are the transition experiences of highly mobile elementary school students?" was best explored by conducting a phenomenological approach grounded in a social constructivist paradigm. This approach allowed data to be gathered in an effort to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of mobile individuals and enabled the participants to co-construct the meaning of the situation. The data that emerged raised new possibilities, opened up new questions and has the potential to stimulate new dialogue among educational professionals on the topic of student mobility.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data were organized into four primary domains, or topic areas: facilitating factors, challenges/obstacles, academics, and needs/suggestions. Domains are often used to group or cluster data or information about similar topics (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997). Within the four domains, categories (core ideas within each domain) emerged. Utilizing Hill et al.'s (1997) method of categorizing the representativeness of results, the category was given the name *general* if it applied to all 15 cases, *typical* if it applied to 8 to 14 (at least 50% of the cases), and *variant* (a few) if it applied to 3-7 cases. Categories that applied to only 1-2 cases were not included. The domains, categories, number of cases, and representativeness are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Results Summary

Domains, categories	Number of Cases	Representativeness
Facilitating Factors		
Connections	15	General
Benefits of Changing Schools:		
A New Chapter	13	Typical
Family Supports	13	Typical
Coping Strategies	12	Typical
Developing Familiarity	11	Typical
Advice/Encouragement:		
"Stand Up For Yourself"	10	Typical
Feeling Safe/Protected	7	Variant
Challenges/Obstacles		
Anxiety: "The Worst Thing Is		
Not Knowing"	14	Typical
School Environment	13	Typical
Sense of Loss	12	Typical
Home Environment	12	Typical
Bullying	8	Typical
Academics		
Grades	10	Typical
Attendance	4	Variant
Needs/Suggestions		
Developing Familiarity	13	Typical
Advice/Encouragement	12	Typical
Feeling Safe/Protected: "Have		
the Person's Back"	11	Typical
Connections	10	Typical

Facilitating Factors

Facilitating factors addressed components that helped students through their transition experiences. Interview responses were rich with examples of individuals (e.g. parents, siblings, and peers) who were of assistance to transitioning students as well as circumstances (e.g. making new friends and feeling comfortable and welcome in a new school) that were viewed as helpful during transitions. Within the domain of facilitating factors there were seven categories: connections (*general*), benefits of changing schools: a new chapter (*typical*), family supports (*typical*), coping strategies (*typical*), developing familiarity (*typical*), advice: "stand up for yourself" (*typical*), and feeling safe/protected (*variant*).

Connections

Connections (*general*) was the first category in this domain. This category stressed the idea that it was important for students to have a prior connection or relationship with someone at the new school(s) or to establish a connection with someone when arriving at their new school(s).

A male African-descended 5th grade student reflected on individuals in the school environment that may have helped and or made it easier for him when he came to his new school(s), "One student at School X [the new school] and her twin sister, they always used to walk me around and help me meet new friends" (Participant 5). This response indicated that establishing a connection was beneficial to transient students in adapting to their new environment.

When asked the same question, another African-descended male 5th grade student shared that he had a previous connection with students prior to coming to his new school. He had been involved in some neighborhood and city sports that enabled him to form a

previous connection, and thus had some support as he transitioned, "Some of the people in my class I already knew and I didn't know they went to this school, so they helped me a lot, like get to know everybody and stuff like that" (Participant 10).

As this example has demonstrated, it is likely that being involved in activities such as sports may have provided him (especially as a student who transfers schools within the district) with the benefit of having a prior connection with future classmates. This, in turn, may have eliminated some of the anxiety that he had about making new friends at new schools.

Benefits of Changing Schools: A New Chapter

The next category, benefits of changing schools: A new chapter (*typical*), focused on students' positive experiences and feelings regarding their transition experiences. The responses in this category included aspects of the transition experience that students seemed to value and/or enjoy. Student responses in this category indicated that starting at a new school was often viewed positively as a chance to start over in terms of grades, friends, reputation, environment, etc.

An African-descended 4th grade female's response indicated that a benefit to changing schools was the opportunity to start over again. In response to a question about what she liked most about changing schools, she replied:

I got a fresh start. It made me feel good because then I can make my

momma prouder instead of always just being bad at school, and I can just

get a fresh start, like a new chapter in my life. (Participant 9)

In the student's response, it was apparent that this particular change in schools included the benefit of having another chance to get things right, and therefore look forward to the chance of making her mom proud. While this interview response indicated that a benefit

to changing schools is a fresh start for oneself, other student responses indicated a need for a fresh start from emotionally stressful situations involving others. I asked an African-descended male student in the 5th grade to reflect on what he did when he found out he would be changing schools again. I also asked him to talk about how he felt about his new school. He replied in this way:

> I danced…It was a difference coming here because it felt like, warm, a
> warm feeling inside. Like, yeah, this is the right school because I'm not
> getting bullied every day like I used to. (Participant 5)

In this student's comments, it was apparent that he experienced positive feelings when he found out he would be changing schools again because (at least in this case) it was a chance to get away from an emotionally dangerous situation (getting bullied). It was clear that he experienced a benefit from this change in schools because when he arrived at the new school, he continued to experience positive emotions and felt as though he would not get bullied there.

While these two examples mentioned the chance to start fresh and get away from previous negative experiences, other responses reflected the idea that sometimes the mobility experience allows students to experience the pleasure of meeting others. An African-descended female student in the 4th grade was asked to reflect on what it was like to change schools: "It's very interesting because you can meet new people, and I like changing schools a lot because you can meet new friends" (Participant #4). This student's response indicated that one positive aspect of changing schools is the opportunity to meet new people. It is possible that because this student has changed schools three times, that she has really found the experience (or at least parts of the experience) to be beneficial in the sense that she will meet new people.

Family Supports

The third category, family supports *(typical)* was a category that was formed as a result of student responses that emphasized the various ways that family members (e.g. parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) provided different types of support during their transition experiences. Responses from students varied and included examples such as having family members support them through the use of distractions, supportive and encouraging conversations and physically and/or emotionally stepping in and assisting during a transition.

A fifth grade African-descended female student mentioned that she really didn't miss many days of schools, even though her family changed residences several times.

> No, because my Auntie came with us, and my brother's Dad did too. So,
>
> when my mother and my brother's Dad used to go back and forth, my
>
> Auntie used to be there. She used to wash our clothes and everything so
>
> we could go to school. She'd get our school supplies so we'd never be
>
> unattended for school. (Participant 6)

In this case, the student was living under the care of three adults who worked together during a family move to make sure the children did not have to miss any school days. While the mother and the father of this child's brother were moving their belongings from the old residence to the new residence and going back and forth, the children's Auntie played a crucial role in taking care of them and looking after them so that they would not have to miss school. A 4th grade male African-descended student was asked to talk about the adults in his life that may have helped or made it easier for him when he had to change schools. He also mentioned the support provided by family members.

Well my Grandma and Papa, they bought my Mom a car, but then the car

broke down, so then my mom bought us a new car that's way better. And

my Auntie helped us because she would come and pick us up from school

when we didn't have a car and feed us because my Mom would work

overtime. (Participant 11)

This student mentioned several ways that family members provided assistance when the

family needed it. Without a car, the children in this family would not have been able to

get to school, so the Grandparents stepped in to buy a car and the Auntie would

sometimes drive them home when their Mother was without a car. A fifth grade male

student of African descent shared his feelings about how just a listening ear was

beneficial to him.

My Auntie, she got married in 2010 or 2011; I forgot. She used to always

live in our house because she just graduated. It was sad when she had to

move away but I got her phone number in my phone, so we talk on the

phone and she makes me crack up and stuff. She makes me feel better.

(Participant 2)

In this student's example, just having a family member to talk things over with and

having someone make him laugh during this transition in his life was very beneficial.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies *(typical),* the fourth category, included the significance of

students having a way to deal with transitions. The responses mentioned methods

students used to cope with leaving a school or residence, such as detaching themselves

emotionally before a move, as well as how to deal with arriving at a new school, such as

attempting to make friends and trying to fit in.

A fifth grade male student of African descent mentioned that he un-attached himself from school when he finds out he will be changing schools again. I asked him to tell me a little bit more about what he meant by that: "Un-attached myself…It's a really sad way to un-attach myself, but I just stopped working and stopped participating. So, yeah, not get too involved in things" (Participant 3). This honest response from a highly mobile student suggests that it was beneficial for him to mentally and emotionally detach himself from his current school environment once he found out he would be leaving. Perhaps this is somewhat like the grieving process in that the student let go of what he knew he had no control over and that he knew he must leave behind. In the above example the student discussed a method for coping with leaving a school. Later in the interview he described his methods of coping when arriving at a new school. Here, he described how he coped with the challenge of making friends at a new school in the middle of the year: "I would actually be friends with the picked on people because they seemed easier to be friends with… it's because at least I know I wouldn't be rejected" (Participant 3). In other words, this student dealt with his fear of being rejected by attempting to make friends with those who were already being picked on, and thus, he was more likely to feel accepted by these individuals.

While these examples dealt with specifics of leaving a school, and then of arriving at a new school, a male 5th grade student of African descent offered insights on how he coped with being a highly mobile student overall, "I got used to it. It's like a pattern, it's like one half of the year, one half of the year, etc" (Participant 10). This student came to realize that there was a pattern to how often he changed schools, which apparently seemed to be that he made it through half of a school year each time before he moved. This coping strategy also seems beneficial because he stated that he got used to it.

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Simply realizing his mobility pattern may have provided him with a mental and emotional time frame for when to expect a change.

Developing Familiarity

Developing familiarity (*typical*) was the fifth category. This category highlighted the responses from students that dealt with ways in which individuals at their new school(s) assisted them in becoming familiar with the new school (e.g. the building layout, curriculum, rules/procedures). Interview responses focused on situations involving other students or teachers who put in the time and effort to show and/or tell them what specifically was expected of them in their new school. Students also reported instances of individuals in school showing them the physical locations of various places they would need to travel to in the building.

A female student in the 5th grade of African descent shared some examples of how teachers at her new school helped her become familiar with her new surroundings. She was asked to tell about how the people at her new school helped her when she arrived.

> I didn't know where my class was at, so the teachers helped me get to my
> class. And they would show me where to put everything at. When I get
> dismissed (at the end of the day) they show me where to go, and they
> helped me around the building. (Participant 9)

This student's response highlights the importance of having someone at the transient students' new school to show him/her around the academic environment. While this student mentioned that a teacher was helpful to her, when asked the same question, a 5th grade female student of African descent mentioned that other students came to her attention. "They (students) helped me with my schoolwork and they walked me around

the school to show me stuff, like a little tour" (Participant 6). Here, the student states the importance of having someone helping her to become familiar with her surroundings.

However, this example shows that it does not necessarily have to be the teacher. A fourth grade African-descended female student concentrated her responses on the ways in which other students assisted her in becoming familiar with daily classroom practices and procedures.

> Yeah, they (students) told me what to do in the morning and what we were
>
> going to do in the afternoon. Because I have some other stuff that at my
>
> old schools they didn't do, and they do it at this school. So, they told me
>
> how to say their creed and the Pledge of Allegiance and what we do in the
>
> morning. (Participant 4)

This response indicated that it was beneficial to have someone assist in helping her through the new aspects of her day-to-day activities and procedures. Obviously, all schools have different ways of doing things and each time a child changes schools, he or she becomes part of a new school and classroom culture; each have their own methods and specific ways of knowing and doing things. It is apparent from the students' responses that it was highly beneficial for them to have someone at their new school assisting them in navigating their way through this new culture when they arrived.

Advice: "Stand Up For Yourself"

The sixth category in this domain was advice: "Stand up for yourself" (*typical*). This category included advice given from someone in the student's life (e.g. family, friends, teachers) regarding his/her transition experience. Student responses were varied

and covered topics such as: advice regarding how to go about making new friends, how to deal with bullies and how to handle their emotions.

When asked to talk about people in his life that may have helped or made changing schools easier, an African-descended fifth grade male student discussed the advice that others gave him in regards to standing his ground.

> I used to be say, shy. I used to like back down from people, so people
>
> encouraged me, "Don't let them push you around. You've got to stand up
>
> for yourself, but you don't have to hit them physically. You have to stand
>
> up for yourself. You can't let anybody punk you around (Participant 10).

This student indicated that other people in his life were concerned about his well-being and offered words of advice and encouragement to him, perhaps in the hopes that he would not be taken advantage of and/or bullied. In response to the same question, a 4th grade African-descended female student reflected on her family member's advice in regards to the challenges of making new friends in the middle of the year.

> When I came from school X the first day, I told them (her family) that I
>
> couldn't make any friends because I was kind of scared that somebody
>
> would make fun of me. They told me just to make one friend and meet all
>
> of their friends (Participant 4)

Here the student referenced the advice from family members who were concerned about their daughter and her struggle with making new friends at a new school. This type of support provides a direct strategy for the student to try. It also is likely that this student has sought advice before and (most likely) will again seek advice and guidance from her family since they appear to be receptive to her needs. This benefit should not be understated because it can provide specific methods and strategies for mobile students to

try in regards to challenges and obstacles they may come across while changing schools. One last example of this are the words from a 5th grade African-descended female student who was asked about how the adults in her life may have helped or made it easier for her when she changed schools.

> My mom made it- my mom and grandma made it easier for me because
>
> they was like, "It's OK, [Olivia]. All you got to do is calm down. You're
>
> going to meet new people." And my auntie was like, "It's OK. Um,
>
> you're going to meet new people. You're going to learn new things", and
>
> then she took me shopping. (Participant 1)

This response describes how the student's family provided her with words of advice on how to emotionally respond to the situation of changing schools as well as offer her a positive outlook on the new people and experiences she may come across. Also, it can be argued that the incident of taking her shopping may have provided a positive emotional experience and could have been used as a distraction or as a simple way to cheer her up about the anxiety she may have had regarding her upcoming change in schools.

Feeling Safe/Protected

It was clear from interview responses that it was important for transitioning students to feel safe at their school. The last category in this domain, feeling safe/protected (*variant*) emphasized this idea. Student responses indicated that individuals (e.g. teachers, peers, siblings) played a crucial role in either verbally or physically protecting them from bullies or the threat of being bullied.

A 4th grade female student of African-descent reflected on how family members helped her feel safe at her new school, and later in the interview, mentioned a school policy that was helpful in dealing with bullies. These reflections were in response to the

questions: Can you tell me a little about how your family (and then how your schools) may have helped you when you changed schools?

> My sister comes and picks me up after school just to make sure no bullies are messing with me and stuff. And my cousin, she walks with me sometimes too… Yeah, we have a bully box outside Mrs. X's (the principal's) office that has helped me a lot. It helps me to tell an adult when somebody's messing with you, and it helps me to not be afraid of telling what's going on if you have problems with what is going on in your classroom. (Participant 4)

This student's comments highlighted the reality that it is crucial for transient students to feel secure in their new environment. This student placed value on the role that her sister and cousin played in assisting her to feel safe, as well as how her new school's policy allowed her to feel comfortable about reporting incidents of bullying.

In response to being asked how her schools and the people in them may have helped her or made changing schools easier, a 5th grade male student of African descent reflected on how his teacher's words made an impact, "Well. Mrs. X- She made me understand it is nice to go here and there are no bullies. You're going to be protected and all that" (Participant 5). Here, it appears the student was comforted by the fact that his teacher was fully aware that bullying can be a problem. The teacher's reassurance to him that bullying would not happen to him at this [his new school] was an additional support of comfort and security. While teachers, siblings and school policies have helped transient students feel safe and protected, a fifth grade female student of African descent addressed how peers also play a pivotal role. "They told me- because there were a lot of bullies at [the new] school told me just to come tell the teacher if they hit you again and

go to the principal and they would get suspended" (Participant 6). In this case, the student was given assistance with how to deal with an existing bullying problem, and was also reassured that there would be consequences for the students who were bullying her, should she report it. It is likely that this student felt protected at her new school because it seemed to have a system in place that holds bullies responsible for their actions.

Challenges

This domain included those responses that described the difficulties students encountered during their transition experiences. Some of these challenges occurred at students' previous schools, and others occurred at the new school at which they were enrolled at the time of their interview. Within this domain were the following categories: anxiety: "The worst thing is not knowing" (*typical*), school environment (*typical*), sense of loss (*typical*), home environment (*typical*), and bullying (*typical*).

Anxiety: "The Worst Thing Is Not Knowing"

The first category, anxiety: "The worst thing is not knowing" **(***typical),* described specific examples of occurrences during transitions that likely made students feel anxious or nervous about their new environment. Most student responses in this category focused on the unknown aspects of their new school including their fears regarding making new friends, fitting in, and the possibility of being the victim of bullying. Students' anxieties focused on both academics and on social situations.

A fifth grade male student of African descent gave some insights on what it felt like when he changed schools. He was asked if there was anything about changing schools that he didn't like.

> What I don't like about moving is that I don't know what's going to
>
> happen in a new school. Not knowing is what gives you the nervous

feeling. If you know what's going to happen at the new school, how it's

going to happen and everything, you wouldn't be nervous because you

already know what's going to happen. But the worst thing is not knowing

what's going to happen at the new school. If the people are going to like

you or not like you, you know? (Participant 3)

This student's comments illustrate the anxiety he feels facing the unknown. He clearly

admitted to feeling anxious about the unknown factors connected with being at a new

school(s). Similarly, a fifth grade African-descended female student admitted her own

feelings of anxiousness when asked why she felt nervous about starting at a new school.

I was nervous because it was a group of kids in my classroom, and you

don't know what they did before you got there or whatever. And then, um,

then you don't know what they are going to say about you, what they

gonna like end up stealing your stuff and stuff. So, I was real nervous

(Participant 1).

Here, it appears that this student seemed to be anxious about what her new classmates

were going to be like, and specifically was nervous about potentially being picked on or

getting her things taken. Perhaps, in this case the student was using her past experiences

from another school and was nervous because these things had happened to her (or

someone she knew) at her other schools.

School Environment

This (*typical)* category discussed a wide-range of negative experiences that

students encountered in their school environments. These negative experiences occurred

at their previous schools, or at the schools at which they were enrolled at the time of

interview.   Responses from students varied significantly and included examples such as

fights, bullying, students disrupting class, the physical aspects of school buildings, and difficulties fitting in.

In the case of this 4th grade African- descended female student, the negative experiences occurred at the new school. She was asked to talk about what she didn't like about changing to her new school.

I don't like it when I have to meet all the people who've been treating the

teachers bad and the people who just don't care about school anymore.

And I hate all the kids at school- well, not all of them, the bad ones- have

to interrupt the class.

Here, the student discussed the fact that she did not appreciate students in her new school interrupting class and disrespecting the teachers. She didn't like that most of the students in her new school were being disruptive, instead of embracing their opportunity to learn. In contrast are excerpts from two other students:

A fifth grade male of African descent was asked to share more about why he wanted to leave the city where he used to live and attend school.

Because there was just too much drama inside of it, so I just wanted to

come here to [this] school …Like fights and a lot of things going on, like

bad things. Shootings going on around and stuff like that. (Participant 7)

Negative aspects of this student's previous neighborhood/school are apparent in that the environment was described by him to be dangerous. This left him wanting to leave that behind and live in a neighborhood and attend school where those things would not be as commonplace. Another 5th grade male student of African descent talked about the physical features of the building where he once attended school. I asked him to explain more about what he meant when he stated that his former school wasn't in the best shape.

Like, you know what keeps the floor- the tiles, the overcovering? They

didn't have that. It's just the kind of school- like the classes, the books

were messed up. They didn't have one single crayon that still had the

wrapping on it, that wasn't broken. And the school was always going

wrong. Like the basement would flood. And once we were in class and

the pipes in the basement broke. The computer lab and everything is

down there (Participant 3).

This student's description of the building painted the picture of a school that was falling

apart. In both of these cases, the students moved from a less attractive, or more violent

environment, to one that was more attractive or safer.

Sense of Loss

The third category, sense of loss *(typical)*, refers to the people, places and things

that students left behind during their transition experiences and for which they expressed

a sense of longing.   Responses in this category centered around students missing their

friends from previous schools.

At the very end of the interview, when asked if there was anything else she would

like to tell me about changing schools, a 4th grade female student of African descent

shared what happened when she changed schools, "I lost my best friend" (Participant 8).

Simply stated, but to the point, it was the last thing she had shared during the interview

and it is an indicator that she was dealing with various emotions regarding her transition.

A 5th grade male student of African descent was asked to talk about what his

experience of changing schools was like, "It's a hard feeling because you're going to

miss your friends and the people you like a lot" (Participant 5). This student also was

feeling the loss of the people he left when he changed schools.

Home Environment

Lastly, home environment, (*typical)*, included student responses that were directly related to challenging or difficult issues that occurred in their personal home lives. A fourth grade female African-descended student was asked to explain some of the reasons for frequently changing schools. She gave several reasons.

> I changed from [my old] school because I went to go to my Dad's house,
> so then I went to my first grade. Then I came back to my Grandma's
> house for second grade. But then I changed that school because she didn't
> have a lease for me. So, then I went to school Y and then I changed that
> school and came here…Because my brother got expelled (Participant 14).

Here, it was several environmental factors that lead to this student's high incidence of school mobility. It is likely that several changes in socioeconomics and/or family composition contributed to her moving from residence to residence. Also was the fact that her (twin) brother was expelled, and thus they both changed schools again. The response of a 5th grade male student of African descent also indicated home environmental issues that were likely factors of his being uprooted to another city, and therefore another school. He was also asked why he changed schools so often.

> Where I used to live, there was a lot of violence. There was a lot of gang
> banging and stuff, I guess, and then my mom said she wanted to move
> away from it, so we moved out of the heart of the gangs and back to [my
> old] city …I moved there (in reference to the next move) because the man
> upstairs had problems and he used to walk around on the floor at like 3:30
> in the morning. It was a two-family house, and his dad owned it. He was
> the landlord, so he was letting his son stay there for free until he got back

on his feet. So, he had problems and stuff. He was doing crazy stuff on

the top floor, so we couldn't sleep, so we had to move (Participant 10).

This student's experience with multiple residential and school moves was likely due to

the environmental factors with which he was dealing. While his mom was making

valiant efforts to provide a safe place for her family to live, it appears that several of her

attempts did not turn out as favorably as she would have liked, and thus the family was

uprooted several times in search of a better environment.

Bullying

While one of the previous categories in this domain, school environment, posed

obstacles for transitioning students, bullying was a very specific component in the

environment mentioned by several students, and therefore, it is its own category.

Bullying *(typical)* focused on the verbal and physical aspects of bullying that students

experienced at either their previous or current school. While some students just

mentioned the word bullies, others described instances of being kicked, hit, or being

made fun of (verbally).

One participant, a fifth grade male student of African descent reflected on

instances of bullying that occurred, unfortunately, at more than one of the schools he

attended. I asked him to tell me more about what he meant when he said that sometimes

kids messed with him when he changed schools.

Some people would kick me, and some people would hit me, so I told my

Momma about that. Then, she took me to another school. Then it

happened again, then we had to go to another school. There's a whole lot

more schools that we went to, but I didn't tell you because I forgot all the

names again (Participant 2).

In this instance, the student was being bullied physically at several of the schools he attended. The student's response also indicated he had changed schools so many times that he couldn't remember all of the schools he had been enrolled in. It is likely that since this student had been bullied, he may have carried some anxiety (as discussed in the previous section of this domain) regarding his personal safety and the fear that he would again experience bullying at each of his new schools. A fourth grade female student of African descent also shared her thoughts on bullying. She was asked if there was anything else she would like to share with me about what changing schools was like that we had not discussed.

> So, the fights- It's like when somebody's talking about you and then
>
> somebody will, like, meet you after school, then you get in fights. And
>
> you get in trouble for nothing because they're the ones that are bullying
>
> you and they're the one that started the stuff (Participant 14).

This student's response reflects the notion that she felt frustrated at the fact that others start the negative behaviors of talking about people and then set up a fight after school. However, it appeared that the victims of bullying also got in trouble. Perhaps the student was tired of being picked on and was attempting to stand her ground. While we don't know the reason, it is clear that this student was upset because of the incidents of bullying in her environment, and possibly the lack of effort being put forth to curtail bullying before it ended up in a physical dispute.

Academics

This domain addressed students' perceptions of how changing schools correlated with their academics. The two categories that emerged were attendance (*variant)* and grades (*typical*).

Attendance

The category attendance (*variant)* included student examples regarding how experiencing a change in schools and/or residences may have caused them to miss time at school. Students responded that they missed school days due to circumstances that were directly related to moving such as packing up belongings, as well as those that related to the school environment such as bullying.

One participant, a female student of African descent in the fifth grade shared her experience regarding how changing schools once affected her attendance, "Sometimes it affect my attendance because it was like, at school X, I was about to move and I missed like, a week of school because we had to pack up our stuff and stuff" (Participant 1). In this example, the student changed both residences and schools, and according her, these changes resulted in her missing a week of school.

Another student, a 5th grade male African- descended student was asked if changing schools affected how often he came to school, "Yeah, at school X, the days (attendance) reflected because of the behavior of the kids. Yeah, because I was getting bullied on. It's hard to come to school when you're getting constantly bullied on" (Participant 2). The response from this student indicates that he sometimes missed school due to the fact that he was getting bullied at his previous school. This student also shared in the interview how excited he was when he found out he would be leaving school X because of that bullying (see benefits domain).

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Grades

This category (*typical)* addressed students' responses that focused specifically on how transitioning from school to school presented a challenge for them in regards to academics, or how their transition to a new school improved their academics.

A fifth grade male student of African descent addresses how the previous category (attendance) affected his ability to keep up with schoolwork, and thus affected his grades as well.

Changing schools has messed me up on the way I do in school because, since I moved so much, I've missed so many days of school that I never had a chance to catch up on the work. So, when I left a school, by the time I went back into school, my grades would be down so bad because I didn't have a chance to do school work (Participant 3).

Here, moving played a role in missing school, which correlated negatively with the academics of the student. This student associated missing many days of school with not being able to catch up with work, which led to lower grades. Another student, a fourth grade female of African descent also shared a negative experience with grades, but her answer focused not on missing school days, but on the differences in curriculum and content. The student was asked if changing schools affected her grades.

It affected my grades my grades because the stuff that they teach at [my old] school was nothing compared to what they teach here [new school]. It was really hard. It's hard here, yeah because I haven't learned decimals until I came here. Or I haven't learned how to add and subtract with decimals. And multiply, we hadn't done as much at [the other] school. We did some, but we didn't do as much as we do here (Participant 4).

This reflection demonstrates that since there were differences between schools in the areas of academic content and curriculum pacing, academics were more challenging for this student. Her response also implied that one school appeared to be more rigorous than the other. The previous two examples focused on negative academic experiences.

Positive experiences were also shared among the interviewees. Some students experienced higher grades due to changing schools. A fifth grade African- descended male student shared his thoughts, "At school X, I was doing very bad. I wasn't getting good grades, but when I came here (new school) I started getting good grades, like straight A's" (Participant 7). This student experienced a positive correlation between changing schools and grades. This is important because students' answers for this category varied. Some students found that changing schools presented a challenge in terms of grades, while others found it to be helpful in attaining better grades. Responses from this category indicate that each change presents a unique set of circumstances for students.

Needs/Suggestions

The domain that addressed students' suggestions regarding what they would do and/or say to help a new student at their school was simply labeled, Needs/Suggestions. Students were asked to pretend that they were a teacher, a principal, a mom or dad, as well as just a student in a school where new students would be arriving. In many cases the things the students suggested they would do and/or say to help new students, was often the very thing that others said and/or did for them during their transitions. These parallel responses favor the notion that students have learned from their transition experiences and have experienced self-growth. Additional ideas provided by the students

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suggest that their expertise with this type of experience is worth listening to and that

perhaps more can be done to assist them. Within this domain were the following

categories: developing familiarity *(typical),* advice/encouragement *(typical)*, feeling

safe/protected: "Have the person's back" *(typical),* and connections *(typical).*

Developing Familiarity

Focusing on the notion that it is crucial for transitioning students to become

acquainted with their new environment and the rules and procedures within it is the

category developing familiarity *(typical).* Students suggested many ways they would

assist transitioning students in becoming acclimated to the ways of their new school such

as giving the new student a tour of the building and assisting them with learning school

rules and routines.

A fourth grade male student of African descent described the importance of

providing a transitioning student a buddy peer when they change schools. Here he shared

what he would do/say if he was the teacher and a new student was entering his classroom

for the first time.

I would give them everything that they need to be prepared for class. First,

I would give them a partner to let them catch up. Then, when they were

far ahead and caught up, then the partner wouldn't help them anymore.

Then they would know how to do it on their own (Participant 11).

This student was able to envision himself as a teacher of a transitioning student and offer

expert advice on what could be helpful to that student. He felt as though a partner was

needed as a support only until the transitioning student became accustomed to his/her

environment, at which time the new student could manage independently. Another

interviewee, an African-descended female 4th grade student explained how a daily class

routine (called the Morning Meeting), that involved several social skills-focused activities could be utilized to assist a transitioning student. She was asked what she would do/say if a new student came into her room.

> I'd help them around, tell them what we do and stuff. Like on their first
> day, we do a Morning Meeting, which when there's a new kid, we just say
> "Hi, Our name is_____" whatever name we say, and then we tell them
> one thing they need to know about being in this school or this class
> (Participant 13).

This student shared a procedure that her class had already implemented for transitioning students. It can be proved to be helpful for transitioning students in her room.

Advice/Encouragement

This category *(typical)* included specific advice that students reported they would give to a transitioning student as well as encouraging words or gestures. Answers varied from advice encouraging students to see the positive aspects of changing schools to advice that focused on how to handle specific instances that may arise at their new school (bullying, trying to make friends, feeling nervous, etc.)

A 5th grade African- descended male student shared what he would say/do if he were a parent helping his son or daughter change schools.

> I would say, "It will be OK because you get to meet new people and have
> new friends. You don't know what this is going to be. Like, it could be
> an awesome school for you that will bring your grades up" or something
> like that if they were already down (Participant 7).

This student mentioned earlier (academics domain) that his grades improved when he changed schools this last time. When given the opportunity to take on the imaginary role

of being a parent, his advice to his son or daughter would be one of hope that this change

in schools may be a good thing and bring about good changes. Another 5th grade male

student of African descent offered his advice regarding what he would do/say to help if

he were a parent of a transitioning student.

> I'd probably buy them a phone. Like, if they're feeling like they want to
>
> burst, ask to go to the bathroom and come call me. Then I'd tell them
>
> what to do. Yeah, then I'd tell them to go back into class but I'd tell them
>
> to keep it on vibrate (Participant 10).

This student's response highlights the specific importance of family supports in relieving

feelings of anxiety and nervousness about the impending new environment. Another

participant, an African-descended female student in the fifth grade shared her thoughts

regarding how she would respond if she were the principal and a new student came to the

school.

> I would like, um, teach them to, uh, like give them a tour around and tell
>
> them, "If anybody messes with you, come down to my office or tell the
>
> teacher. It's not good to fight. Or, it's not good to argue because you're
>
> taking the learning time away from you and your classmates" (Participant
>
> 1).

This student mentioned giving the new student a tour, which was the response of several

students regarding what helped them when they were new at school (Facilitating Factors

Domain). She also offered advice regarding what the new students should do if someone

messes with them. Her answer revealed that she believed it is not good to fight or argue

during school because it takes time away from learning.

Feeling Safe/Protected: "Have the Person's Back"

Feeling safe/protected: "Have the person's back" *(typical)* was the category that centered in on students' suggestions regarding helping other transient students to feel comfortable and safe in their new school environment. Responses were heavily focused on protecting new students from bullies.

A male African-descended fifth grade student was told he was the expert on this subject (changing schools) and was asked what he might do/say if he were the principal of the school to help a highly mobile student if they came to this school.

I would make sure he has a good feeling coming into the school. I would

make sure that he would feel that he or she has a safe environment of

coming and that they won't get bullied or anything (Participant 2).

The suggestion posited by this student reflects his earlier comments from the interview in which he explained that he himself had been bullied at previous schools. This reflection suggests that this student has learned from his experiences and that he wants others to feel comforted like he did on his first day at his new school. Similarly, a 5th grade African-descended female student also wanted other highly mobile students to feel safe. Here, she shares her thoughts on what she would do/say as a classmate when a new student arrived in her room, "I would say, it's okay, there are no bullies that are going to hurt you. The teacher will protect you. It's their responsibility" (Participant 5). In this case, the student offers friendly and reassuring advice to a mobile student entering a new classroom.

Lastly, a fifth grade female student of African descent shared her suggestions, "And then I would have the person's back (new student) and I would never let nobody talk about them" (Participant 1). This student previously shared that it was helpful when

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she felt like other students had her back when she changed schools. She had earlier talked about how nervous she was about making new friends and wondered if people at the new school would mess with her or talk about her. For her to feel safe at her new school, she needed to know someone "had her back", and she wanted other new students to feel the same.

Connections

The last category in this domain was connections *(typical).* The students' responses in this category identified the specific suggestion of making sure the new students made a connection with someone in their new school. Students mentioned examples of how they would help new students by reaching out to them in terms of friendships as well as warning them of the potential fallouts of being the new kid.

An African- descended female student in the fifth grade responded to the question: *What would you say/do if a new student came to your school?* "And I would try to be their friend. If everybody didn't want to be their friend because they're new, then I'd be their friend and try and guide them through" (Participant 9). This response shows the student attempting to reach out to the new student and offering to be his/her friend, even if other students in the class are not as welcoming or willing to reach out. An African-descended male student in the 5th grade was asked what he might say/do to help a transitioning student if he/she came to his class. He shared an example of what he already said/did to help a new student.

> Like student X, as soon as he walked into the classroom, I got straight up
> and I went right to the door to talk to him. Then we went into the hallway,
> and I started talking to him like, "Look out for this. Look out for that.
> They're going to try and pull this trick on you" (Participant 10).

This protective-like response easily falls into the category of feeling safe/protected as well, but it also implies the student felt it was important for someone in the class to connect to new students and to help them navigate through the social maze of the new environment. Here, the student let the new student know that others may try to play tricks on him and engage in other initiation-like rituals that appear to be associated with being the new kid. This student did not want the new student to be tricked or harmed and by reaching out to this new student, he supplied a connection to the unknown social aspects of the transient student's new environment.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of highly mobile, urban elementary students. The aim was to understand the lived experiences of transient students through the underrepresented voices of the students themselves. Research has indicated that high transient rates among students are correlated with negative academic, social and emotional consequences in the school environment (Sanderson, 2004). Researchers have also stated that schools play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of mobility and suggest that school personnel should be doing more to support students, especially given the high level of risk associated with school transfers (Mantzicopoulos & Knutson, 2000; Nelson & Simoni, 1996).

A qualitative analysis of interviews with fifteen students within in two urban elementary schools in Northeast Ohio was conducted. The participants were 4th and 5th grade students who had changed schools non- traditionally at least 3 times thus far in their academic careers. A phenomenological qualitative research methodological analysis revealed that students emphasized facilitating factors, challenges/obstacles, academics, and needs/suggestions.

Students found their transition experiences to be challenging, beneficial, overwhelming, and/or exciting. While students shared many commonalities with regards to their changes, their responses varied significantly depending on their individual life circumstances. It was not uncommon for a student to report both positive and negative aspects of their experiences. Some school transfers were viewed as a good change (e.g. moving out of a dangerous neighborhood or into a safer school), whereas other changes may have been viewed as less desirable (e.g. school being closed/shut down or moving into a less desirable school/neighborhood).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Research Questions

Research question 1.

What are the facilitating factors associated with mobility?

The findings from this study pointed to facilitating factors for highly mobile students in their school transitions. For example, having connections at school was a common response mentioned by many students. This coincides with Rhodes' (2008) study that found mobile students often found that they were unable to concentrate on academic work until they could secure a group of friends that provided social and emotional support. The participants from this study indicated that making connections with peers and becoming familiar with the school was very important when transitioning to a new school. This is similar to the findings of Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) who reported that the biggest challenge for newly entering students at their school was for mobile students to adjust to the school and make connections with their peers.

Some students had prior connections (e.g. knowing kids from sports or the neighborhood) that enabled them to see a familiar face (or faces) on the first day at a new school. This also allowed them to make additional connections with other peers more

easily because these students often introduced them to their friends. Other mobile students mentioned that once they were able to form a connection at the school with a peer, they felt more comfortable and less nervous about being at their new school. Students reported many circumstances in which someone (e.g. peers, family members, teachers) helped them to feel safe and protected at their new school. Many students indicated that it felt good to know that someone "had their back" at their new school.

Several students reported benefits that coincided with their transition experiences. Many transient students enjoyed the opportunities to meet new friends and new teachers when they changed schools. As the Rhodes' (2008) study revealed, some students felt they were more versatile and flexible because of their transition experiences and further, that they really enjoyed moving to different places and meeting new people. Several students saw changing schools as an opportunity to start fresh with a clean slate, which later enabled them to accomplish feats such as making new friends and getting better grades. For some students, changing schools was a result of changing neighborhoods, and sometimes both the new school and residence were more desirable. This coincides with Kerbow's (1996) findings in which he stated that sometimes families move residences or change schools for "attraction reasons".

It was reported by several students that family support was a crucial factor in assisting them through their numerous changes in schools. Students reported that family members provided meals, transportation, school supplies, a listening ear, and even comic relief when needed. It is important to mention that extended family played an especially pivotal role in the experiences of these students by taking on the role and duties of parents who were busy with the physical aspects of the family's move. Many students mentioned Grandparents, step- parents, older siblings, Uncles and Aunties, cousins, etc.

who provided supports during their changes. The students were well aware of the assistance being provided and acknowledged this assistance as helpful during their mobility experiences.

In order to deal with many of the challenges they faced, many transient students reported having some sort of coping mechanism(s). Having specific methods for coping seemed to allow students opportunities to make their own decisions about how to deal with mobility occurrences. This seemed to offer them a sense of control where most aspects of being transient are beyond their control. Students' strategies varied but mostly dealt with how to cope when exiting a school and how to handle starting at a new one. For example, some students' responses indicated that they withdrew emotionally from their environment in order to prepare to leave it. While this could lead to a decline in academics or social involvement for a period of time, it may be that highly mobile students offer themselves a little down time to emotionally withdraw from people and activities that they know they must leave behind. While "un-attaching" may be a coping strategy, it is important to mention that there may also be serious negative implications. If a student continues to utilize this strategy, it would be important to consider how long he/she was academically and emotionally withdrawing from the environment. If it is just for a few days, and it helps him/her through a rough situation, perhaps it is not so dangerous. On the other hand, if a child finds out a month or even more in advance of a school transfer, the academic and social ramifications could be severe (lower levels academic progress, feeling isolated/depressed, etc.) Time and the individual differences of children (sensitivity, resiliency, etc.) play a role in determining if this particular coping strategy would be a helpful and a healthy one. Other students referenced various strategies on how to go about making new friends in a school (often mid-year). A few

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students seemed to favor the strategy of approaching less popular kids first so that they were less likely to be rejected. This finding is very similar to the reports from Rhodes (2008) that declared that highly mobile high schools students had to have a strategy for making new friends and many of them attempted to seek out students who didn't have many friends and make friends with them first. One student mentioned that getting used to changing schools was a strategy. He found a pattern to how often he changed schools, so he simply expected a change to be coming in the future at some point. Whatever the strategy, mobile students in this study were cognizant of their coping mechanisms and reported them as being helpful in their transition experiences.

Many students also reported that it was helpful to have someone assisting them with navigating through the new school to become better familiar with the environment. Whether it was protection from bullies, help with schoolwork, or assistance with understanding the culture at their new school, when someone helped them feel safe, transient students recognized and appreciated the assistance. These findings once again parallel those from the literature review. Students from Rhodes' (2008) study also suggested that assigning a buddy to transfer students during their first week to help them find areas of the school and get to know the school procedures, rules, etc. seemed to be a way that might help ease feelings of anxiety.

Interviewed students offered examples regarding how people in their lives made changing schools a little easier for them by giving them some advice along the way. Students mentioned family members, friends, teachers and peers who often provided critical advice before, during or after a school change. The advice focused on how to handle emotions, how to deal with leaving friends behind, or how to go about making new friends in a new environment.

Though not specifically mentioned in the interviews, it seems plausible that because we live in technologically advanced society, that social media and/or other ways to communicate with old friends, family, etc. may have played a role in assisting transient students to stay connected to people from their previous school, neighborhood, etc. or to help them establish and maintain new friendships and connections in their new environment.

Lastly, for many students the benefits of changing schools meant not having to be worried about getting bullied anymore. This corresponds with Ker bow's (1996) study in which he declared that those who change schools sometimes leave for "exit reasons", such as trouble with other students.

Research question 2.

What are the challenging factors associated with mobility?

The highly mobile student has a much higher probability of experiencing academic, social, and emotional problems compared to less mobile students (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). Many of the students' responses indicated that there were several challenges that coincided with their transitions. Several responses were highly correlated with the findings from the Rhodes' (2008) study. Rhodes (2008) found that student interview responses focused primarily on the friendships they left behind, their strategies to make new ones, their relationships with supportive adults and the many uncertainties that come with being a highly mobile student.

Student interview responses from this study direct us to the emotional challenges transient students encounter before, during, and after school changes. These findings also parallel those from Rhodes' (2008) study in which she found that the transfer experience

among high school students often resulted in stress, insecurity, and a lack of focus because they were often trying to play "catch up" in both academics and social relationships. Common to most students from the current study was a feeling of anxiousness about their changes. Students reported incidents of having butterflies in their stomach, having anxiety about making new friends and fitting in, as well as feeling nervous about the many unknown aspects of their new school and the people who would be there. These responses also parallel findings from the existing literature that states students who transfer schools during the academic year are bringing a great deal of stress with them (Sanderson, 2004) and moving from school to school often elicits feelings and experiences of uncertainty, frustration, major anxiety and academic failure (Queen, 2002).

Almost all the students who were interviewed reported negative experiences at one or more of the schools they have attended. Whether they moved out of a less favorable school to a more favorable one or vice versa, most students clearly identified negative perceptions of one or more of the schools they had attended. Students mentioned obstacles such as fights, disruptive students, shootings, difficulties getting along with others and the less than desirable physical makeup of the school buildings.

Another commonality among transient students was their feelings of loss. Many students reported being sad and/or upset about the people and things they left behind at their old schools/and /or residences. They identified really missing old teachers, friends, family, etc.

According to those interviewed, various challenging home factors were present in students' lives. Factors such as parental hardships including having a parent that lost a job, that is disabled, that was severely injured, or was incarcerated. Sometimes students shifted from living with one parent/guardian to another and while some viewed that shift

as positive, other students viewed it as a change they did not like. Students also mentioned undesirable living conditions such as disorderly neighbors and a prevalence of violent crimes within the area.

Another significant obstacle faced by transient students was bullying. While a few students referenced specific targets for the bullies (e.g. being the new kid, being made fun of for their weight or other physical attributes, being really smart, etc.), others just mentioned that one thing they didn't like about changing schools were the bullies. One student mentioned that the reason he left a particular school was because he asked his mom if he could switch because he was being bullied. After moving to another school, he unfortunately continued to be a victim of bullying.

Research Question 3.

What are the school achievement implications associated with mobility?

According to student responses from the current study, both attendance and grades were influenced by incidents of high mobility. Prior research has indicated that the academic consequences associated with high mobility are severe and that it may take four to six months for a mobile student to recover academically from a transfer (Walls, 2003).

Some students from the study declared that they missed days of school during a transition period. The Family Housing Fund (1998) study indicated that students who move frequently have higher absentee rates (twenty percent) and this results in their missing valuable academic lessons and content. Students also reported that their mobility correlated with a change in their grades that was sometimes positive and sometimes negative. This is consistent with the Temple and Reynolds (1999) study that found that the harmful relationship between mobility and achievement varies according to the type of move and sometimes the quality of schools that were attended. In the current study,

those students who reported doing better in school academically seemed to believe that it was due to the fact that they had changed to a more desirable environment. Those that struggled academically seemed to indicate that differences in curricular material and rigor between schools were the main reasons for a decline in grades. These reasons may be linked to Temple and Reynold's (1999) findings that suggested that students who changed schools frequently were more at risk (than those who are non-movers) of educational difficulties. Their struggles may also be linked to the findings from Lash and Kirkpatrick's study (1990) which indicated that new students need to become part of a class (or classes) that have already built a history, including a sense of purpose, a common understanding of rules/procedures that guide activities and learning, and a shared knowledge base acquired from previous instruction. This challenge is complicated because new students bring educational histories and knowledge of subject matter that may or may not match up with the shared experiences of the class (or classes) they enter.

Two students offered very specific responses on the subject. One student from the current study admitted to being angry about changing schools, and thus she took her anger out at school and her grades suffered, while another student mentioned that while he was lifting a box for his move to a new home, he broke his commanding arm and it affected his ability to write at school.

Research question 4.

What are the needs of highly mobile students?

Student suggestions provided a clear understanding of the multifaceted needs of the highly mobile student. Responses were similar to responses that students provided earlier in the interviews regarding things that made transitions easier for them. Students' responses indicated that mobile students need to feel safe and protected. Many students

stated they would stick up for the student, protect them, and inform them of the school's policies on bullying (including specifically what to do should someone bully them).

Student suggestions also indicated that mobile students need to become familiar with their new environment as well as make connections with people in their new environment so that they would not feel alone, but rather comfortable, around new people. Students mentioned that they would help the transitioning student become familiar with the physical layout of the school as well as the school's policies, culture and routines. This coincides with Rhodes' (2008) study that revealed that highly transient high school students often found themselves unable to concentrate on academic work until they could secure a group of friends that provided social and emotional support.

Parental support of transient students through advice and encouragement was important to many students in this study. They suggested parents should let their child know that a change in schools could be a positive one perhaps resulting in better grades and new friends. Transient students suggested that peers should advise students not to bully anyone, to make new friends, and to say good-bye to old friends before leaving their current school.

Implications for Theory

The findings in this study also support the multisystemic levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model. This model views the child as being nested within a set of interconnected systems and developing, not develop in isolation, but rather in relation to their family, home, school, community and society. For example, at the level that includes the transient student's social environment, including peer groups and family structure (the mesosystem), there were several instances of support. Transient students reported that immediate, as well as extended family members and peers at school,

often assisted them when they transitioned to a new school. The exosystem, which includes the larger social environment of the school (the school board and other political venues) with which a child does not interact directly, definitely plays a role in the lives of transient students. As reported in interviews, students mentioned suspensions and school closings among the reasons for transferring schools. One student mentioned that because of a mix up at the board of education, he was first enrolled at one school, and then changed to another. Finally, highly mobile students are influenced by socioeconomic status and culture (the macrosystem). Students who are highly transient are often from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Nelson et al., 1996). As reported by the students themselves, many moved several times because of unfavorable living conditions or because their families could not make ends meet financially. Further, because each school has its own policies, procedures, beliefs and norms, transient students must constantly adapt to and navigate through each new culture when they change schools.

The findings from this study indicate that highly transient students relied heavily on the mesosystem (peer groups and family, and other in their social environment) as they transitioned from school to school. This study's findings may contribute to the existing theory in that while all levels of the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) play an important role in the lives of mobile students, it appears that those with whom with the students come into contact on a daily basis (those at the mesosystem level) play an especially pivotal role in assisting them through transitions. Through the lens of these highly mobile students, it is their innermost circle (teachers, principals, friends, peers, parents, and other family members with whom they interact on a regular basis) that can assist or hinder their ability to adjust and cope with this new situation.

It seems likely that whether a child was forced to change schools (i.e. the school closed) or because the child (or the child's family) chose to change schools (i.e. changed to a more desirable/favorable school for a better opportunity) plays an important role on the success/failure of a child's ability to transition smoothly. The feeling of having no control or agency over one's situation can be explained at the exosystem. For example, if a child has a positive school experience at a school and then is forced to change schools due to district policies (school boundary lines re-drawn, schools close to do insufficient funds, etc.) it may leave them with a sense of loss that they feel they had no control over. If a student (or their family) wished to change schools, it may provide them with a sense of ownership that enables them to make the school change a positive one.

Recommendations for Further Research

The implications of this study for research are far reaching. Future research needs to further investigate the extent to which school personnel are aware of, and responsive to, the multiple factors associated with educational mobility. A qualitative study using the voices of teachers who work in highly mobile districts may provide a more in-depth look at how teachers struggle to provide for the needs of their changing populous of students. According to the students interviewed from this study, many teachers are reaching out and providing mobile students with supports, but it would be beneficial to have a qualitative study, perhaps in the form of a focus group interview that hones in on best practices for assisting and understanding the needs of highly mobile students.

Because bullying was an obstacle discussed by many students in this study, but not addressed in the previous research on mobility, it is a topic worth investigating more deeply. For example, it would be beneficial to further investigate the correlation between bullying and being a highly mobile student. Is it possible that highly mobile students are

bullied more often because they are new and thus an easier target? It is also worth investigating how often students move or change schools because they are victims of bullying.

Because this research demonstrated that there are often challenges associated with being a highly mobile student, it would be interesting to conduct a focus group with highly mobile students in which they would be free to discuss their challenges and obstacles in a safe environment with peers that had been through similar experiences. The focus group could lead to a more in depth perception of the mobility experience because students would have the opportunity to talk about their experiences with others students, instead of just one researcher.

A longitudinal study might look at academic factors (report card grades, teacher observations, etc.) as well as the social and emotion well-being of students (perhaps through use of a survey) at a school that has a high percentage of mobility. The school personnel would be involved in professional development that is geared toward understanding the needs of highly mobile students. The study could look at student and teacher responses over time and determine if professional development programs provided school personnel with methods and suggestions that helped to increase students' academic, social and emotional needs.

It may be beneficial to study this topic through the use of other highly transient populations such as students from military families who often move from base to base frequently and students from high socioeconomic backgrounds who move frequently because their parents may hold executive positions that require them to relocate. A future study might determine what similarities and/or differences exist in the lives of highly transient students from these various backgrounds. It would be beneficial further

investigate if there are any internal supports in the lives of these types of movers and if so, to determine if some of these supports could be utilized to assist highly transient students in the urban environment.

Many participants from this study did not know why they changed schools or passed when they were asked why they changed schools. Future research may attempt to unveil how timing and communication with children affects transition experiences. Does a voluntary change differ from an involuntary change in terms of adjusting to school? How are parents/guardians of transient students communicating with them in regards to when and why school changes will happen and how does it affect their experiences? A future study could focus on the three overarching reasons for changing schools (voluntary, involuntary, unaware of reason) and the emotional reactions that coincide with each.

The nature and composition of schools including the aspect of culture may be a topic for future research. It is important to determine how schools are addressing new-comers and to get a better idea for how the elements of a school's culture (levels of empathy, teacher experience, student supports, school routines/procedures, etc.) correlate with transient students' ability to make successful transitions.

Lastly, a future study may utilize an experimental design in a single school. This study may involve a pre-focus group made up of transient students who attend the school in which various policies are being implemented to help them, and then a post-focus group to see if the those policies were effective.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice are also evident through the findings of this study. This study suggests that the acknowledgement of the experiences of highly mobile students is valuable in that it provides us with a deeper understanding of the complexity

of their situations. Though each student experienced transience differently, there were commonalities that are worth noting. Through awareness of mobile students' situations, reflections of current practices/policies, and empathy and concern for transient students, educational professionals should be able to craft better support systems to allow for smoother transitions to occur. A support system may include the fashioning of better partnerships between schools and the community businesses and organizations that may be willing to provide supports to transient students and their families (e.g. counseling, health related services, assistance with meals and/or clothing, school supplies, academic tutoring, etc.).

This study suggests that there are several benefits as well as several obstacles to being a highly mobile student. For example, if those who work in education are aware of the reasons students change schools (e.g. looking for a fresh start, in search of better opportunities, or because of a change in family structure) they could facilitate better transitions. By knowing the reasons that students may be entering classrooms mid- year, teachers may be better prepared to assist them emotionally, as well as academically upon arrival. It is also beneficial for teachers and others who work in education to know that they have the potential to assist or hinder a student's transition experience. Students from this study reported what they would do if a new student entered their school. Educational professionals should be aware that transient students reported the need to feel safe and protected, and become familiar with and make connections in their new environment. Educational professional who are employed in districts with high levels of student mobility should focus their efforts on planning and implementing policies and practices that support these needs.

One way for educators to assist mobile students is to assign them a reliable "buddy" for a period of time. The buddy student can be helpful by showing the new student(s) where things are located in the classroom and in the school, explaining the rules and procedures of the school, and introducing the student to other peers in the classroom and school. Also, educators can be prepared by keeping extra classroom materials (ex. pencils, folders, crayons, scissors, etc.) and furniture such as chairs and desks so that when a transient student arrives, he/she has a place and supplies ready for him/her. Another way to assist mobile students is to get them involved in school activities (e.g. drama club, student council, sports, etc.) in the hopes that they will feel connected to their new school instead of feeling "invisible". Getting students involved may provide more opportunities for mobile students to form positive social connections with peers and make them less likely to be the victim of bullying.

 Because several of the participants from this study reported that they were bullied, it would be beneficial to evaluate the current school policies on bullying, and adjust or modify them if necessary. It is crucial that school personnel be firm, fair and consistent in their approach to dealing with incidents of bullying so that students will feel safer in school. This is especially important for already anxious, new students. As new students arrive, they should be immediately informed of the school's bullying policies.

Educators should also provide transitioning students with several opportunities to interact with their peers when arrive. For example, it may be beneficial to have a support group for mobile students entering new schools. This group may be led by a teacher and include members of student council or other reliable students. The group may provide social and emotional support and advice as well as academic assistance.

Educational professionals must not be tempted to utilize standardization as a tool for mitigating the negative effects associated with high levels of mobility. While common curriculum, goal setting, and objectives can be beneficial for the school environment, there are hidden dangers in attempting to standardize coverage of material so that all teachers are teaching the same lesson, on the same day at the same time. This type of approach would appear (at the surface) to provide students who are mobile to just pick up where they left off, and therefore feel less frustrated regarding catching up or figuring out where they are academically. However, the danger is that teachers can become more concerned about keeping up with the pace of the curriculum format, instead of providing in-depth an individualized instruction. It can become more important to be "on pace" then to take student needs and situations into account when planning because there is no time to fit them in. Each teacher has a different teaching style, each child has a different set of needs and learning preferences, each group of students has its own dynamics, and each classroom creates its own culture. Because of the individual differences in the examples stated, it is important to remember that every class could not be on the same lesson, on the same day, at the same time.

Lastly, since the literature on school closings has determined that many mobile students end up in schools that are often ill-prepared to deal with high levels of new comers, end up being shuffled around because there is no room for them at their new schools, or end up at a school that is less desirable then the one they left, it is important to look more closely at policies that affect transient students. More time and effort should be placed on stopping unnecessary transfers and school closures. District personnel should be managing funds with an awareness of the effects that school closures and transfers have on students' academic and emotional well-being. If school closures

contribute to more mobility, then it could be exacerbating the negative effects what we already exist when students become "highly mobile". If a district needs to close schools for financial reasons, every effort should be made to ensure that the transitions of students to their new schools is organized and well-prepared for new students.

Conclusions

As an educator in an urban district for over a decade, I have witnessed the "revolving door" phenomenon first hand. There seems to be a constant shuffle of students coming and going throughout the school year. Through the years I have experienced many emotions in regards to this phenomenon including frustration, disbelief, anxiety and finally understanding and compassion. I believe that in researching topics that we do not fully understand, we come to gain a better sense of the true nature of the topic and a deeper level of understanding, which allows us to make a shift in our thinking. Through studying this topic and learning from my own students, I have come to the realization that although high mobility rates are, for the most part, beyond my control as a classroom teacher, what is under my control is how I choose to act and react to the situation. Teachers that take the time to understand their students and the needs of their students can positively affect their students' experiences. If teachers in highly transient districts take the time to truly understand the experiences of highly mobile students, they are likely to have a better rapport with these students and better provide them with appropriate supports. Even if these students are only in their classrooms for a short time, teachers as well as the classroom environment and culture that they establish creates can have a positive impact on their educational, social and emotional well-being.

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APPENDICES

HIGHLY MOBILE CRITERIA FORM

Dear Parents/Guardians,
Has your child changed schools at least three times?

 (Circle one):   YES   NO

If you answered <u>YES</u>:

Please turn the page to read more about an important study. Please fill out the
attached forms as well as the bottom of this page and return to school with your child.
Thank you.

If you answered <u>NO</u>:

Please complete and return this form to school with your child and thank you for your
time and interest in this study.

Child's Name_____

Teacher's Name_____   Grade_____

School_____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1.   Child's Name_____

2.   Gender (Circle one): M or F

3.   Grade level_____

4.   School _____

5.   Age_____

6.   Race (Circle One): European descent   African descent   Asian   Hispanic

      Native American/Pacific Islander   Multiracial

7.   Who are the adults that live in your home?

      _____

8.   Who are the kids that live in your home?

      _____

      _____

      _____

9.   Please list the names of the schools you have attended and the cities they are in if

      possible.

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW

1.   I know you have changed schools a few times. Can you tell me what it is like to

change schools?

a)   Do you remember why you changed schools?

b)   How did you feel when you found out you would be changing schools?

- How did you feel about leaving your old school?

- How did you feel about starting at a new school?

2.   What do you remember most about changing schools?

a)   What did you like?

b)   What didn't you like?

3.   Were there any people who made it easier for you? How?

a)   Tell me about the adults who live with you, other adults, kids who live in

your house, other kids in family, anyone else in family you can think of.

How did they help? (ex. parents, step-parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles,

older siblings, cousins, parents' friends, etc.)

b)   Did your schools help you? How? Tell me about your principals, teachers,

other students, friends, anyone else at school. How did they help you?

4.   Tell me what made switching schools hard?

a)   Tell me about the adults who live with you, other adults in your life, other

kids in your family, anyone else in your family you can think of that made

it hard on you.

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b)   Tell me about your schools, principals, teachers, other kids, friends and anyone else you can think of at school that made it hard.

5.   How has switching schools affected how you do in school?

       a)   How has it affected your attendance in school? (How often you come), your schoolwork, grades, homework, and behavior?

       b)   Tell me what it is like to make new friends when you change schools?

6.   You are the expert. You have really helped me understand what it is like to change schools.

       a)   How would you help a new student who just changed schools? What would you do/say?

       b)   If you were the principal, a teacher, a parent, what would you do/say to help him/her?

7.   Is there anything else you would like to tell me about changing schools that I haven't asked?

Thank you.

APPENDIX D

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Becky Vaslavsky and I am a third grade teacher at School #1 and a doctoral student at Cleveland State University. I am completing research on elementary school students who have changed schools, under the instruction of Dr. Donna Schultheiss. Through this research I hope to find out more about what changing schools is like for students so that educational professionals can better help these students. Your child will be asked to fill out a short demographic survey containing questions regarding age, race, gender, family, etc. I will also interview your child about his/her experiences when changing schools. The interview will take place at your child's school and will last approximately 45 minutes. Interview questions will focus on the experience of changing schools, including the parts of changing schools that are easy/hard as well as how educational professionals can better help students who have changed schools. In the unlikely event that your child feels uncomfortable with any of the questions, I will refer him/her to the school psychologist to discuss those issues further. The interview will be audio taped, however, to ensure confidentiality, your child's name will be replaced with a pseudonym and the interviews will be stored in a locked file and destroyed after 3 years. After the study is completed, I will have a follow up meeting with your child that will take approximately 10 minutes. During this time, I will allow him/her to listen to a summary of my findings and allow him/her the chance to tell me whether or not it is a fair representation of the interview.

There are no risks for participating in this study beyond those of daily living. Students may choose not to answer any questions that they prefer not to answer. I am not currently your child's teacher, and his/her grades or status at the school will not be affected in any way by participating, or choosing not to participate, in this research. The potential benefits of this study are that students will have the chance to talk about their experiences and sometimes this feels really good. They may also feel good about the chance to make suggestions about how to help other students who have changed schools.

Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. If, at any time, you wish to withdraw him or her from the research, you are free to do so. Your child may also decide to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Please feel free to contact me at (216) 732-2628 or Dr. Donna Schultheiss at (216) 687-5603.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research subject you can contact the Cleveland State University International Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, please follow the directions below, sign your name and have your child return it to his or her teacher. The other copy is for your records. Your child will also need to sign the child assent form and return it to his/ her teacher.

Thank you for your consideration for this important study.

_____
Becky Vaslavsky

Please check one

_____ I agree to allow my child to participate in this study

_____ I do not agree to allow my child to participate in this study

Please check one

_____ I agree to allow the interview to be audio taped

_____ I do not agree to the interview being audio taped

 Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

APPENDIX E

INFORMED STUDENT ASSENT FORM

My name is Mrs. Vaslavsky and I am a third grade teacher at School #1 and a student at Cleveland State University. I am asking you to participate in a study so that I can learn more about what changing schools is like for students. I hope to use this information to help students. There are three things I would like to do with you: 1) have you fill out a short survey, 2) interview you about what it has been like to change schools including asking why you changed schools, what made it easier/harder for you, how it has affected your school life and how you think others can help students who change schools and 3) have you listen to a summary of what I write about our interview so you can decide if it is fair or not. The interview will take place during the school day and will take about 45 minutes. I will audiotape your answers but the tape will be destroyed after the study is completed.

Some of the questions I ask might be a little hard to answer. If this happens, you can ask me to explain or you can skip that question. You can stop answering the questions at any time you want. I will not share your answers with any of the teachers, principal, or other students.

Even if your parents said you can answer these questions for me, you can still say no if you do not want to do it. You can also leave the study at any time, without penalty. Please be aware that the school psychologist will be available for you, if you should need her for any reason.

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

I understand that if I have any questions about this research project I can contact Dr. Donna Schultheiss, the Cleveland State supervisor, at (216) 687-5603 or Mrs. Vaslavsky at (216) 732-2628. Thank you.

If you print and sign your name below, it means that you understand and agree to answer the interview questions.

_____
Student (Print Name)

_____   _____
Student Signature   Date