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A Qualitative Study of the Personal Reactions and Experiences of Adolescent Students Who Have Been Retained

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A Qualitative Study of the Personal Reactions and Experiences
of Adolescent Students Who Have Been Retained

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
at the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Counselor Education

By

Jessica Robertson Fournier

B.S., Nicholls State University, 1994
M.C.Ed., Nicholls State University, 2000

December, 2009

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Beth, Donna, Donovan, James, Jennifer, Jerrod, Lisa and Sam (not their real names), the research participants in this study. I hope that giving you a voice about what it was like to experience being retained may shed light on how deeply being retained in school affects students so that more supportive interventions can be devised and implemented to help you and students like you become more successful in school.

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ABSTRACT

Grade retention is an educational practice that requires students to repeat the grade level they have just completed (Jimerson, 2001). In the United States, an estimated 15% to 19% of students are retained each year (Holmes, 2006). Previous research on grade retention is comprised of quantitative studies describing students who have been retained as having higher suspension rates, coming from a low socio-economic status, and having an increased chance of dropping out of school (Christle, Jolivet, & Nelson, 2007; Janosz, et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2002; Suh & Suh 2007). While these studies provide a wealth of information about grade retention, they do not describe how adolescents reacted when they were retained and how they experienced retention in their lives. In this qualitative study, eight students and one of their parents were interviewed about their experiences and reactions with retention. The dominant themes identified from student and parent interviews suggest that adolescent students and their parents believed that adolescent students reacted negatively to retention, experienced changes in their lives, experienced a loss of self-esteem, felt left behind by peers, felt older than peers, felt that retention added another year of school to their education, and that adolescent students' school performance improved following retention. Implications for school counselors are provided.

Keywords: retention, retained, dropout, school counselors, adolescent self-esteem, qualitative study, adolescent development, influence of peers, parental influence

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

A growing number of students across the nation are not progressing from kindergarten to 12th grade without repeating a grade somewhere along the way. In the United States, an estimated 15% to 19% of students are retained each year (Holmes, 2006). Grade retention is an educational practice that requires students to repeat the grade level they have just completed (Jimerson, 2001). The reasons for retention vary due to the diverse backgrounds and issues that contribute to students' lack of success at grade level. Despite many other alternatives available, the intervention used by many school systems to assist students when they do not meet grade level expectations is retention (Tanner & Galis, 1997).

Reasons for Retention

There are various reasons why students are retained. An increase in the emphasis on accountability in education following the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is one reason why students are retained. NCLB is a federal law that restructured many federal programs to improve education in the United States. The intent behind NCLB is to increase the quality of public education by holding states accountable for student learning. The law establishes that states use appropriate assessment instruments as a means to check for students' achievement. NCLB does not provide recommendations to states on how to address the issue of students' lack of success on these assessment instruments. The law only emphasizes that all students should learn and their learning should be assessed and measured in the name of accountability. Sanctions to states in the form of a loss of federal funds are the consequence if students do not consistently show achievement on assessment instruments (NCLB).

Following the passage of NCLB (2001) and its requirement that students must score proficiently on scientifically-based instruments, many school districts changed student promotion

policies to require achievement of a minimum score on standardized tests. When achievement was not met, many school systems increased the practice of retention in the last decade in an attempt to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of NCLB (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007). Requiring the achievement of a minimum score in order to proceed to the next grade has resulted in standardized testing being referred to as high stakes testing (Potter, 1996).

Despite the fact there could be socio-cultural or environmental issues affecting how students score on standardized tests, retention decisions are based heavily, and in some cases solely, on how students perform on high-stakes testing (Beebe-Frakenberger, Bocain, Macmillan & Greham, 2004; Holmes, 2006). As a result, rising retention rates in many states are directly linked to the increased use of high stakes testing as a measure to determine if student learning has occurred (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007). Thus, if the intent behind NCLB is to ensure that students are not left behind, then the practice of retention does the exact opposite – it leaves children behind in grade level.

According to Bowman (2005), students are also retained because they lack the maturity of their classmates to progress to the next grade. In a study conducted by Okpala (2007), the perceptions of kindergarten teachers about retention were explored. Findings showed that kindergarten teachers felt retention was a necessary intervention, because students enter kindergarten at so many different maturity and ability levels. Therefore, retention is used in an attempt to place students in classrooms that are more homogeneous in ability (Okpala). For some students, as Foster (1993) indicates, the practice of retention can do the exact opposite: It may increase, as opposed to decrease, the range of student abilities in grade level.

During adolescence, the maturity differences between adolescents of the same age are even more pronounced than at earlier ages, making the threat of retention due to immaturity

determinations even higher (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Thus, retaining students based on their maturity level may not be consistent with what is known about the development of children in that children do not all develop at the same pre-described pace year by year. For example, Erik Erikson's (1968) theory of development prescribed a sequence of stages experienced by individuals throughout their lifetime, but the timing of each stage in an individual's life will vary. His theory also stated that the stages of human development overlap and intertwine rather than cut clearly from one to the next. Thus, according to his theory, retention decisions based on students' maturity levels may be based on developmental differences that are beyond the students' and parents' control (Tanner & Galis, 1997).

Additionally, students are more likely to be retained because their learning style and behavior differs from their peers (Foster, 1993). In a study that compared retained students to students with low academic levels conducted by Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2004 over half of the 46 special education students in their sample were retained before being identified as having a disability. This finding suggests that many schools use retention as an intervention strategy prior to identifying that students have a learning disability. Furthermore, students with academic deficits at the end of second grade were also perceived by their teachers as having behavior problems and deficits in social skills (Beebe-Frankenberger et al.). The decision to retain students because they learn or act differently often is based on the assumption that the problem is with the child and not the instructional process (Mcleskey & Grizzle, 1992; Potter, 1996).

While some students are retained in school because they do not score the minimum score established on standardized tests, others are also retained because they are too immature for that grade level. Still others are retained because they learn or behave differently than their peers. In

an attempt to understand the real impact of retention on adolescents, a background in adolescent development is critical.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to understand the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained is Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development. Erikson's psychosocial theory of development describes human growth and development from birth to death in eight stages. According to Erikson's theory, growth progresses as individuals adequately resolve the crisis of their current stage of development in order to progress to the next stage of development. Not only will the occurrence of each stage vary among individuals, stages will intersect each other and will not always be experienced in a chronological and orderly manner. Adolescence, the fifth stage of development, calls for the resolution of the crisis identity versus role confusion. This adolescent stage of development occurs between the ages of 13 and 18. During this time adolescents begin to explore and examine who they are in an attempt to develop a positive self-image (Erikson).

Also, Erikson (1968) stated that one variable critical for identity development in adolescence is having a high self-esteem. Adolescents who feel good about themselves resolve the identity stage of development with a positive identity. Conversely, adolescents who do not feel good about themselves may struggle with their identity and ultimately form a negative identity along with maladaptive and dysfunctional behaviors that will not promote the resolution of crisis at future stages of development (Chandras, 1999).

Although Erikson's (1980) theory focuses on individuals' psychological development, it also considers the social aspect of adolescents' lives. The social component of development includes the external relationships that adolescents have with family, school and peers.

Development is both individual and systemic with family and others influencing how adolescents develop and vice versa. It is important to note that reference to family is not specific to birth parents as some individuals may experience “growing up” with other adults (Erikson).

Since retention is not a scientifically based intervention based on theory and is used with so many students on school campuses, research is needed to examine the reactions and experiences of adolescents following retention in order to better understand how adolescents experience this intervention in their personal lives. When analyzing data for this study, a theoretical background in adolescent psychosocial development is imperative to completely understand the experience of retention. A theory about how adolescents’ react to and experience retention was developed that was grounded in the data collected for this study. While there were no studies that have explored the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained, there is research that has established certain effects of retention.

Effects of Grade Retention

Dropping Out

The personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained are important to research because study after study conducted shows while many different variables like suspension rates, socioeconomic status, and race may contribute to adolescents dropping out of school, the one most frequently recognized is grade retention (e.g., Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; McLeskey & Grizzle, 1992; Stanard, 2003). While the national dropout rate of high school students is 4.7% (Laird, 2006), Louisiana’s dropout rate is much higher at 6.9% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008). These percentages have caused a recent shift in education to focus on understanding what places adolescents at risk for dropping out of school (Stanard, 2003). When considering the studies that

have linked grade retention to students dropping out of school, it would be meaningful to understand adolescents' personal reactions and experiences to being retained.

Bowman (2005) argues that the most significant problem of school dropouts is the cost to society in the labor market. Adolescents who drop out of school drain our society's resources in the form of unemployment, underemployment and social services. Furthermore, adolescents who drop out of school are more likely to be involved in criminal activity (Jimerson, Sharkey, O'Brien, & Furlong, 2004) and once involved, the incidence of recidivism is high (Sharkey, Furlong, Jimerson, & O'Brien, 2003). Because the ramifications of school dropouts is far-reaching and affects many in society, all are stakeholders in the problem of grade retention and its relationship to adolescents later dropping out of school (Bowman).

Peers

With regard to the adolescent stage of development, Erikson's (1968) theory not only emphasizes the significant role that peers play in adolescents' lives, but also the fact that adolescents will rebuff peers who are different from them or stand out as a defense against their sense of identity. Adolescents who are retained may stand out from their peer group, because retention singles out students who are not academically successful from the class. Retained adolescents experience being removed from their same age grade level peer group and being reassigned to classes with younger students (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). Additionally, the different maturation rates of adolescents may illustrate the fact that retained adolescents are at least a year older than their grade level peers. By standing out in this way, the potential for rejection described by Erikson for some retained adolescents is realized. For some adolescents, when they grasp that they are not academically equal to their peers, they may engage in maladaptive behaviors to cope with this experience (Chandras, 1999). Some maladaptive

behaviors of retained adolescents are that they lack confidence in their abilities and tend to be unpopular with their peers (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003).

Self-Esteem

Although Erikson (1968) speaks to the importance of a high self-esteem for positive identity development, studies show that students who experience retention may in fact suffer a loss of self-esteem (Foster, 1993). A loss of self-esteem can occur when adolescents who have been retained are stigmatized by the experience and are teased and discriminated against by their peers (Bowman, 2005). As Chandras (1999) has concluded, these reactions of peers to retention could be especially disastrous to adolescents, because this is a time when the importance of peer groups and friendships are at an all time high. Despite educators' attempts to present retention as a positive intervention, retained adolescents may feel they are being punished, not helped. As a result, adolescents may react negatively to retention and internalize unproductive messages into their development (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001).

In summary, it appears that studies conducted on grade retention show that the most significant impact on students is the increase in the likelihood that they will later drop out of school. Grade retention may also affect adolescents' relationships with their peers and their self-esteem. Despite the wealth of studies on grade retention, there exists a gap in the research on grade retention that explores how adolescents react to and experience being retained. Therefore, a study using an alternate research method appears justified.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to use a qualitative method of investigation to research the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained. In keeping with Erikson's (1980) psychosocial theory of development and the significant influence that parents

and/or family have on adolescent development, conducting a study that included both students who have been retained and their parents proved to add a multidimensional representation of how adolescents reacted to and experienced repeating a grade. A grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze adolescents' and their parents' perceptions of how adolescents reacted to and experienced being retained to provide data to fill the gaps of the existing quantitative research on grade retention (Frey, 2005; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Jimerson et al., 2006; Tanner & Galis, 1997; Witmer, Hoffman, & Nottis, 2004).

Quantitative studies conducted on grade retention illustrated the impact of retention on adolescents in the form of dropout rates, grades, socioeconomic status, suspension rates, and achievement levels on standardized tests to name a few of the outcomes. While this information is meaningful, it lacks the depth of information derived from a more qualitative approach to research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Because how students feel about themselves can be better understood by talking to them and their parents, an alternate method of investigation was warranted.

Qualitative research provides rich, thick data about phenomena, so it can be understood more completely (Banyard & Miller, 1998). Also, qualitative methods are useful in understanding phenomena from the viewpoint of individuals who are in the experience (Glesne, 2006). As stated earlier, no study existed that used a qualitative method of research to learn the personal reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained. By also including parents in the research process, the total reaction to and experience of retention on adolescents can be best understood.

Research Questions

Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development was the conceptual framework used to understand the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained. The personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained were studied by asking the overarching research question: "What are the reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained in school as seen through the eyes of students and parents?"

The following subquestions were used to generate more discussion from adolescents who have been retained and from their parents so their experiences could be further understood.

1. For students: What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?

For parents: What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?
2. For students: How did you react when you found out you were retained?

For parents: How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?
3. For students: Since being retained, how is your life different?

For parents: Since being retained, how is your child's life different?
4. For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?

For parents: What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child's relationships with his or her peers?

5. For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?

For parents: What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?
6. For students: What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained? What are some positive experiences?

For parents: What are some negative experiences that you can be attribute to your child being retained? What are some positive experiences?
7. For students: How would you describe yourself?

For parents: How would you describe your child?
8. For students: How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?

For parents: What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?
9. For students: How do you view your future outlook?

For parents: How do you view the future outlook of your child?
10. For students: In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

For parents: In retrospect, what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From yourself?

Retention and the School Counselor

Because grade retention is one of the highest predictors of adolescents later dropping out of school (e.g., Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; McLeskey & Grizzle, 1992; Stanard, 2003), the possible implications of this study for school counselors are they must become more involved with this population in an attempt to address the dropout problem. In a study conducted by Kaminski (1993), adolescents who dropped out of school a number of years earlier were surveyed to determine their reasons for doing so. When asked for suggestions on how schools could better assist adolescents who are at-risk of dropping out, the biggest response was that “counselors become more involved with the students” (p. 537). In the words of adolescents, if the problem of grade retention and its relationship to later dropping out of school is to be addressed, the roles of both elementary and secondary school counselors are critical.

Historically, school counselors have been an underutilized resource on school campuses (Lieberman, 2004). Agencies like Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and American School Counseling Association (ASCA) are at work to help re-define the role of school counselors in an attempt to maximize their professional training and experience on school campuses to target the problem of grade retention and its link to school dropouts (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Colbert, Vernon-Jones, & Pransky, 2006). In helping to define school counselors’ role, CACREP (2009) developed standards for universities to follow in educating and training school counselors. Additionally, ASCA (2005) developed the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* in order to guide school counselors in developing comprehensive guidance programs that addresses the needs of not only

at-risk students, but also the needs of every student in schools. According to ASCA, school counselors have a duty to advocate on the behalf of students..

There are ample alternatives to retention in the research that school counselors have used with positive results to assist students who have been retained or who are at-risk for retention. The School and Family Integration (SAFI) Model incorporates strategies to include families in the education of at-risk adolescents (Bemak & Cornely, 2002). By using a collaborative consultation method of working with parents, educators, youth and community counselors, school counselors have shown that academic success can be achieved by working with all the different systems to which adolescents are exposed (Keys, Bemak, Carp & King-Sears, 1998). School counselors have also successfully paired at-risk adolescents with mentors to promote connectedness to both schools and families (Karcher, 2005).

When working with adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention, school counselors have been successful by incorporating self-efficacy theory within a family systems approach (Hall, 2003). By using the theoretical framework of Bandura (1993), school counselors have assisted adolescents to feel better about their abilities. By including families, adolescents' self-efficacy was enhanced and that ultimately translated to increased performance in school (Hall). In an effort to be proactive, *The Best of Coping Program* is a school-wide strategy school counselors have used to help teach adolescents coping skills when they are faced with stress (Frydenberg et al., 2004).

Retention and Parents

Erikson's theory (1980) includes the influence of parents as a critical part of adolescents' development. Accordingly, when addressing the problem of grade retention, parents have a significant role (Steinberg, 2001). Because the school environment can be very intimidating for

parents who are unfamiliar with school culture and norms, steps to bridge the gap between school and home in order to involve parents with their adolescent's academic development are needed (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). For academic achievement to be enhanced for adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention, the involvement of parents is a critical link (Brown & Trusty, 2005).

Definition of Terms

ASCA: This is an acronym for the American School Counseling Association. This organization works to promote the profession of school counselors (ASCA, 2003).

The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs, this model was designed by the American School Counseling Association to guide school counselors in developing a comprehensive school counseling program that services the needs of all students (ASCA, 2005).

At Risk Students: At-risk students are students who possess or display characteristics that put them in jeopardy of not being successful (ASCA, 2005).

CACREP: This is an acronym for the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. This independent agency's function is to develop and implement standards for master's programs that train counselors. Its standards ensure quality training and preparation of counselors (CACREP, 2009).

Dropout: A dropout is a student who has exited school (Bowman, 2005).

Grade Retention: Grade retention is an educational intervention that requires students to repeat the grade level they have just completed (Jimerson, 2001).

High Stakes Testing: The use of standardized testing to make promotion and/or retention decisions (Potter, 1996).

Identity Development: Identity development refers to the formation of one's inner self. Individuals with a positive identity have a positive self-concept and are adequately prepared to maneuver life's challenges (Erikson, 1968).

Maladaptive Behaviors: These are negative behaviors that help students cope with the experience of retention. Examples of maladaptive behaviors are a loss of confidence, negative attitude toward school and less school engagement (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003).

Marginalized Families: These families typically have a low socioeconomic status in communities. Because of this, they feel unwelcome in many government based institutions like schools (Bemak & Cornely, 2002).

NCLB: No Child Left Behind is a federal law that holds states accountable for student achievement by withholding federal funds if students do not show appropriate growth on assessment instruments (NCLB, 2001).

Retained: A student who is retained has experienced grade retention (Jimerson, 2001).

Self-esteem: Self-esteem is the value that an individual places on himself or herself. High self-esteem will indicate a high value of self. Low self-esteem will indicate a low value of self (Erikson, 1968).

Sociocultural: The part of an individual's life that includes the social and cultural aspects of their environment (Beebe-Frankenberger, et al., 2004).

Chapter Summary

There are several reasons students are retained in school. They are retained because they do not score satisfactory on standardized tests (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007), they are immature (Bowman, 2005), and they learn or behave different than their peers (Foster, 1993). A theoretical background in adolescent development is necessary in order to understand the

personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained. Additionally, by using a grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for analysis, a theory about how adolescents react and experience retention can be generated that is grounded in data.

The research that currently exists on grade retention has shown that it can increase the likelihood that adolescents will drop out of school (e.g., Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; McLeskey & Grizzle, 1992; Stanard, 2003). According to Erikson (1980), being retained can also affect adolescents' relationships with their peers, as well as their self-esteem. Despite the wealth of research on retention, no qualitative study has been conducted to examine the breath and depth of the personal reactions of adolescent students who have been retained.

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research and literature related to grade retention and how it is experienced by adolescents. A discussion is presented in the first section regarding retention and its use. A review of the literature on adolescent development is the second section. The effects of grade retention are explored in the third section. The fourth section presents the role of school counselors in assisting students who have been retained.

Reasons for Retention

In the United States, an estimated 15% to 19% of students are retained each year (Holmes, 2006). Grade retention is an educational practice that requires students to repeat the grade level they have just completed (Jimerson, 2001). The practice of retention dates back to the mid-1800s when it was believed that academic achievement would be enriched if students were placed according to grade (Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2004). If students did not master the material of their assigned grade level, repetition of the material seemed the obvious solution (Tanner & Galis, 1997). In the 1970s, social promotion policies allowed students to progress to the next grade without meeting grade level requirements in order to stay with their same aged classmates. In the past 10 years, however, these policies have been abandoned as education has shifted to accountability measures that require students to demonstrate mastery of grade level material before they are allowed to advance to the next grade (Frey, 2005).

Accountability

There are various reasons why students are retained. One reason is an increased emphasis on accountability in education following the passage of federal law No Child Left Behind, NCLB (2001). Signed into law by President Bush, the intent behind NCLB is to close the achievement gap between low and high performing students by holding states accountable

for student learning. The law establishes that schools must show yearly progress of students' achievement by assessing learning using scientifically-based assessment instruments (NCLB). This law represents one of the most rigorous attempts of the federal government to reform education by not only insisting that students are successful, but also demanding that states demonstrate this success. States can be rewarded if students show progress, but states can also be subject to sanctions if they do not (Simpson, Lacava, & Graner, 2004).

Following the passage of NCLB and its requirement that students must score proficiency on scientifically-based instruments, many school districts changed their promotion policies to require achievement of a minimum score on standardized tests. For example, in Louisiana, fourth and eighth grade students must score at the minimum a combination of basic and approaching basic on the English and Math portion of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) test in order to be promoted to the next grade (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.). When achievement is not met on standardized tests such as the LEAP, many school systems have increased the practice of retention in the last decade in an attempt to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of NCLB (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007). Standardized tests are referred to as high stakes testing, because if students do not achieve at least the minimum score established on standardized tests, they are not allowed to proceed to the next grade and are retained at their grade level (Potter, 1996).

For some students, sociocultural or environmental issues like a learning disability may affect how they score on standardized tests. In a study by Beebe-Frankenberger et al. (2004), 224 students, the year after they completed the second grade, were studied. Students were divided into four groups: (a) students who were normally promoted to the third grade, (b) students who were at risk for retention but promoted to the third grade, (c) special education

students who were promoted to the third grade; and (d) students who were retained and repeating the second grade. When considering the group of special education students in this sample, over half of the 46 special education students were retained before being identified as having a disability. Students who have been identified with a learning disability will sometimes lack the necessary skills needed for success on standardized tests despite accommodations that are provided. These students learn differently than their peers. The researchers suggested that many schools use retention as an intervention strategy prior to identifying that students have a learning disability (Beebe-Frankenberger et al.). Thus retention decisions based on standardized tests may highlight a disability instead of a lack of student achievement.

Specific populations, such as African Americans and Hispanics, have been shown to be more disconnected from academics than Caucasians and Asians, which could explain the reasons why African Americans and Hispanics score lower on standardized tests (Griffin, 2002). In an effort to protect against psychologically damaging situations, African Americans and Hispanics have adopted strategies whereby they disengage or disconnect from a setting or circumstance, like in the educational system. In an effort to protect their self-image, many African American and Hispanic students may perform poorly in school, because they have distanced themselves from the importance of education and do not identify positively with academics. By performing poorly, according to Griffin, they unconsciously reinforce negative stereotypes that may exist.

Despite these reasons, the retention decision has been based heavily and in some cases solely on how students perform on high stakes testing (Holmes, 2006). As a result, rising retention rates in many states are directly linked to the increased use of high stakes testing as a measure to determine if student learning has occurred (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007). Thus, if the

intent behind NCLB (2001) was to ensure that students are not left behind, then the practice of retention does the exact opposite – it leaves children behind in grade level.

Maturity Differences

Another reason for retention is that students are deemed to be too immature by teachers, administrators and sometimes parents (Bowman, 2005). Students are considered immature when they engage in behaviors that are not considered developmentally appropriate for their age group. What is considered appropriate may vary from individual to individual; and therefore, there is no uniform example of immature behaviors. According to Witmer et al. (2004), teachers of early grades believe that students must demonstrate certain behaviors before they should be promoted to the next grade level. The participants in Witmer et al.'s study were teachers of kindergarten to fourth grade students who were asked to list the most influential factor that caused them to recommend retention for students. While academic performance was the highest, the other influential factors equally ranked were effort, ability and social/emotional maturity. As a result, this study supports the fact that there are some students who are retained because they are considered immature (Witmer et al.).

Another study by Okpala (2007) of a random selection of North Carolina kindergarten teachers' on their perceptions of retention were explored using a questionnaire and a mixed-method approach. Findings of this study showed that kindergarten teachers felt retention was a necessary intervention, because students enter kindergarten at so many different maturity and ability levels. Okpala concluded that retention is used in an attempt to place students in classrooms that are more homogeneous in ability. However, in some instances, retaining students because of their maturity level can work in the opposite direction by actually increasing, as opposed to decreasing, the range of student abilities in a grade level (Foster, 1993).

The threat of retention is even higher in adolescence due to the more pronounced maturity differences between students of the same age at the adolescent stage of development (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Since all adolescents do not develop at the same prescribed pace year by year, retaining students based on their maturity level may not be consistent with what is known about the development of adolescents. For example, Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development prescribed a progression of stages that individuals experience throughout their lifetime. However, according to Erikson, the timing of each stage will vary from individual to individual based on factors such as genetics and upbringing. Erikson's theory further defined an overlapping and enmeshment of stages as opposed to an orderly succession of stages that are clearly differentiated. As a result, retention decisions based on students' maturity levels may be based on developmental differences that are beyond students' and parents' control (Tanner & Galis, 1997).

Learning and Behavior Differences

Students are also retained because they learn or behave differently from their peers. In many instances, special education students who have been identified as having a disability that causes them to learn differently experience retention before they are formally identified as special education (Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2004). Beebe-Frankenberger et al. examined the academic and social-behavior characteristics of retained students and compared them to students identified as at risk and special education who were promoted to determine if they were significantly different. In order to determine this, data such as IQ tests, achievement tests, standardized tests and surveys from teachers measuring students' behaviors and social skills were collected for the study. The results revealed that academic and behavioral scores of students who were retained were similar to students who were identified as at risk and special

education but promoted. Furthermore, students with academic deficits at the end of second grade were also perceived by their teachers as having behavior problems and deficits in social skills. Accordingly, retention was used for only one group when all three groups were academically and behaviorally similar. The results of this study suggested that students who are recommended for retention because of behavioral and academic behaviors that deviate from their peers are not significantly different when compared to other students who are equally low achieving (Beebe-Frankenberger et al.).

Teachers' beliefs about how students learn and develop can greatly affect instruction and how decisions like retention are made when students demonstrate that they learn or behave differently than their peers. For example, teachers who genuinely believe that all students can learn may readjust how instruction is presented until all students are successful. For some students, it may take time to problem solve in order to determine exactly what their needs are so that they might master material (Mcleskey & Grizzle, 1992; Potter, 1996). When the decision to retain or not to retain a student may become an issue, teachers can oppose retention in some situations when they are aware of circumstances outside of the classroom like environmental or cultural issues that may account for low achievement (Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2004). Unfortunately some teachers do not believe that all students can learn and when students are unsuccessful, assume the problem is with the child, not with the instructional process (Mcleskey & Grizzle; Potter).

In conclusion, students are retained in school because they do not score the minimum score established on standardized tests. Some students are also retained because they are too immature. Still others are retained because they learn or behave differently than their peers. If

the true impact of retention on adolescents is to be understood, a background in adolescent development is crucial.

Adolescent Development

Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

The theory of development used as a conceptual framework for this study is Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory, which describes human growth across the lifespan in eight stages. According to Erikson's theory, growth progresses as individuals adequately resolve the crisis of their current stage of development in order to progress to the next stage of development. The eight stages of development, according to Erikson, are as follows: (a) trust versus mistrust, (b) autonomy versus shame and doubt, (c) initiative versus guilt, (d) industry versus inferiority, (e) identity versus role confusion, (f) intimacy versus isolation, (g) generativity versus stagnation and (h) integrity versus despair. The manner in which the stages are described suggests that one side must win over the other. However, Erikson's theory proposes that a proper resolution of the crisis is a balance between the opposing forces described at each stage.

While Erickson's (1980) theory does speak to adolescents' psychological development, it also considers the social aspect of adolescents' lives. The social component of development includes the external relationships that adolescents have with family, school and peers. Development is both individual and systemic with family and others influencing how adolescents develop and vice versa. It is important to note that reference to family is not specific to birth parents as some individuals experience life with other adults.

Adolescence, the fifth stage of development, occurs between the ages of 13 to 18 and calls for the resolution of the crisis of identity versus role confusion. During this time, adolescents begin to explore and examine who they are in an attempt to develop a positive self-

image. While Erikson's (1968) theory prescribes a sequence of stages that individuals will experience during their lifetime, it also states that the exact phase of each stage varies from individual to individual. Furthermore, the stages of development intersect and interlock as opposed to being clearly separated from one to another. For this reason, development may vary from adolescent to adolescent (Erikson).

In relation to how adolescents develop psychologically, Erikson (1968) stated that a critical variable for identity development is having a high self-esteem. Adolescents who feel good about themselves resolve the identity stage of development with a positive identity. Conversely, adolescents who do not feel good about themselves may struggle with their identity, and ultimately form a negative identity along with maladaptive and dysfunctional behaviors that will not promote the resolution of crisis at future stages of development (Chandras, 1999). Self-esteem may be compromised during identity development if adolescents have experienced retention as some adolescents place a high value on how they perform in school (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Parent Influence

The social aspect of Erikson's (1980) theory has been validated by the many studies that demonstrate the significant influence that parents have on how adolescents' perform in school (Bong, 2008; Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007; Levy, 2001; Ochoa, 2007; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). For example, students who are raised by parents who promote independence will do better socially and in school (Bong). Also, achievement is higher for students whose parents expect more of them (Garg et al.). Open communication patterns between students and parents promote a positive self-image which translates to better performance in school. Families with open communication patterns

encourage and provide opportunities for positive communications between parents and adolescents which causes adolescents to feel good about who they are and their abilities (Ochoa). Furthermore, parents who are able to control the behavior of their adolescents bring about students who perform and behave better in school (Wang et al.).

Unfortunately not all parental influences are positive. Parents who allow too much freedom produce students who have behavior problems and are not successful in school (Levy, 2001). Students who are raised in single-parent families have more difficulties in school than students who grow up in intact families. This is partly due to the fact that sometimes when the family unit falls apart, the socioeconomic status of the family is greatly affected (Garg et al., 2007). Parents from a lower income status may not be as involved in the education of their children, because they do not identify with the education process. They may feel inadequate to assist their children in school which may also be reinforced by school cultures and norms that do not welcome parents and specifically exclude them from the educational process (Somers et al., 2008).

Peer Influence

Adolescents are not only influenced by parents, but also by their peers (Chandras, 1999; Erikson, 1980; Lashbrook, 2000; Putnik et al., 2008). The importance of peers increases at this stage as adolescents seek acceptance and affirmation as they develop their self-concept and identity. There are times during identity development that adolescents will rebuff individuals who are different from themselves as a defense against their sense of identity. By rejecting those who are different, adolescents feel that they are protecting who they are. Adolescents' self-protection emphasizes the need for adolescents to not stand out or appear different from their peers (Erikson).

When adolescents do stand out and are rejected by their peers, the potential for aggression is increased. In a study conducted by Keltikangas-Jarvinen (2002), correlations between aggressive strategies, aggressive behavior and social acceptance were studied. Adolescents who were socially unaccepted described themselves as having more aggressive tendencies than adolescents who were socially accepted. Additionally, students attributed aggressive dispositions to peers who were considered unpopular as opposed to peers who were well-liked. As a result, adolescents tend to act more aggressively when they are rejected by their peer group.

Peer influence in the form of peer pressure has also been attributed to how adolescents perform in school (Lashbrook, 2000). The potential for peer pressure is high for most adolescents, as time spent with peers far outweighs time spent with family. Adolescents who are accepted by their peers are involved in school and are more confident about their abilities. On the other hand, adolescents who are neglected or rejected are not as popular in school and tend to isolate themselves from school activities (Chandras, 1999). Peers also heavily influence adolescents' perceptions about body image, more so than parents or the media which further demonstrates the significant role that peer influence has on adolescents (Putnik et al., 2008).

Erikson's (1968) theory of development provides researchers a conceptual framework to understanding how adolescents develop in order to better understand the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained. During the adolescent stage of life, a high self-esteem is critical for the development of a healthy identity. Because Erikson's theory includes the social aspect of adolescents' lives, the influences of peers should also be considered. The next section discusses the research that demonstrates some affects that retention can have on adolescents.

Effects of Grade Retention

Dropping Out

According to Jimerson and Ferguson (2007), while retention may be beneficial for a few, it actually has proven unhelpful to a large number of students who are retained by increasing the chances that they will later drop out of school. Furthermore, in some instances where retention has appeared to benefit students the year after they were retained, later results have shown these benefits dissipated and even disappeared in the years that followed and could possibly lead to a second retention (Jimerson et al., 2006; Walters & Borgers, 1995). In a literature review conducted by Bowman (2005), no study showed long-term academic achievement gains by students who had been retained.

The personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained is important to research because study after study conducted has shown that while many different variables like suspension rates, socioeconomic status, and race may contribute to students dropping out of school, the one most frequently recognized is grade retention (Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2002; Suh & Suh, 2007; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). In a study conducted by Christle et al., schools with low dropout rates were compared to schools with high dropout rates in Kentucky. The researchers studied how socioeconomic status, race, achievement scores, attendance rates, retention rates, suspension rates, and discipline infractions contributes to students dropping out of school. The most significant conclusion was that schools with students who score poorly on standardized achievement tests and who were retained in school had a higher percentage of students who dropped out of school.

In a similar study, Janosz et al. (1997) examined variables that predicted school dropouts over time. While the results implicated factors from the students' family, social and behavioral aspects of students' lives, grade retention appeared as a significant predictor of school dropouts. Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) found that students who had learning disabilities and socioemotional and behavioral problems were five times more likely to drop out of school if they were retained.

The most comprehensive study linking grade retention to later dropping out of school was conducted by Jimerson et al. (2002). The researchers examined 17 research studies on retention to determine the association between high school dropout status and grade retention. Findings from the studies revealed that students who were retained subsequently dropped out of school, despite the fact that students who were retained demonstrated short-term achievements. For students who were retained more than once, the likelihood they would drop out of school increased to 90%. Even students who were retained in kindergarten and first grade were more likely to drop out of school which dispelled the belief that retaining students in earlier grades would have less of an impact on their decision to stay in school. The researchers noted that grade retention does not implicitly cause students to leave school, but it does influence students' self-esteem, peer interactions, social adjustment, emotional being, and other variables that influence students to drop out of school. Thus, the researchers suggested that educational professionals must consider the long term impact of retaining students and consider alternatives to retention (Jimerson et al.).

Similar studies conducted by Suh and Suh (2007) and Suh, Suh, and Houston (2007) investigated factors that contributed to students' dropping out of school. The studies showed that students who were weak academically were more likely to later drop out of school. Students

identified as “academic risk” were more likely to later drop out of school as much as 115.9% (Suh & Suh). The findings from these studies reinforce the importance of the awareness and understanding of educators that not all students who drop out of school do so for the same reasons. Thus, when reviewing risk factors of students who are at-risk of dropping out of school, school personnel must design intervention strategies that target the multiple characteristics of potential dropouts if they are to be effective (Suh & Suh).

In a meta-analysis of research studies on the efficacy of grade retention, students’ dropping out of school was the largest long term effect of being retained in school (Jimerson, Fletcher, & Graydon, 2006). Other long-term impacts of retention are that students are “more likely to drop out of high school by 19, less likely to receive a diploma by 20, less likely to be enrolled in a post-secondary education program, receive lower education/employment status ratings, paid less per hour, and received poorer employment competence ratings at age 20 in comparison to a similar group of low-achieving, promoted students” (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007, p. 316). Furthermore, students who drop out of school lack education and skills needed when they seek employment. As a result, many school dropouts became unemployable. Over their lifetimes, the unemployment and underemployment of school dropouts will result in a staggering loss of tax revenue to society (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999), as well as a myriad of social and economic issues for the individual.

Students who are retained in school and later drop out become a burden to society when they become part of the prison population. A large majority of the prison community are comprised of individuals who have dropped out of school. Society then shoulders the burden of feeding and housing these individuals during their imprisonment (Jimerson et al., 2004). Once incarcerated, the incidence of recidivism is high for those individuals who lack a high school

education. This can be attributed to the lack of options available for school dropouts when they are released from prison (Sharkey et al., 2003). Because the ramifications of school dropouts is far-reaching and affects many in society, all are stakeholders in the problem of grade retention and its relationship to students later dropping out of school (Bowman, 2005).

Peers

Erikson's (1968) theory highlights the major role that friends play in adolescents' lives and that adolescents will reject peers who are different from them or stand out. Students who must repeat a grade may stand out from their peer group because retention singles out students who are not academically successful from the class. Retained students experience being removed from their same age grade level peer group and being reassigned to classes with younger students (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). Because of the different maturation rates of adolescents, students who must repeat a grade may actually look older than the younger students they must now attend classes with. By standing out in this way, the potential for rejection for some retained students because they look older could be realized.

For some students, when they grasp that they are not academically equal to their peers, they may engage in maladaptive behaviors when coping with this experience (Chandras, 1999). Maladaptive behaviors are negative behaviors such as a loss of confidence, negative attitude toward school and less school engagement that students who are retained may develop (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). For other students, standing out from peer groups will cause some adolescents to be rejected and deemed unpopular by their cohorts. This could lead to these adolescents being victimized by their peers. Victimization reinforces the low-self concept of unpopular adolescents and continues a cycle of self-defeating beliefs about the self (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

The reaction of peers to retention could be disastrous to adolescents because this is a time when the importance of peer groups and friendships are at an all time high. Adolescents who are rejected or neglected do not have many friends which may cause them to feel inadequate at social activities so they may choose to refrain from socializing (Chandras, 1999). The threat of peer rejection is so powerful that many adolescents conform for acceptance. Conformity can take the form of whatever the dominant group culture dictates. However, some adolescents identify with subcultures to cope with rejection and engage in delinquent behaviors such as substance abuse, fighting and truancy (Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2002).

Self-Esteem

Although Erikson (1968) speaks to the importance of a high self-esteem for positive identity development, studies show that students who experience retention may in fact suffer a loss of self-esteem (Foster, 1993). A loss of self-esteem can occur when students who have been retained are stigmatized by the experience and are teased and discriminated against by their peers (Bowman, 2005). In a study conducted by Byrnes and Yamamoto (2001), retained elementary students were interviewed to determine their views on retention. When researchers asked the group of retained students if they knew of anyone who had been retained, one-fourth of the students did not name themselves. Students also stated the worst thing about not passing was being teased by peers about being retained. The findings indicated that students are sensitive to the negative feedback from peers regarding their failure in school. Despite educators and parents' attempts to present retention as a positive event, retained students may feel they are being punished, not helped. As a result, students who have been retained react negatively to retention and internalize unproductive messages into their development (Byrnes & Yamamoto).

In a study conducted by Lee and Breen (2007), 12 adolescents, who dropped out of school between six months and four years prior to the interview, were asked what the experience was like for them. Data indicated these adolescents felt excluded from the school experience because they did not perform well academically and many reported that being bullied and teased by their peers was so intense they simply decided to withdraw from school. Because they felt excluded, participants developed feelings of inferiority that jeopardized their wellbeing by causing them to have a lack of confidence in their abilities and worth (Lee & Breen).

In another study conducted by Anderson, Jimerson, and Whipple (2005), 58 first graders, 87 third graders, and 93 sixth graders were administered a questionnaire that listed life experiences adults identified as being stressful for children. Children were asked to identify the top seven most stressful experiences to them and then to rank those top seven in order from the most stressful to the least stressful. The sixth grader results showed that grade retention was rated as the highest stressful event in their lives, more so than losing a parent or going blind. When considering the responses of the group as a whole, stressful experiences for the first graders were more associated with the self, whereas the stressful events for the sixth grade group were more social in nature. This finding illustrates the bearing that retention has on adolescents' self-esteem as the importance of peers and perceptions of peers grow in significance for adolescents (Anderson et al.).

The majority of research conducted on grade retention links it to students later dropping out of school. School dropouts cost society in the form of lost earning potential, lower wages and a drain on social services. Research on retention also indicates that it affects relationships that students have with their peers in addition to students' self-esteem. Because retention occurs on school campuses, the role of the school counselor is critical to addressing the retention issue.

Retention and the School Counselor

Grade retention is one of the highest predictors that students will later drop out of school. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) recommends that school counselors become more involved with student populations who have been identified as at-risk (ASCA, 2005). This need is illustrated in a study conducted by Kaminski (1993) who surveyed students who dropped out of school to determine their reasons for doing so. When asked for suggestions on how schools could better assist students who are at-risk of dropping out, the biggest response was that “counselors become more involved with the students” (Kaminski, p. 537). Thus, if the problem of grade retention and its relationship to later dropping out of school is to be addressed, the involvement of elementary and secondary school counselors is critical.

CACREP and ASCA

Historically, school counselors have been an underutilized resource on school campuses. This is mostly due to the fact that many school systems have not clearly identified who school counselors are on campuses and what their role is in school environments (Lieberman, 2004). Agencies like CACREP and ASCA are at work to help re-define the role of school counselors in an attempt to maximize their professional training and experience on school campuses to target the problem of grade retention and its link to school dropouts (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Colbert et al., 2006).

According to ASCA (2005), school counselors advocate for the academic achievement of all students and those programs and interventions that support student success. They also help students develop their full potential regardless of their background and ability (Walters & Borgers, 1995). School counselors work constructively with students to help them identify

impediments to their success so that a plan can be devised and implemented to remove barriers (ASCA).

In helping to define school counselors' role, CACREP (2009) developed standards for universities to follow in educating and training school counselors. A review of the 2009 CACREP standards for school counselors indicates that objectives for school counselors in training are divided into the following subsections: foundations; counseling, prevention and intervention; diversity and advocacy; assessment; research and evaluation; academic development; collaboration and consultation; and leadership. While all of the subsections are divided into knowledge and skill objectives that are directly related to grade retention and its link to students later dropping out of school, only a few will be discussed. The foundations subsection includes objectives that call for school counselors to have an understanding of adverse affects on students' growth and development which may include how they react to and experience being retained. The counseling, prevention and intervention subsection includes an objective that school counselors know how to design and implement a program that will build students' academic and personal/social development (CACREP).

The diversity and advocacy subsection objectives state that school counselors identify those opportunities that build and impede students' academic and personal/social development. In an effort to assist students who are in danger of being retained, school counselors are resources on school campuses that can assist students in identifying community, environmental or institutional situations that are barriers to their success. This may involve helping students recognize how cultural stereotyping may hamper their school achievement. The academic subsection objective is specific to school drop outs in it states that school counselors "understand the concepts, principles, strategies, programs, and practices designed to close the achievement

gap, promote students' academic success, and prevent students from dropping out of school" (ASCA, p. 43). School counselors in training need to be aware and educated on the issue of retention that exists on school campuses and incorporate the objectives learned from CACREP universities in preparation of their work in school settings.

ASCA (2005) developed *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* in order to guide school counselors in developing comprehensive guidance programs to address the needs of not only of at-risk students, but the needs of all students. The ASCA (2005) model is a significant resource for school counselors to assist them in developing programs that address the problem of school dropouts. By incorporating the four delivery systems of curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services and systems support outlined in the ASCA model, comprehensive guidance programs can be developed to address the standards of academic development, career development and the personal/social development of students to prevent grade retention before it occurs. The four delivery systems and standards can also be utilized to assist students following retention to prevent them from later dropping out of school (ASCA).

The ASCA (2005) model also delineates performance standards that specifically speak to school counselors' roles in addressing grade retention. For example, Standard 2 calls for school counselors to put into practice a comprehensive guidance curriculum that meets the needs of students by utilizing appropriate instructional skills and group counseling sessions. Guidance programs that encourage academic achievement of all students could possibly prevent retention from occurring for those students who are at-risk of being retained in school. Standard 3 addresses the collaboration of school counselors with parents or guardians to assist students in their plans for future education. Because parents play a pivotal role in the psychosocial

development of adolescents, devising strategies for parents that will involve them in their adolescents' education will assist students in achieving academic success (ASCA, 2005).

The contents of Standard 4 state that school counselors work both individually and in groups with students who have identified needs and concerns. Students who have been retained or who are at-risk of being retained have been identified as having a need or concern. Awareness of the data that exists on grade retention falls under Standard 8 which directs school counselors to understand and use data to close the gap between students of low and high achievement. When students have been identified with a need or concern, the contents of Standard 9 involve the development of appropriate interventions that will address the needs of this population. Once implemented, interventions must be evaluated to determine whether the interventions are successful. If they are not, they should be revised or discontinued (ASCA, 2005).

School and Family Integration

One model that has been developed to target at-risk students that incorporates the standards and delivery systems of the ASCA model is the School and Family Integration (SAFI) Model. The SAFI model's main focus is to target families in an effort to assist students who are at-risk for retention (Bemak & Cornely, 2002). School counselors' training in individual and group counseling should be utilized to include families in developing strategies to assist students' who are at-risk of retention. The SAFI model suggests synthesizing school and family interventions as a start. This can be accomplished by setting goals to incorporate families into the school, instilling hope in both students and parents, redefining for faculty the composition of contemporary families and building bridges to make sure that communication between school and home is reciprocal. By synthesizing school and family interventions, school counselors

incorporate the school guidance curriculum delivery system to address the personal/social domain standards of students.

School-based focused interventions of the SAFI model include instruction of faculty in communication skills with students and family, facilitation of a sense of ownership of families in schools and promotion of cultural diversity. Examples of family-based focused interventions include working to create an environment that is inviting to families, mediating value differences between students and adults, encouraging healthy family interdependence, helping families with their needs, and shifting the role of family in the schools (Bemak & Cornely, 2002).

Collaborative Consultation Model

With the realization that over 25% of students in schools are at risk of failing, many school counselors have incorporated the collaborative consultation model of working with parents, educators, youth and community counselors (Keys et al., 1998). This model includes participation from representatives of the many social systems that affect many at risk youth such as education, mental health, health, social services, juvenile justice, community organizations, churches and families. School counselors facilitate the process by bringing together the stakeholders to develop a vision to address the problem that is impeding students' academic success. Stakeholders then develop a plan to assist adolescents in their community with each member assigned a role in implementation. Progress is then monitored as all group members' work toward achievement of the established goal. This method of addressing students who are at risk for failing school incorporates a systems approach to dealing with adolescents by recognizing that in order to prevent many adolescents from failing in school, the environment surrounding adolescents must also be included if true change is to occur (Keys et al.).

Mentoring

Based on concepts derived from attachment theory, mentoring works to re-engage students who have detached or disengaged from the educational process (Karcher, 2005). This process occurs by pairing students with identified needs with older or stronger students to work collaboratively in a partnership relationship. Mentoring is available for school counselors who are working with adolescents who are at risk of retention or who have possibly already experienced retention. In a study conducted by Karcher, the effectiveness of developmental mentoring was examined where adolescents were paired with older students in structured activities over a two year period. The study revealed that developmental mentoring improved adolescents' connectedness to school and parents by providing needed emotion support and guidance to at risk adolescents. While this strategy alone may not improve academic performance of adolescents, it does promote their engagement in the process of their education so that the potential for academic gains can be capitalized (Karcher).

Self-Efficacy and Family Systems

When working with adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention, school counselors have increased academic achievement by utilizing self-efficacy and family systems theories (Hall, 2003). Self-efficacy theory relates to adolescents' perceptions of their ability to accomplish academic work. The cognitive functioning of adolescents is affected by how they feel about themselves. Students who experience failure in school are more likely to have a negative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Family systems theory considers adolescents within the context of their families and takes into account that adolescents are part of a structure which can affect their self-efficacy and ultimate academic performance in school (Hall). School counselors who have worked with how adolescents feel about their abilities within the context of

the family system have assisted many at risk adolescents increase academic gains. By including parents into strategies to increase adolescents' self-efficacy, school counselors can help adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention improve how they perform in school (Hall).

The Best of Coping Program

The mental health status of adolescents around the world is growing in importance along with a shift to be more proactive than reactive to the mental health concerns of adolescents (Frydenberg et al., 2004). The poor academic performance of adolescents who have been retained or who are in danger of being retained can be attributed to how adolescents cope with environmental stressors. By developing and implementing school wide programs like The Best of Coping Program that teaches coping skills to the entire student body as opposed to only at risk students, school counselors have helped adolescents develop strategies to cope with stress in a manner that has prevented retention from occurring (Frydenberg et al.).

Other Interventions

Programs that have proven successful for students who are at risk for retention are behavior and cognitive-behavior modification, school based mental health programs, and programs that involve increased parental involvement (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). School performance has been shown to increase with activities like individual and group counseling and mentoring (Stanard, 2003). When working with students who are identified with a learning disability or who are African American or Hispanic, school counselors have helped promote positive communications between teachers and students that has improved the academic outcomes for these disadvantaged groups (Griffin, 2002). School counselors have been instrumental in exploring alternatives to retention that have proven a better fit for students when

collaborating with teachers, parents and administrators to determine the best intervention for students who might be at risk for retention (Jimerson et al., 2006).

In an attempt to prevent retention, school counselors have consulted with teachers to help identify students who are not performing at grade level in an attempt to intervene before student are retained (Wells et al., 1999). School counselors have also used data to identify characteristics that have been recognized as putting students at risk for grade retention and its link to later dropping out of school (Stanard, 2003).

School counselors are a resource on school campus that can be utilized to help address the problem of grade retention on school campuses. CACREP has worked to develop standards to help train school counselors to be aware and target the problem of grade retentions (CACREP, 2009). ASCA has provided a framework for implementing training (ASCA, 2005). There are many options available to school counselors to help target the issue of grade retention on school campuses that have proven successful.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature indicates that students are retained in school for various reasons. An understanding of the development of adolescents is needed to understand the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained. The research literature shows that retention increases the likelihood that students who have been retained will later drop out of school. Retention also been shown to influence adolescents' relationships with peers and adolescents' self-esteem. School counselor are in an excellent position to not only assist students who have been retained, but also to develop interventions to identify students who may be at-risk for retention in an effort to be proactive rather than reactive to students dropping out of school.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. Organization of this chapter incorporates subsections explaining the rationale for qualitative and grounded theory design, research questions, procedures, participant profiles, summary of participants, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and, reliability and validity.

Rationale for Qualitative and Grounded Theory Design

Previous research on grade retention is comprised of quantitative studies describing students who have been retained as having higher suspension rates, coming from a low socio-economic status, and having an increased chance of dropping out of school (e.g., Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2002, Suh & Suh, 2007). While these studies provide a wealth of information about grade retention, they do not describe how adolescents reacted when they were retained and how they experienced retention in their lives. As a result, in this study, the phenomenon of retention was researched to understand how adolescents perceived the reality of their experiences.

In order to understand adolescents' reactions and experiences with retention, access to their perspectives on this event was essential. In keeping with Erikson's (1980) psychosocial theory of development and the significant influence that parents and/or family have on adolescent development, conducting a study that included both students who have been retained and their parents proved to add a multidimensional representation of retention. Therefore, understanding came about through in-depth interactions of adolescents and their parents with this researcher. By using a qualitative method of study, understanding the central phenomenon of retention was addressed, as discussed by Creswell (2008). A qualitative research method provided rich, thick data about the phenomenon of retention, so retention of adolescents can be

understood more completely (Banyard & Miller, 1998). By using questions that began with “how” or “why,” more in-depth data about retention were discovered (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is applicable to a study when the research problem is not addressed by existing theories. In the present study, Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial theory of development was used as a conceptual framework to understand the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who had been retained. Additionally, the inclusion of parents of the adolescents selected for the study also was founded on Erikson’s theory considering the significant influence parents and family play in the development of adolescents. By using a grounded theory design to study students and their parents who have been retained, the data were collected and analyzed in such a way as to generate a theory of how retention was experienced through the personal reactions of students.

Research Questions

Research questions help the researchers’ conceptual framework become clearer (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who have been retained were explored by using the overarching research question: What are the reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained in school as seen through the eyes of students and parents?

The following subquestions were used to generate more discussion from adolescents who have been retained and their parents so that their experiences could be more fully understood:

1. For students: What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?

- For parents: What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?
2. For students: How did you react when you found out you were retained?
For parents: How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?
 3. For students: Since being retained, how is your life different?
For parents: Since being retained, how is your child's life different?
 4. For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?
For parents: What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child's relationships with his or her peers?
 5. For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?
For parents: What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?
 6. For students: What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained? What are some positive experiences?
For parents: What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained? What are some positive experiences?
 7. For students: How would you describe yourself?
For parents: How would you describe your child?
 8. For students: How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?

For parents: What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?

9. For students: How do you view your future outlook?

For parents: How do you view the future outlook of your child?

10. For students: In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

For parents: In retrospect, what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From yourself?

Procedures

Setting

In qualitative studies, participants and sites that can help the researcher understand the phenomena being researched are intentionally selected (Creswell, 2008). As this study was about personal reactions and experiences of students who were retained a grade during their first through twelve school years, a public school was determined to be the optimal research setting for this topic. The parish selected to conduct this study was Terrebonne Parish. Terrebonne Parish has a population of 104,503, which makes it the tenth largest parish in the State of Louisiana. It is a relatively rural parish and covers a large geographic area. Terrebonne Parish, which is located along the southern coast of Louisiana, has a dropout rate of 7.3% compared to the state dropout rate of 6.9% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008) and national dropout rate of 4.7% (Laird, 2006). Considering its high dropout rate, the schools in Terrebonne Parish proved to have a high percentage of students who have repeated a grade.

The Terrebonne Parish School District has four high schools and one vocational high school. Two of the four high schools, South Terrebonne High School and Ellender Memorial High School, are located at the southern end of the parish and consist of grades 9 through 12. The other two high schools, Terrebonne High School and H.L. Bourgeois High School, are located at the northern end of the parish and consist of grades 10 through 12. Students from all four high schools in Terrebonne Parish School District have the option to attend the Vocational-Technical High School (Vo-Tech) to both learn a skill and meet elective requirements for a high school diploma. Students who choose to attend Vo-Tech are bused from their base school to the Vo-Tech campus to attend classes for half of their school day. The other half of their school day is spent at their base school working on core classes to meet high school diploma requirements. Based on this arrangement, Vo-Tech's students attend classes on the Vo-Tech campus either in the morning or the afternoon.

Vo-Tech offers students the opportunity to learn a skill prior to graduation in hopes of making their transition into the workforce as smooth as possible. The Vo-Tech campus allows students who are not academically strong to excel in a skill. Since Vo-Tech is comprised of students from all four high schools in the Terrebonne Parish School District, Vo-Tech's school campus was selected as the setting to recruit students for this study. By choosing this school campus, participants were representative of students from all areas of the Terrebonne Parish School District.

Approval for Study

Approval to conduct this study in a school located in the Terrebonne Parish School District was sought from (see Appendix A) and approved by (see Appendix B) the Superintendent of Terrebonne Parish Schools, Ed Richard, Jr., by an exchange of letters.

Additionally, approval to conduct this study was sought from the University of New Orleans' Institutional Review Board by completing and filing an application. The application submitted included a project description, description of how data were collected, funding source, a list of risks to participants, informed consent, and principal investigator's assurance. On December 17, 2008, the University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board forwarded a memo approving this study (see Appendix C).

Sample

The use of criterion sampling involves the selection of participants who meet a criterion established for being included in the study. In most cases, the criterion is that the participant experienced the phenomena being studied. When this type of sampling is used, it promotes the use of quality assurance (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There were three criteria for inclusion in this study. The first criterion was that students must have experienced being retained at least once. As this study was about grade retention, students could not answer questions about how they reacted to retention unless it was actually experienced by them. The second criterion was that students were currently enrolled in school on a high school campus. In keeping with the research that links grade retention to later dropping out of school, students who were closer to the drop out age, between the ages of 15 and 19, were selected as they could better discuss future plans and if the possibility of dropping out of school was an option for them. The third criterion was that students must have parents who were willing to also be part of the study. Parents were included in the study to corroborate and provide added perspectives to students' reactions and experiences in connection with students' retentions. For purposes of this study, the term "parents" was used to refer to any adult individual or individuals who were significant in

students' lives at the time of the retention and who could speak to how the retention was experienced.

Recruitment of Students

In order to recruit participants, a flyer explaining the nature of the study and providing information on how parents and/or students could contact the researcher if they were interested in being research participants (see Appendix D) was brought to the school counselor at Vo-Tech. The school counselor disseminated the flyer to those students on Vo-Tech's campus who were identified as being previously retained. The researcher selected participants who met the criteria previously stated and who expressed interest in being included in the study to include a male and female from each of the four high schools in the Terrebonne Parish School District. This resulted in a total of eight students and their parents who were selected and interviewed as participants for this study. Once the study commenced, it was necessary to offer parents of the study a \$20 gift card to Wal-Mart to secure their interview as interview appointments were scheduled and re-scheduled repeatedly. When the gift card was introduced as an incentive, interview appointments were kept. In the spirit of fairness, all parents of the study were provided with a \$20 gift card to Wal-Mart for their participation to the study. In order to protect the anonymity of the students and parents who were selected to participate in the study, names were changed to aliases and all identifying information was removed from the written research data.

Informed Consents

Since students recruited for the study were from a high school campus, some of the research participants were 18 years of age and over. For these students, an informed consent was prepared for their signature, as students 18 years of age could legally sign their own consent. For minor students, or those under the age of 18, informed consents were signed by their parents

prior to their inclusion in the study. Minor students also signed a child assent form which provided written agreement of their willingness to participate in the study. Parents of the students in the study also had an informed consent prepared for their signature. All informed consents included the purpose of the study, risks, benefits, confidentiality, procedures for data collection, notification of voluntary withdrawal from the study and contact information for questions. Informed consents were signed by all research participants and their parents prior to any interviews (see Appendices E through H).

Role of the Researcher

My career in education began 14 years ago with seven years as a social studies public school teacher and eight years as a school counselor in middle school, high school and junior high school settings. When I made the transition from high school classroom teacher to middle school counselor, I was surprised to learn how many students experienced retention. As a high school classroom teacher, I was only exposed to students who failed the subject I taught and were repeating the course for a second time. As a middle school counselor, I had a more global view of the school as a whole and a clearer picture of how many students were retained each year.

Part of my job description as a middle school counselor included my membership on the School Building Level Review Committee. The function of this committee was to meet at the end of each school year in order to determine if students who had not met promotion requirements would be retained or promoted. The committee was comprised of teachers, an administrator and the school counselor. In the small middle school where I was employed, there were one set of teachers for each grade level. When members of the committee recommended

retention for students, I often wondered how retained students were going to succeed in learning material from the same teachers with whom they had been unsuccessful the previous year.

When the School Building Level Review Committee met at the end of the year to consider retention decisions about students, I listened to teachers who insisted on retaining at least three to five students each year because they behaved poorly, not because they could not perform academically. These teachers wanted to use retention as a punishment, not an intervention. I also was able to observe various weaknesses in some faculty. When students failed the class of a teacher who was ineffective, it seemed unfair that a student would have to repeat the grade. The results of the LEAP test had to be reviewed for students in eighth grade, which dictated the retention decision for the committee. Because of LEAP test results, many students were not allowed to progress forward to high school with their friends as a result of their failure to achieve the appropriate LEAP score.

When I made the transition from middle school counselor to high school counselor, I experienced seeing students and their parents arrive in the school office for the sole purpose of formally dropping out of school. Despite my attempts to talk them out of it, their minds had already been made up. They had experienced a long academic career of frustration and lack of achievement. Many of these students were older than their peers and were waiting until they reached the age they could legally drop out. The problem of high school dropouts seemed an enormous problem to address, since it appeared many of these students' academic problems began in elementary school and were perpetuated throughout the remainder of their years in school.

As part of a post-graduate class at Nicholls State University, I researched the enrollment trend of Terrebonne Parish's Option III program which was designed for students who were at-

risk of dropping out of school (Robertson, 2004). This program involved students spending half their school day at the parish's Vo-Tech school working on a skill and the other half of the day working at their base school on skills to obtain a General Equivalency Diploma, instead of Carnegie units, in order to earn a high school diploma. This program was a program of last resort for students wanting to drop out of school and part of the criteria was that the student must be behind in grade level. Within three years of implementation of the 105 Options III program, the parish's enrollment went from 105 Option III students in 2001 to 292 Option III students in 2003. The number of Option III students continues to rise each year. These figures illustrated the need for this program and others like it to keep students enrolled in school to work on some sort of training and education. These research findings were included in a panel presentation, of which I was asked to be part, at the Louisiana Department of Education's Summer Institute in 2004. Terrebonne Parish presented its Option III program to other educators around the state as one of its "Best Practices" at curbing the dropout rate.

Currently, I am a junior high school counselor. As part of my job description, I am again a member of the School Building Level Committee, which makes retention and promotion decisions about students. Knowing the relationship grade retention has on students' decisions to later drop out of school, I identify those students on my campus each academic year who have repeated a grade and work closely with administration and fellow counselors in developing interventions to assist this population before they become too disengaged in the educational process. In my experience as a junior high school counselor, I worked with gifted and honor roll students in the eighth grade who had repeated the first grade. I also worked with seventh grade students who had repeated two or more grades and were so disengaged from the educational

process it was imminent they would avail themselves of the first opportunity to drop out of school.

I believe all of these experiences have shaped my views about retention and its appropriate role in the educational system. My views on retention were quite objective, as I believed it to be an academic intervention that had merit, but tended to be used too indiscriminately. I further believed that when students do not meet established promotion policies, sometimes alternatives to retention should be considered. In my role as researcher, I set aside my feelings and experiences as teacher and counselor of the students whom I interviewed, as best as I could, so that my findings were sound and grounded in accurate data.

Participant Profiles

The following are participant profiles for the students and parents included in the study.

Beth

At the time this study was conducted, Beth was a 17-year-old White female and a high school sophomore, who had been retained once, in the seventh grade. Her parents were divorced, and she was currently living with her father, step-mother and the younger of her two older brothers. Her mother was diagnosed five years prior to this study with multiple sclerosis and, as of the date of this study, resided in a nursing home. Beth indicated that she comes from a middle class household. Of her two older brothers, the oldest brother graduated from high school, and the younger brother quit school, but later obtained his GED. Beth's mother dropped out of school when she was in eighth grade. Her father quit school in the 10th grade, but later obtained his GED.

Beth's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Beth's father was a 48-year-old White male. He had three children: two older sons and Beth, his youngest child. He divorced Beth's mom, and subsequently remarried. He was currently living with his wife, daughter and son. He described his household as middle income. Beth's father quit school in the 10th grade but went back eight years later and obtained his GED. He worked as a tugboat captain and was rarely home.

Donna

At the time this study was conducted, Donna was an 18-year-old African American female. She was a high school senior, who was retained once in the fourth grade. Donna was planning to graduate high school at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Her parents were divorced, and she resided with her two older sisters, her mother and her niece. Donna rarely saw her biological father and refers to her step-father as "Daddy." Her step-father and her mother were separated at the time this study was conducted. Donna indicated she comes from a middle class household. One of her older sisters graduated from high school, and the other older sister did not graduate but had obtained a GED instead. Both of Donna's parents graduated from high school.

Donna's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Donna's mom presented as a 43-year-old African American female. She had three children: two older daughters and Donna, who is her youngest child. She was divorced from her first husband, Donna's father, and subsequently remarried. Her second husband did not reside with her at the time of the study. She was currently living with her three daughters and grandchild. She described her household as low income and stated she graduated from high school. She also stated she works as a sitter in an assisted living home.

Donovan

At the time this study was conducted, Donovan was a 17-year-old White male and a high school freshman. He experienced being retained twice, once in the third grade and again in the eighth grade. His parents were divorced, but he stated he is allowed to move freely between the households. His mother lived in the school district in which he attends school. His father, however, lived outside of the school district in which he attends school. Donovan stated that his cousin would bring him to school when he spent time at his father's residence. His mother's household consisted of his younger sister and step-father. His father's household consisted of only his father and his younger sister, when she visited. Donovan claimed to be from a middle class income household. His younger sister was enrolled in elementary school. Both of Donovan's parents graduated from high school. His mother has an undergraduate degree in education. In the third grade, Donovan was evaluated for ADD. He was then put on a 504 plan with accommodations and, as of the date of this study, was still receiving 504 plan accommodations.

Donovan's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Donovan's mom was a 35-year-old White female. She had two children: Donovan, who is her oldest, and his younger sister. She was divorced from her first husband, Donovan's father, and was subsequently married to her second husband, Donovan's step-father. She lived with Donovan, her second husband and her daughter in a middle class income household. She obtained an undergraduate degree in education and was employed as a teacher in the Terrebonne Parish School District.

James

At the time this study was conducted, James was an 18-year-old African American male and a high school sophomore, who experienced being retained three times: the sixth, seventh, and ninth grades. James' parents were divorced, and, at the time of this study, he lived with an aunt and six cousins. Additionally, his mother resided across town in a different school district than one in which James attends school. James stated he does not want to attend school with his sister and two brothers in his mother's school district. James' father lives out of town and throughout James' life had not exercised regular visitation. James described his household as middle income. James has an older brother who graduated from high school. His two younger brothers and younger sister were in school. Both of James' parents dropped out of school; however, his mother did earn a GED.

James' Parent

At the time this study was conducted, James' mom was a 38-year-old African American female. She has five children: an older brother, James, two younger brothers and a younger sister. She was divorced from James' father and engaged to her fiancé. She lived with her oldest son and his wife, her fiancée, her daughter and infant son, who were present during the interview. She stated she was from a low income household. James' mom did not graduate from high school but did obtain her GED. At the time of the study, she stated she was filing for disability and could not work. She previously worked as a nurse.

Jennifer

At the time this study was conducted, Jennifer was an 18-year-old African American female. She was a high school junior, who was retained once: the seventh grade. Her parents were never married, and she never met her father. Jennifer lived with her mother, two younger

brothers and grandmother and claimed to come from a low income household. Jennifer's mother would leave for long periods of time, without Jennifer being aware of her mother's whereabouts. Jennifer's grandmother was her guardian and lived with her as long as Jennifer can remember. Her younger brothers were still enrolled in school. Her mother quit attending school in the 10th grade. Jennifer's grandmother also did not graduate from high school.

Jennifer's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Jennifer's mother was not available to be interviewed. Instead, Jennifer's grandmother, who was Jennifer's guardian and had been living with Jennifer throughout her life, was interviewed and will be referred to hereinafter as "Jennifer's parent." Jennifer's parent was a 57-year-old African American female. None of her 10 children graduated from high school. She was divorced and reported her household as low income. Jennifer's parent indicated that she left school in the ninth grade, because she was pregnant, and never graduated. She never worked outside of her home and spent her life raising her children and grandchildren.

Jerrod

At the time this study was conducted, Jerrod was an 18-year-old White male. He was a high school senior, who was retained once in the third grade. Jerrod planned to graduate from high school at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. His parents were still married to each other, and he lived with them and his younger brother in a middle class income household. Jerrod had an older brother, who did not graduate from high school, and an older sister, who did graduate from high school. Jerrod's younger brother was scheduled to graduate with him at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Neither of his parents graduated from high school.

Jerrod's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Jerrod's mom was a 47-year-old White female. She had four children: an older son, an older daughter, Jerrod and his younger brother. Jerrod's mom has only been married to Jerrod's dad. She lived with her husband, Jerrod and his younger brother. She described her household as middle income. Jerrod's mom and dad quit school when they were in the ninth grade. Both Jerrod's parents work in a shrimp factory.

Lisa

At the time this study was conducted, Lisa was a 17-year-old White female. She was a high school sophomore, who has been retained twice: once in the seventh grade and once in the eighth grade. Lisa's parents were divorced, and she lived with her mother, step-father and step-grandmother in a middle class income household. Lisa rarely saw her father and stated she does not have a close relationship with him. Lisa's older sister graduated from high school, but her older brother did not, choosing instead to earn a GED. Her mother graduated from high school. Her father dropped out of school, but later earned a GED.

Lisa's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Lisa's mom presented as a 46-year-old White female. She stated she had three children: an older son, an older daughter and Lisa, who was her youngest child. She was divorced from Lisa's dad and married to her second husband. She lived with Lisa and her husband, along with her mother-in-law, for whom she was acting as caregiver at the time this study was conducted. She graduated from high school and described her household as middle income. She stated she has worked cleaning houses in the past.

Sam

At the time this study was conducted, Sam was a 17-year-old White male. His grade classification was high school junior. Sam experienced being retained three times: in the first, fourth and eighth grades. His parents were still married to each other, and he lived with them and his older brother in a middle class income household. Sam's older sister and brother dropped out of school and did not graduate. Both of his parents dropped out of school and did not graduate. Around the seventh grade, Sam was identified as a 504 student, but he did not remember his disability classification. He did remember that when he received accommodations on tests, his grades improved. After his last retention, Sam's mother enrolled him in the Option III program for the school district. This is an alternative program offered by the school district for students in danger of dropping out. Students in the program exit the Carnegie unit diploma track and, instead, work in classes to build skills to attain a GED. Sam's grade classification was changed to reflect his chronological age to prevent him and other students like him from being classified as eighth graders on a high school campus. The Terrebonne Parish School District felt this age/grade level equivalent designation added to the self-esteem of students involved in the Option III program.

Sam's Parent

At the time this study was conducted, Sam's parent was a 50-year-old White female. She had three children: an older daughter and son and Sam, who is her youngest child. Sam's parent was married to Sam's father. She is living with Sam, Sam's father and their older son. She described her income status as middle income. Neither she nor Sam's father graduated from high school. She was a homemaker and had never worked outside the home.

Summary of Participants

Information to complete the research participant profiles was derived from the data collection sheet research participants were asked to complete (see Appendices I & J). With regard to the ages of the students, four of them were 17 years old and four of them were 18 years old. The ages of the parents in the study ranged from 35 to 57. Of the 16 participants, only four indicated that they were from a low income household. The remainder indicated that they were from middle income households. Donna and her parent and James and his parent were the two parent and child dyads that reported different income households. Both Donna and James reported their household income level as middle, while Donna's parent and James' parent reported their household income level as low.

With regard to race, six of the 16 research participants were African American and 10 of the 16 were White. Eleven of the 16 research participants were female and five of the 16 were male. Only one of the eight parents interviewed had a college degree. Of the remaining seven parents, two graduated from high school, two earned a GED and three indicated that 9th grade was the highest grade they attended in school. Of the eight students, one is in 9th grade, three are in 10th grade, two are in 11th grade, and two are in 12th grade. A summary of all student research participants including their name, age, income level, race, sex and highest grade attained is contained in Table 1. A summary of all parent research participants, including the same demographic information, is contained in Table 2.

Table 1

Summary of Student Participants

Name	Race	Sex	Age	Income	Highest Grade
Beth	White	Female	17	Middle	10th
Donna	African American	Female	18	Middle	12th
Donovan	White	Male	17	Middle	9th
James	African American	Male	18	Middle	10th
Jennifer	African American	Female	18	Low	11th
Jerrod	White	Male	18	Middle	12th
Lisa	White	Female	17	Middle	10th
Sam	White	Male	17	Middle	11th

Table 2

Summary of Parent Participants

Name	Race	Sex	Age	Income	Highest Grade
Beth's Parent	White	Male	48	Middle	10th/GED
Donna's Parent	African American	Female	43	Low	High School Diploma
Donovan's Parent	White	Female	35	Middle	Bachelor's Degree
James' Parent	African American	Female	38	Low	GED
Jennifer's Parent	African American	Female	57	Low	9th
Jerrod's Parent	White	Female	47	Middle	9th
Lisa's Parent	White	Female	46	Middle	High School Diploma
Sam's Parent	White	Female	50	Middle	Drop Out

All of the student research participants were living with the parent interviewed, with the exception of James, who was living with his aunt because he preferred attending a high school different from where he would if he lived with his mother. Of the eight students interviewed, three of the students, Beth, Donna and Lisa, have an older sibling who graduated from high school and an older sibling who obtained a GED. Two of the eight students, Donovan and Jennifer, are the oldest and have younger siblings who were still in school at the time this study was conducted. James was the only student of the eight interviewed who has both an older sibling who graduated and younger siblings who are still in school. Sam was the only student of the eight interviewed who have two older siblings who did not finish school. A summary of all research participants' living arrangements and their siblings/children is contained in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Participants' Living Arrangements, Siblings and Highest Grade Level Achieved by Siblings

Name	Living Arrangements	Highest Grade Level of Siblings
Beth	Resided with Father, Step-mother and younger brother	Older Brother - High School Diploma Second Older Brother - Quit High School/Obtained GED
Donna	Resided with two older sisters, mother and niece	Older Sister - High School Diploma Second Older Sister - Quit High School/Obtained GED

(table cont.)

Donovan	Resided with Mother, Step-father and younger sister or with Father (moves freely between both homes)	Younger Sister - Attends Elementary School
James	Resides with Aunt and six cousins	Older Brother - High School Diploma Younger Brother - Attends school Second Younger Brother - Attends school Younger Sister - Attends school
Jennifer	Resides with Mother, two younger brothers and Grandmother	Younger Brother – Attends school Second Younger Brother – Attends school
Jerrod	Resides with Mother, Father and younger brother	Older Brother – Quit High School Older Sister – High School Diploma Younger Brother – Senior in High School
Lisa	Resides with Mother, Step-father and Step- Grandmother	Older Sister – High School Diploma Older Brother – Quit High School/Obtained GED
Sam	Resides with Mother, Father and older brother	Older Sister - Quit High School Older Brother – Quit High School

Data Collection Methods

According to Creswell (2008), data may be collected for qualitative studies through the use of observations, interviews and questionnaires. The use of interviews should include open-ended questions that are designed to promote the experiences of participants in their own words. Interview protocols provide researchers with a guide to follow when conducting interviews. Protocols ensure that the researcher covers specific topics of the study in the event the interview steers away from the main themes. Interviews can be tape recorded, so they can be transcribed at a later date. The use of transcribed interviews allows researchers the opportunity to code data to aid in data analysis (Creswell).

Memos are notes the researcher writes throughout the process in order to elaborate on concepts observed while collecting and coding data. They are also used in the collection process and add to the variety of methods used to gather information about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008).

Student Interviews

For this study, approximately 45-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight students selected to participate in the study. All of the student interviews took place in a private office located on Vo-Tech's campus. The only furniture in the office was a small table with two chairs on either side, so throughout the interview, the student and I were facing each other. For each interview, an interview protocol was utilized and is attached (see Appendices K & L). Each interview was audio-recorded utilizing a hand-held recorder that I operated. Once the informed consents, child assents and data collections sheets were completed, I indicated to the research participant that I was ready to begin taping, at which time I switched on the recorder and placed it on the table between the student and myself. At the conclusion of each interview, I

switched off the recorder. The services of a transcriptionist were retained in order to transcribe all interviews into electronic format. This individual was trained in confidentiality procedures by me and executed a written oath of confidentiality to protect the anonymity of research participants (see Appendix M).

Parent Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents of the eight students. Each parent interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Two of the parent interviews took place in a private office located on Vo-Tech's campus. The other six parent interviews took place in each of the parent's homes. Three of the six parents scheduled and rescheduled interviews a couple times before they actually took place. For these parents, it appeared that, despite the fact that the interview was scheduled, something they felt was more important came up and as such, opted out of the interview. Each situation will be discussed in Chapter Four in each participant's interview summary. When I offered a gift card as an incentive to conduct the interviews, the interview we scheduled took place. In an effort to be fair to all participants, gift cards were awarded to all parents in the study. The interview protocol utilized is attached as Appendix F.

Parent interviews were also audio recorded utilizing the same hand-held recorder used for the students. Following the completion of informed consents and data collection sheets, I indicated to the parents I was ready to begin the interview. For all six of the parent interviews that were conducted in their personal residences, interviews took place either at the kitchen table or in living room, where there was a table to place the recorder between us once the interview began. At the completion of each interview, I switched off the recorder. Parent interviews were later transcribed into an electronic file by the same transcriptionist who had transcribed the student interviews.

Follow-up Interviews and Member Checks

To protect validity of the data collected, a second, follow-up interview was scheduled and conducted to serve as a member check for all research participants. Follow-up interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and were also audio-recorded. Member checking is a process where researchers meet with interviewees to check out findings to ensure their accuracy (Creswell, 2008). Throughout data collection, tapes and documents were stored in a locked filing cabinet, to which only the researcher had access. Once transcribed, tapes of interviews were destroyed, and all identifying information contained in the transcribed data were redacted. Participant aliases were assigned by the researcher for ease in the reporting of individual findings.

Data Collection Sheet

Before each interview was conducted, students and parents were asked to complete a data collection sheet which is attached as Appendices L and M.

Subjectivity Portfolio

Prior to the process of data collection, the researcher completed a subjectivity portfolio to address any possible biases on the part of the researcher toward the research topic. Recognizing that subjectivity is always part of their research, qualitative researchers should work to monitor it, so the results will be more trustworthy (Glesne, 2006). Because the researcher worked in education for over 14 years, the researcher had personal views about retention that had to be set aside for purposes of this study. In an effort to ensure that the data collected were analyzed appropriately, the researcher had to remain very aware of how the data collected from parents and students during their interviews were viewed. The researcher constantly checked herself to ensure that my personal values did not bleed into the data.

Data Analysis Methods

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), analysis of data using a grounded theory design is referred to as constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. This process was accomplished by using precise coding and analysis procedures according to a series of identifiable steps.

Step One

An analysis of each participant's interview began with the first step of constant comparative analysis which occurs by coding each incident in the data. Incidents are concepts of what is happening in the raw data. Codes are then compared to other codes to generate categories that emerge and stand out from the data. Comparing incidents in this way promotes the generation of theoretical properties of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Consistent with grounded theory design, analysis of data began as soon as the data collection process began. Transcribed interviews were coded, initially, by using a line-by-line coding method. Codes were once again reviewed using a method of focused coding which involved comparing the initial codes of the interview to each other in an effort to identify categories. Because the purpose of the parent interviews was to corroborate and elaborate further about the students' retention experiences, categories about students were able to be identified from both the parent interviews and the student interviews.

Step Two

Step two of data analysis utilizing a constant comparative analysis approach integrates categories and their properties by continual comparison of categories to identify themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I accomplished step two by comparing emerging categories about each student from the student interview to emerging categories about each student from the parent interviews.

Categories were integrated by analyzing and comparing each category to the other categories until themes about the student emerged which captured the retention experience in relation to the research questions posed. Emerging themes, supported by direct quotes from both members of each student/parent dyad, were identified and reported first in the findings. At times, discrepancies among themes by students and parents relating to the research questions were identified. These discrepancies are reported next in the findings by reporting the theme of the student followed by the direct quote that supported the theme, then reporting the opposing theme of the parent followed by the direct quote in support. In some student/parent dyads, themes emerged that were not equally supported by both student and parent interviews, but provided significant data that were essential to answering the research questions. These themes were also identified and reported with the direct quote that supported the theme.

Step Three

The third step of data analysis is to delimit the theory. The theory begins to emerge in constant comparative analysis as the themes are reduced and saturated with data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This step in analysis was accomplished by comparing the themes that emerged from each student/parent dyad to themes of the other student/parent dyads in the study. All themes for each student/parent dyad were compared including those supported by both members, discrepancies between the dyad and themes not equally supported by both members of the dyad. Discrepancies across student/parent dyads were compared and no noticeable trends emerged. The result of this comparison was the identification of themes of the study which were then organized in terms of the research questions posed to the group. By organizing the themes in this way, the research questions were able to be answered with responses that represented all research participants. Next, the themes of the study were further integrated and collapsed by charting the

frequency of themes by research participants to identify the seven dominant themes that were representative of a majority of the sixteen research participants in the study. A majority was considered a frequency of half or greater from research participants.

Step Four

The fourth and final step of constant comparative analysis is the generating of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After completing all prior steps of data analysis, student and parent findings about the personal reactions and experiences of retained students were identified from the answers to the research questions. Additionally, the most dominant themes of the study were reported and discussed..

Reliability and Validity

Because qualitative studies rely on the interpretative nature of the researcher and various methods of collecting data, there are many threats to reliability and validity. As a result, measures must be taken to guard against issues of reliability and validity, so conclusions drawn from this type of research method are sound. Since much of the data collected from participants is in the form of the spoken word, the first obvious threat to the reliability and validity of a qualitative research study is noted as the bias of the researcher. Data collected from observations are also subject to this threat, because analysis of data collected from interviews and observations involve interpretation from the researcher of the words and actions of the participant (Creswell, 2008).

In order to address the issue of subjectivity or researcher bias, researchers should utilize the many tools and methods available to develop awareness of their subjectivity. Developing a subjectivity portfolio on a research topic is one of many methods researchers can use. Recognizing that subjectivity is always part of their research, qualitative researchers should work

to monitor it so that the results of their study will be more trustworthy. By not doing so, researchers stand the risk of analyzing their data through a lens that may not be congruent with what participants have done or said. Monitoring subjectivity does not control or omit it from qualitative research; it merely brings reliability and validity to conclusions drawn from data because it is accounted for during analysis (Glesne, 2006). To address the potential threat of researcher bias to the validity of this study, the researcher completed a subjectivity portfolio before data collection began. The subjectivity portfolio is a collection of exercises developed in order to force the researcher to identify their thoughts, beliefs and feelings about retention. The researcher, therefore, reflected on her researcher identity, role and relationships by answering probing questions about how the topic relates to her professional experience, how the topic relates to her personal experiences, how her social identities affect the research, ethical considerations, to name a few. This awareness aided the researcher when the time came to look at the data collected and ensure it was not analyzed in a way that confirmed preconceived ideas the researcher may have about retention and its effect on adolescents. By being aware of her biases going into analysis, the researcher was able to step back from the data to ensure that she was not purposefully omitting important findings that would otherwise be lost.

The trustworthiness of data collected can be a significant threat to the validity of a qualitative research study. Data collected in a way that does not incorporate methods to account for its credibility will lead to erroneous conclusions (Edmondson & Irby, 2008). There are a variety of methods to ensure that data collected are valid to analyze. Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from individuals, data and methods (Creswell, 2008). By interviewing both parents and students, the data gathered from students could be corroborated by their parents. Likewise data gathered from parents could be backed up by students. Findings from interviews

that were confirmed by both the student and parent are more valid and reliable. Additionally, by analyzing transcribed interviews, memos the researcher wrote to herself and the data collection sheet completed by participants, findings were based on data collected in a number of different ways. By having both parent and student interviewed and by analyzing transcribed transcripts, data collection sheets and memos, a variety of methods to collect and analyze data were incorporated into the study, which increased the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Member checking also protects the validity of data gathered. This process involves bringing the findings of an interview back to the participant to check its accuracy (Creswell, 2008). By providing feedback to participants, researchers not only know more, but they also know what they know better (Miles & Hubbell, 1994). By conducting a follow-up interview with all students and parents, the researcher incorporated the use of member checking in her study. When the researcher was able to read back to the research participants a summary of their answers from the initial interviews, it allowed the researcher's data to feel more solid. It also caused the researcher to feel that her questions were understood, and the answers received accurately reflected how the research participants felt about the topic.

Because qualitative studies involve the use of small samples, some researchers have questioned the validity of the applicability of findings to the general population (Hoyt & Bhati, 2007). Deep, intense descriptions of participants and the context can provide readers of the study the ability to determine applicability (Edmondson & Irby, 2008). The researcher addressed this issue of validity by providing descriptions of the data that were rich and thick. The researcher also incorporated the constant comparative method for analysis outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for her data analysis, which has been described previously.

Chapter Summary

Research which understands the personal reactions and experiences of adolescents who are retained is lacking. By conducting a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of students who have been retained and their parents, the experiences of being retained can be more fully understood. It is necessary to understand what happens to adolescents when they are retained, so appropriate interventions may be developed and implemented in order to support students in the process of completing their education. A grounded theory research design approach to this problem was used.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to research the personal reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained, as well as their parents, using a qualitative method of investigation. Research participants were interviewed utilizing the interview protocol for students (see Appendix K) and parents (see Appendix L) developed by the researcher for purposes of this study. In all cases, parents were interviewed first, and students were interviewed a day or two later. Additionally, both parents and students were asked to complete a data collection sheet (see Appendix I for student data collection sheet and Appendix J for parent data collection sheet), which in combination with the transcribed interviews and memos, comprised the data for this study. Follow-up interviews with all research participants were conducted within two to three weeks following the initial interviews and served as a member check of findings from the initial interviews. Interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using a constant comparative analysis consistent with a grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants' experiences with retention and the results of an analysis of the data collected for purposes of this study are reported in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into subsections that represent the four steps of the data analysis of constant comparative analysis. Step one resulted in the identification of categories from each student/parent interview. In step two, categories were integrated leading to the emergence of themes about each student that related to the research questions. Discrepancies between student and parent responses to the research questions were also identified, as well as the emergence of themes not equally addressed by both the student and parent in the responses to the research questions. The themes of all researcher participants were summarized in step three in order to develop an answer to each research question by the group as a whole. Additionally, dominant

themes were identified and set forth in step three. Step four contains the significant findings from the study.

Step One of Data Analysis

An analysis of each participant's interview began with the first step of constant comparative analysis which is the coding of each incident in the data. Incidents are concepts of what is shown by the raw data. Codes are then compared to other codes to generate categories that emerge and stand out from the data. Comparing incidents in this way promotes the generation of theoretical properties of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Consistent with grounded theory design, analysis of data began as soon as the data collection process began. Transcribed interviews were coded, initially, by using a line-by-line coding method. Codes were once again reviewed using a method of focused coding which is the comparison of initial codes of the interview to each other in an effort to identify categories. Because the purpose of the parent interviews was to corroborate and elaborate further about the students' retention experiences, categories about students were able to be identified from both the parent interviews and the student interviews. Memos were then written about each student utilizing the categories identified from student and parent interviews.

This subsection presents the first step of data analysis by discussing each student in alphabetical order utilizing the memos written about each student following the identification of categories. For each student, a summary of the student interview is followed by a summary of the parent interview and then by categories which emerged from both interviews. Finally, the categories are set forth in tables in order to further facilitate understanding.

Beth

Interview summary of Beth

Beth's interview took place in a small office located in Vo-Tech's guidance office. Beth greeted me warmly and expressed her willingness to participate in this study. The informed consent for minor students had previously been executed by her father. After reading the child assent form, Beth again verbally indicated her willingness to participate in the study and signed the form. She then began completing the data collection form for students. After Beth completed and executed the forms, we began our interview.

During Beth's interview, she spoke very candidly about how being retained in school affected her. Beth's stated reason for repeating the seventh grade was she did not care about school that year. Later in the interview, Beth admitted she was very distracted by her mother's illness. During Beth's sixth grade year in school, her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. It was during seventh grade, the year she was retained, that her mother's health deteriorated rapidly. While her mother's illness was a significant event in her life, Beth expressed regret that she allowed herself to be so distracted in school.

Beth became emotional when we discussed the effect her retention had on her friendships. She began crying when she spoke of the loss of her best friend the year she had to repeat the seventh grade. Beth's perception was that her friend seemed reluctant to continue the friendship when they were in different grade levels. Her display of emotion indicated she was still deeply affected by this loss. She did discuss new friendships that were made, but stated she did not consider them as close as her previous friendships.

Despite the loss of friendships, Beth appeared to try to focus on the positive things she experienced because of retention. Upon reflection on Beth's interview, focusing on the positive

aspects of her life like her friends and family appeared to be Beth's way of coping with negative experiences in her life. Despite the positive things experienced by Beth since her retention, Beth was clear about communicating she was not happy about repeating the seventh grade. However, Beth did express her determination to graduate from high school, especially since very few members of her family had achieved this goal. Beth struck me as an adolescent who accepts responsibility for her actions and does whatever it takes to recover from life's experiences. She displayed a mature attitude toward her life, which made her appear wise beyond her years.

A follow-up interview was conducted with Beth in the same location as a member check to verify findings from the initial interview. Beth confirmed her answers and added that she has never considered dropping out and intends on graduating.

Interview summary of Beth's parent

Beth's father was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Beth's parent. When Beth's parent telephoned to express interest in participating in the study, he indicated that his schedule as a tugboat captain required him to be away from home for two weeks at a time. We then discussed the date of his scheduled return and delayed his interview until his return. On the day of his scheduled return, I followed up on the previous telephone discussion with another telephone call, which resulted in scheduling his interview for the day after his scheduled return home. Because Beth's parent worked away from home for long periods of time and in an effort to alleviate the amount of time he would be away from home, he requested the interview be conducted at his home.

Beth's parent's home was located in a rural part of Terrebonne Parish, requiring a considerable amount of travel time to access. The home was a double-wide trailer bearing a wooden ramp to the entrance. I later learned this wooden ramp was built to accommodate his ex-

wife, Beth's mother, who became handicapped during their marriage and who now resides in a nursing home since their divorce two years ago. The trailer was located on a large piece of property in an area where the homes are located far away from one another. The community in which Beth's parent and Beth lived confirms the middle income level they both indicated during their interviews.

When I arrived at his home, Beth's parent greeted me very warmly and welcomed me into his home. He had just returned from purchasing building materials to repair hurricane damage to his home, which he commented he has very limited time to make because of work. Both in his telephone calls and in person Beth's parent was very friendly and willing to consent to being interviewed. He met me at the door and led me into his well-decorated home. He then introduced me to his second wife, Beth's step-mother, who remained in the room throughout the interview. She busied herself picking up things around the kitchen while we talked and did not offer any comments or answers to any of the interview questions.

After reading and explaining the informed consent, Beth's parent expressed his agreement to the consent and signed the informed consent. I then asked him to complete the data collection sheet for parents. At times, he seemed at a loss to remember which schools Beth attended throughout her education. At one point, he had to scratch out a school, because he realized he had named the wrong one. We used the data collection sheet as a springboard to begin the interview, continuing with interview protocol as we progressed.

Throughout the interview, Beth's parent answered questions with few words. It appeared to the researcher that Beth's parent's dearth of verbosity related more to his style of communicating than to not wanting to elaborate more on his answers. Early in the interview, Beth's parent brought up Beth's mother's illness and discussed the impact it had on Beth's

school performance. According to Beth's parent, Beth's mother's deteriorating health caused Beth to be uninterested in school. Beth's parent also spoke of how difficult this time was for his family, but stopped short of detailing any specific events. Beth's parent seemed to become emotional when the topic of Beth's mother came up. I sensed his resistance to an in-depth exploration of this topic and, as such, our interview focused mainly on the information he was comfortable discussing.

Beth's father was the sole provider for his family during Beth's retention years. His occupation as a tugboat captain allowed him to have a steady income, something his earlier career as a fisherman did not provide, but it also required him to be away from home for long periods of time. As a result, Beth's parent seemed disconnected from all of his children, and Beth in particular. Therefore, he possessed only limited insight on the degree to which being retained in school affected Beth. This fact, along with the fact that his family was distracted with his ex-wife's illness, may have contributed to his unawareness of the how deeply being retained in school affected Beth.

A follow-up interview was conducted with Beth's parent by telephone three weeks after the first interview as a member check to verify interview responses. Beth's parent confirmed findings from the first interview and did not add or change any of his original answers.

Categories regarding Beth

Categories about how Beth experienced being retained in the seventh grade emerged from Beth's and Beth's parent's interviews and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Categories from Beth and Beth's parent's interview

Beth Categories	
apathetic about school	new friendship not as close
average abilities	next year tried harder
brother GED, brother graduated	no effect on friendships
C student	no strict parenting
career in cosmetology	no thoughts of dropping out
depressed after retention	not giving up on diploma
distracted about mother's illness	parents disappointed about retention
education important	parents divorced, father remarried
father disconnected	realized messed up
father emotional about ex-wife's illness	regrets so distracted about mothers illness
father GED/mother quit	responsible for retention
father works away from home	retained because of grades
feels older	retention hard on friendships
felt wasn't stupid	retention is hard
few in family graduate	retention sucked
gave up	same thing all over again
learned to try harder	sets attainable goals

(table cont.)

left behind	tries not to get hopes up
loss of best friend rough	upset about retention
low self-esteem	visits mother in nursing home
medical career	wasted year
middle class income	would leave room crying
mother illness affected family	wouldn't see some friends
mother illness hard on her	year behind in school
needed help from teachers	year older than peers
needed more support from father	

Donna

Interview summary of Donna

Like all of the student interviews, Donna's interview was conducted in an available office of the guidance area on Vo-Tech's campus. When I called Donna to the office to conduct her interview, she expressed her interest in finally telling her side of the story about her fourth grade retention. Because she was 18 years old, I read and explained to her the adult student consent form, which she signed prior to beginning the interview. I asked Donna to complete the data collection form for students, which she gladly did. Upon her completion of the data form, we began her interview.

Donna only briefly mentioned an illness she suffered from since elementary school and instead, related that her failure to pass the LEAP test was the main reason why she failed fourth grade. During her fourth grade year, Donna relayed a year laden with a string of substitutes who did not attempt to teach the class anything, but instead spent the day reading books to the

students. Because Donna was not taught the material and therefore unprepared for the test, was the reason she felt was unsuccessful in passing the LEAP test.

According to Donna, her emotional response to being retained was very intense. She used words like “sad,” “embarrassed” and “ashamed.” Donna also related that she was very upset about losing her friends because of the retention. Additionally, she acknowledged experiencing being teased by the other students, because she had to repeat fourth grade. Donna went so far as to state that because she is a year behind in school and should have graduated last year, she thinks every day about having been retained.

The year Donna repeated the fourth grade she became involved in an after-school tutoring program, which helped her improve academically. Her school performance has continually been satisfactory, and she is scheduled to graduate from high school in May. Donna is very optimistic about her future and states she wants much out of life. She feels confident in her abilities and her ability to achieve her goals.

A follow-up interview was conducted with Donna two weeks following her initial interview as a member check to verify information from the initial interview. Donna confirmed her original answers and added only that she has not considered dropping out of school, because she does not want to be like her sister who dropped out to have children. She wants a high school diploma. This information was the only data added to the original interview, and no answers were changed.

Interview summary of Donna's parent

Donna's mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Donna's parent. After being scheduled on three different occasions, Donna's parent met the researcher and was interviewed. When Donna's parent first contacted me to schedule the interview, she

indicated she lived too far away to travel to Vo-Tech's campus to be interviewed, so arrangements were made to have the interview conducted at her home. Donna's parent's home is located at the northern part of Terrebonne Parish, while the Vo-Tech's campus is located closer to the southern end of Terrebonne Parish. Consequently, I agreed to travel to Donna's parent's home for the interview, which was scheduled for a date and time which accommodated Donna's parent's work schedule.

On the morning of our first scheduled appointment, Donna's parent telephoned to inform me that she would be unable to keep our scheduled appointment because "something had come up." We rescheduled her appointment for another date. For our second scheduled interview, upon arrival at her home, I was informed by the neighbors that she was not at home and had left her residence just prior to my arrival. When we spoke following this incident, Donna's parent apologized and stated that something had "just that minute come up," causing her to leave before I arrived. Desperate to secure the interview, I offered a \$20 gift card to Wal-Mart for her time to be interviewed. She agreed to schedule a third interview. When I arrived for the third scheduled interview, Donna's parent was away from the home, and I was instead greeted by Donna's sister, who informed me that Donna's parent was dropping off her granddaughter at nursery school. Donna's sister then ushered me into the living room and talked with me until Donna's parent returned home.

While waiting for Donna's parent to arrive, I looked around and made note that the home was rather small to accommodate the large number of people whom I later learned resided there. The neighborhood where Donna's parent's home was located is a newly-developed subdivision for low-income families. The homes were small and located very close together in an attempt to provide numerous houses on a small tract of land and confirmed the low-income household

reported by Donna's parent. Because the houses were newly built, I understood why Donna herself felt she resided in a middle class income household. Despite the small size, the inside of Donna's parent's home was neat and nicely decorated. Donna's sister kept me company while she worked on a computer in the kitchen area until her mother returned from dropping off her granddaughter. During our chat, I learned from Donna's sister that she is currently pregnant for her second child.

Donna's parent arrived for the interview and apologized for being late. She immediately sat in the living room to signal she was ready for the interview to begin. Donna's parent struck me as being nervous, as she constantly shook her leg while she spoke. Numerous times throughout the interview she expressed how she was always running here and there for herself, her children, her neighbors and her friends. Since Donna was 18 years old, she would later sign her own consent to the study; therefore, I read through and explained the informed consent for Donna's parent to sign, which she readily agreed to do. I then had her complete the data collection sheet for parents before we began the interview.

Despite her hurried personality, Donna's parent proved to be very soft spoken. She used expressions and phrased sentences in a way that proved unusual to me. Some of her answers to the research questions indicated she was unclear as to what I was asking; therefore, during the follow-up interview, the questions were posed differently in order to glean appropriate responses. The answers Donna's parent's provided to the interview questions were brief.

According to Donna's parent, Donna repeated only one grade, the fourth grade, because of an illness which has plagued Donna throughout her school years. Donna's parent depicted years of going to the hospital and not knowing what was wrong with her daughter and described Donna's illness vaguely as stomach problems. I sensed she truly did not understand what was

wrong with Donna, as she stated the doctors are still running tests as of the date of the interview, but that Donna is better than she had been previously. Donna’s parent felt Donna was relatively unaffected by repeating the fourth grade, and the experience caused her to be a better student. She described Donna as a good girl and a good student who is going to get somewhere in her life.

Donna’s parent works as a caregiver at an assisted living home for the elderly. She brought up the subject of spirituality on more than one occasion. Donna’s parent utilized a firm parenting style that incorporated a clear set of expectations and consequences that were enforced when expectations were not met. She used this style to raise her three girls on her own.

A follow-up telephone interview was conducted with Donna’s parent two weeks after her initial interview as a member check to verify findings from the original interview. Donna’s parent clarified her answers from her initial interview in that she felt that Donna was unaffected by her fourth grade retention and also that the retention did not affect Donna’s friendships. All other interview responses were confirmed as stated during the initial interview.

Categories regarding Donna

Categories about how Donna experienced being retained in the fourth grade emerged from Donna’s and Donna’s parent’s interview and are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Categories from Donna and Donna’s parent’s interview

Donna Categories	
accepts her life	math is weakness
after school tutoring helped	medical career
ashamed	missed too many days

(table cont.)

assertive	mom says stick together
behavior problem last year	mom upset about retention
boosted herself up	mother talked about retention with her
calls stepfather "daddy"	needed more tutoring
can do anything	needed slower pace
cried about retention	no thoughts of dropping out
did not learn	not too sad about retention
divorced dad when baby	one more year of school
encouraged by mom	poor communication from school
failed eighth grade LEAP test	raised by single parent
failed Exit exam	repeated fourth grade
family knows not dummy	retained because LEAP
family sticks together	retention was positive
fear not going to graduate	sad about retention
feelings of failure return at times	sees father now
felt everyone was looking	separated from friends
felt left behind by cousin	setback
few friends	some things are too hard
firm parenting style	step-father not living with family
good grades now	still asked about failing fourth grade
happy when passed	strong spirituality
honor roll student	studied harder

(table cont.)

illness interfered retention year	substitutes all year
illness throughout school years	summer school eighth grade helped
involved mother	teased by peers
lack of studying retention year	thinks she is a dummy
lesson learned	wants a lot out of life
lives with mom and sisters	will make something of herself
low income household	won awards
made up work when sick	working mom

Donovan

Interview summary of Donovan

Donovan's interview was conducted in a small office located on Vo-Tech's campus. Donovan proved to have the small stature his mother described and could easily have passed for a student two years younger than his stated age. After he signed the child assent sheet and completed the data collection sheet for students, we began his interview. Donovan's interview proved the most challenging of all the research participants. Despite the fact that the research questions were open ended, his responses consisted of few words. My attempts to get him to elaborate were fruitless. He kept glancing toward the tape recorder throughout the interview, which makes me believe the audio recording aspect of the process made him uneasy and could possibly explain his reluctance to further elaborate on his responses to my questions.

According to Donovan, the reason he repeated third grade was he was "not strong" enough. He expressed his disagreement with his mother's decision to voluntarily hold him back in the third grade and his subsequent anger about her decision. Donovan felt his friendships

were not affected by this retention. In the eighth grade, however, Donovan felt he was retained because he did not care about his school work. He admitted to sleeping in class and not caring, which caused him to fail the eighth grade LEAP test. Despite the fact that he admitted his responsibility for the retention, he was angry about having to repeat eighth grade. For Donovan's second turn in the eighth grade, he and his mother moved to a different school district because of his parents' divorce. Despite the fact that he had to attend a different school, Donovan stated that his friendships were not affected by the eighth grade retention.

Donovan believes the retentions have helped him do better in school. He also stated that he prefers where he is living now, because of the hunting and fishing opportunities in the area. Upon graduation from high school, Donovan plans to join the army and work as a diesel mechanic. He also expressed confidence in his abilities in general and his ability to achieve the goals he sets for himself. According to Donovan, he has never thought about dropping out of school.

Donovan's follow-up interview was conducted in the same location two weeks after his initial interview. In Donovan's follow-up interview, he spoke about being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) in the third grade and credited the accommodations he now receives with helping him be more successful in school. He feels that he is a loner and prefers to do things by himself. Other than these additions, the other responses to the interview questions were neither changed nor amended.

Interview summary of Donovan's parent

Donovan's mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Donovan's parent. Donovan's parent's interview occurred in the second grade classroom of the school in which she is employed. Her occupation as a teacher helped to add a significant

perspective to the subject of retention, not only as it related to Donovan, but to the students she has taught, as well. Donovan's parent's classroom was cleverly decorated with many educational prompts that represented the many subjects that she taught. Rows of small student desks were flanked by computers located along the sides of the classroom. A teacher's desk was located in the back left corner, alongside a table surrounded by many chairs. The interview was scheduled for the end of the school day. When I walked into her classroom, Donovan's parent was waiting for me with a smile and directed me to the table in the back of the classroom where we sat and proceeded with the interview process.

As with the other interviews, I read and explained the informed consents for both Donovan's parent and Donovan to participate in the study. After she signed both consents and the data collection sheet for parents, we began the interview. Throughout the interview, Donovan's parent's responses to the interview questions were quite lengthy. She seemed very at ease with speaking to me about Donovan's retention experience and made an effort to fully explain her answers in detail. Donovan's parent spoke very clearly and intelligently and did not struggle with what she wanted to say.

Donovan's parent voluntarily chose to have him repeat the third grade, because she felt that he was not prepared enough to proceed to the fourth grade. She was concerned about Donovan's academic ability to pass the fourth grade LEAP test; therefore, she made the decision to voluntarily hold Donovan back in an effort to protect him from failing on his own. Since Donovan subsequently failed the eighth grade and is currently two years behind in grade level, Donovan's parent now regrets the decision she made to hold him back. She articulated perfectly how she struggles with parenting a child who is 17 years old and in the ninth grade. She articulated well her dilemma with whether to treat Donovan according to his age (17 years old)

or his grade level (ninth grade). She encounters problems with both scenarios and has not resolved how to handle the dilemma.

Donovan's parent had Donovan evaluated after it was decided he would repeat the third grade. It was at this time she learned that Donovan has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). She also decided to refuse medication and instead have him retained in school, which she felt would better help him. Donovan's parent described Donovan as becoming withdrawn the year he had to repeat third grade. She further noted that Donovan was bothered by the fact that he had to make new friends. She further believes the retention may have fostered Donovan's attitude that he is inferior to his peers, since it was around the same time that he began becoming easily frustrated, not only with school responsibilities, but with everything he attempted to do. He constantly complained to her that he could not do things and sought her help in simple tasks.

By the seventh grade, Donovan started not even attempting to do schoolwork. He passed the seventh grade, but failed the eighth grade. Donovan's parent was furious that he did not even try. It was also around this time that Donovan's parents divorced. As a result of the divorce, Donovan had to repeat eighth grade at a school different than the one he was previously attending. Donovan's parent believes that this move was a turning point for him. Because he has a small build, he fit in with the eighth graders at the new school, despite the fact that he was two years older than his peers. Donovan's parent indicated that Donovan was on severe restrictions for a long time following his deliberate failure in the eighth grade. Donovan made new friends and improved his school performance. He is currently involved in high school sports and seems to be engaged in his education.

Donovan's parent is concerned about the fact that later this year Donovan will be 18 years old and could legally drop out of school on his own. She and Donovan's father have

discussed this possibility and fear that if things get tough for Donovan, he will quit. Donovan's parent will not discuss this as an option with Donovan and wants him to stay in school until he gets a high school diploma, regardless of the length of time involved in achieving this goal. The realization that it may not happen weighs heavily on her.

A follow-up interview was conducted with Donovan's parent three weeks following her initial interview as a member check. Donovan's parent confirmed the findings of our first interview and did not add or change her answers to the interview questions.

Categories regarding Donovan

Categories about how Donovan experienced being retained in the third and eighth grades emerged from Donovan's and Donovan's parent's interviews and are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Categories from Donovan and Donovan's parent's interview

Donovan Categories	
504	lost soul
ADD diagnosis third grade	mad about retention
angry about eighth grade retention	made new friends
apathetic about school	motivated by sports
army future goal	never considered dropping out of school
attended a different school after second retention	no consequences after third grade retention
behavior problem in school	no effort in eighth grade
bored retention years	older than friends
can achieve things	parent chose retentions vs. fail on his own
concerned parent	parent dilemma, grade level vs. age

(table cont.)

consequences after eighth grade retention	parent regrets third grade retention
did not agree with parent about first retention	parents divorced
did not want retentions	positive teacher repeat eighth grade
drop out possibility this year	quiet, loner
easily frustrated	receives accommodations
family business	retained LEAP/grades
fear will drop out	retained third grade. was not strong enough
feels he stands out	retention fostered idea can not do it
feels helpless	retention not fun
feels like a failure	sad, withdrawn
gives up without trying	same teachers third grade
happy with friends	sibling fights
held back by mother third grade	size fits grade
high self esteem	slept in class, didn't care
huge heart	started thinking differently after retention
indifferent about divorce	talks about college
left behind	Unemotional
likes to hunt and fish	wasn't hard to switch schools
lives with both parents	without retention maybe sooner goals

James

Interview summary of James

James' interview was conducted on Vo-Tech's campus in the available office in the guidance department. James' cooperative personality was evident the minute he walked into the office for the interview. When he received the flyer about the study, he made sure to contact his mother, with whom he is not currently living, to express how much he wanted to be in the study and to make sure she contacted me so that he could be included. Since James was 18 years old, the informed consent for adult students was explained to him and submitted for his signature. He then completed the data collection sheet for students that we used to begin our interview before proceeding to the interview protocol.

James had the unique experience of being retained three times, something he seemed willing to talk about. His responses were always well-mannered and respectful. Of the four boys interviewed, James appeared to be the most forthright about the experience of retention. Before he was able to compose himself, he admitted to being sad and actually crying when he first found out he was going to be retained. James felt his sixth grade and his seventh grade retentions were the result of his poor class behavior. He described his poor behavior as clowning, which he later defined as making jokes in class and disrupting the teacher while she was trying to teach. James talked about being influenced to misbehave by his friends who were also acting inappropriately in class. By acting in this way, James was not focusing on schoolwork and, ultimately, did not receive passing scores in his subjects.

The effect of James' first retention on his friendships was mitigated by the fact that after the retention he moved out of the parish with his mother, who wanted a fresh start upon her release from prison. In an effort not to stick out as being a year older than his sixth grade

classmates, James deliberately acted younger so his peers would not realize his age. By the time James got to the seventh grade, he began engaging in severely delinquent behavior like fighting with others boys in the street. He admitted to ignoring his mother's rules and staying out after curfew. When the realization came that he was in danger of repeating a grade again, James made a conscious decision to change his behavior, but it was too late.

Throughout his period of bad behavior, James was continually mentored by his older brother, who kept calling him from out of state in an effort to alter James's self-destructive behavior. James was also mentored by his school principal, who tutored him after school during the year he had to repeat seventh grade. The influences of these two individuals helped James improve his behavior both at school and at home.

James' mother made the decision to relocate to Terrebonne Parish the summer before his ninth grade year. This move again affected his school performance. James felt uncomfortable asking for help in classes. His timidity, however, James felt, was only partially the reason behind him failing his ninth grade year. James admitted that the situation was further exacerbated by the fact that he was working late night hours to provide support to his aunt with whom he was living at the time. He sometimes came to class tired and slept instead of completing schoolwork. James claims to be involved in sports now, and because he wants to stay eligible, his grades have improved.

James' follow-up interview was conducted two weeks after his initial interview when he confirmed and validated his previous answers provided as a member check. James did add in his follow-up interview that he has no intention of dropping out of school and wants a diploma, not a GED.

Interview summary of James' parent

James' mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as James' parent. After being rescheduled three times, James' parent's interview occurred. When James' parent phoned me to express interest in participating in the study, she indicated that she did not have transportation to travel to Vo-Tech's campus. As a result, we scheduled her interview to take place in her home. When I called to confirm our interview the morning of our first scheduled interview, she indicated that she was not feeling well and asked to have the interview rescheduled for another date. On the morning of our second scheduled interview, I arrived at her home to learn that she had to leave to run an errand. Her fiancée answered the door and instructed me to call back later that afternoon to speak with her. In an effort to offer her an incentive to keep the scheduled appointment, I offered a \$20 gift card to Wal-Mart in return for her time. The third scheduled interview attempt was then successful.

James' parent lived in a very upscale neighborhood in Terrebonne Parish. The home she lived in was stylishly built and decorated inside. I later learned that she was not the homeowner, but rather was living with her son and his wife. This explained the discrepancy between her reported low income household status and the home in which she resided. James' parent's fiancée again met me at the door and ushered me inside. He brought me to a table in the kitchen and excused himself in order to inform James' parent I had arrived. James' parent walked into the room with her two-year-old son, who was present throughout the interview.

James' parent sat with me at the kitchen table to complete the informed consent and data collection sheet. As James was 18, he would later sign his own consent to participate in the study. James' parent struggled to remember the schools James attended in elementary school. She kept saying she had a hard time remembering the specifics because it was so long ago.

James' parent indicated that James did not currently live with her, but rather lived with her aunt on the east side of town. When they moved to Houma, three years ago, James wanted to live with his aunt in order to attend school with his cousins, a living arrangement with which she agreed. After the forms were completed, we began our interview.

James' parent's two-year-old son danced around the room during the interview and, at times, we spoke with him in an attempt to pacify him and minimize the disturbance he was causing. James' parent's fiancée came in at one time to announce he was leaving and shook my hand as he left. James' parent's son walked into the room at one point also to comment about James, but then walked right out. Despite the interruptions, James' parent answered all interview questions and cooperated fully with the interview. James' parent spoke clearly and confidently. There were times her responses came out as disorganized, but her meaning was clear.

According to James's parent, he repeated the sixth grade, because his maternal grandmother, his guardian at the time, felt he had been inattentive and had not learned anything. Afraid he would progress unprepared for the seventh grade, James' maternal grandmother wanted him to repeat the sixth grade, a decision supported by James' parent. Attempts to discern why James was living with his maternal grandmother were not made known during this interview, as these questions were evaded by James' parent. It was interesting to note that James' parent indicated that he had no problems with conduct in school; however, during other parts of the interview, she indicated he was a victim of peer pressure and was acting out with his friends. His second turn in sixth grade was accomplished at an out-of-town school, because at this point in time, James, his brothers and his sister were relocated by their mother to another city in Louisiana.

James repeated the sixth grade and then, at the end of the following year, learned he would have to repeat the seventh grade. Following the second retention, James's parent declared that he was teased so badly by his peers it caused him to get into fights and write threatening letters, something James' parent was called into school to address. Eventually, the family moved to Terrebonne Parish, where they have been living ever since. James is doing much better in school and appears to be improving in his academic performance. James' parent describes James as a loner and someone who is hard to read. His behavior started changing when he began working. Having a job seemed to help James become more responsible. While James has never mentioned any thoughts about dropping out of school, James' parent is quite surprised that he has not done so.

James' parent's follow-up interview was conducted in the same place two weeks following the initial interview. James' parent confirmed her responses from the initial interview and did not change answers or add any information to the study.

Categories regarding James

Categories about how James experienced being retained in the sixth, seventh and ninth grades emerged from James' and James' parent's interviews and are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Categories from James' and James' parent's interview

James Categories	
accepts responsibility	not mad left behind
acted younger to fool peers	loner
afraid to ask for help because teased	many abilities
afraid to look dumb	mentors, brother, principal

(table cont.)

anger and sadness about retention	mom in jail, lived with grandmother
artist	more respectful since retention
attention getting behavior	mother has GED
avoidance behavior ninth grade	motivated by sports
behavior affected grades	moved out of parish
being older hard feeling	not living with mother
blames friends influence	no negative experiences
blames job influence	older than peers
clowning in class	positive life change
cried, but sucked it up	positive reaction to retention
currently lives with eight people	peer pressure
delinquent behavior	possesses positive traits
distant relationship with father	quiet
encouraged by mentors	retained for grades affected by behavior
failing caught his attention	retained students are teased
father unconnected	school should stop teasing
felt he messed up	support in the neighborhood
fighter	teased by peers about retention
fights with peers about retention	thought about dropping out
friendships intact	three retentions
head down clue to teacher	unpredictable behavior
ignoring teasing is hard	

Jennifer

Interview summary of Jennifer

Jennifer's interview occurred in the vacant office located in the guidance office at Vo-Tech. Because Jennifer's mother has not proved a stable influence in her life, Jennifer has always lived with her grandmother, who had guardianship over her until she reached the age of 18. When Jennifer received the flyer about the study, she and her grandmother expressed interest in becoming participants in the study. Since Jennifer's grandmother held a significant role in Jennifer's life at the time of the retention and can effectively speak as to how Jennifer experienced being retained, Jennifer's grandmother was included in the study and will hereinafter be referred to as Jennifer's parent.

Like several other students who participated in the study, Jennifer appeared very motivated to discuss her experiences with retention; she repeated the seventh grade. Because Jennifer was 18 years old, the adult student consent form was read and explained to her that she readily signed to be included in the study. After completing the data collection sheet for students, Jennifer's interview began.

Throughout Jennifer's interview, she responded with very thoughtful and heartfelt responses. She at times cried when speaking of her experiences both in her personal life and with repeating a grade in school. Jennifer grew up and continues to live in one of the lowest socioeconomic neighborhoods in Terrebonne Parish. Violence and drugs are a daily event for her as she struggles to rise above her surroundings. Jennifer expressed her feeling that her poor academic performance in the seventh grade was caused by her failure to receive the support from home that she required in order to succeed. According to Jennifer, when she lived with her mother, her mother would leave home for long periods of time. During this period, Jennifer's

parent raised her and her brothers and was simply unable, because of age and the amount of children in the home, to provide the support to Jennifer which Jennifer felt she needed to succeed academically.

When Jennifer found out about her retention, she described her feelings as being sad and ashamed. The sadness she felt was heard in her voice as she explained that her cousins, with whom she had been attending school until seventh grade, went forward to the next grade, while Jennifer was left behind. As Jennifer stated, some of her friends passed to the next grade forgot about her. When speaking of how she should be graduating with those friends this year, it was evident that Jennifer is still affected by feelings of abandonment. Despite these setbacks, Jennifer did succeed in creating new friendships the year she had to repeat seventh grade.

Jennifer's teacher the second year she was in seventh grade proved to be the inspiration she needed to not only improve her school performance, but also to motivate her to rise above the low socioeconomic neighborhood in which she lived. Jennifer's teacher told her she could achieve her dreams if she worked hard, a credo which she has adopted for herself since that year. Unfortunately, when Jennifer looks around her impoverished neighborhood, she lacks a role model who can illustrate to her the economic gains attainable with a high school diploma. At times, it even appeared she felt guilty for wanting more out of her life than her current surrounding. Her responses with regard to this issue were laden with comments about her feeling that she is "different" (in that she would succeed where others in her neighborhood had not) to comments about not being "different" (so as not to appear like she thought she was better than those in her neighborhood). I was struck by her inner turmoil to continue to strive to overcome her circumstances. Jennifer's responses indicated that while she heavily identified with her environment, because it was part of who she was, there was a bigger part of her that

wanted a life that was different than what she experienced growing up. She realized it would take a lot of effort to have a life that was not the same as her family and friends.

Despite her retention and the struggles of her environment, Jennifer has improved her performance in school. She started focusing on her schoolwork and has successfully brought up her grades. Jennifer is now in high school and works part-time as a sitter in a nursing home. Repeating a grade in school caused Jennifer to be stronger, and she expects to graduate next year. Her long term goal is to go to college and have a career in cosmetology.

Jennifer's follow-up interview was conducted in the same location two weeks after her initial interview. Jennifer confirmed her answers from our initial interview. The only things she added to her initial interview was that she admitted that she has considered dropping out of school as an option for her because of the adversity she has had to overcome; however, she is at the time of this writing still committed to graduating from high school.

Interview summary of Jennifer's parent

Jennifer's grandmother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Jennifer's parent. Because of the close proximity to her home, Jennifer's parent readily agreed to travel to Vo-Tech's campus to be interviewed. Her interview was conducted in the same office used for the students in the study in Vo-Tech's guidance office. When she arrived for her interview, Jennifer's parent reaffirmed her willingness to be interviewed because of Jennifer's insistence that she be included in the study. The interview began following the explanation and signature of the informed consent and completion of the data collection sheet for parents.

Throughout her interview, Jennifer's parent's responses would often jump from topic to topic with no apparent reason for the jump. These rambling responses often resulted in disconnected and disorganized responses. For example, a question not answered at the

beginning of the interview might be addressed in response to a totally different question. Because of this, the interview shifted from topic to topic and did not flow in an orderly manner. At times, Jennifer's parent would digress to speak about topics unrelated to the interview and had to be refocused. Despite this pattern, Jennifer's parent's lively personality caused the interview to proceed at a quick pace.

Jennifer's parent felt that Jennifer did poorly in school because of the environment in which she was raised. As Jennifer had done in her interview, Jennifer's parent described a neighborhood filled with drugs and violence that was not conducive to and supportive of successful academic performance. With regard to her immediate family, Jennifer's uncles are incarcerated for drugs, and no one in Jennifer's immediate family has graduated from high school. Jennifer's parent stated that when she found out she had to repeat the seventh grade, Jennifer cried and was embarrassed. Additionally, the teasing from her peers caused Jennifer to question her self-worth. At this point, Jennifer began acting out at home by talking back and displaying rude and argumentative behavior toward her grandmother. Also of note, according to Jennifer's parent, was the fact that Jennifer rebelled against house rules by staying out past curfew.

During her retention year, Jennifer began to improve how she performed in school. Unlike Jennifer, many of her friends had already quit school because of either teenage pregnancy or their involvement with the neighborhood drug problem. Jennifer's parent stated, however, that despite her surroundings, Jennifer remained uninvolved in the calamities that plague her neighborhood. Jennifer's parent is proud of her school performance and looks forward to her graduating from high school one day. Being the first in her family to graduate high school is expected by Jennifer's parent to be a great achievement for both Jennifer and her family.

Jennifer’s parent feels that Jennifer will one day be a spokesman and a model for others who come from low income environments and have had to overcome adversity to become successful.

Jennifer’s parent’s follow-up interview was conducted three weeks following her initial interview to serve as a member check. All of her interview findings were confirmed and nothing was added or changed.

Categories regarding Jennifer

Categories about how Jennifer experienced being retained in the seventh grade emerged from Jennifer’s and Jennifer’s parent’s interviews and are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Categories from Jennifer’s and Jennifer’s parent’s interview

Jennifer Categories	
all we know is neighborhood	low income
anger	made new friends
apathetic about school	mean, rebelled at home
ashamed	more parental involvement
can achieve	need more home support
could motivate others	no one behind her
cried, embarrassed	no one graduated in family
difficult neighborhood	not involved with drugs
discouraged by friends	peer pressure
dreams can be reality	raised with tough love
dropouts in neighborhood	retention rough
drug environment	sad about retention

(table cont.)

embarrassing to fail	sad inside still
feels bad about herself	school wasn't for us
first hand view of drugs	shootings, fights, drugs
friends forgot her	stands out from peers
glad about retention	stays focused
going to college	stronger
good person	supposed to be graduating
had to get over it	teacher mentor
had to help herself	teased by peers
improved school performance	temper tantrums
inner beauty emphasized	thoughts of dropping out
inspired to set high goals	trying to survive
isolated herself	uninterested mother
it was rough but she is better	wants a career
left behind by friends	wants an education
looks to future	wants to graduate

Jerrod

Interview summary of Jerrod

Jerrod's motivation for wanting to be included in the study, he later told me, was because he wanted people to know how much better he has performed in school since being retained in the third grade. Jerrod's retention experience proved very positive for him, and he saw this study as an opportunity to express that fact. Jerrod's interview began following the procedural reading

and signing of the informed consent for adult students, as Jerrod is over 18 years old, and the data collection sheet for students. His interview occurred in the small office located in the guidance area on Vo-Tech's campus.

According to Jerrod, at the end of his third grade year, Jerrod's reading comprehension proved to be poor. His parents were then called to school to meet with his teacher. At this time, his teacher recommended that Jerrod repeat the third grade, despite the fact that he had successfully completed his academic course work. Jerrod stated that he and his parents discussed the teacher's recommendation, and it was agreed by all that he would repeat the third grade. The following year when Jerrod repeated the third grade, his parents hired a tutor to help him a couple days a week. Additionally, at this point, Jerrod makes note that his mother began bringing him to the library to get books to read. Jerrod described a process in which the whole atmosphere of his family shifted, and they became much closer. All of the previously mentioned interventions were seen by Jerrod as positive occurrences and provided not only academic support for Jerrod, but emotional support, as well.

Jerrod's brother, who was a year younger than him, shared his friendships, thereby easing Jerrod's transition while repeating his third grade year. To this day, Jerrod notes that both he and his brother have the same friends. Jerrod did, however, mention that he feels like he is the oldest one in the group. In the seventh grade, Jerrod's family relocated to a more rural part of the parish, a move that made Jerrod very happy. Unlike other kids his age, Jerrod spoke of a very close relationship with his parents and stated that he spends most of his time with his family. At the time of this study, Jerrod was a high school senior scheduled to graduate in May of 2009. He stated, also, that his brother will be graduating with him at that time.

Jerrod's follow-up interview was conducted two weeks following his initial interview as a member check. Jerrod confirmed and did not change his answers from his first interview. Jerrod did add in his follow-up interview that he was able to secure a job as a helper electrician with a local electric company and plans to continue the job after he graduates. He is excited about the opportunity this job has provided and has high expectations for his future.

Interview summary of Jerrod's parent

Jerrod's mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Jerrod's parent. Jerrod's parent was the first parent to contact me to express interest in being included in the study. Despite the fact that her home is located a great distance from Vo-Tech's campus, she readily agreed to travel to Vo-Tech for the interview. When the interview began following the explaining and signing of the informed consent and data collection sheets for parents, Jerrod's parent expressed her eagerness to share what a positive experience being retained has been for Jerrod's success in school.

Because Jerrod's parent dropped out of school in the ninth grade, Jerrod's achievement in school was perceived as a very important event. According to Jerrod's parent, once informed of Jerrod's reading comprehension problem, she immediately looked for ways to help him improve in school. Concomitantly, as Jerrod indicated in his interview, Jerrod's parent secured the services of a tutor to work with Jerrod a few days a week and began taking him to the library to help build up his reading skills. Jerrod's parent changed the whole dynamics of her family to support Jerrod and show him that his education was important.

Throughout her interview, Jerrod's parent kept commenting about Jerrod missing something in the third grade and how that was her reason for having him retained. On six different occasions throughout the interview, she said he missed something. Jerrod's parent was

unwilling to allow him to progress to the next grade fearful that he would repeat a grade in the years that followed. It seemed important for Jerrod’s parent to relay to me that her decision was in his best interests. Despite the fact that she raised her children the same way, her older son, Jerrod’s brother dropped out of school in the ninth grade and did not graduate. Jerrod does not want the life of his older brother and his older brother’s example seems to have reinforced Jerrod’s desire to stay in school and graduate.

A follow-up interview was conducted with Jerrod’s parent two weeks following her initial interview by phone as a member check. Jerrod’s parent confirmed her answers and did not add or change her responses from her first interview.

Categories regarding Jerrod

Categories about how Jerrod experienced being retained in the third grade emerged from Jerrod’s and Jerrod’s parent’s interviews and are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Categories from Jerrod’s and Jerrod’s parent’s interview

Jerrod Categories	
always oldest in group	moved in seventh grade
another year of school	never said it bothered him to repeat
brother in grade behind him	no behavior problems in school
chooses to stay with his family	no problems since retention
connected family	not surprised about retention
could have passed to next grade	older brother did not graduate
did not want commitment with girlfriend	parents didn't graduate
didn't let retention affect him	parents hired a tutor to help

(table cont.)

doesn't follow crowd	positive communication in family
doesn't want his brother's life	reading class at school helped
empowered with retention decision	reading comprehension low in third grade
fear for success in future grades	realized he should have asked for help
fear of failing fourth grade LEAP	repeated third grade
friendships okay	should have asked for help
grades improved after retention	spends most of time with family
happy when moved	third grade too fast, couldn't catch on
has no best friends	wants to be a good person
have same friends as younger brother	was shy and afraid to ask for help
is older than other kids	works as a lineman
missed something in third grade	

Lisa

Interview summary of Lisa

Lisa's interview took place in the small office located on Vo-Tech's campus. Lisa was very eager to discuss her experiences about being retained, which added much depth to her interview. Lisa spoke quite candidly about how she felt about school, her family, herself and what it was like for her to experience being retained not only once, but twice. The cadence of her interview was very similar to her mother's cadence. Lisa spoke quickly and answered the questions confidently. She smiled often during the interview and appeared to be pleased to have the opportunity to discuss what it was like to be retained.

Prior to the interview, Lisa commented about how happy she was to finally talk about her retention. Lisa signed the child assent form and completed the data collection sheet for students. We began the interview by discussing the answers and information she provided in the data collection sheet and then moved to questions from the student interview protocol. At the beginning of the interview, Lisa revealed that the home in which she currently resides with her mother and step-father is not located in the school district of the school she was attending. Lisa did not appear to be as concerned to reveal this information as her mother was, but I assured her that her answers were confidential.

According to Lisa, she repeated the seventh grade, because she missed too many days of school. Because Lisa did not want to go to school, she feigned illness to her mother who allowed her to stay home. Lisa further acknowledged that throughout her education her mother would allow her to miss school and would not push Lisa to go to school. Lisa failed the eighth grade, because she did not pass the LEAP test. She could have been promoted if she would have gone to summer school, but she chose not to do so, a decision she now regrets. Each time Lisa found out she was going to be retained, she cried. Her responses indicated that she felt unintelligent and flawed because she had to repeat both the seventh and eighth grades.

Lisa's acknowledged that her friendships were affected significantly by her first retention. As she stated, all of her friends went on to eighth grade at the junior high school, and she was left behind to stay at the middle school to repeat seventh grade. Her second year in seventh grade, according to Lisa, provided her with a general ennui by having to repeat the same materials with the same teachers as before. Lisa did, however, make note that she was able to create new friendships with the younger students during her second year in seventh grade.

Lisa's friendships were not affected by her second retention, because, unlike her first retention, all of her friends remained on the same campus despite being promoted to a grade above her. She was teased, however, by other students who were aware that she was repeating eighth grade. Lisa reacted to the teasing by not volunteering answers in class and asking herself if she really was stupid like she was being called by her peers. After the second retention, Lisa said she began thinking about how much longer she was going to be in school. This train of thought eventually led her to think about dropping out, because she felt she could not stay in school forever. Lisa's second retention proved to be a turning point for her, however, as she started working to improve her school performance and at the time of this study was making better grades.

Additionally, at the time of her first retention, Lisa commented that her parents were getting divorced. She described her father as a hopeless alcoholic, who was absent both emotionally and physically from the rest of the family. Lisa described her parents' marriage as being filled with nightly fights over the alcoholism and money. From Lisa's point of view, she was eventually successful in persuading her mother to end the marriage. Accordingly, Lisa states she was much happier after the divorce, since she felt her mother was much happier. Lisa commented that she does indeed feel that she has a close relationship with her step-father and is happy to live with him and her mother in her step-grandmother's home.

Lisa's follow-up interview took place three weeks later in the same location for purposes of member checking. Lisa confirmed all of her answers from her initial interview and did not add or change any of her answers.

Interview summary of Lisa's parent

Lisa's mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Lisa's parent. During initial telephone contact with Lisa's parent, she indicated she was caring for her mother-in-law, who required constant care. When the suggestion was made that the interview could be conducted in her home, she readily agreed. Therefore, the interview was scheduled around her mother-in-law's visit from home health. I traveled to Lisa parent's home, which was located very near my home. Upon my arrival at her home, I received a warm welcome and noted that the home was kept in a very neat and orderly manner. Lisa parent had recently painted Lisa's room and insisted that I see it. Lisa's room reflected the taste of a teenage girl, which made me think her mother allowed Lisa to choose the decorative style. This fact was confirmed upon questioning Lisa's parent. While conducting the interview, we sat at a bar in the kitchen and were interrupted only once when her telephone rang. The recorder was turned off for her conversation and then turned back on after she ended her telephone call. Before we began the interview, I read through and explained the informed consents, which she signed for herself and for Lisa agreeing to their participation in the study. Lisa's parent then completed the data collection sheet for parents.

Throughout the interview, Lisa's parent proved very eager to participate and spoke freely about her perceptions regarding Lisa's experiences because of retention. On occasion, Lisa's parent mouthed comments that she seemed unsure about being recorded, despite the fact that I assured her that her answers would be confidential. The pace of Lisa's parent's speech was very fast. She communicated a lot of her conversations with Lisa word-for-word. She did not use formal speech and instead spoke in disorganized phrases. She displayed a very energetic personality and seemed very emotional about some topics. While she appeared to have a lot of

insight into how Lisa experienced being retained, she did admit that sometimes Lisa does not share everything with her.

From Lisa's parent's point of view it seems that Lisa repeated the seventh grade because she missed too many days of school. The school principal told Lisa's parent that her absences would be excused only if she could provide doctor's excuses for some of the days. Lisa's parent attempted to do this, but she could not secure the required number of excuses. Lisa was upset about the retention, because she was not able to participate in the graduation ceremony that would have marked the end of her years in middle school. Additionally, Lisa's parent was not aware of Lisa's friendships being affected by the retention. As far as Lisa's parent was aware, Lisa was friends with the students in the grade behind her. Lisa's parent also admitted that the year Lisa was retained was the same year she Lisa's father divorced, and, at the time, she was very distracted by the divorce.

With regard to Lisa's second retention, Lisa's parent feels it could have been avoided if Lisa had chosen to go to summer school. Lisa's parent insisted that it was Lisa who refused to attend summer school and, therefore, Lisa's parent was not willing to force the issue. As a result, Lisa had to repeat the eighth grade. One negative experience from Lisa's retentions, according to Lisa's parent, is that Lisa began referring to herself using the word "stupid." Additionally, Lisa's parent noticed that despite the fact that she studied for a test, Lisa would become so anxious about the test that she would fail. Although Lisa's parent admitted to calling Lisa stupid, she did relate that she was very upset when she learned about Lisa's boyfriend calling Lisa stupid. Of interesting note was the fact that Lisa's parent used the word "stupid" a total of 16 times throughout her interview. The numerous times "stupid" was used throughout the interview suggested it was a commonly used word perhaps appearing in her everyday speech.

A follow-up phone interview was conducted with Lisa’s parent three weeks following the initial interview where initial interview findings were confirmed, and no information was added or answers changed.

Categories regarding Lisa

Categories about how Lisa experienced being retained in the seventh and eighth grades emerged from Lisa’s and Lisa’s parent’s interviews and are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Categories from Lisa’s and Lisa’s parent’s interview

Lisa Categories	
accepts responsibility for retention	likes high school
alcoholic father	living out of school district
angry about first retention	low self-esteem about abilities
another year in school	low self-worth
apathetic about school	medical previous career goals
assertive	missed seventh grade graduation with friends
attends school regularly now	mom disapproves career choice
calls herself an idiot	mother warned her about first retention
calls herself stupid	needed more parental involvement
close relationship with boyfriend	never liked school
conflict with teacher	not prepared for next grade
cried about retentions	older than peers
described as moody	outspoken
disengaged in class	parents divorced

(table cont.)

embarrassed about father	permissive parenting style
experience of poor parenting	positive relationship with stepfather
father GED	refused summer school eighth grade
fear of failure despite preparation	retained for absences first time
felt degraded	retained for LEAP second time
feels stupid	retention helped and hurt
friendships affected	sadness about friends
future career plans changed to hairstylist	same teachers
immature	same work repeat year
improved school performance	sticks out
increased years in school	stuck in a rut
indifference about second retention	teased by peers
lack of parental support	thoughts of dropping out
left behind	unprepared to go to next grade

Sam

Interview summary of Sam

Sam's interview took place in the vacant office in the guidance area on Vo-Tech's campus. Sam's parent signed the informed consent allowing his participation in the study during her interview, which was conducted prior to Sam's interview. When I met with Sam, he was read the child assent form, which he agreed to execute. He then completed the student data collection sheet, after which time we began his interview.

While Sam wanted to share his experiences with being retained, he presented an indifferent demeanor throughout the interview. When he spoke about his school experiences, his answers were matter-of-fact and unemotional. His views of why he was retained and his school experiences were related to his personal perceptions and rarely included an outside, insightful perspective. Sam's responses about his school experience, in general, indicated he possessed an apathetic attitude toward school. This led the researcher to consider the possibility that Sam had never really engaged himself in school. Subsequently, Sam revealed that ever since repeating the first grade, he never really cared about doing well in school, thereby confirming the researcher's thought on this subject. Sam's apathetic attitude toward school was reinforced by his parents' failure to demand that he attend school and failure to emphasize education as important.

Sam's second and third retentions occurred in the fourth and eighth grade, because he did not pass the LEAP test. Sam felt he did not pass the fourth and eighth grade LEAP tests, because his teachers did not like him. He claimed he would ask for help from his teachers, but they would not come to his aid. In fourth grade, he felt that the pace of instruction was too fast for him to keep up. When he repeated fourth grade, he felt he did much better because he had already practiced the material the first year. By the time Sam was in seventh grade, he was classified as a 504 student and began receiving accommodations. The accommodations served to improve his grades; however, he was not able to pass the eighth grade.

Although Sam admitted he could have tried harder, he also admitted he was angry when he had to repeat the fourth and eighth grades. In fourth grade, he felt like his friends were passing him by, and he had been left behind. By the time he was retained for the third time in eighth grade, Sam really felt the three year age difference between himself and his classmates. By this time, Sam was ready to drop out of school. Sam also revealed during the course of the

interview that he had a history of behavior problems in school and was suspended quite often for fighting and disrupting classroom instruction.

After Sam repeated the eighth grade, Sam's parent signed for permission for him to be involved in the Option III program in Terrebonne Parish. In an effort to prevent students from dropping out of school, the Option III program allows students to work on skills to obtain a GED instead of a high school diploma. The program targets overage students who are considering dropping out of school, instead of earning the Carnegie units needed for a high school diploma. The two year program focuses on helping students work on skills needed to pass the GED, so they would exit high school with at least an equivalency diploma. Part of Option III is also that students must attend Vo-Tech and work on a skill for half of their school day. In an effort to boost students' self-esteem, the grade level of students in Option III is changed to reflect the grade they should be in according to their chronological age.

Sam stated he felt much better about school when he entered the Option III program. He was finally able to be on a campus with students his same age. He further stated that at the time of the study he enjoys taking welding class and looks forward to graduating with his GED in two years. Sam also hopes that he can attend college one day. Despite these high aspirations, Sam thinks about being retained every day, because he resents the additional years of school that retention has added.

Sam's follow-up interview was conducted three weeks after his initial interview as member checking. Unfortunately, since the time of our initial interview, Sam's parent signed him out of school, and Sam is now a school dropout. According to Sam's parent, she was frustrated with his suspension for violating the dress code. At 17, Sam was of legal age to be signed out of school with parent permission. Sam stated he no longer wanted to follow school

rules, and he was tired of getting into trouble. As a result, he and his parent agreed that dropping out of school was his only option.

Sam's future goals now are to attend adult education classes and obtain a job. He states that he will attempt to get a job in the lumberyard where his father currently works. Sam feels free to be away from school and looks forward to his future outside of school. All of the Sam's other answers were confirmed from his initial interview and not changed.

Interview summary of Sam's parent

Sam's mother was interviewed for this study and is hereinafter referred to as Sam's parent. When Sam's parent contacted me to be included in the study, she indicated that she did not have transportation to Vo-Tech's campus. As a result, the interview was scheduled to take place in her home. Sam's parent's home was located in a low socioeconomic neighborhood in Terrebonne Parish. The rented home that Sam lives in with his family appeared to be in disrepair like the other homes nearby. The home was located near an abandoned railroad track on a small track of land. The day I arrived for the interview, Sam's parent was experiencing plumbing problems and was having trouble getting the landlord to make repairs. Despite her frustration, Sam's parent warmly welcomed me into her home for her interview.

Sam's parent led me to the kitchen table in her home to conduct her interview. Sam's parent was provided the informed consents for herself and Sam to be included in the study. After they were read and explained to her, she signed them and began to complete the data collection sheet for parents. Sam's parent experienced trouble remembering the schools attended by Sam. She kept saying that it was so long ago; therefore, it took her some time to complete the form. As she completed the form, I looked around the room and noted that the walls were barren and the inside furnishings were cluttered with papers and household articles. Upon the completion of

the form, we began Sam's parent's interview. The interview was interrupted once, when Sam's parent received a telephone call. During the call, the tape recorder was turned off and then turned back on after she completed her call. The interview was interrupted a second time when Sam's older brother walked into the room, commented about Sam and then walked out.

Throughout her interview, Sam's parent appeared to have a hard time recalling the order of Sam's school experiences. Responses from time to time to questions were that she did not know or did not remember. Later in the interview, she would go back to a question previously asked, because she had just realized the answer. Some questions were answered clearly and confidently, when she seemed to have understood them better. There were times when she discussed Sam's fourth grade retention with facts that related to his eighth grade retention before she caught her mistake and then corrected her error. Because of this, the flow of the interview was very disconnected and at times drifted to topics unrelated to the study, causing the researcher to redirect the interview back to the question at hand.

Sam's parent started the interview by stating that Sam has had trouble with school since the first grade. For years she went to the school asking that he be evaluated, because she suspected that he had a learning disability. She was always told that he was too young to qualify. Because of his low skills, Sam's parent elected to have him repeat the first grade. It was also about this time that her parents passed away, an event about which she became very emotional. According to Sam's parent, Sam was very close to his grandparents, and she feels that he was very strongly affected by their deaths.

Sam's parent stated that when Sam failed the fourth grade because of the LEAP test, he was very upset. He wanted badly to go onto the next grade with his friends, but could not. Sam's parent felt he went through a period of depression over the retention. Throughout his

school years, Sam was described as being very obstinate about the things he was willing to put effort. For example, according to Sam's parent, when Sam did not want to go to school, he would deliberately get into a fight that would cause him to be suspended. Sam's parent stated that she tried to encourage him to do better, but her pleadings fell on deaf ears.

According to Sam's parent, he was finally diagnosed with dyslexia in the seventh grade and began receiving accommodations for his disability. Sam's parent felt his school work has improved since he began receiving accommodations following his diagnosis and wonders why the school had not been able to diagnose the problem earlier. Despite his accommodations, however, Sam failed the eighth grade LEAP test and had to attend summer school in order to consider being promoted. On his first day of summer school, Sam got into serious trouble for fighting and was asked not to return. After his second time in eighth grade, Sam's parent signed him up for the Option III program. Because of Option III, Sam's parent stated she is much more optimistic about Sam completing this program than completing the course work necessary for a high school diploma.

Sam's parent described Sam as getting discouraged very easily. When he is not successful at a task, he gets very angry, she stated. Despite this fact, however, Sam's parent feels confident that Sam has the confidence and ability to make something of himself one day. She expressed high hopes that Sam would not follow the examples of his older brother, who was expelled from school, and his older sister, who quit school when she became pregnant.

Three weeks after the initial interview, Sam's parent's follow-up interview was conducted to serve as a member check. Sam's parent informed me at her follow-up interview that she had decided to sign Sam out of school. She further stated that she was tired of having to travel to school because of Sam's discipline problems. Sam's parent confided that Sam has

wanted to drop out of school for some time, but she had refused because she was hopeful that he would finish school. After Sam's suspension for habitual dress code violations, she stated she was finished fighting with Sam about his failure to follow school rules and signed him out of school. She assured me that he has agreed to attend adult education classes and go to work. The answers Sam's parent provided from her initial interview were confirmed, and nothing else was changed or added.

Categories regarding Sam

Categories about how Sam experienced being retained in the first, fourth and eighth grades emerged from Sam's and Sam's parent's interviews and are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Categories from Sam's and Sam's parent's interview

Sam Categories	
affected by family deaths	left behind by friends
always had trouble in school	math weakness
angry friends passed him up	mother held him back in first grade
apathetic about school	needed more help from school
asked for help got none	needs more one on one help
became dropout	not evaluated until seventh grade
believes in himself	not prepared for next grade
brother expelled for fighting	oldest one in class
called stupid	option III program
could have done better	parents believe supported him
could have tried harder	parents quit school

(table cont.)

could have graduated by now	receives accommodations
depressed about fourth grade retention	repeat year same thing
diagnosed dyslexia	repeated first grade
did not want summer school	repeating grade helped a little
disturbed the teacher	school boring
dropped out of school	school is still hard for him
easily angered	sister quit because pregnant
easily discouraged	stopped caring in first grade
failed eighth grade LEAP test	succeeded when wanted to
failed fourth grade LEAP test	suspended from school
felt bad about being older	teachers did not like him
felt left behind	thinks about failing every day
fourth grade pace too fast	too young to be evaluated
gives up without trying	uncaring about eighth grade retention
got into fights	upset about fourth grade retention
grades always poor in school	wanted to quit school
has confidence	wants to get GED
improved in school	wants to go to college
kicked out of summer school	was not forced to attend school
lack of parental support	years of conflict in school

Step Two of Data Analysis

Step two of data analysis utilizing a constant comparative analysis approach integrates categories and their properties by continual comparison of categories to identify themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I accomplished step two by comparing emerging categories about each student from the student interview to emerging categories about each student from the parent interviews. Categories were integrated by analyzing and comparing each category to the other categories until themes about the student emerged which captured the retention experience in relation to the research questions posed. Emerging themes, supported by direct quotes from both members of each student/parent dyad, were identified and reported first in the findings. At times, discrepancies among themes by students and parents relating to the research questions were identified. These discrepancies are reported next in the findings by reporting the theme of the student followed by the direct quote that supported the theme, then reporting the opposing theme of the parent followed by the direct quote in support. In some student/parent dyads, themes emerged that were not equally supported by both student and parent interviews, but provided significant data that were essential to answering the research questions. These themes were also identified and reported with the direct quote that supported the theme.

As a result, for each student, integration of categories into themes followed by discrepancies between the parent/student dyad is reported as is the identification of themes from the interviews supported by only one member of the parent/student dyad.

Beth

Themes regarding Beth

Beth's retention experience was captured by twelve themes that significantly relate to the research questions posed. The 12 themes that emerged following the comparison of categories

about Beth were: (a) family issue affected retention, (b) apathy toward school, (c) negative reaction to retention, (d) another year of school, (e) feeling older than peers, (f) lack of parental support in school, (g) improved school performance, (h) low self-esteem, (i) responsible for actions, (j) needed help from the school, (k) few high school graduate role models, and (l) no thoughts of dropping out. These twelve themes are presented in Table 12. Direct quotes from Beth’s and Beth’s parent’s response to the research questions that support the themes are included in Table 12 as well.

Table 12

Themes regarding Beth

Theme	Direct Quotes
Family issue affected retention	<p>Beth: “I think that my mom being sick that kinda messed with my head a little bit ‘cause that’s whenever she really started getting sick and she got bedridden.”</p> <p>Beth’s Parent: “Uh it didn’t look like she was that much into school around that time. Her mom, her mom was sick and you know, she, I guess she didn’t have all of her attention in school.”</p>
Apathy toward school	<p>Beth: “I really didn’t care too much about school, but I probably failed because of, I wasn’t really worried about it that year.”</p> <p>Beth’s parent: “I think towards the end of the year that she just pretty much gave up.”</p>
Negative reaction to retention	<p>Beth: “It really sucked. Like it really did, . . .”</p> <p>Beth’s Parent: “She was a little upset. . . . Uh, she didn’t cry, but she was just, like a little depressed.”</p>

(table cont.)

Another year of school	Beth: “Uh, that, knowing that I could be in 11th grade right now, instead of 10th, and be graduating next year” Beth’s Parent: “She just realized that she had another year to go to school, had to repeat it.”
Feeling older than peers	Beth: “I met a lot of different people that were in the sixth grade . . .” Beth’s Parent: “Um, she knows she’s a year behind, because she’s gonna be a year older, but, like, that’s about it.”
Lack of parental support in school	Beth: “Yes, my dad could’ve talked to me when he realized that my grades were slipping. He could’ve asked me what was going on, but, like I said, my dad’s not too talkative.” Beth’s Parent: “I didn’t notice. I wasn’t around much. I was working a lot.”
Improved school performance	Beth: “It has taught me that I should really try at school so I don’t fail again.” Beth’s Parent: “Well when she went back and repeated it, there she looked into the books. You know? She really tried harder.”
Low self-esteem	Beth: “I try not to set my goals higher than I really know I can do.” Beth’s Parent: “She has a low self-esteem.”

(table cont.)

Responsible for actions	Beth: “I realized that I had to, if I didn’t do it right that time, that I would have to do it again, so I tried my best to pay attention and, you know, I passed.” Beth’s Parent: “You know, if she’d a watched what she was doing and passed, that’d be one less year you [Beth] have to go to school.”
Needed help from the school	Beth: “The only thing I could say that the school should have done, or could have done better is keeping, trying to keep me focused.” Beth’s Parent: “Sometimes she’d leave the room and go cry, you know, ‘cause her mom was sick and, you know and she passed through a hard time with all of that.”
Few high school graduate role models	Beth: “. . . I’m actually looking forward to graduating because when I do; I’m really like two people in the whole family who graduated.” Beth’s Parent: “I quit at the end of the 10th. I went to work.”
No thoughts of dropping out	Beth: “And, I mean, I have a big family, and for me to graduate, I don’t know, it’d just be important to me, ‘cause I really wanna do good in life.” Beth’s Parent: “And, uh, that’s one thing I told her, I said, you have to finish school.”

Discrepancy between Beth’s student/parent dyad

A discrepancy between a theme from Beth’s interview and a theme from Beth’s parent’s interview that related to the research questions was identified and reported. During Beth’s interview, she described the loss of a very close friendship when she had to repeat the seventh

grade that caused her to feel left behind by friends. When she spoke about her lost friendship, her sadness about her loss was displayed when she began to cry. Beth’s parent’s perception was that Beth’s friendships were not affected by her retention. The discrepancy between Beth and Beth’s parent about how Beth’s friendships were affected by being retained illustrated the lack of connectedness between Beth and Beth’s parent. Beth’s parent’s absence from the home both physically and emotionally caused him to not be aware of how much being retained affected Beth with regard to her friendships. This discrepancy between Beth’s student/parent dyad is presented in Table 13. The theme identified by Beth is presented first, supported by her direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of her parent is then reported next, along with his direct quote from the interview.

Table 13

Discrepancy between Beth’s student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
Beth	Left behind by friends	Beth: “I met this girl, “Kayla”, and we met on like the third day of school in fifth grade, and we were like best friends until I failed. . . . But whenever I went back to school, she was eighth grade, and I was in seventh grade, we quit, we quit talking, and she’s not my friend anymore. . . . Its’, it was rough. It really was. Like, I don’t even talk to her at school now.”

(table cont.)

Beth's Parent	No effect of friendships	Beth's Parent: "Uh, I don't think so [affect on friendships]. You know, she wouldn't see some friends that moved on as much, but, um, she pretty much kept her same friends, so I, I don't think it did."
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Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Beth

Themes emerged that were not equally supported by interviews of Beth and Beth's parent, but provided significant data that were essential to answering the research questions. Beth's comments about how drastically her life changed since her retention were not mirrored in her parent's interview. The negative experience of having to repeat the same thing all over again was likewise not present in Beth's parent's interview. These themes were not equally supported by both interviews as they are representative of the types of experiences about retention that Beth chose not to share with her parent. Therefore, Beth's parent's interview would not include data to support this theme. Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Beth are presented in Table 14, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 14

Themes not equally supported by interviews of Beth

Themes	Direct Quotes
Life is changed	Beth: "Cause, I mean, being, like, failing a grade isn't just having to take those subjects over. Its' like having, like, a whole year wasted of your life. . . . But I mean it's not just about school. Like, it's not just about the classes. It pretty much changes your whole life."

(table cont.)

Same thing all over again Beth: “I mean, every year of school feels long enough. But then to have to go and do it again, and I hated that.”

Donna

Themes regarding Donna

The comparison of the categories about Donna resulted in the identification of the following seven themes relative to responses to the research questions posed: (a) family issue affected retention, (b) another year of school, (c) supported by parent in school, (d) improved school performance, (e) responsible for actions, (f) resilient, (g) no thoughts of dropping out, and (h) needed help from the school. These themes are presented in Table 15, along with direct quotes from Donna and Donna’s parent.

Table 15

Themes regarding Donna

Theme	Direct Quotes
Family issue affected retention	Donna: “. . . I was in the hospital, in and out the hospital, . . .” Donna’s Parent: “Donna was sick, and she had stomach problems. So, uh, she always was out of school because of that, and that’s why Donna was kept back in the fourth grade.”

(table cont.)

Another year of school
Donna: “And its like, like you know, man, like if I would a passed fourth grade, I’d a been graduating with them and had school over with, and now I gotta sit back another year.

Donna’s Parent: “I told her, just, you know, um, it’s gonna be a set-back . . .”

Supported by parent in school
Donna: “My momma talked to me, it’s like, she, she was telling me things like don’t let that hold you back. You know? Just keep moving. You know? You know what the problem was when you failed. You know? Just keep moving. Don’t let nothing get in your way.”

Donna’s Parent: “. . . I explained things to her, and she told me that she gonna study real hard.”

Improved school performance
Donna: “You know, since I had done the work already, you know, I did good on it and I got good grades and awards for it and all the other stuff. . . . ‘cause that helped me a little bit.”

Donna’s Parent: “She went in and studied harder. She worked harder.”

Responsible for actions
Donna: “I accept it, that’s my life.”

Donna’s Parent: “And it was a lesson learned. She learned from it.”

Resilient
Donna: “To me, I feel like I can do anything, as long as I put my head into it and set goals to do it. I feel like I can do anything.”

Donna’s Parent: “Ever since she knew she was sick it’s, it’s like a kinda like on a set-back , like, and like, when we explained to her got her to understand, she kinda boosted herself up, and she got straight.”

(table cont.)

No thoughts of dropping out	Donna: “I have to pass it [exit exam]. I’m not going to be able to graduate if I don’t . . . and I don’t wanna go to GED or nothing, you know, just to get them. I’m gonna pass it.” Donna’s Parent: “. . . when she get outta school, but, she going somewhere. I don’t know which college, but whatever one she choose, I’m going.”
Needed help from the school	Donna: “They don’t give you enough time, you know, to work on it. Like you on one subject, then like the next two days, you on a whole ‘nother subject, and, it’s like, you didn’t give me time, you know, to get the learning into me and you giving us a test, and it’s like hard for us to remember all this stuff.” Donna’s Parent: “All I can say is if, like me with Donna, I see where she lacking in her grades, I wanna know why.”

Discrepancies between Donna’s student/parent dyad

Discrepancies emerged among themes relating to the research questions from Donna’s interview and Donna’s parent’s interview. Donna stated that when she learned she was retained, she reacted negatively and later felt like she was being left behind by her friends. According to Donna’s parent, however, Donna barely reacted to being retained, and her friendships were unaffected by her retention. These discrepancies illustrated that Donna and Donna’s parent had different perceptions of how Donna reacted to retention and how retention affected her friendships. Either Donna’s parent chose to report these experiences in a different way from Donna or she was unaware that Donna reacted negatively and felt left behind by her friends.

Discrepancies between Donna’s student/parent dyad are presented in Table 16. The theme identified by Donna is presented first, supported by her direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of her parent is then reported next, along with her direct quote from the interview.

Table 16

Discrepancies between Donna’s student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
Donna	Negative reaction to retention	Donna: “I cried and cried and cried.”
Donna’s Parent	Minimal reaction to retention	Donna’s Parent: “She was sad a little bit, but not that much.”
Donna	Left behind by friends	Donna: “I’m still on the fourth grade side. Everybody else on the fifth and sixth grade side.”
Donna’s Parent	No effect on friends	Donna’s Parent: “No. It wasn’t different [friendships].”

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Donna

Themes about Donna were that she feels older than her peers, has low self-esteem and was teased by peers about being retained. These themes were not supported in Donna’s parent’s interview, but provided significant data essential to answering the research questions posed. These themes illustrate the types of experiences about retention that Donna’s parent would be unaware of unless Donna chose to share them with her. In this case, Donna chose to refrain from making her mother aware of the fact that she felt older than her peers, has a low self-esteem and

was teased by her peers. Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Donna are presented in Table 17 along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 17

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Donna

Themes	Direct Quotes
Feeling older than peers	Donna: “People ask me, you know, I thought you were supposed to graduate with them. I’m like, yeah, I know. I failed one grade and they ask me how old I am. I say, I’m eighteen, about to be nineteen, and they be like, you know, like, you failed a grade, and I’m like, yeah.”
Low self-esteem	Donna: “. . . got up every morning faithfully, went to summer school, failed it again. I be so ashamed. . . . Everybody lookin’ like, you know, she back in the fourth grade, and I was ashamed, ‘cause, like, I’m a dummy or something.”
Teased by peers	Donna: “Some of them would tease and be like, you know, saying the fifth graders and sixth graders going to a ceremony in the cafeteria. So, I mean, we have to, you know, it’s not for the fourth graders. And they would be like, um, ha, ha, ha, like you in the fourth grade, you can’t come, you know, stuff like that.”

Donovan

Themes regarding Donovan

In relation to the research questions posed, the comparison of categories about Donovan resulted in the identification of five themes set forth as follows: (a) not prepared for the next grade, (b) apathetic about school, (c) diagnosis of ADD, (d) positive affect on friendships, and (e) improved school performance. Themes regarding Donovan are presented in Table 18 along with direct quotes from Donovan and Donovan's parent.

Table 18

Themes regarding Donovan

Theme	Direct Quotes
Not prepared for next grade	Donovan: "I had passing grades. They just said I wasn't strong enough to go on. Donovan's Parent: ". . . he could have gone on. As a parent, I requested him to stay back, with fourth grade LEAP, they're having so much importance on them going on, I asked that he stay back in third grade."
Apathetic about school	Donovan: "No, I just really didn't do nothing. I slept all class and didn't care." Donovan's Parent: "But he didn't want to study. He didn't want to do homework. He didn't care. I don't know if he just didn't realize it could happen again . . . or I'm thinking, because he was held back once, he didn't think he'd be held back again."

(table cont.)

Diagnosis of ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder	Donovan: “After I failed third grade, that’s when my mom found out I had ADD.” Donovan’s parent: “Then, of course, we went to the doctor, that’s when we got him diagnosed with, you know, he’s ADD, whatever.”
Positive affect on Friendships	Donovan: “It didn’t [affect his friendships].” Donovan’s parent: “The friendships he’s got now are better.”
Improved School Performance	Donovan: “I don’t know. I guess I got better in school.” Donovan’s Parent: “I’d like to say he learned new skills to kinda cope with his academic problems . . . “

Discrepancies between Donovan’s student/parent dyad

Discrepancies emerged between themes relating to the responses to research questions in Donovan’s interview and in Donovan’s parent’s interview. Themes that emerged from Donovan’s interview were that he has never thought about dropping out of school and that he feels positive about his abilities. Donovan’s parent contradicted these themes with responses indicative of her belief that Donovan will consider dropping out of school and that he has low self-esteem. Donovan’s parent was very descriptive of why she believed Donovan may consider dropping out and has a low self-esteem. Her interview included many examples and descriptions of his behavior that support her beliefs. Donovan’s responses were much briefer and it appeared from these discrepancies as though he wanted to portray himself in a manner that was different than how his parent described him by stating he has never thought about dropping out of school and that he feels positive about himself and his abilities. Additionally, the lack of depth of some

of Donovan’s responses suggested Donovan lacked insight about himself and possibly he was unaware of these themes reported by his parent which resulted in him reporting them differently.

The discrepancies between Donovan’s student/parent dyad are presented in Table 19. The theme identified by Donovan is presented first, supported by his direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of his parent is then reported next, along with her direct quotes from the interview.

Table 19

Discrepancies between Donovan’s student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
Donovan	No thoughts of dropping out of school	Donovan: “I never thought about dropping out of school.”
Donovan’s Parent	Thoughts of dropping out of school	Donovan’s parent: “If things get tough for Donovan, I can see him washing his hands of it [school].”
Donovan	Positive about Abilities	Donovan: “I think I can [achieve things]
Donovan’s Parent	Low self-esteem	Donovan’s Parent: “And I think him being held back in third grade kinda fostered the idea in his head that he can’t do it like everybody else.”

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Donovan

Throughout her interview, Donovan’s parent proved much more descriptive and forthcoming about Donovan’s retentions than Donovan which accounted for the identification of themes in her interview that were not supported by Donovan’s interview. Reacting negatively to

being retained, feeling older than peers and giving up without trying were themes that emerged from Donovan’s parent’s interview not present in Donovan’s interview. Donovan neglected to disclose these themes because either he lacked the insight of his parent about his retention experience or was not comfortable disclosing these themes to me during his interview. Because these themes provided significant data essential to answering the research questions, they are included in analysis and are presented in Table 20 along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 20

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Donovan

Themes	Direct Quotes
Negative reaction to retention	Donovan’s parent: “Because Donovan’s a very outgoing kid. And, in that time, I found he was more withdrawn to himself, kinda. You know?”
Feeling older than peers	Donovan’s parent: “. . . talking about standing out as far as when he’s with his little friends that’s younger, age really isn’t a thing. But when you’re with someone who’s your age, I guess in conversation it would come up what grade you’re in, you know?”
Gives up without trying	Donovan’s parent: “But, still in the back of his head, I can’t do it. Why try? I can’t do it. You know? Why try?”

James

Themes regarding James

There were ten themes relating to the research questions that emerged from categories about James. Those 10 themes are as follows: (a) behavior affected grades, (b) minimized reaction to retention, (c) older than peers, (d) positive life change, (e) positive effect on friendships, (f) improved school performance, (g) positive description of self, (h) positive about abilities, (i) thoughts of dropping out of school, and (j) needed something from the school.

These ten themes relate significantly to the research questions posed and are presented in Table 21. Themes were supported by direct quotes from James and James' parent interviews and are included in Table 21, as well.

Table 21

Themes regarding James

Theme	Direct Quotes
Behavior affected grades	James: "I had to repeat sixth grade 'cause I failed too many classes, me clowning around in class and not doing my class work and that what gave me all Fs. That's why I failed sixth grade. I know that for a fact." James Parent: "Yeah, see, he tried to keep up with some of the classmates and that's what kinda made him have lack of attention to his own school work."
Minimized reaction to retention	James: "It was like, I was kinda mad about it, but then I thought I messed up the first time I need to go back on my mistakes and correct it." James Parent: "It didn't much really bother him. He just said, oh well, I guess I'll just do it again."

(table cont.)

Older than peers	James: "Like the way I acted, like everybody felt like I was their age. They didn't think I was older than them." James Parent: "Uh huh, but, he said, no, I'm not [going to drop out], I'm gonna graduate momma. You know how it is. He says, I don't care how old I'm gonna be."
Positive life change	James: "I learned from my mistakes." James Parent: "He's changed, like, he has his life with the family. He changed. He's more respectful. He give more help around the house, and you know, neighbors and stuff."
Positive affect on friendships	James: "I really kept all my friends, because they was, like, proud of me because I was helping their little brothers and little sisters, like, pass their classwork and all that." James Parent: "He had good friends, but, you know. As far as losing them, he eventually caught up with them."
Improved school performance	James: "Like I got like more people, like talking to me, like, helping me out with my school work and all that." James Parent: "Oh, he was more into books then, after repeating a grade, 'cause like we, can I go to the library, can I do this, can I do that, and he used to go and run off copies of stuff that was in the schoolbooks that he had trouble with in class."

(table cont.)

Positive description of self James: “I’m a fun person to get along with. . . . I’m helpful, like, I’m a person you can count on to, like; help you with stuff, like, almost like anything.”

James Parent: “Quiet. He is like an adventurer type. You know, like a lot like a small kid, he got to see, What is this for? What is that for?”

Positive about abilities James: “Like, I got a lot of abilities, and my grandma always told me, use my abilities to my business, so that’s what I’m gonna try to do in the future.”

James Parent: “He can take a thousand army toys and make an army base, all kinds of way. He will do that by himself. . . . He’s a good drawer. He’s a very good drawer.”

Thoughts of dropping out of school James: “Like, if I was thinking about it, like, I was like, I might as well drop out of school.”

James’ Parent: “He had never mentioned nothing about dropping out of school, and I was surprised, ‘cause I thought he would drop out of school.”

Needed something from the school James: “. . . and they [students] don’t understand the work, and they’ll be scared for the people to like start teasing them in class.”

James Parent: “The thing I wish would really change with kids repeating the grades is that other kids won’t tease them. . . . because when some kids get teased a lot, they can’t take it. Then they turn to suicide and all of that . . .”

Discrepancy between James' student/parent dyad

In relation to the research question posed, a discrepancy emerged between themes from James' interview and James' parent's interview. James' parent indicated that a negative experience for James following his retention was being teased by his peers for having to repeat a grade. Perhaps because he was embarrassed about being teased, James reported that he had no negative experiences from his retention. This discrepancy between James' student/parent dyad is presented in Table 22. The theme identified by James is presented first, supported by his direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of his parent is then reported next, along with her direct quote from the interview.

Table 22

Discrepancy between James' student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
James	No Negative experiences from retention	James: "I wouldn't say that nothing negative happened."
James' Parent	Teased by Peers	James' Parent: "... the kids, they teased and stuff like that. He might a had 'bout two, three fights about it. . . . he was writing like threatening letters, you know, about him beating up the guys that kept picking on him and stuff like that, where I was called into school."

Theme not equally supported by interviews regarding James

A theme that provided significant data essential to answering the research questions from James' interview was that a mentor helped improve his academic performance. This theme was not supported in James' parent's interview as she was either unaware of James being mentored or neglected to mention it during the interview. This theme not equally supported by interviews regarding James is presented in Table 23, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 23

Theme not equally supported by interviews regarding James

Themes	Direct Quotes
Mentor improved academic performance	James: "Um, the principal had called, 'cause me and the principal was like, he was one of my mentors like, he like helped me with my classwork and all of that."

Jennifer

Themes regarding Jennifer

Jennifer's retention experience was captured by 12 themes identified following a comparison of the categories regarding Jennifer that related to the research questions posed. These 12 themes are as follows: (a) family issue affected retention, (b) negative reaction to retention, (c) another year of school, (d) left behind by friends, (e) lack of parental support at home, (f) teased by peers, (g) improved school performance, (h) resilient, (i) low self-esteem, (j) few high school graduate role models, (k) no thoughts of dropping out, and (l) more parental

involvement. These twelve themes are presented in Table 24, along with direct quotes from Jennifer and Jennifer's parent that support each theme.

Table 24

Themes regarding Jennifer

Theme	Direct Quotes
Family issue affected retention	<p>Jennifer: "Um, you know what I think it was? It was that I felt like if my momma didn't care, I shouldn't have to go to school and make someone else mom care. You know, like the teacher or something."</p> <p>Jennifer's Parent: "So she got a lot a peer pressure out there on her and then I guess she got lulled by the neighborhood."</p>
Negative reaction to retention	<p>Jennifer: ". . . and I told them, no, seriously [I failed]. You know? And then I broke down crying. . . . and I was sad for about a month."</p> <p>Jennifer's Parent: "Cried. Embarrassed. [reaction to retention] She didn't want to do it."</p>
Another year of school	<p>Jennifer: "So, it's like I was, I got put back from everybody else."</p> <p>Jennifer's Parent: "I felt sorry for her, but she had to go back and do it . . ."</p>
Left behind by friends	<p>Jennifer: "Some of them forgot about me, and you know, it's kinda sad, cause I was supposed to be graduating this year."</p> <p>Jennifer's Parent: "And the kids on the bus are going to the next school and you going back to the other school, that's embarrassing."</p>

(table cont.)

Lack of parental support at home

Jennifer: "I didn't have any help behind me. I was trying to help myself. Nobody was, you know, behind me to help me. . . . my mom was always gone . . ."

Jennifer's Parent: "So Jen had a lot of problems. Her mother had problems with her boyfriends or whatever."

Teased by peers

Jennifer: "I felt real, real bad. To be honest, I did. And I was ashamed, you know . . ."

Jennifer's Parent: "They all teased her."

Improved school performance

Jennifer: "Um, things at home really didn't change, but um, I changed it because I had figured if nobody else was to help me, I had to get out there and help myself. So, you know, I started going to the library. I started reading more . . ."

Jennifer's Parent: "It made her stronger."

Resilient

Jennifer: "It's not that I'm trying to be different, but I am trying to be different, but , um, I don't wanna be like them. You know? I want an education. . . . I don't wanna just sit around all day, you know, in the neighborhood. Um, 'cause looking at it every day is like, you're never going anywhere."

Jennifer's Parent: "She's in the area, but she's not doing the things in that area. I'm proud she's not doing the things in the area."

(table cont.)

Low self-esteem Jennifer: “. . . my friends are saying, uh, you not gonna be no teacher. You know? You can’t be no teacher. You know? ‘Cause of the area where we live, you know, that’s all we know is people working like at Wal-Mart and Burger King, McDonald’s and things like that. You never know nobody that work at, you know, um, in the hospital, or you know, being a teacher or anything like that.”

Jennifer’s Parent: “I think Jen feel bad about herself. Because she put that front that she so good and she so sad inside.”

Few high school graduate role models Jennifer: “. . . like most everybody we grew up with and most everybody we know dropped out . . . I believed that, well, how I was raised, I believed that, you know, school wasn’t for us. You know?”

Jennifer’s Parent: “And out of all my kids, I ain’t never seen it [graduation]. Out of ten kids, I ain’t seen none of them graduated like normal kids graduate.”

No thoughts of dropping out Jennifer: “. . . I wanna graduate, and I wanna go to college . . . “

Jennifer’s Parent: “Jennifer’s gonna get a diploma. She’s gonna be able to go up there and graduate.”

More parental involvement Jennifer: “. . . I think the parents, you know, should put a little effort into it and the child should, too.”

Jennifer’s Parent: “I think you should talk to the parent. Need the parent and child to have a conference . . . demand the parent. If they get into trouble, they got to come with the kid.”

Discrepancies between Jennifer's student/parent dyad

There were no discrepancies between Jennifer's interview and Jennifer's parent's interview.

Theme not equally supported by interviews regarding Jennifer

A theme identified from Jennifer's interview was that a mentor improved her academic performance. This theme was not present in Jennifer's parent's interview because either she was unaware of Jennifer being mentored or neglected to mention it during her interview. Because this theme provided significant data that were essential to answering the research questions, it was included in analysis and presented in Table 25, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 25

Theme not equally supported by interviews regarding Jennifer

Themes	Direct Quotes
Mentor improved academic performance	Jennifer: "And she was saying, you know, 'cause I was at the point where I just didn't care. And she said, um, you know, this just the beginning, you know, of finish school and life or whatever. . . . if you dream it, you can become it."

Jerrod

Themes regarding Jerrod

A comparison of the categories regarding Jerrod that captured his retention experience in relation to the research questions posed resulted in the identification of nine themes, which are as

follows: (a) not prepared for next grade, (b) negative reaction to retention, (c) another year of school, (d) no effect on friendships, (e) supported by parent in school, (f) improved school performance, (g) positive description of self, (h) positive about abilities, and (i) positive aspirations. These themes are presented in Table 26 and include direct quotes from Jerrod and Jerrod’s parent.

Table 26

Themes regarding Jerrod

Theme	Direct Quotes
Not prepared for next grade	<p>Jerrod: “I wasn’t catching something like reading comprehension like the comprehension English, like I have trouble with English.</p> <p>Jerrod’s Parent: “We went for a like a meeting with the teacher she was telling us that, uh, hold him back, ‘cause to help him, ‘cause he had missed something and he could’ve probably made it into the next grade, but he wouldn’t . . . “</p>
Negative reaction to retention	<p>Jerrod: “A little bit. It was like, man! . . . but I didn’t let it affect me.</p> <p>Jerrod’s Parent: “It bothered him, ‘cause like most kids they pass. They all excited.”</p>
Another year of school	<p>Jerrod: “I gotta do another year and a whole more year in high school, and it was like, it was just one more year in school.</p> <p>Jerrod’s Parent: “. . . if we would’a let him pass and not, look, you know, held him back, I think maybe he’d had been rough for him through the years. I mean, he probably would’a quit and you know, not wanna go to school.”</p>

(table cont.)

No effect on
friendships

Jerrod: "I was always playing with him [younger brother]. He's a year younger and he had friends and all of a sudden, like we both have the same friends and we both hang out and stuff like that."

Jerrod's Parent: "He never told me that it bothered him. . . . he kept the same friends."

Supported by parent
in school

Jerrod: "It got good. We connected. . . . we got closer, like they were looking out for me more or less. It's it was pretty cool."

Jerrod's Parent: "We tried our best to show that school comes first, you know what I mean."

Improved school
performance

Jerrod: "It's like I have a better understanding of what I should've been, what I missed, so I kinda caught on, so it kinda helped me with right where I'm at now, passing all my other classes from then on."

Jerrod's Parent: "And he really, like I say, like he repeated the same grade, that's like, he ran through everything. It was like, oh, man. He was all excited because it's not like he was, like, struggling."

Positive description of
self

Jerrod: "Describe, um, outgoing, I guess, um . . . Funny, I guess . . ."

Jerrod's Parent: "Pretty much a good boy because, I mean, like, I'm not saying cause he's my son, but if you was to meet him, anybody that meet him he is polite and he's uh, like fun."

(table cont.)

Positive about abilities	Jerrod: “I have a little trouble every once and a while, I like, I struggle then I look back on it and then I catch it.” Jerrod’s Parent: “I think he feels good about himself, because, I mean if he put his mind to it, he can do anything.”
Positive aspirations	Jerrod: “Well working, hopefully, like, um a lineman, like working on the telephone poles and, it just fascinates me a little bit . . .” Jerrod’s Parent: “I think he has a real good future, ‘cause when he puts his mind to it, he’ll do it.”

Discrepancies between Jerrod’s student/parent dyad

No discrepancies between Jerrod’s interview and Jerrod’s parent’s interview were noted.

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Jerrod

In relation to the research questions, themes that emerged from Jerrod’s interview that did not emerge from Jerrod’s parent’s interview were that Jerrod felt older than his peers and that he should have asked for help. These themes were not supported by Jerrod’s parent’s interview possibly because she was unaware that Jerrod felt older and that he was afraid to ask for help. Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Jerrod are presented in Table 27, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 27

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Jerrod

Themes	Direct Quotes
Feeling older than peers	Jerrod: “Old is like that. I’m always the oldest one of the group that I always with . . . “
Should have asked for help	Jerrod: “I shoulda said something, but I didn’t. . . . I know I was like shy and like didn’t want to admit that I was having a problem.”

Lisa

Themes regarding Lisa

Comparison of the categories regarding Lisa resulted in the identification of the seven themes that captured her retention experience in relation to the research questions posed. These seven themes are as follows: (a) identified as negative reaction to retention, (b) left behind by friends, (c) lack of parental support, (d) improved school performance, (e) poor description of self, (f) low self-esteem, and (g) needed more parental support. These seven themes are presented in Table 28 and include direct quotes from Lisa and Lisa’s parent.

Table 28

Themes regarding Lisa

Theme	Direct Quotes
Negative reaction to retention	Lisa: “I cried” Lisa’s Parent: “. . . and she started crying . . . ”

(table cont.)

Left behind by friends Lisa: "I lost all my friends. They all went on, 'cause it's like fifth grade, sixth grade and seventh grade at middle school and, after that, everybody goes on. . . . Everybody goes on to junior high and left Lisa behind. . . . and I was, no more friends . . ."

Lisa's Parent: ". . . who wants to leave all your friends, the people they've known, to go to another school."

Lack of parental support Lisa: "Somebody to push me and say you gotta do better, you know, be on me, like all of the time. Sit down and do your homework . . ."

Lisa's Parent: "My mom never tried to help me. You know. I passed by the skin of my teeth . . ."

Improved school performance Lisa: "It made me smarter. It made me think about what I was doing before I did it."

Lisa's Parent: "She's better, than she was before."

Poor description of self Lisa: "I thought that those kids were right and I just was dumb.:"

Lisa's Parent: "She had called herself stupid."

Low self-esteem Lisa: "It kinda like degraded me, made me fell like I was stupid, like I didn't know anything."

Lisa's Parent: "I feel like she puts herself down, that she doesn't think that she can do anything. You know, like, like, she's feels like she's stupid. . . ."

(table cont.)

Needed more parental support	Lisa: “I think she [Lisa’s parent] would’ve [allowed Lisa to drop out]. I don’t think she would’ve pushed me, ‘cause she never did push me. She was just kinda the more, do-whatever-you-gotta do person.” Lisa’s parent: “. . . I guess she feels like I don’t really care about her, but I do.”
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Discrepancies between Lisa’s student/parent dyad

Two discrepancies emerged from the themes relating to the research questions and responses from Lisa’s interview and Lisa’s parent’s interview. In Lisa’s interview, responses indicated her apathy toward school caused her first and second retention. Lisa’s parent was unaware of this apathy. Instead, she identified the reason for both of Lisa’s retentions as Lisa not being prepared for the next grade. These discrepancies between Lisa and Lisa’s parent are indicative of how removed Lisa’s parent was from being aware of Lisa’s lack of motivation toward school. Additionally, the discrepancies could also be related to Lisa’s parent not wanting to appear to me that she encouraged Lisa’s negative attitude toward school.

Discrepancies among Lisa’s student/parent dyad are presented in Table 29. The theme identified by Lisa is presented first, supported by her direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of her parent is then reported next, along with her direct quote from the interview.

Table 29

Discrepancies between Lisa’s student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
Lisa	Apathy toward school caused first retention	Lisa: “I just didn’t feel like going to school. . . . I just, laziness, just didn’t feel like being there.”
Lisa’s Parent	Not prepared for next grade caused first retention	Lisa’s parent: “She repeated because she missed too many days of school and the teacher asked me to hold her back for reading, because she wasn’t good at reading.”
Lisa	Apathy toward school caused second retention	Lisa: “I had failed the LEAP test, and I was supposed to go to summer school, because they had that waiver that year and I didn’t go, so I got held back.”
Lisa’s Parent	Not prepared for next grade caused second retention	Lisa’s Parent: “. . . and I’m like, no, my child does not want to go on. I’m not going to make her do something she doesn’t want to do. She doesn’t feel like she’s ready. I’m not going to force her to go on.”

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Lisa

Five themes emerged from Lisa’s interview which did not emerge from Lisa’s parent’s interview, but that provided significant data essential to answering the research questions. These themes are as follows: (a) another year of school, (b) feeling older than peers, (c) same thing all over again, and (d) thoughts of dropping out of school. The disconnectedness and the lack of parental support between Lisa and Lisa’s parent are reflected by the number of themes about

Lisa’s retention experience that were not present in Lisa’s parent interview. Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Lisa are presented in Table 30, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 30

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Lisa

Themes	Direct Quotes
Another year of school	Lisa: “Um, let’s see. One more year in school, which, really stunk. . . . let’s see, that made me think even more about having to be in school even longer because of what I did.”
Feeling older than peers	Lisa: [about repeating seventh grade] “Odd. A whole bunch of younger kids . . .”
Teased by peers	Lisa: “Like, they just kinda teased and picked fun. . . . [they would say] Like girl, you stupid, or something like that.”
Same thing all over again	Lisa: “Um, it was easy ‘cause I knew everything that was going on, and it was boring because we just got through class that you knew everything about and. . . . it was the same exact thing.”
Thoughts of dropping out of school	Lisa: “Um, I thought if I kept on doing what I was doing I was gonna have to drop out of school ‘cause you can’t stay in school forever.”

Sam

Themes regarding Sam

Ten themes emerged following the comparison of categories about Sam that captured his retention experience in relation to the research questions posed. These ten themes are as follows: (a) not prepared for next grade, (b) apathetic toward school, (c) negative reaction to retention, (d) left behind by friends, (e) improved school performance, (f) gives up without trying, (g) low self-esteem, (h) thoughts of dropping out, (i) dropped out of school, and (j) needed help from the school. These ten themes are identified in Table 31. Themes were supported by direct quotes from Sam's and Sam's parent's interviews and are included in Table 31.

Table 31

Themes regarding Sam

Theme	Direct Quotes
Not prepared for next grade	Sam: "I just failed the LEAP test by like a couple of point." Sam's Parent: "He failed the fourth grade LEAP test and the eighth grade LEAP test."
Apathetic toward school	Sam: "I slept half of the time." "I put anything and put my head down." Sam's Parent: "He didn't have a care in the world."
Negative reaction to retention	Sam: "I threw it [report card] away. I told my momma I wasn't going [to summer school]." Sam's Parent: "... he was kinda like depressed, I guess."

(table cont.)

Left behind by friends	Sam: "I was mad, 'cause all my friends passed me up . . ." Sam's Parent: "'Cause all his friends were going to a higher, you know, grade and not him."
Improved school performance	Sam: "I just made better grades." Sam's Parent: "Yeah, he got, I mean that's when he got more help."
Gives up without trying	Sam: "I know I could do it. I just never did my work." Sam's Parent: "If he wanted to do it, he done it. If he didn't he didn't."
Low self-esteem	Sam: "I just can't figure out how to do most stuff." Sam's Parent: "He gets discouraged easily. He tries his best, but if he don't succeed, he gets mad."
Thoughts of dropping out	Sam: "I wanted to quit. . . . I was gonna quit this year." Sam's Parent: "He wants to quit."
Dropped out of school	Sam: "So my mom got tired of coming to school about my dress code so she signed me out." Sam's Parent: "You know, he's been after me to sign him out so I just got aggravated to the point that I just went and did it."
Needed help from the school	Sam: "If the teachers would a helped me when I asked them." Sam's Parent: "Even though they evaluated him, you know, they evaluated him, and they said no, he wasn't. But if the momma keeps asking, something's wrong. Check into it more. Do another test. In my opinion, do a different test this time."

Discrepancies between Sam's student/parent dyad

A discrepancy emerged between a theme from Sam's interview and a theme from Sam's parent's interview relative to the research questions posed. A theme from Sam's interview was that he lacked parental support in school. Sam's parent contradicted this theme by stating that she supported Sam in school. This discrepancy was related to Sam's parent wanting to appear to me to be more involved in Sam's education than she actually was. This discrepancy between Sam's student/parent dyad is presented in Table 32. The theme identified by Sam is presented first, supported by his direct quote from the interview. The opposing theme of his parent is then reported next, along with her direct quote from the interview.

Table 32

Discrepancy between Sam's student/parent dyad

Student/Parent	Themes	Direct Quotes
Sam	Lack of parental support in school	Sam: "We could stay home or go to school, whichever we wanted."
Sam's Parent	Supported by parent	Sam's parent: "Sam, all I ask is to give one hundred percent, not fifty, not eighty, give one hundred percent of you."

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Sam

Feeling older than peers, having another year of school, being teased by peers and having the same thing all over again were four themes that emerged from Sam's interview that were not equally supported by Sam's parent's interview. Sam's parent's interview lacked support for

these themes either because she was unaware of their existence with Sam or chose not to disclose them. These themes were included in analysis, because they provided data essential to answering the research questions and are presented in Table 33, along with the direct quote from the interview in support of the theme.

Table 33

Themes not equally supported by interviews regarding Sam

Themes	Direct Quotes
Feeling older than peers	Sam: "I was the oldest one on there."
Another year of school	Sam: "If I would have never got held back, I would have been graduated by now."
Teased by Peers	Sam: "He called me stupid."
Same thing all over again	Sam: "It was all the same thing." "I had the same teachers."

Step Three of Data Analysis

The third step of data analysis is to delimit the theory. The theory begins to emerge in constant comparative analysis as the themes are reduced and saturated with data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This step in analysis was accomplished by comparing the themes that emerged from each student/parent dyad to themes of the other student/parent dyads in the study. All themes for each student/parent dyad were compared including those supported by both members, discrepancies between the dyad and themes not equally supported by both members of the dyad. Discrepancies across student/parent dyads were compared and no noticeable trends emerged. The result of this comparison was the identification of themes of the study which were then organized in terms of the research questions posed to research participants. By organizing the

themes in this way, the research questions were able to be answered with responses that represented all research participants. Next, the themes of the study were further integrated and collapsed by charting the frequency of themes by research participants to identify the seven dominant themes that were representative of a majority of the research participants in the study. A majority was considered a frequency of half or greater from research participants.

In this subsection, the research questions are presented, along with a short summary of how they were answered by the participants. A table follows the summary of each research question that identifies the themes from the study that supported the answer to the research questions and the research participants who supported each theme. The subsection concludes with identification of the most dominant themes from the study.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1

For students: What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?

For parents: What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?

Of the eight students and their parents who participated in the study, the retentions of Beth, Donna and Jennifer were strongly affected by factors within their family and outside of the school setting. Beth was affected by her mother's illness; Donna was affected by her own illness; and Jennifer was affected by the socioeconomic environment in which she was raised. James' poor behavior reported by both he and his parent caused his retention, but was related to the peer pressure James felt from his peers to misbehave.

Feeling apathetic toward school influenced the retentions of four students in the study. Beth's apathy stemmed from her mother's illness distracting her so badly that she began not to

care about school. The apathy of Donovan, Lisa and Sam resulted from their lack of academic success and their experience with previous retentions, which caused them to view the challenges of school as something that met with failure, thereby making their effort meaningless. An interesting caveat to Lisa's apathy was that Lisa's apathy was not evident to her mother. Lisa's parent failed to comment or reference Lisa's apathy, which validated the disconnectedness of Lisa's parent reported by Lisa.

The apathy toward school experienced by Donovan, Lisa and Sam caused them to not be prepared academically to proceed to the next grade. This was evident by their failure to succeed with regard to the LEAP test. All three of them and their parents admitted to their failure to complete schoolwork or their lack of focus with regard to their school performance. Jerrod's lack of preparedness to proceed to the next grade was identified by his teacher and stemmed from low reading comprehension skills. After consulting with Jerrod's parents and Jerrod himself, it was determined that repeating the grade would be the best way to remedy this deficit, a decision that has benefited Jerrod in the long term.

In summary, it was concluded that adolescent students experience retention as a result of family influences, feeling apathetic toward school, lacking preparedness to pass onto the next grade and disruptive behaviors. Table 34 presents the research questions, "What are the perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?" and "What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?" The four themes that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 34. The column to the right in Table 34 lists those participants in the study who supported the themes listed with a direct quote reported previously in step two of analysis.

Table 34

What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?

What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Family issue affected retention	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent
Apathy toward school	Beth, Beth Parent, Donovan, Donovan Parent, Lisa, Sam, Sam Parent
Not prepared for next grade	Donovan, Donovan Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent, Lisa Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Behavior affected grades	James, James Parent

Research Question 2

For students: How did you react when you found out you were retained?

For parents: How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?

Seven of the eight students reacted negatively to learning they were being retained in school. Their emotions ranged from sadness to anger to embarrassment. Donovan became withdrawn following his retention, according to his parent. Even Jerrod and his parent, who were the most positive about being retained, admitted that Jerrod was troubled by the fact that he had to repeat a grade. James' reaction seemed the least extreme of the eight and is reported as minimal, although, before he was able to compose himself, he did admit that he was angry. Donna's parent seemed the least aware of how being retained in school affected Donna; her comments did not reflect the severity of Donna's reported reaction.

Based on the responses from participants, it was concluded that adolescent students react negatively to retention. Table 35 presents the research questions, “How did you react when you found out you were retained?” and “How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?” The column to the left of Table 35 identifies the themes from the study that support the answers to these research questions. The column to the right of Table 35 identifies those research participants who supported themes presented with a direct quote reported previously in step two of analysis.

Table 35

How did you react when you found out you were retained?

How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Negative reaction to retention	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donovan Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Minimized reaction	Donna Parent, James, James Parent

Research Question 3

For students: Since being retained, how is your life different?

For parents: Since being retained, how is your child’s life different?

Adding another year of school to the lives of students in the study was reported as being a concern of 10 of the 16 research participants. It is interesting to note these 10 research participants commented on the grade the student would have been in had they not been retained, which speaks to the awareness of how long these students have been in school. Feeling older

than their peers also emerged as a significant theme from 9 of the 16 research participants. These nine research participants were keenly aware of the age difference between the students in the study and their classmates. Additionally, Donovan’s life changed when, following his retention, he was identified as having ADD. The fact that he was retained caused his parents to have him evaluated, resulting in identification of his disability. Beth was the only student who commented specifically about the negative change retention made to her life when she made reference to her retention year being wasted. Jerrod and his parent were the only participants who felt the changes Jerrod’s life were positive. They both related that because of his retention, Jerrod has become a much better student.

In summary, adolescent students experience a myriad of changes to their lives following retentions. The research questions “Since being retained, how is your life different?” and “Since being retained, how is your child’s life different?” are presented in Table 36. The column to the left of Table 36 identifies the five themes that support the answers to these research questions. The column to the right of Table 36 identifies those research participants who supported themes presented with a direct quote reported in step two of data analysis.

Table 36

Since being retained, how is your life different?

Since being retained, how is your child’s life different?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Another year of school	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent, Lisa, Sam

(table cont.)

Feeling older than peers	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donovan Parent, James, James Parent, Jerrod, Lisa, Sam
Negative life change	Beth
Diagnosis of ADD	Donovan, Donovan Parent
Positive life change	James, James Parent

Research Question 4

For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?

For parents: What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child's relationships with his or her peers?

Jerrod was the only student whose friendships were not affected by being retained. Having his brother in the grade behind him resulted in Jerrod shifting his friendships to his brother and his brother's friends after his retention. This provided a support that the other students did not experience, which was, more than likely, the reason he reported no affect on his friendships. On a positive note, Donovan and James made better friendships when they had to repeat a grade. Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Lisa and Sam all suffered a loss of their friendships and actually felt left behind when their friends moved on to the next grade without them. Beth and Donna's parents proved unaware of how retention impacted their children's friendships, as they commented there was no affect.

Considering the themes identified that illustrate the impact of retention on friendships, it can be concluded that adolescent students' friendships are altered when they are retained. Additionally, some parents of students who are retained observe the impact on their child's relationship with his or her peers and others do not. Table 37 presents the research questions,

“What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?” and “What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child’s relationships with his or her friends?” The three themes that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 37. The research participants who support these three themes with a direct quote reported in step two of analysis are presented in the column to the right of Table 37.

Table 37

What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?

What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child’s relationship with his or her peers?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Left behind by friends	Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Positive effect on friendships	Donovan, Donovan Parent, James, James Parent
No effect on friendships noticed	Beth Parent, Donna Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent

Research Question 5

For students: What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?

For parents: What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?

Three of the eight student/parent dyads reported that being retained had no impact on their families, since parents were not involved in their education. Both members of Beth, Jennifer and Lisa's dyad admitted that parents were either absent, disconnected or did not emphasize education as important. As a result, parents and family were not greatly affected when these students did not do well in school and were forced to repeat a grade. Sam was the only member of his student/parent dyad to report that his parents and family were not affected by his retention. Sam's parent's perception was that she was involved in his education; however, Sam's interview, along with other comments made during Sam's parent's interview, discredited that perception. While Donovan's and James' parents were involved in their education, both of these student/parent dyads reported no impact to the family.

The only students whose families were impacted by their retentions were Jerrod and Donna. For both of these students, the increased involvement of their families following their retentions resulted in them feeling supported both emotionally and academically, thereby resulting in their improved academic performance.

In summary, the impact of retention on students' relationships with their parents and family will vary depending on students' relationship with their parents. The research questions, "What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?" and "What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?" are

presented in Table 38. Those themes from the study that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 38. The research participants who supported the themes in the left column with a direct quote previously reported in step two of data analysis are presented in the column to the right of Table 38.

Table 38

What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?

What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Lack of parental support in school	Beth, Beth Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent, Sam
Supported by parent in school	Donna, Donna Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent, Sam Parent

Research Question 6, part one

For students: What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

For parents: What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?

Donovan and Jerrod did not disclose in their interviews negative experiences attributable to being retained in school. While James expressly stated that he experienced nothing negative from his retention, James parent indicated that he experienced being teased by his peers about repeating a grade. Four other students, Donna, Lisa, Jennifer and Sam also reported being teased about the fact they were retained. The only other negative experiences reported were from Beth,

Lisa and Sam, who each stated their displeasure with having to repeat the whole year over again with the same teachers and with the same material.

To summarize the themes of all research participants, it can be concluded that being teased by peers and having to repeat the same thing over again are negative experiences adolescent students and their parents attribute to being retained. The research questions, “What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained?” and “What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?” are presented in Table 39. The column to the left to Table 39 presents those themes of the study that support the answers to these research questions. The research participants who supported themes presented in the left column are identified in the column to the right of Table 39.

Table 39

What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Teased by peers	Donna, James Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Lisa, Sam
Nothing negative	James
Same thing all over again	Beth, Lisa, Sam

Research Question 6, part two

For students: What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

For parents: What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

All 16 participants reported that the school performance of the students in the study improved after they experienced being retained. This theme is particularly interesting in light of the fact that two of the students in the study repeated a second grade and two repeated a grade for the third time. Possibly the perception that their school performance was improved could be related to the fact that school work was easier when they attempted it a second time. As Sam put it, “it gave me more practice.” Jennifer and James each reported that being mentored proved to be an additional positive experience.

Themes identified from research participants can be summarized to conclude that improved school performance and the help of mentors are positive experiences adolescent students and their parents attribute to being retained. The research questions, “What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to being retained?” and “What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?” are presented in Table 40. The column to the left of Table 40 identifies those themes of the study that support the answers to these research questions. The column to the right of Table 40 identifies those research participants who supported the themes presented in the left column with direct quotes reported previously in step two of data analysis.

Table 40

What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Improved school performance	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent, Donovan, Donovan Parent, James, James Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Mentors improved school performance	James, Jennifer

Research Question 7

For students: How would you describe yourself?

For parents: How would you describe your child?

Donovan, Sam and Lisa were described using negative connotations. Donovan and Sam were described as individuals who give up without trying. Additionally, Lisa was described as “dumb” and “stupid.” The five remaining students, Beth, Donna, James, Jennifer and Jerrod, were described in positive ways. Jerrod, James and their parents used upbeat descriptors for them like “fun,” “outgoing,” “dependable” and “good.” Beth and Donna were reported as responsible for their actions and accepted responsibility for their choices. Donna and Jennifer were also reported as being resilient to the obstacles they have had to overcome in their lives.

Based on the themes from the study, it was concluded that adolescent students who have been retained are described in both positive and negative ways. Table 41 presents the research questions, “How would you describe yourself?” and “How would you describe your child?” The themes of the study that supported the answers to these research questions are presented in the

column to the left of Table 41. The research participants who supported themes presented with direct quotes reported previously in step two of analysis are identified in the column to the right in Table 41.

Table 41

How would you describe yourself?

How would you describe your child?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Positive description of self	James, James Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent
Responsible for actions	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent
Resilient	Donna, Donna Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent
Gives up without trying	Donna Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Poor description of self	Lisa, Lisa Parent

Research Question 8

For students: How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?

For parents: What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?

Donovan and his parent were the only student/parent dyad whose answers were in disagreement to this question. Donovan described himself as having a good self-concept and feeling good about his abilities; while his parent described Donovan as having low self-esteem and not believing he can accomplish things, which is why he gives up so easily. Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Lisa and Sam all have low self-esteem, while James and Jerrod are reported as feeling positive about their abilities.

The responses of the research participants can be summarized to conclude that a majority of adolescent students who experience retention have low self-esteem. The research questions “How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?” and “What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?” are presented in Table 42. The themes of the study that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 42. Research participants who made direct quotes that support the themes in the left column are identified in the column to the right of Table 42.

Table 42

How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?

What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Low self-esteem	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donovan Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Positive about abilities	Donovan, James, James Parent, Jerrod, Jerrod Parent

Research Question 9

For students: How do you view your future outlook?

For parents: How do you view the future outlook of your child?

When considering the future, Beth and Jennifer both have few high school graduate role models to illustrate the benefits of earning a high school diploma, as reported by both members of their student/parent dyad. Despite this lack of role models, Beth and Jennifer, along with Donna and Donovan, have never considered dropping out of school. All four of them are

determined to graduate with a diploma from high school. Donovan’s parent responded differently to this question than Donovan because of her fear that Donovan will eventually get so frustrated with school that he will drop out once he becomes old enough to do so on his own. James, Lisa and Sam admitted in their interviews that they have considered dropping out of school. During his follow-up interview, it was learned that Sam actually did drop out of school. When this question was posed, Jerrod responded only with positive aspirations for his future.

When analyzing the group as a whole, those students who have no thoughts of dropping out of school or with positive aspirations, experienced being retained only once. The students who admit to having thoughts of dropping out experienced being retained more than once. As a result, the future outlook of adolescent students who have been retained can be summarized with the statement that adolescent students who were retained only once have not considered dropping out of school. Additionally, it was concluded that adolescent students who have been retained more than once have considered dropping out of school. Table 43 presents the research questions, “How do you view your future outlook?” and “How do you view the future outlook of your child?” Themes of the study that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 43. The research participants who made direct quotes that support those themes presented in the left column are identified in the right column of

Table 43

Table 43

How do you view your future outlook?

How do you view the future outlook of your child?

Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Few high school graduate role models	Beth, Beth Parent, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent

(table cont.)

No thoughts of dropping out	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent, Donovan, Jennifer, Jennifer Parent
Thoughts of dropping out	Donovan Parent, James, James Parent, Lisa, Sam, Sam Parent
Positive aspirations	Jerrod, Jerrod Parent
High school dropout	Sam, Sam Parent

Research Question 10

For students: In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

For parents: In retrospect, what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From you?

According to Donovan, there was nothing he needed which he did not receive from the school system, his family or himself. Beth, Donna, James and Sam and their parents all expressed they could have used more help from the school system. Both members of Jennifer and Lisa's student/parent dyad reported that more help from parents was needed in retrospect. Finally, Jerrod felt he should have asked for help when he started struggling in school.

Thus, it can be concluded that adolescent students who were retained needed more help from school and parents. Table 44 presents the research questions, "In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?" and "In retrospect,

what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From you?” Themes of the study that support the answers to these research questions are presented in the column to the left of Table 44. Those research participants who made direct quotes that support themes presented in the left column are identified in the column to the right of Table 44.

Table 44

In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

In retrospect, what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From you?

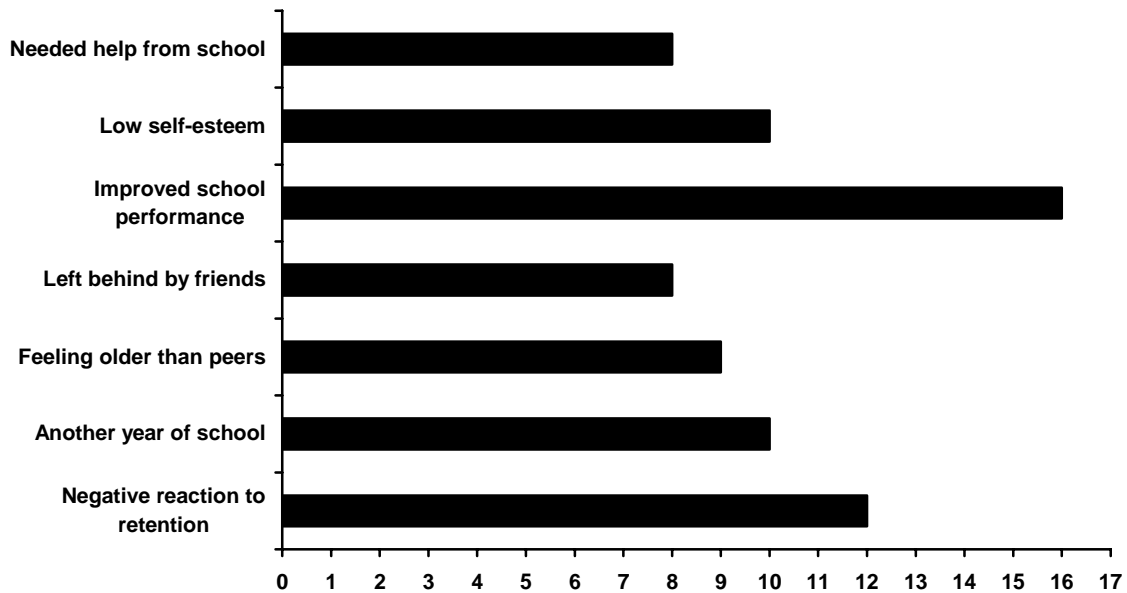
Themes	Supported by Students/Parents
Needed help from the school	Beth, Beth Parent, Donna, Donna Parent, James, James Parent, Sam, Sam Parent
Parents involved in school	Jennifer, Jennifer Parent, Lisa, Lisa Parent
Should have asked for help	Jerrod

Dominant Themes

After placing all 36 themes in a spreadsheet, each theme was then charted in order to determine the frequency it was supported by research participants. Themes that were supported by at least half of the sixteen research participants in the study were selected as the most dominant themes and are presented in Figure 1. The bar graph in figure one illustrates how many participants in the study supported the dominant seven themes of the study.

Figure 1

Frequency of Dominant Themes by Participants



The theme supported by all eight participants and their parents in the study was that students who were retained improved their school performance. Despite the fact that two students were retained twice and two students were retained three times, the perception of all participants, parents and students included, was that school performance improved following retention. Experiencing a negative reaction to retention was also a dominant theme of the study. Other dominant themes are that students who are retained feel older than their peers, have another year of school added to their required number of years and have a low self-esteem.

Step Four of Data Analysis

The fourth and final step of constant comparative analysis is the generating of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After completing all prior steps of data analysis, eleven student and parent findings about the personal reactions and experiences of retained students were identified from the answers to the research questions. Additionally, the most dominant themes of the study are reported and discussed, as well.

Findings of the Study

Based on answers to the research questions posed to students, 11 student findings of this study were identified. The student findings are as follows:

1. Adolescent students experience retention as a result of family influences, feeling apathetic toward school, a lack of preparedness to pass onto the next grade and disruptive behaviors.
2. Adolescent students react negatively to retention.
3. Adolescent students experience a myriad of changes to their lives following retention.
4. Adolescent students' friendships are altered when they are retained.
5. Adolescent students experience either no effect or a significant effect within the family following retention.
6. Being teased by peers and having to repeat the same thing over again are negative experiences adolescent students attribute to being retained.
7. Improved school performance and the help of mentors are positive experiences adolescent students attribute to being retained.
8. While adolescent students who have been retained are described both positively and negatively, a majority of them have a low self-esteem.
9. Adolescent students who were retained only once have not considered dropping out of school.
10. Adolescent students who were retained more than once have considered dropping out of school.
11. Adolescent students who were retained needed more help from school and parents.

Based on answers to the research questions posed to parents, 11 parent findings of this study were identified. The parent findings are as follows:

1. Adolescent students experience retention as a consequence of family influences, feeling apathetic toward school, a lack of preparedness to pass onto the next grade and disruptive behaviors.
2. Adolescent students react negatively to retention.
3. Adolescent students experience a myriad of changes to their lives following retention.
4. Some parents observe the impact of retention on their child's relationship with his or her peers and others do not.
5. Adolescent students experienced either no effect or a significant effect within the family when they are retained.
6. Being teased by peers is a negative experience parents of adolescent students attribute to retention.
7. Improved school performance is a positive experience that parents attribute to their child being retained.
8. While adolescent students who have been retained are described both positively and negatively, a majority of them are described by their parents as having a low self-esteem.
9. Adolescent students who were retained only once have not considered dropping out of school.
10. Adolescent students who were retained more than once have considered dropping out of school.
11. Adolescent students who were retained needed more help from school.

Summary of Dominant Themes

The most dominant theme of the study was that the school performance of adolescent students who were retained was believed by both adolescent students and parents to have increased following retention. Many of the adolescent students remarked that their retention year was easier because either they were completing the same work they had completed the year before or the second time they attempted the material, it was easier because it was more familiar to them. Another dominant theme reported by all but one of the adolescent students in the study is that when adolescent students found out they were going to be retained, they reacted negatively. Despite the fact that many of the research participants have accepted their retentions as a consequence of their poor choices, this negative reaction speaks to the perception that being retained was not initially considered a positive intervention by the research participants. Negative reactions were not only reported by the adolescent students, but also the parents as well, which is representative of how intensely it was experienced by adolescent students in the study.

Having a low self-esteem was a dominant theme that related to how adolescent students in the study felt about themselves. Both adolescent students and parents in the study made reference to the low self-esteem experienced by adolescent students following retention. Adolescent students further remarked how being retained made them doubt their self-worth, and still today affects how they feel about themselves.

The next three dominant themes were (a) having another year of school, (b) feeling older than peers and (c) feeling left behind by peers. These three themes highlight the significance of peers during adolescence as having another year of school that their peers do not stands out for adolescent students in the study, along with being older and feeling left behind. Despite the fact

that adolescents in the study made new friendships following their retentions, adolescents in the study use the students in the grade level they were retained as a point of reference when looking to the future and past. Comments related to the grade they should be in or that they should have graduated by now reflect that adolescent students in the study who reported these themes do not see themselves where they are, but where they should be with their same age peers. Being in a different place in their education than their same age peers could possibly influence the loss of self-esteem mentioned earlier. The adolescent students may have internalized that they are not good enough to be with peers who are the same age because they were retained and therefore feel badly about themselves and their abilities.

Needing help from the school was a last dominant theme noted from the study. At least half of the research participants remarked that interventions from the school could have assisted the adolescent students in the study to be more successful. While research participants do not blame the school for causing the retentions discussed, they report they did need help from the school in the form of increased motivation, more tutoring opportunities, improved communication with home, earlier identification of a learning disability, and a heightened understanding of the struggles in the home environment.

Chapter Summary

The findings of this study were discussed in this chapter utilizing a qualitative method of data analysis. The interviews of eight students and their parents were transcribed and analyzed using a constant comparative method of data analysis. In step one of the analysis, a summary of each member of the student/parent dyad was provided followed by a table of the categories that emerged from the interviews about each student. Themes about each student were identified in step two of the analysis and were presented in tables along with direct quotes from each member

of the student/parent dyad that supported the theme. Discrepancies between the dyads were next presented followed by themes that were not equally supported by both members of the student/parent dyad. The research questions were answered in step three of the analysis followed by the identification of the most dominant themes of the study. Step four presented the student and parent findings of the study along with a summary of the dominant themes.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to research the personal reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained. In keeping with Erikson's (1968, 1980) psychosocial theory of development and the significant influence that parents and/or family have on adolescent development, adolescent students who have been retained and their parents were interviewed for the study. Parent interviews were sought to corroborate data from student interviews in order to validate the research findings. Additionally, by interviewing both students and parents, the overarching research question "What are the reactions and experiences of adolescent students who have been retained in school as seen through the eyes of students and parents?" was answered from two different perspectives.

The research on grade retention consists of quantitative studies illustrating the impact of retention in the form of dropout rates, grades, socioeconomic status, suspension rates and achievement levels on standardized tests to name a few of the outcomes. While this information is meaningful, data from quantitative studies lack the depth derived from a more qualitative approach to research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This study sought a multi-dimensional picture of how adolescent students who were retained reacted to and experienced retention in order to promote awareness of its affect on adolescent students' lives. A qualitative method of investigation was warranted as adolescent students' feelings about themselves and how retention affected them personally can be better understood by talking to students and their parents.

Summary of the Procedures

Eight adolescent students and one each of their parents were interviewed for the study utilizing the interview protocol for students (see Appendix K) and parents (see Appendix L).

Additionally, data were collected from the data collection sheet for students (see Appendix I) and the data collection sheet for parents (see Appendix J). Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative analysis consistent with a grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analysis of this type began with the coding of each incident in the data. Codes were then compared to each other until the identification of categories about each student was recognized from interviews of both the student and the parent. Categories were then integrated and collapsed until themes emerged about each student that related to the research questions. Finally, themes were organized according to the research questions to determine the findings of the study which are discussed in this chapter.

Research Questions, Findings and Implications for School Counselors

Research questions were used to generate discussion from adolescents who have been retained and from their parents so that their experiences were more fully understood. Answers to the research questions by participants resulted in 11 student findings and 11 parent findings about the personal reactions and experiences of adolescent students who experienced retention. Research questions are presented in this subsection as they were posed to student and parent research participants, along with the finding that represents the responses of the 16 research participants (eight students and eight parents) to these questions. For each finding, a short discussion follows about participants' answers to the research question which includes existing research that is either supported or refuted by the findings of the study.

The results of this study are relevant to school counselors who are a resource on school campuses for students who have experienced retention or who may be at-risk of being retained. Because past studies have linked grade retention as one of the highest predictors of whether adolescent students will later drop out of school, awareness of how retention is experienced by

adolescent students can assist school counselors when developing interventions to mitigate some of the negative reactions and experiences reported by retained students in this study. As a result, implications for school counselors along with research supporting each implication are included for each research finding as well.

Research Question 1

Students' question

What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?

Students' finding

Adolescent students experience retention as a consequence of family influences, feeling apathetic toward school, a lack of preparedness to pass onto the next grade and disruptive behaviors.

Parents' question

What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?

Parents' finding

Adolescent students experience retention as a consequence of family influences, feeling apathetic toward school, a lack of preparedness to pass onto the next grade and disruptive behaviors.

Discussion

Four themes emerged from the responses of parents and students when asked why students were retained. These four themes were family influences affected retention, apathy toward school, not prepared for the next grade, and behavior affected grades. The responses from each student/parent dyad were the same with the exception of Lisa and her parent. Lisa's perception was that she experienced retention because she did not care about school. Her

apathetic approach to school caused her to not put forth the necessary effort to be successful and as a result, she had to repeat both the seventh and eighth grades. Lisa's parent's perception was that Lisa was not prepared to go onto the next grade and, as a result, repeated both the seventh and eighth grades. Accordingly, Lisa and her parent were the only student/parent dyad with a discrepancy when answering this research question.

Family issues like the illness of Beth's mother, Donna's illness and Jennifer's low socioeconomic background were not the sole reasons these adolescent students had to repeat a grade in school, but it considerably influenced their academic performance. For example, both Beth and Beth's parent reported that Beth was very distracted by her mother's quickly deteriorating health; therefore, she failed to adequately focus on her school work, resulting in an unsatisfactory academic performance. Likewise, Donna's illness resulted in her missing school which in return impacted her being unprepared for the LEAP test, as reported by both members of Donna's student/parent dyad. Because Donna failed the LEAP test, she was not promoted to the next grade. Finally, responses from Jennifer's parent/student dyad revealed the chaotic, violent and drug-infested neighborhood where Jennifer lived, coupled with feelings of abandonment by her mother, affected Jennifer's ability to remain focused on her academic course work. She became apathetic to her situation; thus she did not focus on her studies. These different family issues proved obstacles to these three adolescent students' academic success and are examples of barriers that influenced retention.

While the research is lacking on the affects of the illness of a parent or self on students' academic performance, studies have identified low socioeconomic status as a characteristic that puts students at risk for poor achievement in school (Christle et al., 2007; Suh & Suh, 2007; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). In a study conducted by Suh et al., the lack of success in school for

students from a low socioeconomic status household was related to having parents who lack an education and therefore do not support the academic achievement of their children. Accordingly, this finding of this study supports previously conducted studies by Christle et al., Suh, Suh, and Suh et al. that identify low economic status as a characteristic that puts students at risk for low academic achievement.

Both Beth and her parent reported that Beth felt apathetic toward school because her mother was seriously ill and she was unable to manage her personal crisis and schoolwork. However, Donovan, Lisa and Sam's apathy toward school was identified as a maladaptive behavior they developed following their first retention. Donovan, Lisa and Sam, along with Donovan's and Sam's parent, described how Donovan, Lisa and Sam developed a poor attitude toward school following their first retention and did not engage in schoolwork. This ultimately led these three students to a subsequent retention in the eighth grade. This finding supports research conducted by Jimerson and Kaufman (2003) that described maladaptive behaviors that are attributed to retained students. In their study that compared retained students with low-achieving promoted students, retained students were found to be less confident, to possess an apathetic attitude toward school and to not be engaged in the educational process.

In keeping with the accountability measures of NCLB (2001), at least half of the adolescent students in this study were retained because they failed the LEAP test in either the fourth or eighth grades, indicating their lack of preparedness to pass to the next grade level. This finding is similar to research conducted by Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) which stated that when achievement is not met on standardized tests, such as the LEAP, many school systems have, over the previous decade, increased the practice of retention in an attempt to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of NCLB. Consistent with Potter's (1996) description of high stakes testing

policies, the LEAP test proved to be a high stakes test for Donna, Donovan, Lisa and Sam, as they were not allowed to proceed to the next grade because of their failure to achieve the established minimum standards.

In the third grade, teachers of Donovan and Jerrod determined that their maturity and ability levels were not equivalent to their peers, which also indicated a lack of preparedness for the next grade level. Although they both passed their subjects and could have gone onto fourth grade, Donovan's and Jerrod's teachers determined that they were not on level with their peers. In an effort to better prepare them for the fourth grade LEAP test, both students' parents agreed to retain them in the third grade. While the findings do not conclusively state why, Jerrod supported his parents' decision to repeat the third grade, however, Donovan did not. Research conducted by Witmer et al. (2004) on the opinions of teachers of early grades revealed the belief that students must demonstrate certain behaviors before they should be promoted to the next grade level. Results from this study support Witmer et al.'s assertion. The teachers of both Donovan and Jerrod recommended their third grade retention as they believed the boys failed to meet the basic grade level requirements to move on to the next grade.

James' disruptive behavior caused his retentions in the sixth and seventh grades. Both he and his mother spoke of peer pressure influencing James' behavior and its negative impact on his academic performance. During James' interview, he stated that he deliberately engaged in behavior that was disruptive because of his peers. The importance of peer influence on James' school performance is supported by Lashbrook (2000), who found that peer influence in the form of peer pressure has also been attributed to how adolescents perform in school.

Implications for school counselors

According to ASCA (2005), school counselors work constructively with students, teachers, parents and administrators to help identify impediments to students' success so that a plan can be devised and implemented to remove barriers. A method to identify barriers to adolescent students' achievement like family stressors, apathy, academic deficits, disabilities and poor behavior can be utilized on school campuses in order to promote awareness of characteristics that put students at risk for low academic achievement. By being aware of the characteristics that put students at risk for poor school performance, school counselors can be proactive in their attempts to prevent retention from occurring. School counselors can then problem solve with students, teachers, administrators and parents to develop interventions to support adolescent students toward academic success that fit the school climate (ASCA).

Research Question 2

Students' question

How did you react when you found out you were retained?

Students' finding

Adolescent students react negatively to retention.

Parents' question

How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?

Parents' finding

Adolescent students react negatively to retention.

Discussion

Members from seven of the eight adolescent student/parent dyads reported that they reacted negatively to being retained. Similar findings were reported by Byrnes and Yamamoto

(2001) where elementary students reported feeling poorly about being retained. In the present study, both members of Jennifer's and Lisa's student/parent dyad admitted that Jennifer and Lisa cried upon learning they were going to repeat a grade. The reactions of Beth, Donovan and Sam were also supported equally by both members of the student/parent dyad and ranged from being upset to becoming withdrawn and angry, respectively. Jerrod and his parent did not describe a reaction to his retention, but both stated that Jerrod was bothered by the fact he would have to repeat third grade. Donna's parent's response to how Donna reacted to retention proved the only discrepancy to this question. While Donna's reported reaction to retention was "I cried and cried and cried," Donna's parent reported "She was sad a little bit, but not that much." These two different responses to the same question depict how differently Donna's reaction was perceived by her parent and herself. Only James and his parent described James' reaction as minimal. James and his parent admitted that while James was affected by being retained, he decided he would accept his situation and move forward. The reported reactions of the adolescent students in the study speak to how seriously being retained affected them.

Implication for school counselors

School counselors can help adolescent students cope with their reactions to retention by providing guidance services both individually and in groups. This suggestion is supported by Standard 4 of *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* [ASCA] (2005), which calls for school counselors to work both individually and in groups with students who have identified needs and concerns. Being retained identifies a student as having a need and concern that may be addressed by a school counselor. Reactions to retention can be supported by meeting individually or in groups with adolescent students after they have been retained to assist them in processing the negative feelings they have and to reframe retention

from a negative experience to one more positive (ASCA). Referrals to community based mental health services may also be necessary for some students who experience more severe reactions to being retained (Keys et al., 1998).

Research Question 3

Students' question

Since being retained, how is your life different?

Students' finding

Adolescent students experience a myriad of changes to their lives following retention.

Parents' question

Since being retained, how is your child's life different?

Parents' finding

Adolescent students experience a myriad of changes to their lives following retention.

Discussion

Having another year of school added to their education experience was a theme that described the change in the lives of Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Jerrod, Lisa and Sam following their retention. The theme of another year of school was also reported by Beth's parent, Donna's parent, Jennifer's parent and Jerrod's parent. The fact that 10 of the 16 research participants identified another year of school as a change makes this theme one of the more dominant themes of the study. Additionally, feeling older than peers was a theme reported by Beth, Donna, James, Jerrod, Lisa and Sam. Beth's and James' parent also reported that they believed Beth and James feel older than their peers. Donovan's parent interview suggested that Donovan feels older than his peers, however, Donovan's interview did not support this theme. This discrepancy suggests that Donovan's parent observed a change that Donovan was not aware of himself.

As described in Erikson's theory (1980), the differences of having another year of school and feeling older than peers were related to adolescent students who are retained feeling like they stick out and no longer belong to their former grade level peer group. These noted differences are also reflective of the importance peers have in the lives of not only the students in the study, but also all adolescents (Chandras, 1999; Lashbrook, 2000; Putnik et al., 2008). Statements that supported the themes of adding another year of school and feeling older than peers emphasizes the lost affiliation from their grade level peer group felt by the adolescent students in the study.

When asked to describe how her life was different, Beth went on to describe retention as not just repeating subjects she did not pass, but as changing her entire life. This negative life change expressed by Beth was probably related to her perception of retention as being a stressful event in her life and was not supported in her parent's interview. In a study by Anderson, Jimerson, and Whipple (2005), adolescents were asked to identify the top seven most stressful experiences to them and rank them in order from the most stressful to the least stressful. Grade retention was rated as the highest stressful event in life, more so than losing a parent or going blind. Beth's perception of retention being stressful in her life supports the study by Anderson, et al.

In the case of Donovan, his life changed following his first retention in the third grade, when he was diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). Donovan's teacher's determination that he was not on level with his peers prompted his parent to have him evaluated by a physician who made the diagnosis. Awareness of the disorder followed with accommodations in the classroom for Donovan and a change to his classroom environment. Beebe-Frankenberger et al. (2004) found similar results and concluded that many schools use retention as an intervention strategy prior to identifying that students have a learning disability.

Implications for school counselors

Retention can cause changes in the lives of adolescents who may lack coping skills for recovering from this significant event in their lives. The *Best of Coping Programs* is an example of a school program used by school counselors to incorporate the teaching of coping skills for environmental stressors, like retention serving not only at-risk students, but also all students on campus (Frydenberg et al., 2004). This program includes teaching adolescent students problem solving skills, how to seek out help when needed and the identification of non-productive coping skills that are counterproductive to managing a stressful event. Developing coping skills before a stressful event like retention is experienced promotes a more proactive instead of reactive approach to helping adolescents students manage the life changes experienced when they are retained.

Research Question 4

Students' question

What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?

Students finding

Adolescent students' friendships are altered when they are retained.

Parents' question

What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child's relationships with his or her peers?

Parents' finding

Some parents observed the impact of retention on their child's relationship with his or her peers and others do not.

Discussion

Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Lisa and Sam reported their friendships were negatively altered when their friends went onto the next grade because they felt left behind by them to repeat the grade. Jennifer, Lisa and Sam's parent supported this theme, while Beth's parent and Donna's parent did not notice an effect on their children's friendships. Donovan's and James' friendships were positively affected when they made what they and their parent considered productive friendships. Jerrod and his parent reported a minimal effect on his friendships; however, Jerrod's experience was unique because his brother was in the grade behind him. Jerrod's younger brother proved a support system following his retention that resulted in Jerrod adopting his brother and his brothers' friends as his new circle of peers. This finding of the study is supported by Chandras (1999) which reports that during adolescence, time spent with peers far outweighs time spent with family magnifying the importance of friendships during this stage of life. Thus, the significance of friendships explicates the feeling of being left behind reported by some of the students in the study. Whether the change was considered positive or negative, the major role that friends play in adolescents' lives is highlighted in Erikson's (1968) theory and supported by the adolescent students interviewed.

Implications for school counselors

School counselors can not only assist in the changes to friendships of adolescent students who have been retained, but also the friendships of all students on school campuses by utilizing Standard 2 of the ASCA (2005) model. This standard calls for school counselors to put into practice a comprehensive guidance curriculum designed to meet the needs of students by utilizing appropriate instructional skills and group counseling sessions. By incorporating into the guidance curriculum standards that address the acquisition of interpersonal skills, adolescent

students can be better equipped to move into and out of friendships when situations, like retention, may cause friendships to shift. Because the importance of friendships is emphasized during adolescence, this is a key issue that should be addressed on school campuses.

Research Question 5

Students' question

What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?

Students' finding

Adolescent students experienced either no effect or a significant effect within the family following retention.

Parents' question

What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?

Parents' finding

Adolescent students experienced either no effect or a significant effect within the family when they are retained.

Discussion

Six adolescent students in the study reported no effects within their family when they were retained. For four of these six students, the lack of any noticeable effect within the family stemmed from their parents not being involved in their education. Interestingly enough, Beth, Jennifer and Lisa's parent all admitted to being uninvolved in their child's education. The experiences of Beth, Jennifer, Lisa and Sam support the finding of Levy's (2001) study which showed that parents who allow too much freedom produce students who have behavior problems or who are not successful in school. All four of these students reported parenting that was either

lax or uninvolved and therefore promoted the freedom to engage or not engage in educational pursuits. Thus, all four of these students reported choosing to not engage in schoolwork when allowed the freedom to do so which resulted in their lack of success in school.

Jennifer's experience also supports the study conducted by Somers et al. (2008) which found that parents with a low socioeconomic status may not get involved in the education of adolescents, because they do not identify with the educational process. Parents themselves may feel inadequate because they lack the academic skills to assist their adolescent children with school work. Additionally, some schools do not welcome parental involvement and therefore are perceived as not inviting to parents who might otherwise consider being more involved in their adolescent child's school. Despite the fact that Jennifer's parent reported being aware of Jennifer's lack of academic success in school, she felt inadequate addressing Jennifer's educational issues with the school. Having dropped out in the ninth grade herself, Jennifer's parent did not feel welcomed by the educational process and as such, felt excluded.

On the other hand, Donna and Jerrod reported being supported by their families following their retentions. Jerrod's experience is reflected in the findings of Ochoa (2007) in that the open communications patterns described by both Jerrod and his parent worked to promote Jerrod's performance in school. By talking about the retention in a positive way, Jerrod was able to overcome the experience and work toward a more positive school experience. The findings of Garg et al. (2007) are supported by Donna's experience in that her parent's high expectations for her school achievement was a factor that caused Donna to improve her school performance following retention. Donna and her parent both spoke of how education was emphasized throughout Donna's school years, and that despite being retained, she was expected and encouraged to improve her school performance.

Implications for school counselors

One model available to school counselors developed to target at-risk students and address the lack of family involvement in adolescent students' lives is the *School and Family Integration* (SAFI) model (Bemak & Cornely, 2002). The SAFI model's main focus is to target families in an effort to assist adolescent students who are at-risk for retention. School counselors play a key role in the model by including families in developing strategies to assist these adolescent students utilizing school counselors' training in individual and group counseling. Interventions are targeted in the family and in the school to include setting goals that incorporate families into the school, instilling hope in both students and parents, redefining the composition of contemporary families for faculty and building bridges to make sure that communication between school and home is reciprocal. By synthesizing school and family interventions, school counselors incorporate the school guidance curriculum delivery system to address the personal/social domain standards of students (Bemak & Cornely).

Research Question 6

Students' question

What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

Students' finding

Being teased by peers and having to repeat the same thing over again are negative experiences adolescent students attribute to being retained.

Parents' question

What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?

Parents' finding

Being teased by peers is a negative experience parents of adolescent students attribute to retention.

Discussion

Being teased by peers was a negative experience reported by five of the eight adolescent students in the study. Five adolescent students in the study reported that their peers made fun of them because they had to remain behind in their grade level and called them names like “stupid” or “dumb.” Only two of these five adolescent students’ parents were aware that their children were being teased. According to Erikson (1968, 1980), during adolescence when self-concepts and identities are being shaped, the importance of peers increases significantly. In an attempt to protect their sense of identity, the dominant group may rebuff adolescents who stand out. The teasing experienced by the adolescent students in this study supports Erikson’s theory because they stood out from their peer group and were therefore ridiculed about the circumstances that caused them to be in that situation.

Additionally, consistent with Erikson’s (1968, 1980) postulates, Keltikangas-Jarvinen (2007) found that adolescents tended to act more aggressively when they were rejected by their peer group. This finding is supported in the study by both James and Sam who reported getting into fights with peers when they were teased about being retained. The aggression reported by these two students was a reaction to being rejected by their peers and subjected to teasing about being retained.

Having to repeat the same academic material, with the same teacher, taught in the same manner was another negative experience reported by at least three of the eight adolescent students in the study. At the schools where some students in the study had to repeat a grade

level, there was only one teacher who taught the subject in the grade level these students had to repeat. As a result, when these students were unsuccessful the first time they attempted the grade level, they found themselves right back in the same classroom to experience lessons presented in the same manner the lessons were presented the first time these students attempted the grade level. This experience proved, as they stated, to be boring for them and was therefore viewed by each as a negative experience and unsupported by their parents. This finding is not present in previous research on grade retention.

Implications for school counselors

The development and implementation of a comprehensive guidance curriculum by the school counselor according to Standard 2 of the ASCA (2005) Model could include programs that address the bullying and teasing of not only adolescent students who experience retention, but also all students that are different from their peers on all campuses. How students treat each other can be viewed as a school-wide issue needing to be addressed in order to promote a more positive school environment. Additionally, school counselors can work as advocates for students who must repeat a grade by making teachers aware of how students view the repetition of the same material year after year (ASCA).

Students' question

What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

Students' finding

Improved school performance and the help of mentors are positive experiences adolescent students attribute to being retained.

Parents' question

What are some positive experiences that you can attribute to your child being retained?

Parents' finding

Improved school performance is a positive experience that parents attribute to their child being retained.

Discussion

All eight adolescent students and their parents interviewed reported improved school performance as a positive result of being retained. When all eight students attempted grade level material for the second time, they were either more familiar with the material or approached the material with a different attitude and therefore experienced more success. This led to the perception that their school performance had improved. This finding supports a conclusion by Jimmerson et al. (2006) following a meta-analysis of 64 studies that suggested some students who were retained in school demonstrated short-term achievement gains following their retention. Retained adolescent students in 9 of the 63 studies examined demonstrated increased academic achievement the year after they were retained, however, these gains later proved to be short-lived.

An interesting caveat to the adolescent students in this study's perceptions of improved academic performance following their first retention is that two of the eight adolescent students were retained a second time, and two were retained three times. This fact validates studies conducted by Jimerson et al. (2006) and Walters and Borgers (1995) where it was found that retention appeared to benefit students the year after they were retained, but later results showed these benefits dissipated and even disappeared in subsequent years resulting in a second retention at times. Accordingly, while Lisa, James, Donovan and Sam reported their school performance improved following their retentions, they all experienced a subsequent retention and for James and Sam, a third.

Another positive experience reported by two adolescent students was the fact that they were mentored by older adults. Jennifer was mentored by her teacher and James was mentored by the principal of his school. In a study conducted by Karcher (2005), the effectiveness of developmental mentoring was examined where adolescents were paired with older students in structured activities over a two year period. While the adolescent students in this study were mentored by older adults, unlike the adolescent students in research by Karcher who were mentored by older students, the results were the same. Jennifer and James reported becoming more engaged in school and subsequently improving their academic performance. They felt more attached to the educational process and felt more inclined to exhibit the effort needed for them to be more successful in school.

Implications for school counselors

According to Karcher (2005), mentoring is based on concepts of attachment theory and works to re-engage adolescent students who have detached or disengaged from the educational process. Considering the success of this type of intervention with two adolescent students in the study, school counselors may consider incorporating strategies of mentoring into their comprehensive guidance program in order to re-engage adolescent students who have become disconnected from school due to experiences like retention.

Additionally, by consulting with teachers, parents and other school personnel, school counselors can help identify students who are not performing at grade level (Wells et al., 1999). Wells et al. found that school counselors accurately identified those students on a school campus who were at-risk and could benefit from interventions. However, identification lacking an intervention plan would be of little use for these students. Accordingly, once at-risk students are identified, interventions can be developed to improve academic skills in order to provide a

positive academic experience similar to that experienced when adolescent students repeat a grade for the second time (Wells et al.).

Research Questions 7 and 8

Students' question

How would you describe yourself? How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?

Students' finding

While adolescent students who have been retained are described both positively and negatively, a majority of them have a low self-esteem.

Parents' question

How would you describe your child? What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?

Parents' finding

While adolescent students who have been retained are described both positively and negatively, a majority of them are described by their parents as having a low self-esteem.

Discussion

Student research participants were asked to describe themselves and how they felt about themselves and their abilities. Parent research participants were asked to describe their child and how their child felt about himself or herself and his or her abilities. A majority of the adolescent students were described by their parents and themselves with positive descriptors such as “fun”, “outgoing” and “responsible.” Parent and student research participants’ comments about how students felt about themselves and their abilities pointed to low self-esteem. For example, Beth’s parent specifically stated that he felt that Beth had a low self-esteem. Jennifer’s parent conveyed in her interview that Jennifer “felt bad about herself.” Both Donovan and Sam’s parent

described their children as giving up too easily and not believing in themselves. Lisa's parent described how Lisa calls herself "stupid." The students likewise made comments about themselves that related to their feelings of low self-esteem. Beth indicated that she does not set goals too high that she knows she cannot achieve. Lisa revealed that she feels "stupid" and "dumb" because of her lack of success in school. Donna believed "she would never get it" when she kept experiencing failure on the LEAP test and reported how she felt she may never pass. Sam reported feeling angry because he felt victimized by his teachers for having to repeat a grade and wanted to drop out of school to escape the experience. Conversely, Jerrod and James described themselves positively and felt optimistic about their abilities, a finding supported by their parents.

According to Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development, high self-esteem is important for adolescents to resolve the crisis of the identity versus role confusion stage of development. In keeping with his theory, six students (Beth, Donna, Donovan, Jennifer, Lisa, Sam) in this study reported having a low self-esteem could be described as having a poor identity development following the experience of being retained. Alternatively, only two students (James, Jerrod) in the study could be described as having a positive identity development following the experience of being retained. Research conducted by Steinberg and Morris (2001) is supported by this finding which found that because academic ability is one of the many factors used by adolescents to evaluate themselves, self-esteem may be compromised during identity development if adolescents are not successful in school.

Implication for school counselors

Self-efficacy theory relates to adolescents' perceptions of their ability to accomplish tasks. The cognitive functioning of adolescents is affected by how they feel about themselves.

Students who experience failure in school are more likely to have a negative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Family systems theory considers adolescents within the context of their families and takes into account that adolescents are part of a system that can affect their self-efficacy and ultimate academic performance in school (Hall, 2003). When counseling adolescent students individually for low self-esteem, school counselors can assist adolescents in increasing their self-efficacy by including the adolescents' family as part of the therapeutic process. Despite the best of interventions designed by school counselors to increase the academic performance of adolescents, families who are not involved may fail to support programs initiated by the school to help their children. By including parents into strategies to increase adolescents' self-efficacy, school counselors can help adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention improve how they perform in school (Hall).

Research Question 9

Students' question

How do you view your future outlook?

Students' finding

Adolescent students who were retained only once have not considered dropping out of school.

Parents' question

How do you view the future outlook of your child?

Parents' finding

Adolescent students who were retained only once have not considered dropping out of school.

Student and parent finding

Adolescent students who were retained more than once have considered dropping out of school.

Discussion

With regard to the future outlook of adolescent students who have been retained once, Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Jerrod and their parent expressed they have never considered dropping out of school. It appears that despite experiencing retention at least once, these four students were still engaged in the educational process. Additionally, when Donna and Jerrod graduated from high school, they contradicted the finding of Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) that states retention increases the chances that a student will later drop out of school. Both of these students have proven resilient from a future that dropping out of school would otherwise entail.

Donovan and Lisa who were retained twice and James and Sam who were retained three times all reported considering dropping out of school. Parents of these four students all stated that they were aware that their children thought of dropping out of school. These students expressed frustration about their continued retentions and their ability to continue in the educational process. This research finding is supported by a study conducted by Jimerson et al. (2002), which determined that multiple retentions increased the likelihood of students dropping out of school by 90%. When Sam dropped out of school because he was exhausted with his lack of success in school, his experience confirmed all the research which links grade retention to students later dropping out of school (Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2002; Suh & Suh, 2007; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007).

Implication for school counselors

The future outlook for adolescents who experience multiple retentions can be addressed by school counselors utilizing Standard 3 of the ASCA Model (2005), which addresses the collaboration of school counselors with parents and guardians to assist students in their plans for future education. Including parents in helping students plan for their future is pivotal as career goals that may aim higher than parents' current occupations may not be supported without the assistance of school counselors (Hall, 2003). Because parents play a pivotal role in the psychosocial development of adolescents, devising strategies for parents that will involve them in their adolescents' education will promote adolescent students looking forward to a brighter future (ASCA).

Research Question 10

Students' question

In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

Students' finding

Adolescent students who were retained needed more help from school and parents.

Parents' question

In retrospect, what do you believe your child needed in the form of resources or support that he or she did not get from the school in order to prevent him or her from being retained? From family? From you?

Parent finding

Adolescent students who were retained needed more help from school.

Discussion

Four students in the study and their parents reported that if they would have received more help from the school, they possibly could have avoided being retained. Two students in the study reported that if they had received more help from their parents, they would have performed better in school and possibly avoided being retained. The perceptions of these adolescent students were that the school and their parents could have done a better job of identifying their needs so they would have been more successful. These students believed that their failing grades should have signaled to someone in the school or home that these students were not achieving so that appropriate measures could have been taken to investigate the reason for these students' lack of accomplishment. Because many of the students in the study lacked the skills to advocate for themselves, they could not ask for the help they needed in order to be more successful in school.

Implication for school counselors

With regard to the need for more involvement from the school cited in this research finding, the ASCA (2005) model is supported as it calls on school counselors to advocate for the academic achievement of all students and those programs and interventions that support student success. Considering the need for more involvement from parents also cited in this finding, school counselors who utilize a self-efficacy and family systems theories approach (Hall, 2003) and models like the *School and Family Integration* model (Bemak & Cornely, 2002) is supported and described in earlier implications for school counselors.

Additionally, school counselors can incorporate models like the *Collaborative Consultation Model* when working with retained students who may be at risk for dropping out of school (Keys et al., 1998). This model involves representatives of many social systems that affect many at risk youth such as education, mental health, health, social services, juvenile

justice, community organizations, churches and families. School counselors facilitate the process by bringing together the stakeholders to develop a vision to address the problem that is impeding students' academic success. Stakeholders then develop a plan to assist adolescents in their community with each member assigned a role in implementation. Progress is then monitored as all group members' work toward achievement of the established goal. This method of addressing students who are at risk for failing school and later dropping out incorporates a systems approach to dealing with adolescents by recognizing that in order to prevent many adolescents from failing I school, the environment surrounding adolescents must also be included if true change is to occur (Keys et al.).

Implications for Educators and Community Counselors

The findings of this study have systemic implications in education to include teachers, administrators and policymakers of educational policy. Awareness of how adolescents react to and experience retention is critical to understanding that retention is an educational intervention that is different from using alternative teaching strategies or interventions to help adolescent students. The results of this study have shown that retention has an adverse socio-emotional effect on many adolescent students and increases the likelihood they will drop out of school. In an effort to address the drop out issue, school counselors should collaborate routinely with teachers and administrators to devise more productive plans for student achievement.

Implications for community counselors are that issues like depression, substance abuse, aggression, and hopelessness of many adolescents are possibly related to being retained. Based on the research provided, these young adults have not graduated from high school and are more than likely the recipient of social services and public mental health services not only at the present time but also for years to come. School counselors should work collaboratively with

community based mental health agencies that provide services for adolescent students who have experienced retention (Lerner, 1998).

Implications for Counselor Educators

Findings of this study support the 2009 CACREP standards for universities to follow in educating and training school counselors because they relate to objectives used in counselor educator programs. Objectives for school counselors in training, according to the 2009 CACREP standards, are divided into subsections that include foundations, academic development, diversity and advocacy, and counseling, prevention and intervention. Each subsection is subdivided into professional knowledge objectives and skills and practices objectives.

According to CACREP (2009), knowledge objectives in the foundations subsection calls for school counselors to have an understanding of adverse affects to adolescent students' growth and development. Additionally, the counseling, prevention and intervention subsection includes an objective that school counselors know how to design and implement a program that will build students' academic and personal/social development. Adverse affects of retention on adolescent students' growth and development is demonstrated in the present study by the low self-esteem of adolescent students and, as such, are relevant to school counselors in training. Knowledge of how retention can adversely affect student development will aid school counselors in training as they develop programs to build on students' academic and personal/social development.

According to the knowledge objectives of the diversity and advocacy subsection of CACREP (2009) standards, school counselors identify those barriers that impede adolescent students' academic, career and personal/social development. Examples of some of the barriers affecting their academic success encountered by the students in the study were the family

stressors experienced by Beth, Donna and Jennifer, the learning disabilities of Donovan and Sam, the apathy of Beth, Donovan, Jennifer and Lisa and the poor behavior of James.

Awareness of the barriers encountered by students in the present study can provide counselors-in-training examples of what to be on the lookout for when attempting to identify barriers to adolescent students' academic, career and personal/social development.

When addressing the academic development subsection of the CACREP (2009) standards, school counselors-in-training must demonstrate understanding of ways to close the achievement gap, improve how students perform academically and decrease the number of school dropouts. The significant link between grade retention and students' later dropping out of school demonstrated in the research make this study relevant to school counselors-in-training. It serves as an aid in targeting the problem of school dropouts on school campuses. A specific finding of this study that adds to school counselors' knowledge about school dropouts includes that adolescent students who were retained expressed thoughts about dropping out of school, and in the case of one student, actually did drop out of school.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation to this study is the low number of students who were included. A sample size of eight students limits the ability of the researcher to generalize the findings to the general population. Because of the vast number of students who experience retention each year and the diverse and varied backgrounds from which they come, the applicability of the findings of this study are further limited. Notwithstanding, qualitative research involves a purposeful sampling of research participants to provide rich, thick data to a study (Creswell, 2008). As a result, eight students can provide the depth of data sought in a qualitative study and is an appropriate sample size (Creswell).

Additionally, the fact exists that for some of the research participants, retention occurred in the distant past and the passing of time may have distorted their memory of the event. Also, the passage of time may have mellowed or attenuated the emotional reaction that some research participants may have initially felt about the experience causing it to be reported as less intense than experienced initially. To reduce the likelihood of this limitation, parents were included into the present study in order to assist with details about students' retention experiences that students did not easily recollect or remember.

Another limitation of the study is that participants may have wanted to present themselves in a good light and, therefore, did not present to the researcher an accurate portrayal of how they experienced being retained. Because retention carries with it a stigma for some of the research participants that they still might feel today, they may have downplayed their experiences and emotions in an attempt to overcome the negative manner in which the event is internalized. Additionally, students who may have been extremely affected by retention could have possibly dropped out of school at the time students were being recruited for the study and therefore their input was not accessible. In the present study, the wide range of both positive and negative comments by research participants minimizes this limitation.

The disclosures of parents may have also been distorted somewhat in an effort to present themselves as incorporating parenting styles which they did not use. Additionally, some parents may have confused the retention of the research participants with facts or circumstances that may have occurred with other children they may have had who likewise were retained in school. The responses made by the parents in the study may have also been influenced by the researcher's role as a school counselor. This influence may have affected participants by causing them to respond in ways they believed the researcher wanted or expected them to respond. In an attempt

to offset this limitation, the style and manner of interviewing utilized by the researcher in this study put the research participants at ease to facilitate true and accurate disclosures relating to the research topic. Additionally, the researcher emphasized the anonymity of research participants in the final findings which also promoted more truthful and honest answers to the research questions by parents.

Implications for Future Research

Research participants in the present study had to overcome personal illness, illness of a parent and a low socioeconomic neighborhood in order to be successful in school. One implication for future research is to study the types of adversities students' encounter that challenge their academic ability. Knowledge of these challenges can inform school counselors about the types of barriers students must overcome in order to achieve academically in school. Additionally, it would be helpful to study those students who have adequately coped with environmental barriers to determine what factors, if any, contributed to their resiliency. Once recognized, factors that contribute to resiliency could be reproduced in the lives of other students who may lack factors that may promote resiliency to environmental stressors.

Mandatory education policies require that students spend 13 or more years of their lives attending school. As a result, the school environment and culture can have an impact on how adolescents develop as was revealed in the findings of this study where retention was found to have affected the development of adolescent students. Similar studies to this one should be conducted that specifically examine how academic interventions, like retention, affect how adolescent students develop. Because all children will spend a large amount of time in school, studies that explore how schools affect adolescent development should be conducted and added to the research literature.

Retention is an educational intervention that is very commonplace in academic settings. By helping educators and policymakers become aware of its long term affect on adolescents, more supportive ways to implement its use need to be determined so that the impact on adolescent development will be minimized. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could possibly track students who have been retained over a period of time in order to assess the long term affects that retention has on development.

Given that 50% of the eight research participants in this study were retained more than one time, future research could examine the affects of being retained on adolescent students only once as compared to being retained twice or more. For some adolescent students, the effects of retention could possibly intensify with the number of times adolescent students are retained. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine at which grade retention is the most beneficial to adolescent students' future academic success and at which grade retention proves to be the most detrimental to adolescent students' future academic success. A study that examines the critical grades during adolescent students' academic careers that retention should and should not be exercised as an intervention would certainly add to the wealth of research on retention.

The findings of this study provided many implications for school counselors to assist students on their campuses who have been retained or who may be at-risk for retention. With regard to those students who have already experienced being retained, research on programs that address the negative psychological consequences of retention would help educators realize the importance of supportive services for students who have experienced being retained in school. Furthermore, research that documents the effectiveness of proactive programs that prevent students from experiencing retention should also be conducted.

When replicating this study in future research, identifying potential research participants who have repeated a grade within the past year may promote more vivid data about what being retained in school was like for adolescent students. Also, this study revealed that in some instance parents were allowed input into the decision to retain their child. However, with regard to some statewide high stakes testing policies, parental input is not included in retention decisions. Researchers could interview parents and students at the time the retention decision is made and compare their opinions and reactions of retention decisions that are voluntary to those decisions that are involuntary. Additionally, interviews could also include teachers of the retained students which would add another dimension to the phenomenon of grade retention of adolescent students.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study involved the interviews of eight students and their parents in order to explore how they reacted and experienced being retained in school. By using a constant comparative analysis consistent with a grounded theory design, 11 findings of the study were identified and discussed. There are various reasons why the adolescent students in this study were retained. Some of the reasons identified in this study were that they could not overcome environmental barriers, they were apathetic toward school, they were not prepared for the next grade level and they were disruptive in school. Despite the reason, adolescent students reacted negatively when they were retained and experienced many changes in their lives.

While the friendships of retained adolescent students were affected by the retention, effects on family varied. Additionally, as reported in the study, adolescent students had both negative and positive experiences following retention that were reported in the study. They described themselves using both positive and negative descriptors, and reported having a low

self-esteem. Moreover, adolescent students in the study who were retained once did not consider dropping out of school, however, those who were retained more than once reported that they have considered dropping out of school. Ultimately, it was reported that adolescent students who were retained needed more help from the school and family in order to be successful in school.

Implications for school counselors are discussed as their role on school campuses is to provide assistance and support to students who are at-risk for retention and who have previously been retained. Also there are implications for counselor educators as they train future school counselors to work with this population. Limitations to the study and suggestions for future research were also discussed in this chapter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Superintendent Ed Richard requesting permission to conduct study in Terrebonne Parish School District.

Appendix B: Letter from Superintendent Ed Richard granting permission to conduct study in Terrebonne Parish School District.

Appendix C: University of New Orleans IRB Approval Letter

Appendix D: Announcement flyer to recruit students to study

Appendix E: Informed Consent for Adult Student

Appendix F: Informed Consent for Minor Student

Appendix G: Child Assent Form

Appendix H: Informed Consent for Parent

Appendix I: Student Data Collection Sheet

Appendix J: Parent Data Collection Sheet

Appendix K: Interview Protocol: Student

Appendix L: Interview Protocol: Parents

Appendix M: Oath of Confidentiality of Transcriptionist

**Appendix A: Letter to Superintendent Ed Richard requesting permission to conduct study
in Terrebonne Parish School District.**

Jessica Robertson Fournier

LPC-S, LMFT, NCC, NCSC

xxx xxxxxxxx Way

xxxxx, LA xxxxx

Email: xxxxxxxx@xxx.edu

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

November 3, 2008

Terrebonne Parish School Board
201 Stadium Drive
Houma, LA 70360
Attn: Superintendent Ed Richard

Re: Approval for Dissertation Study

Dear Superintendent Richard:

As you already know, I am pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of New Orleans. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Louis V. Paradise in the College of Education at the University of New Orleans. As part of my dissertation study, I propose to conduct interviews of students who have been retained in grade. Since the Vocational Technical High School draws from all four high schools in the parish, I hope to recruit eight students from that campus to be part of my study. The study would involve taped interviews of students who have been retained and their parents. I feel certain that this study will not pose any unusual risk to these participants. I am hopeful that the results of this study will benefit our parish and possibly our state about the effects of retention on students. The confidentiality of students' identities will be protected throughout the study and will not be disclosed in the findings.

Many of the students on that campus are already 18 years old and would be able to sign their own consent forms. In the event students are under the age of 18, I will contact and have their parents sign an informed consent on their behalf. Since I would also like to include the perspective of parents, I will have them sign a consent form as well. I have attached for your review the consent forms that I will have students and parents complete.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your approval to conduct this study in Terrebonne Parish, specifically on the Vocational Technical High School campus. As I will need your approval in writing, I would respectfully request you respond in that manner. Please also find enclosed a letter from the principal of the Vocational Technical High School, Mr. Marcel Fournier, allowing me permission to conduct my study on his campus. I thank you in advance for your help in this endeavor and look forward to hearing from you soon on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jessica Robertson Fournier, MED, LPC-S, LMFT, NCC, NCSC
Doctoral Student at the University of New Orleans

Enclosures

Appendix B: Letter from Superintendent Ed Richard granting permission to conduct study in Terrebonne Parish School District.

HAYES BADEAUX, JR.
PRESIDENT

ED RICHARD, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT

GREGORY HARDING
VICE-PRESIDENT



TERREBONNE PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

201 Stadium Drive/Houma, Louisiana 70360
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District 6

ROGER DALE DEHART
District 7

DONALD DUPLANTIS
District 8

HAYES BADEAUX, JR.
District 9

November 4, 2008

Mrs. Jessica Robertson Fournier
137 Wimberly Way
Houma, LA 70360

RE: APPROVAL FOR DISSERTATION STUDY

Dear Mrs. Fournier:

You have my approval to conduct your dissertation study in Terrebonne Parish at the Vocational-Technical High School campus. Please understand that I expect you to follow any and all guidelines established by the principal.

I appreciate your professional attitude in making this a successful experience.

Sincerely,

Ed Richard, Jr., Superintendent
Terrebonne Parish School Board

ERjr/rlb

c: Mr. Marcel Fournier

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Appendix C: University of New Orleans IRB Approval Letter

**University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans**

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Louis Paradise
Co-Investigators: Jessica Fournier

Date: December 16, 2008

Protocol Title: "A qualitative study of the impact of grade retention on adolescent students"

IRB#: 11Dec08

Your proposal was reviewed by the full IRB. The proposal is considered to be minimal risk. The group voted to approve your proposal. Your project is now in compliance with UNO and Federal regulations and you may begin recruiting participants and conducting your research.

Please remember that approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best of luck with your project!
Sincerely,

Robert Laird, Ph.D., Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix D: Announcement flyer to recruit students to study

Dear Student:

I need your help in a research study about students who have been retained. Students who have been retained are also referred to as having failed a grade, flunked a grade or held back in grade..

My name is Jessica Fournier. I am a school counselor at Houma Junior High School. I am also a student at the University of New Orleans in New Orleans, Louisiana. I am working on a Ph.D. in counseling. I am conducting a research project about the experiences of students who have been retained or "held back" in school. I believe that you can provide information for this study that will help teachers, principals and parents make better decisions about requiring students to repeat a grade..

Would you please consider being a part of my study?

I am looking for students who have been held back at least once in grade. Your participation in the study would involve an interview that will be about 45 minutes in length. I will ask you questions about what it was like when you were retained in school. In order to fully understand how being retained has affected you, I would also like to interview your parents or the person you were living with when you were retained or "held back" in school. If you are under the age of 18, I will need your parent or guardian to sign permission for you to participate in the study. Participation in this study is strictly on a voluntary basis.

By providing this information for this study, you will be benefiting other students like yourself who are at-risk for being retained in school. Unfortunately there is no compensation for being a part of this study.

For more information about being in this study, please have your parents contact me me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for agreeing to part of this important study!!!!

Jessica Fournier, Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E: Informed Consent for Adult Student



Informed Consent Form for Adult Student

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Louis V. Paradise in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to examine the impact of grade retention on students who have been retained.

I am requesting your participation, which will possibly involve an initial recorded interview and a recorded follow up interview. The purpose of the follow up interview is to check with you to confirm findings from the initial interview. It is expected that your participation will take not longer than three hours total from December, 2008 to December, 2009 when data will be collected. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. If you choose not to participate in or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your grade or how you will be treated in class or on campus. Likewise, if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Every precaution will be taken to protect your identify in this study to include, but is not limited to replacing your name on all data collection tools with an identifier known only to myself and locking all data in a storage cabinet. The services of a third party may be retained to transcribe data from recorded interviews. Prior to retaining services, I will personally meet with this individual to train them in the use of confidentiality for this project. The results of the research study may be published, but all efforts to protect your identity in the discussion will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is to learn more about how being retained in school impacts children. The risks associated with participating are minimal and include possibly being uncomfortable about discussing being retained in school. These risks are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your participation in this study, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon, Associate Professor, at the University of New Orleans at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Jessica Robertson Fournier , MEd, LPC, LMFT, NCC
Doctoral Student at the University of New Orleans

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Appendix F: Informed Consent for Minor Student



UNIVERSITY of
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Informed Consent for Parent of Minor Child

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Louis V. Paradise in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to examine the impact of grade retention on students who have been retained.

I am requesting your child's participation, which will involve an initial recorded interview and a recorded follow up interview. The purpose of the follow up interview is to check with your child to confirm findings from the initial interview. It is expected that your child's participation will take not longer than three hours total from December, 2008 to December, 2009 when data will be collected. Your child's participation in this study is totally voluntary. If you choose to not have your child participate in or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child's grade or how your child will be treated in class or on campus. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Every precaution will be taken to protect your child's identity in this study to include, but is not limited to replacing your child's name on all data collection tools with an identifier known only to myself and locking all data in a storage cabinet. The services of a third party may be retained to transcribe data from recorded interviews. Prior to retaining services, I will personally meet with this individual to train them in the use of confidentiality for this project. The results of the research study may be published, but all efforts to protect your child's identity in the discussion will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is to learn more about how being retained in school impacts children. The risks associated with participating are minimal and include possibly being uncomfortable about discussing being retained in school. These risks are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon, Associate Professor, at the University of New Orleans at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Jessica Robertson Fournier, MEd, LPC, LMFT, NCC
Doctoral Student at the University of New Orleans

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ to participate in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Appendix G: Child Assent Form



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NEW ORLEANS

Child Assent Form

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning what its like to be retained or held back in a grade in school.

I will be asked to answer questions about what it was like to be retained or held back in school. I understand that I will participate in a recorded interview and then a follow up recorded interview. The follow up recorded interview is to check findings from the initial interview.

The risks or harm to me are not that much and include possibly being uncomfortable about discussing being retained in school.

My participation in this project is totally voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grades or treatment at school in any way.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Appendix H: Informed Consent for Parent



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Informed Consent Form for Parent Interview

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Louis V. Paradise in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to examine the impact of grade retention on students who have been retained.

As you have a child who has experienced being retained in school, I am requesting your participation in this study which will involve an initial recorded interview and a recorded follow up interview. The purpose of the follow up interview is to check with you to confirm findings from the initial interview. It is expected that your participation will take not longer than three hours total from December, 2008 to December, 2009 when data will be collected. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. If you choose not to participate in or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child's grade or how your child will be treated in class or on campus. Likewise, if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Every precaution will be taken to protect your identify in this study to include, but is not limited to replacing your name on all data collection tools with an identifier known only to myself and locking all data in a storage cabinet. The services of a third party may be retained to transcribe data from recorded interviews. Prior to retaining services, I will personally meet with this individual to train them in the use of confidentiality for this project. The results of the research study may be published, but all efforts to protect your identity in the discussion will be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is to learn more about how being retained in school impacts children. The risks associated with participating are minimal and include possibly being uncomfortable about discussing your child being retained in school. These risks are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon, Associate Professor, at the University of New Orleans at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Jessica Robertson Fournier , MEd, LPC, LMFT, NCC
Doctoral Student at the University of New Orleans

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

Appendix I: Student Data Collection Sheet

Student Data Collection Sheet

Name: _____

Race: _____ Birthdate: _____

Please state which schools you attended for each grade level. If you repeated a grade, please check yes or no.

Schools

1st grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

2nd grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

3rd grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

4th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

5th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

6th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

7th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

8th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

9th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

10th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

11th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

12th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

How would you describe your family income?

Low _____ Middle _____ High _____

Name the individuals who live with you and their relationship to you.

What is the highest grade your parents attended when they were in school? _____

Did they graduate from high school? Yes ____ No ____

Appendix J: Parent Data Collection Sheet

Parent Data Collection Sheet

Name: _____ Child's Name: _____

Race: _____ Age: _____

Please state which schools your child attended for each grade level. If your child repeated a grade, please check yes or no.

Schools

1st grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

2nd grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

3rd grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

4th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

5th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

6th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

7th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

8th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

9th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

10th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

11th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

12th grade: _____ repeated yes ____ no ____

How would you describe your family income?

Low _____ Middle _____ High _____

Name the individuals who live with you and their relationship to you.

What is the highest grade you attended in school? _____

Did you graduate from high school? Yes ____ No ____

Appendix K: Interview Protocol: Students

Interview Protocol: Students

- What are your perceptions of the reason why you were retained in school?
- How did you react when you found out you were retained?
- Since being retained, how is your life different?
- What is the impact of retention on your relationships with your friends?
- What is the impact of retention on your relationship with your parents and family?
- What are some negative experiences that you can attribute to being retained?

What are some positive experiences?

- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you feel about yourself and your abilities?
- How do you view your future outlook?
- In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained?

From family? From yourself?

Appendix L: Interview Protocol: Parents

Interview Protocol: Parent Interviews

- What are your perceptions of the reasons why your child was retained in school?
- How did your child react when he or she found out he or she were retained?
- Since being retained, how is your child's life different?
- What is your perception of the impact of retention on your child's relationships with his or her peers?
- What is the impact of retention on your child's relationship with you and the rest of your family?
- What are some negative experiences that you can be attribute to your child being retained? What are some positive experiences?
- How would you describe your child?
- What is your perception of how your child feels about himself or herself and his or her abilities?
- How do you view the future outlook of your child?
- In retrospect, what do you believe you needed in the form of resources or support that you did not get from the school in order to prevent you from being retained? From family? From yourself?

Appendix M: Oath of Confidentiality of Transcriptionist

OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

I, Monica Ellender-Junot, have been retained by Jessica Robertson Fournier to aid in the preparation of her Dissertation entitled, “A Qualitative Study of the Personal Reactions and Experiences of Adolescent Students Who Have Been Retained” to be submitted to the Graduate Faculty at the University of New Orleans in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education.

In connection with services rendered in preparation of the Dissertation referenced above, I do hereby understand and appreciate the confidential nature of the data collected in preparation of the Dissertation and do hereby solemnly swear that all information pertaining to the Dissertation will be kept in the strictest confidence for now and forever.

This 5th day of January, 2009.

Monica Ellender-Junot

VITA

Jessica Robertson Fournier was born and raised in Houma, Louisiana. In May, 1994, she earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Studies Education from Nicholls State University. She has been employed by the Terrebonne Parish School Board for fifteen years. For six years, Jessica worked as a social studies teacher in both a junior high and high school setting. She spent her seventh year as a teacher in the position of a behavior intervention specialist. This position involved writing behavior management plans and teaching social skills to those special education students with identified behavior needs. In May, 2000, Jessica Robertson Fournier graduated with a Masters in School Counseling from Nicholls State University. For the past nine years, she has been employed as a school counselor in a middle school, high school and currently a junior high setting.

Jessica Robertson Fournier is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in the state of Louisiana. Jessica is also a board approved supervisor in and for the State of Louisiana. She is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and a National Certified School Counselor (NCSC). She is a member of the Alpha Eta Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota and also enjoys membership to various counseling organizations such as the American Counseling Association, Louisiana Counseling Association and the Terrebonne Association of School Counselors. Jessica Fournier has presented her anger and behavior management presentation to various schools in the Terrebonne Parish School System. She has also presented at various national conferences.