A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC RETENTION: THE LIVED

EXPERIENCES OF ADULTS WHO WERE RETAINED IN K-12

by

Suzann Faye Bouray

Liberty University

A Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. The central research question guiding the study were: What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school? Guiding questions were implemented to further understand the phenomenon of grade retention. The guiding questions were: How did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention? How did the young adults explain their K-12 educational experiences and the adult's future in connection with their personal grade retention? Bandura's self-efficacy theory is the examination of one's own belief on their own ability to achieve a self-determined level of success is based on their own life's experiences and will serve as the theoretical framework. Bandura's theory relates to the proposed study in the understanding of the life experiences of adults' self-efficacy who were retained during their K-12 education. Study participants were selected through a participant recruitment survey. The study included 13 participants who were retained during their K-12 education. The data collection methods included interviews, journal entries, and a focus group of the young adults. The transcendental phenomenological reduction process was used for data analysis. This research disclosed both positive and negative outcomes to retention.

*Keywords*: self-efficacy, transcendental phenomenology, grade retention, young adults, K-12 education.

**Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Darwin Bouray, and our two sons, Mason and Marek. Thank you to Darwin who sat beside me and made me relook at it one more time or just finish one more page, without his support and encouragement I would not be at this point. Without your patience and understanding of the amount of time dedicated to this journey it would not have been possible. The entire family sacrifice of family time over the four-year process from start to finish of this achievement did not go unnoticed or under appreciated. It really was a family effort from the beginning to the end and I greatly thank you for every minute spent through this process. Without your continual encouragement and pushing through the long hours of writing and research I would not be at this point today; I love each of you. It truly was a family effort!

I dedicate this to the participants of this study whom without you, none of this would be possible. You were willing to open up to me and share a part of your life in hopes to help others navigate through the understanding of grade retention.

I want to thank my parents for the installation of a strong work ethic, passion for follow through and attainment of goals. They believed in me through this process even though they did not fully understand all the ins and outs. I want to thank my brother, Dr. Chad Thompson for believing in and standing up for me wanting to get yet another degree when sometimes even I questioned myself.

I want to thank my friend and former colleague, Theresa Hier, who spent time combing through my writing and providing guidance in editing suggestions. I want to thank my friend, Lana Daves, who lent her ear through much of this process.  I want to also thank one of my former elementary teachers, Mrs. Beverly James, who always saw more in me.

**Acknowledgments**

Without the divine sacrifice of our God, my Lord and Savior none of this would be possible. There were countless prayers sent above for his guidance and understanding through the accomplishment of my personal and professional goals. Through him all things are possible, and I am eternally grateful for him providing the means for my goals to be achieved.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jose Arturo Puga and Dr. James Swezey for keeping me focused and aligned with the scholarly process and aiding to complete this life changing milestone. Without your continued guidance through emails, phone calls, and video conferences this accomplishment would not be possible.

I would like to thank the many other mentors and individuals along my higher education journey, especially Dr. Yaprak Dalat Ward, Dr. Suzanne Becking, Dr. James Eller, and Dr. Sarah Pannone who aided in guiding my vision and path through to this point.

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**List of Abbreviations**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Education Commission of the States (ECS)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP)

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB)

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

United States Department of Education (USDE)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. The problem is knowing if grade retention in K-12 is beneficial or detrimental to a student's success. Specifically, knowing if there is a connection between grade retention and persistence to high school graduation based on the lived experiences of young adults ages 18 to 25. The proposed problem for this study is further outlined in the beginning chapter of this qualitative dissertation. An in-depth background of the proposed problem will be examined to highlight the study. The research study aims to validate the research questions of K-12 grade retention of high school graduated young adults. In addition, the research study will identify the significance of the study, explaining common terminology and definitions, and summarize the chapter with a synthesis of the topic.

### Background

In the United States about 10% of all students are retained one time by the eighth grade (Planty et al., 2009; Schwerdt et al., 2017). Educators had been undecided about retention, both for and against (Peixoto et al., 2016). There had been steady decline by students in school interest, self-motivation, and academic achievement during the year in which the student was retained (Kretschmann et al., 2019). Washington D.C. and 13 other states have elected to retain and provide additional reading remediation to all students not meeting reading proficiency at the third-grade level (Rose, 2012). Many other states are adapting policies similar to aid in student academic achievement. This brings up the long-standing debate of retaining low performing

students and their long-term educational outcomes.

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) began the social, emotional and character development (SECD) initiative for all students in 2012 with a major redesign in 2018, making it a graduation requirement (KSDE, 2018). The implementation of College and Career Readiness in K-12 Kansas school systems has aided in students being required to at least explore areas of their indicated interest beyond high school (KSDE, 2018). The state of Kansas is looking to change the assessment requirements to the ACT examination in place of the existing state created assessment for measuring student progress to align with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (Kansas Association of School Boards [KASB], 2019). This is to meet the changing requirements for collegiate institutions and to aid in college preparedness. These relatively new initiatives are in place to elevate individual student's self-worth, post-secondary success, and potential predictors for future outcomes. There is limited current research giving a voice to young adults who have lived experiences of retention in their K-12 education (Ellsworth & Lagace-Seguin, 2009). This qualitative, phenomenological transcendental study is a way for young adults to express their experiences and the effect retention has on their lives.

**Historical Context**

The idea of grade retention has been around since the early 19th century as a practice of requiring a student's grade level to be repeated (Dennler et al., 2006). There has been disagreement between researchers of grade retentions effectiveness and how to determine the necessity (Dennler et al., 2006). During the early 1970's the practice of social promotion gained momentum and grade retention declined. When the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was implemented grade retention based on poor testing performance rose. This was when the practice of high stakes testing, the retention of a student based on one poor state or national

assessment, emerged in schools (Segool et al., 2013).

**Social Context**

There have been numerous studies on both retention and social factors regarding being retained throughout the world. Many of these studies are from European and African countries who have varied beliefs regarding the practices of retention. European countries view retention as a way to ensure the success of students beyond the ordinary realm. The practice of grade retention is largely supported as a necessity for student education (Vandecandelaere et al., 2016). The African country of Uganda views retention as a factor relevant to life for students. Students often move frequently causing them to either fall behind in content or are required to enter the workforce to financially support their families (Kabay, 2016). The social implications for retention are rooted in attendance, inability to connect with school, and student dropouts (Yang et al., 2018). The financial loss of a student who does not graduate from school is estimated to be $263,440 lower than peers who obtain a high school diploma (Hughes et al., 2017). The nation's economy is affected by the amount of students who are not successfully finishing high school, many of these students' dropout in lieu of being retained or due to earlier retention and the impact on their families' stability (Cham et al., 2015).

**Theoretical Context**

The predominant theory in the research was Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The self-efficacy theory added in the understanding of individual attitudes, perceptions, and personal beliefs on the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education and persisted on to high school graduation (Bandura, 1997). Further understanding the positive and negative aspects of self-efficacy due to grade retention of the 13 young adults (Ikeda & Garcia, 2014). I addressed the young adults' education experience and how it has developed their ideas

toward grade retention (Ikeda & Garcia, 2014). I aimed to enhance the current literature on grade retention in K-12 education and provide the view from young adults lived experiences as a resource for educational leaders and instructors to guide the practice of the retention of students. Based on research from Pierson and Cornnell (1992) self-motivation was a variable thought to have a connection to grade retention. In a study by Holmes and Matthews (1984) it was pointed out that a student's inability to meet educational standards was often accompanied with negative effects despite retention or social promotion. Holmes and Matthews (1984) pointed out the negative outcomes for both groups and the lack of understanding the long-term effect on student's self-concept. Self-efficacy measured over long-term regarding students who were retained were significantly high based on parent, teacher, and peer relationships (Marsh et al., 2017).

## Situation to Self

The importance for me to conduct this study is both professional and personal. I have been in education for more than 10 years in both the private and public-school settings. Over these years, I have been in the capacity of elementary classroom teacher, high school electives teacher, adjunct community college instructor, elementary and high school principal. My current professional role is as principal of an alternative high school. Many of the students attending my building are current at-risk high school students and adults who have returned after dropping out of school or failing to graduate with their cohort class. A large portion of them are coming back to obtain their high school diploma after nearly a 10 to 15-year absence. The students which I serve fall into the retained or dropout student populations. Many of these students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, minority populations, and are non-native English speakers. This led me to want find out what happened to the students in their same situation who chose to

complete school and graduate despite being retained at some point during their K-12 education.

The ontological assumption is the study of the world and the reality as it is for those who experience it (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The ontological assumption I brought to the research was the ability to research multiple realities as explained by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) using the participants own words and life experiences to understand the phenomenon of retention based on Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach. It is important to use the exact words and phrases of the participants of the study, get to know them on a personal level through the research process and the epistemological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemological assumption is explaining the knowledge we know and the validity to how we know it (Crotty, 1998). The axiological approach is understanding the values and importance of education through the study participants (Valeev & Kondrat'eva, 2015). I brought to this study my work in the field, reporting my biases, and the transfer of knowledge from my profession to the results of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The methodological assumption is the design and plan of action used for the basis of a study (Crotty, 1998). In using the methodological assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I selected themes which emerge from the study and allow the stories of the participants to determine the outcome of the study. The interpretivist paradigm guided the study because human behaviors are non-predictable, each person is different and will respond individually (Dean, 2018). Interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to look from the perspective of the study participant (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). It was the intention of the researcher to build, understand, and interpret the experiences from collected data. From the perspective of interpretivist paradigm, it was important for me to collect information from my study participants' words and points of views as the young adults explain the phenomenon.

**Problem Statement**

The problem is there are limited research studies focusing on the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted on to graduate high school. Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1997) as one's control over their own motivation, behavior, and social environment. There had been researchers that believed retention does not benefit students who need additional support (Ikeda & Garcia, 2014; Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015; Marsh, 2016). Researchers examined the dropout rates of students who were retained in a study which agreed with the Alexander et al. (2003) study, indicated students retained in grade school would have a higher probability to not complete high school (Hughes et al., 2017). Grade retention for some educators seemed like a temporary fix and had limited educational benefit and in a study linked to 70% higher dropout rates (Lynch, 2017).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. At this stage in the research, retained is generally defined as a student who repeated the same grade level twice or dropped out to avoid repeating a grade level two or more times. Few research studies shed positive light on the practice of retention, student self-esteem, and student success resulting in the completion of high school. The theory guiding this study is Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's self-efficacy theory is the examination of one's own belief on their own ability to achieve a self-determined level of success is based on their own life's experiences. Bandura's theory relates to the proposed study in the understanding of the life experiences of adults' self-efficacy who were retained during their K-12 education.

**Significance of the Study**

I described the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education and their persistence to graduate high school. This study of retention is important for societal issues for employability, lifetime earnings, and physical and mental health burdens (Hughes et al., 2017). The main purpose is to be the voice for retained young adult graduates to gain a better understanding how retention has potentially modified their self-efficacy. The use of the 13 participants' words allowed a deeper understanding of grade retention and self-efficacy.

**Empirical Significance**

The empirical significance of the study examined the in-depth interviews and personal observations of young adults whose lived experiences include being retained during K-12 education and persisting through high school graduation. Knowledge was gained on the value and educational purpose of grade retention through details provided through personal accounts. According to Marsh (2016) a positive academic outlook is an important goal and a way to reach and fulfill those set academic milestones. Through personal accounts there was information gained on retention, family dynamics, post-secondary goals, and social demographics. Statics are estimated that around 3 million students are annually retained due to federal guidelines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Hauser, 1999; Merrick et al., 1998). Retention is not cheap intervention to close the achievement gap, costing states upwards of billions of dollars each year (Florida Association of School Psychologists [FASP], 2004; Jimerson et al., 2006). In large metropolitan areas it has been reported that nearly 50% of high school students have a cumulative risk of being retained (Hauser, 1999).

**Theoretical Significance**

The theoretical significance is to deepen the understanding self-efficacy has and the role it played in young adults that experienced retention during K-12. Research is limited in the area of young adults lived experiences of K-12 grade retention. There are a variety of demographic factors which have been researched in association with grade retention. These include race, gender, socioeconomic, family dynamics, and self-efficacy (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jimerson et al., 2006). There were over 40 different studies published on the topics surrounding academic achievement and socioemotional conclusions (Holmes, 1989). The topic of retention is still valid in the area of education, and it has not seemed to vary in its productiveness. This allows for room to understand why some students' dropout and other students push through to graduation despite being retained.

**Practical Significance**

Practical significance was gained through the viewpoint of young adults on their K-12 grade retention. This study assisted young adults in verbalizing their life goals and determining if retention played a part in either the achievement or set-back in relationship to these goals. Research has determined the importance of positive educational experiences for students, this can be achieved through academic self-efficacy to aid in keeping students in school (Peguero & Shaffer, 2015). I hope the study of young adult retention was valuable to not only southwest Kansas but education in general due to the high number of migrant, bilingual, and low socioeconomic students. It is estimated over 47 million students are enrolled in K-12 education, with the average cost of $7,500 per pupil and annually about 1% of students are retained (Eide & Goldhaber, 2005). The national cost of retention is estimated annually to exceed 3.5 billion and resulting in 475,000 students being retained across the country (Eide & Goldhaber, 2005). It is

my hope this will help guide and benefit school administration and educators on the value and purpose of grade retention on student self-efficacy.

## Research Questions

In this study I planned to discover the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation in southwestern Kansas. I intended to gather the explanation of the phenomenon of retention using the qualitative transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994). This was focused on Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1997) self-efficacy theory. The data was collected from 13 graduated young adult participants who were retained in K-12 education and was focused on information gathered from the central research question and guiding questions.

### Central Research Question

The central research question asked: What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school? I intended to allow graduated young adults explain their experiences of being retained during their K-12 education as a part of their life story. It is important to leave this question in an open-ended format to allow the study participants to provide their personal account of their experience. The participant's personal description of being retained and persisting through to graduation will allow educators to look at retention from a different viewpoint. The participants in this study are graduated students in comparison to the majority of students retained who drop out of school due to retention or to avoid retention (Jimerson et al., 2006). The use of an open-ended question will hopefully provide insight to individual accounts of persistence and self-efficacy due to retention during K-12 education. In a study by the Rand Corporation in conjunction with the United States Department of Education

[USDE] (2018) there is no reported significance in the graduation rates of on track students to retained students.

**Guiding Question 1**

The first guiding question asked: How did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention? This question is specific to the factors which impact young adult's self-efficacy. The question lends young adults to answer for different times in their lifetime. Depending on the age of the study participant this answer might have varying results which could cover both attributes. According to Peixoto et al. (2016), students retained outperformed peers who were advanced to the next grade despite not meeting the required standards. It is important to obtain the impact young adults experienced regarding their self-efficacy. When students outperform peers, it can be a boost but in turn if they are not meeting standards, what does that result in for their education. In connection to the study, what long term effects to self-efficacy begin to develop based on these educational parameters. Dimotakis et al. (2017) stated the more abilities one believes they can improve based on positive support can lessen the negative effects toward self-efficacy.

**Guiding Question 2**

The second guiding question asked: How do the young adults explain their K-12 educational experiences and the adult's future in connection with their personal grade retention? I wanted to have the young adults put their own experiences in terms of their life relating to being retained during school. When people have experienced a life altering event it can have an impact on their life from that point forward. Countries other than the U.S. support the use of grade retention through parent, classroom teacher, and administrative backing (Vandecandelaere et al., 2016). Peixoto et al. (2016) stated the high connection with low-socioeconomic status,

young age for grade level, ethnic minority, parental education, and lack of school involvement to higher retention rates. There are limits to connections with young adults due to minimal recent research conducted on their educational experiences. These young adults possibly now have students in school and the same patterns could be emerging in their children.

**Definitions**

1. *Birth effect* – a student who's birthday who falls later in the calendar year approaching the school cut-off date (Gonzalez-Bentancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016)

2. *Character development* – developing skills to help student identify, define, and live according to core values which aid and assist in effective problem solving and decision making (KSDE, 2018)

3. *Cohort-* means a group of people, typically students, who have something in common (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2019)

4. *College and Career Readiness* – means a person has academic, cognitive, technical, and employability skills to be success in post-secondary education, through a industry certification, work force, or without remediation (KSDE, 2018)

5. *Educational Malpractice* – the link between grade retention of students and their action of dropping out of school (Jimerson, 2004)

6. *Lived experience* – from the German term *erlebnis* meaning experiences as we live through it and it is recognized as a certain experience type (Patton, 2015)

7. *Group insistence* - where a person is influenced to follow the action of the whole peer group (Santor et al., 2000)

8. *Retention* - retained is defined as a student who repeated the same grade level twice or dropped out to avoid repeating a grade level two or more times (Hughes et al., 2017)

9. *Phenomenology* - Meaning to flare up or to appear from the Greek term Phaenesthai, (Moustakas, 1994).

10. *Self-efficacy* – refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1997).

11. *Social emotional* – the ability to understand feelings of others, control one's own behaviors and feelings, while getting along with peers (Early Childhood Connections, 2019)

## Summary

As stated, prior, the problem was knowing if there is a connection between grade retention and persistence to high school graduation based on the lived experiences of young adults. The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. The central research question guiding the study was; What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school? The theory guiding this study is Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Through the examination of lived experiences, the study analyzed young adult's self-efficacy based on retained adult graduates' own beliefs in their own ability to achieve a self-determined level of success based on their own experiences. This directly links to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, prior research on grade retention, and proposes to study the understanding of the life experiences of young adults' who were retained during their K-12 educational timeframe and persisted on to graduate high school.

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Overview**

In this chapter, I will present an overview of the theoretical framework and a review of literature related to the topic of grade retention. The purpose of this chapter is to offer the background for relevant research and the significance to the established problem, gaps and the necessity in the literature. Chapter Two consists of four sections: (a) the Overview, (b) a Theoretical Framework section, (c) a Related Literature section, and (d) a Summary. The included related literature consists of; (a) the history of retention, (b) the world views on retention, (c) the differing outcomes of retention for young adults, (d) the impact of student achievement of young adults who were retained, (e) the contributing factors towards retention, and (f) students who dropout either due to retention or in lieu of being retained during school. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory provides a philosophical view on an individual's ability to make decisions based on attaining specific goals, motivation, behavior, and the social environment which relates to the individual lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education. The theory of self-efficacy is applicable in this study because of the connection to retention and achievement goals in young adults (Peixoto et al., 2016). At the conclusion of Chapter Two, I will summarize the topics and literature gaps, which I will attempt to add value through this research.

**Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework is the foundation in which academic research is based or essentially the "blueprint" for the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 13). The guiding theory or theories as developed by researchers directs the understanding, direction, and also the relevant definitions and content related to the topic. The focus of this study is on the self-efficacy theory

of Bandura which was born from his social cognitive theory. This theory is rooted in the pedagogy of education and psychology. It is important to look at where education has been to determine the path in which it should move, if the same mistakes or repeating patterns continue the cycle never changes. It continues with the expectation of a different outcome without changing the inputs or variants. With the knowledge of the theoretical framework driving the research, the accounts from the retained young adults as depicted through the viewpoint of the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977).

## Self-Efficacy Theory

To understand where self-efficacy theory developed it is important to understand the theories which came before leading to the discovery and development of self-efficacy. Bandura was a creator of many different theories dealing with past experience and current behaviors and actions taken based on the environmental interactions of a person. He started with social learning theory in the 1960's which then turned into the social cognitive theory. There were five constructs included in the social learning theory; reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, observational learning, reinforcements, and expectations. The social learning theory is where the social cognitive theory was created. Bandura's social cognitive theory developed around the 1980's and was made up of four separate processes; self-evaluation, self-observation, self-reaction, and self-efficacy. It is thought that for a person to be success all elements of each of these processes must be achieved. If a person does not have the ability to be successful, then how in turn can they be successful overall. This is where the component of self-efficacy is important and how a person feels about their own ability to be able to perform through to successful completion (Bandura, 1997; Redmond, 2010).

Albert Bandura developed the self-efficacy theory in 1977, defining it as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy is the focus on a person's ability to succeed in specific situations. Bandura developed the theory out of a need to understand a mechanism in a person's own ability to impact one's own life events. To be successful in one's self-efficacy is the notion to be able to overcome a negative event in a short amount of time (Hoffman, 2010). The theory of self-efficacy is the influence of initiating one's coping behavior when a person meets stressors and challenges (Bandura, 1995). When students perform poorly in the subject area of mathematics they fail to try based on the belief they cannot succeed, thus experiencing low self-efficacy towards math (Hoffman, 2010). Bandura (1999) believed self-efficacy was self-sustaining, in which a person must be driven to work through their own problems.

Self-efficacy was comprised from a missing element of Bandura and Walter's social learning and personality development theory (Pajares, 2002). By the 1970's, Bandura determined it was necessary to include self-efficacy as this missing element and in 1977 it was identified (Pajares, 2002). The aspects of the missing element, now known as self-efficacy, provides a person's well-being, personal accomplishment, and human motivation (Pajares, 2002). The personal approach to self-efficacy breaks into how a person ultimately sees themselves at the end of a perceived task outcome. When a person believes they are good at something they have personal expectation to perform above average. The opposite is the outcome when someone doubts their ability to be successful, creating a lower expectation for themselves prior to beginning the task. All of these have three basic elements of measurement; magnitude, strength, and generality. Self-efficacy magnitude is the measurement of a tasked difficulty level which is the level a person determines is necessary to successfully complete the task. This is observed in

the school setting when students ask each other how difficult an exam was and if the student studied. This allows them to gage their own success rate prior to taking the exam based on perceived information from peers. Self-efficacy strength is the diversification of difficulty levels based on a person's inner ability to perform (Bandura, 1996). The relates to the individual capacity to keep a goal in mind and keep reaching towards the goal. Generality of self-efficacy is when a generalization is made from a variety of successful experiences. This can be seen when students are successful in multiple classes based on similar experiences through tactics used from prior success and knowledge (Lunenburg, 2011; Van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002).

Self-efficacy is made of four factors; mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic and emotional state (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2002). Self-efficacy theory is the culmination of the four factors making a change to a person's self-efficacy and ultimately one's behavior. Bandura stated "successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). Students who have been retained early in their academic years, have a short-term positive effect on their social and emotional state and belonging in school while they also experience a long-term positive effect on academic self-efficacy (Peixoto, 2016). Self-efficacy has two facets which include personal efficacy and one's personal outcome expectancy. Personal efficacy is when a person only completes a task when they have personal belief in their own ability. While outcome expectancy is their personal belief that they will achieve a desired preset result. The two facets do not always have to be paired but can be achieved separately (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tosun, 2000). This can be seen when a student feels accomplished in understanding math facts but are unsure of how to complete math problems when they are put into formulas and equations.

**Mastery Experience**

A mastery experience is known as being successful in a new task based on a previous successful task (Bandura, 1994). Raising a person's self-efficacy through the use of mastery experience allows them to be exploratory, based on previous success in similar situations without causing personal threat (Welch & West, 1995). Training, workshops, and internships are all a part of mastery experiences. Events from one's past is sometimes a predictor for them to repeat based on a successful outcome (Bandura, 1994). The example of babysitting in junior high and motherhood was used as an example of a mastery experience (Owen & Froman, 1988). Both positive and negative experiences have influential perspective on a similar task based on the previous outcome whether it was successful or unsuccessful (Bandura, 1977).

People want to believe that they can be successful in a new venture and tend to relate new events with closely related events from their past. Students who have not been successful previously in a subject area or grade level might be reluctant to feel as if they can succeed the second time. For students who are grade repeaters or have been retained mastery experiences would be being successful in content areas where they have already had exposure but not success in the lessons and materials. This may take practice and teachers pointing out the gains the student is making for them to recognize the success and growth they are experiencing. Mastery experience is the student understanding their own ability to achieve success (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018; Klassen & Usher, 2010).

It is thought that mastery is more successful to self-efficacy than vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic and emotional states because of the prolonged exposure to the feared outcome. There is also the risk of mastery experience not working because of a person's ability to understand a behavior and the outcomes potential success but still be unable to achieve

going forward and completing the task (Schunk, 1990; Welch & West, 1995; Wood & Bandura, 1989). There is a lack of mastery experience when one is not challenged to work towards remembering the associated tasked or skills. For retained students when teachers assist them because of the belief they are unable to be successful it prohibits the student to continue to work toward their own mastery of content (Rodin & Langer, 1980).

**Vicarious Experience**

This is the event where a person views others who are similar to themselves as either a success or failure (Bandura, 1994). When a person is able to see another person succeed it increases their chance of success, if the person whom they observe is most like themselves. A cancer prevention program was created, using vicarious experience through children, parents, and teachers (Tripp et al., 2000). This is observed in classroom settings, childhood, and through mentor/mentee relationships. Vicarious experience could be used to increase self-efficacy through teachers in the classroom when working with students of difficult ability and management (Hagen et al., 1998).

Students who struggle in the classroom either with discipline or curriculum understanding could benefit from teachers who use vicarious experience to enhance their teaching practice from colleagues who have had success with similar experiences (Bautista, 2011). Vicarious experience uses modeling to aid with intrinsic motivation while providing feedback and strategy toward tasked and action plans leading to personal success in a specific area (Bandura, 2008; Lane et al., 2004; Schunk, 2003). Students can visualize personal success through witness of others in the same area or content if they believe there is similarities or likeness to those they are observing (Harlow et al., 2006; Prieto & Meyers, 1999). Self-efficacy needs to continue to be pushed and students need to understand how to utilize it for themselves,

while vicarious experience is one way to help them apply intrinsic motivation in their own life (Luzzo et al., 1999). In a classroom setting teachers and students model for each other often to express understanding of content and strategy for success of a topic (Schunk, 2003). This is important for students who are academically challenged or behind their cohort to see how others have mastered material and find a way in which to be successful (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018; Klassen & Usher, 2010).

**Verbal/Social Persuasion**

The verbal persuasion method is used to convince a person they can attain or succeed at a specific task. This is done to help a person believe in themselves through verbal support (Bandura, 1994). Verbal or social persuasion is used most often by coaches, teachers, and mentors. The verbal/social persuasion is used by coaches as a method to increase self-efficacy in their team to heighten their belief in their own ability to beat an opponent (Brown et al., 2005). Students are influenced by the responses received from their teachers; either positive or negative, ultimately determining how they feel about their ability to be successful in an area of academics (Bergen, 2013).

When students feel a sense of failure they begin to relate the subject with low self-efficacy and begin to perform at the new expected outcome. This may be the result of one instance but for the student it is not the perceived outcome if not intervened by an outside source; peer, parent, or teacher (Domenech-Betoret et al., 2017). This is readily seen in peer groups in the school setting. When the peer group a student associates themselves with values good grades than the student tends to try and have higher grades. The opposite is also true, when a student's peer group is lower achieving and makes poor behavior choices this also becomes the pattern of behavior for the student to continue to be a part of the group.

Verbal and social persuasion is thought to be the most influential type of self-efficacy. As, social persuasion is a means of control over an individual's positive and negative thoughts based on that of another entity. The influence of what others think about a person's ability has a strong impact on their own thoughts of their own ability. It is important to not over validate when a student performs below the expected outcome as this will provide a false positive toward negative or unwanted behavior or performance (Bandura, 1997). It is valuable to provide appropriate feedback and interventions to aid in improvement following a low or poor outcome. Schools need to continue to involve parents allowing them to be engaged in their child's educational process because of the consistent social and verbal persuasion they have on the child (Lam & Chan, 2017).

**Somatic and Emotional States**

The physical and emotional frame of a person's being is altered when they fear failure of a task (Pajares, 2002). There are feelings like stress, anxiety, worry, and fear which impact self-efficacy in a negative manner. Coping with situations in a person's life become difficult, emotional state is heightened after a negative outcome to their self-efficacy. When the emotional state is lowered then a positive effect occurs in one's self-efficacy (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Young adults' life satisfaction is a direct result from school-related stressors and adverse effects during adolescence. With the notion that young adults may not have a solid foundation for life satisfaction, they rely on environmental factors to help contour the adjustment from youth to adulthood (Burger & Samuel, 2017).

Academic self-efficacy is a part of self-efficacy which focuses on the confidence of a student to master academic content (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). When the assumption is made that students who project a high self-efficacy have a high motivation to learn, they are more apt

to be a goal achiever (Yokoyama, 2019). When students have a high academic self-efficacy they set higher goals, strive for academic success, and spent 50% more time focusing on subject areas. These students also indicate they have more self-control and concentration while completing school work than their peers with a lower self-efficacy (Maddux, 2016). A recent study revealed an anxiety of teachers to instruct mathematics out of the fear of not understanding the material well enough to teach students (Bursal & Paznokas, 2006). Mathematic anxiety of a teacher can be transposed onto the students through vicarious persuasion (Brady & Bowd, 2005).

There are many varying forms of self-efficacy which is discussed loosely in education. These forms include the phrases; grit, determination, intrinsic motivation, and drive. In understanding how a student is determined to be retained; parents, educators, and school administration look at overall student academic performance, social interactions with peers, and benchmarks on local, state, and federal assessments (Mahjoub, 2017). Self-efficacy is tied in with the concept of retaining a student academically because of not meeting grade level, cognitive gaps, performance indicators sometimes based on personal fortitude and not performing to a specific set of standards.

**Related Literature**

Included into the review of literature, while not independently about self-efficacy but also issues relevant for understanding the circumstances associated with grade retention in K-12 education and how young adults persisted to graduate despite being retained. This literature will expose the gap to further understand the result K-12 retention played in the life experiences of young adults; ages 18-25. Retaining a student in the same grade for an additional year is known as grade retention (Vandecandelaere et al., 2016). Retention is also commonly known in other countries as grade progression in Italy, grade repetition in Uganda, and grade retainment in

Europe (Kabay, 2016; Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015; Mahjoub, 2017). For students to be accountable and considered academically proficient, retention is often justified as a necessary requirement (Klapproth et al., 2016). Retention is not by chance but is specific to students' performance, grade level requirements, teacher recommendations, and family input (Mahjoub, 2017).

There are many factors which contribute to the research of retention and student success (Huang, 2014; Young et al., 2019). Many of the conducted studies measure the negative outcomes of retention and base findings on other contributing factors which are an underlying or associated reason for student's repetition of a grade level (Gary-Bobo et al., 2016; Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016). These factors make a long-term impact on students well beyond their years in elementary school. These are seen around the world in many countries who focus on students passing assessments and levels of achievement rather than staying with cohorts based on age determination (Rahim, 2017; Sunny et al., 2017).

**History of Retention**

The practice of grade retention began in the 19th century when it was common practice to retain students who were below the academic level of their peers. About the time frame of 1860, the method of separating students into age and grade level brackets; based on Maxwell's Age-Grade Progression study (Owings & Magliaro, 1998) became the norm for schools. At one point in time, retention fell out of common practice and social promotion became a more popular choice for educators. The return of the use of grade retention started about the 1980's when standardized testing and national comparison for school districts was on the rise. This was also in part to the increased comparison of United States students to those in other countries around the globe (Range et al., 2011).

Kindergarten retention is one of the most common practices due to the lessened negative impact on the student due to the age and social connections. These students are typically lower in their emotional maturity level and are lower on age specific skills (Xia & Kirby, 2009). The earlier a student is allowed to gain another year of maturity increases the chances of academic success based on social emotional behavior. In the early years; kindergarten and first grade, retention focuses on student developmental readiness more than retention as a practice of behavior modification (Laitsch, 2005). Of the early retentions, that majority tend to be male students with birthdays who fall later in the calendar year, approaching the school cutoff date and these students also do not often recognize letters and sounds (Dong, 2009). The name of this is known as "season of birth effect" or "quarter of birth effect" (Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016, p. 3). This incorporates the idea that the youngest students in class are disadvantaged to that of their peers due to their birthdate.

Standardized test scores are more readily becoming the reason for older grade students to be retained in school. When students test scores fall below meeting grade level expectancies school are using this as a rationale for retention (Stearns et al., 2007). These students may be significantly behind their peers in educational content and cognitive understanding. This however, does not evaluate the social or peer connections associated with retaining a student.

**World Views on Retention**

The issue of retention of elementary students has been a long-time struggle for administrators, teachers, and families worldwide. Retention has been a debated topic for education institutions for decades and still seems to be controversial when practiced throughout the world (Goos et al., 2013). There have been studies conducted in the United States, France, Italy, Luxemburg, and Uganda; although this does not reach all the countries and students who

have been influenced by the long-term ramifications of early grade level retention (Kabay, 2016; Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015; Mahjoub, 2017). The measurement of student success over time has changed drastically and grade retention used to not be necessary due to the placement of students in one room schoolhouses (Steiner, 1986). The implementation of retention in the United States became prevalent around the mid-19th century and was used when students failed to achieve success (Holmes & Matthews, 1983). Retention was mostly phased out by the newer practice of social promotion around the late 1930's and early 1940's. This was due to the thought that retention could be the result of lasting negative effects to social and emotional growth in adolescents (Steiner, 1986).

Up until the early 1980's the United States used grade retention commonly for students who did not master grade level content (Mahjoub, 2017). The United States educational system used retention based on performance indicators and a prerequisite to move forward to the next grade level. After the 1980's, social promotion became a popular choice for educators. Social promotion is the advancing of a student with their peer or cohort group despite their academic performance (Reschly & Christenson, 2013). This causes social and academic strain on the student who was promoted (Jimerson et al., 2006; Mawhinney et al., 2016). In France, 28% of graduating middle school students have repeated at minimum one-grade (Mahjoub, 2017). Chicago, Illinois public schools retained 20% of third graders and almost 10% of eighth graders in 2004 as a result of the end of social promotion around the year 1990 (Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015).

About 11% of students in the European Union have repeated at least one year, with Spain having 32% of students repeating a grade level (Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015). In Spain, student retention can only happen one time in primary grades legally if they don't meet grade criterion or

are low in more than two subject areas. It is widely used practice in the Spain school systems (Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016). While 88% of Ugandian students have repeated one grade and 11% have repeated more than three grades, in spite of mandated automatic promotion (Kabay, 2016). The viewpoint on retention varies from country to country, the differences appear to be based on mastery compared to cost. This is shown in several studies in the literature review and appears to be a trend in data (Mathys et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Sparks, 2019). There are many countries which attribute retention to a set score or assessment level. There were cities in the United States at one which retained students based on testing norms and then proceeded to a social promotion system who are in recent years returning to a norm referenced testing system. Kabay (2016) identified age as an important factor which should be used for the entry point of school attendance and contributes the repetition and dropout rates to the lack of language understanding. This is a reason for education to use entry and exit screeners for students to identify gaps in reading proficiency (Education Commission of the States [ECS], 2019). Schools also rely on achievement benchmarks and standards to gauge students' ability to be promoted.

In some countries grade retention is one of the top forms of remedial education, some countries use it as the only form of remediation at an extreme cost to schools (Gary-Bobo et al., 2016). These students bring about the evidence of long term increased unearned costs in jobs with lower earned wages based on their level of education. When European students in Germany and France understand the effect of grade retention it is believed to increase the focus on their studies pushing them to stay on track with their peers.

**Retention Outcomes**

In recent use of high stakes testing education systems rely on data to help determine if students are on grade level. Retention is one practice still in use to provide remediation and close the curriculum gap of students who do not perform on grade level equivalency. Students who are unable to stay on point with the material makes them loose interest and lack self-efficacy to achieve to the next level or even graduation resulting in dropping out (Carifio & Carey, 2010; Jimerson, 2006; Klapproth et al., 2016). Evidence over a 50-year period that grade retention rarely benefits the student. Retention is more a reflection of chronic absenteeism, disengagement of school, and a negative impact on parental expectations of student promotion (Yang et al., 2018).

In the U.S. nearly 7-15% of all students are retained to include the factors which predict retention for students to include socio-economic status (Yang et al., 2018). Previous research from Hughes et al. (2018) investigated grades first through fifth and their high school completion resulting in a diploma, GED, or dropping out. Out of 734 students; the highest negative effect was to African American and Hispanic girls based on retention at the point of entering high school (Hughes et al., 2018). Students who are retained at the eighth-grade level are more likely to drop out before graduation (Hughes et al., 2018). Hughes et al. (2018) stated elementary students who are retained seem to not be affected academically or loose motivation to attend school in comparison to their peers retained closer to high school age. Students who are in the early elementary years are afforded the ability to have increased time to learn (Hwang & Cappella, 2018). They attributed this as based on first grade students who were retained and their improved achievement test scores. When European researchers looked at a variety of outcomes they determined that statics of lower achievement groups included those students who had been

retained. This was not of surprise due to the reason for retention is because a student has not met benchmarks or is significantly below peers of the same level in academics.

***Short- and Long-Term Outcomes***

The idea of grade repetition has been a hot topic in educational scholarly research and has been segmented into categories of both short- and long-term outcomes. Short-term effects are more significantly studied bouncing between the negative outcome to positive or minimal effects on students (Holmes 1989; Jimerson 2001; Allen et al., 2009). Several studies over the years have looked at the short term and have determined retention to be ineffective and harmful to students (Hwang & Cappella, 2018; Lorence, 2014; Wong & Zhou, 2017). Retention lessens differences in achievement making teaching less demanding. In the area of kindergarten retention there is a high number of white students retained based on parental opinion of maturity level instead of academic concern (Hwang & Cappella, 2018).

In contrast low-socioeconomic, males, and African American's are retained based on lower academic achievement, socialization, and emotional stability based on Elder's Developmental Theory (Hwang & Cappella, 2018). Cham et al. (2015) stated there might be interrelated factors at the individual, family and school levels that predict grade retention and completion of high school. It has been stated grade retention can be associated with other risk factors for poor academic and behavior concerns (Cham et al., 2015). The short-term results of the student they are likely to benefit due to covering the content repeatedly with differentiated instruction methods (Klapproth et al., 2016).

There has been an increase in the United States since the mid 80's with an increased percentage of freshman through junior aged students being retained nearing 17% while at the first to third grade levels nearing seven percent of students being retained. It is further estimated

that in more recent years there has been a shift from later grade retention toward earlier retentions based on the birth groups and parental viewpoints (Frederick & Houser, 2008). When students were retained only one grade level, they were put at two to 11% at higher risk of becoming a school dropout (Jimerson et al., 2002; Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

Research discovered long-term effects of retention on school attendance, completion, and postsecondary enrollment. There is belief that when sampling low-income youth, it also impacted their ability to continue towards earning their high school diploma by the age of 20 and more known to not continue to postsecondary education with the percentage range of 16 to 75 (Fine & Davis, 2003; Jimerson, 1999; Ou & Reynolds, 2010). When it comes to finding jobs later in life there are long-term scarring effects from retention which are thought to affect student's ability to find adequate paying jobs or to remain employed due to intragenerational mobility (Andrew, 2014; Gangl, 2006). There is minimal research on the long-term effects of retention on students. There is also little available information on those students who successfully graduation after being retained (Mawhinney et al., 2016). It still results in not knowing what happened after students were retained and the effect on their adult life.

*Student Achievement*

Retained students might have a different outlook based on age compared to their classmates, have a lack of connection and reduced efforts with poor self-outlook. Students in the short term have positive measures of growth at the lower elementary grades resulting in fewer classroom outbursts, greater self-worth, and more instructional time in the classroom (Cham et al., 2015). Studies have shown to be effective in the short term with positive outcomes while reaching more negative results for long-term studies (Peterson & Hughes, 2011). There are many studies which look at the graduation rates, attrition rates of schools, and drop out factors but do

not address the students' point of view in a narrative fashion (Stark & Noel, 2015). Studies which address student achievement compare retained students to that of their cohort which have not had the same lived experiences which impact the learning process (Dougherty & Shaw, 2016).

Student achievement can be from a variety of viewpoints; the student, family, instructor, and administration. In the article by Lewis (2018) instructors indicated the positive outcome from students who received remedial or repeated courses. Students who repeated courses had factors which the instructors questioned if they could have screened for prior to the start of the program (Lewis, 2018). Repetition of grades has varied outcomes for students based on their age and connection with peers (Cham et al., 2015). In Kabay's (2016) study he compared the age of students to educational outcomes. For retained students this is important for the fact if they are not cognitively ready for the content and there might be later negative educational outcomes. This is mirrored in the study by Agasisti and Cordero (2017) which focused on the official starting age of students in kindergarten or equivalent grade level. There have been academic and development professionals who believe the importance of using leveled instruction in place of grade retention for students who are behind the required standards and state-based testing. The achievement of the student has been determined to be a direct result of the timing of when the student was retained (Cooley-Fruehwirth et al., 2011; Penfield, 2010). It is known as beating the odds when a retained student persists on to graduate high school. Students who continue on and at least make it to their junior year are considered successful failures, these students are older than their peers and often had social and individual obstacles which led to higher risk from being retained (Ferguson et al., 2001).

*Home Support*

In evaluating the efforts of Bandura, he urged that family and parental figures could provide a living guide for youth to simulate self-regulation and self-efficacy. When youth are setting goals and working towards individual achievements the input from their home support system creates a positive impact on their self-efficacy. There are numerous diversities in how varying cultures place value toward the individual and research leans towards the home environment playing a part in minority youth self-efficacy (Bradley & Corwyn, 2001; Schunk & Meece, 2006). The home environment is a relative new factor associated with one's self-efficacy and achievement. Due to this there is reason for groups who work with at-risk youth to form outreach services to aid in family support which relate to self-efficacy. These outreach services include state family services, home health agencies, and juvenile services which all support adolescents in hoping to form positive self-efficacy in the youth and families they serve (Bradley, 2019).

Employment of family members has a direct correlation to the household having a high self-efficacy. This is more evident in single parent homes based on the parent's attitude and self-efficacy which is in turn transposed to the child. When single parents who receive financial assistance or are unemployed the child's cognitive and emotional development can be altered from the strain of financial resources. Single parents face the burden of depletion of self-worth and inadvertently transpose these feelings to others in the household (Brody et al., 1999; Elder et al., 1995). The children who have access to both parental units even if they do not reside together provides more positive educational outcomes and a higher self-efficacy in children (Jackson, 2000; Jackson & Huang, 2000; Jackson & Scheines, 2005).

*School Support*

  Students need to feel supported in the school environment to be successful and have room for improvement when they do not achieve on level academically. For students' self-efficacy in relationship to school teachers to be effective in showing student support academically, emotionally, and mentally (Hendrickx et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018). It is important for students to feel supported both in and out of school, to do this teachers' and school personnel have to make an effort to support the whole child not just in the school setting. The school culture needs to be uplifting and welcoming to make students feel as though they are wanted and needed. When students are gone from school or a classroom for longer than a day or two, it is important to make connection with them either by a note or other communication to keep a positive outlook toward school and self (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

  When teachers exhibit a high-self efficacy in the classroom, students have a tendency to work harder to learn and complete the academic structure. When students perceive low self-efficacy from the teachers such as anxiety over content, job satisfaction, and teacher self-doubt in overall teaching ability, students might tend to mirror the behavior on the academic work or in general towards school (Hardre et al., 2006; Van Uden et al., 2013; Zee & Koomen, 2019). Schools sometimes lose focus on all aspects which are important to support the whole student. That is why in recent years there has been an increase in student mental wellness, overall health, and social emotional education efforts. For students to connect with teachers, administration, and school support staff they must feel a genuine connection beyond just their classroom efforts. It is easier for students of all abilities to relate to teachers with high self-efficacy in the classroom through differentiated instruction and formative assessments. Assessments when utilized

correctly drive instruction and are modified when students are not succeeding in the curriculum materials (Firestone, 2009; Popham, 2011).

### *Peer Support*

It important for students to have connections with others whom they have similar interests. During the ages of 10 through 19, peers become a support system outside of the family unit. When it comes to self-efficacy peers have unsurmountable influence upon each other even if they do not intend to initially. When a student has positive self-efficacy, they deem their actions to be effective and are more willing to work at a higher level of achievement (Cook & Dayley, 2001; Murdock et al., 2001; Schunk & Meece, 2005). For example, when students study as a group and support each other in the learning process the group aims at doing the best possible on the assigned work.

When other peers choose to participate half-heartedly then others might follow suite to as not be seen as part of the group. This is also what is seen if a peer chooses to be academically dishonest thus creating low self-efficacy through avoiding the work from fear of stress, confusion, frustration, and embarrassment (Anderman & Murdock, 2007). If one member of a peer group chooses to cheat, then there runs risk that others may follow because they perceive if their friend cannot do it they cannot either. When peers observe others in their group to have similar dispositions and attributes of lower self-efficacy, they also minimize their personal self-efficacy based on vicarious experience (Bandura, 1994; Pajares, 2002). This transfers into what is known as *group insistence*, where a person is influenced to follow the action of the whole peer group. Youth often are in unfamiliar territory when it comes to decision making, confidence and personal morals they look to their peers for approval and support (Kiran-Esen, 2012; Santor, et al., 2000; Schunk & Meece, 2005).

***Post-Secondary Success***

Being socially and emotionally ready for the rigors of college courses depends on students being academically and socially prepared (Hesser & Gregory, 2016). Colleges are preparing themselves for students who are not academically or socially prepared for the intense level of coursework (Tafreschi & Thiemann, 2016). Higher education has implemented policies to benefit the unprepared student to succeed in post-secondary programs. Collegiate institutions say there are two ways to allow these students to be successful; remedial education courses or grade retention. There are differences in repetition success, dependent upon if the education is voluntary or involuntary (Tafreschi & Thiemann, 2016). Students are more successful if retained in primary school rather than at an older grade level (Tafreschi & Thiemann, 2016). Renirie (2017) discussed learners who are classified as traditional and non-traditional students. Traditional being students who attend college directly following high school graduation. Non-traditional are students who are age 25 and above who are attending school after work-force experience.

Colleges are rethinking how to intervene in three areas of need for students; financial, academic, and social. Interventions were put in place to address the gap of tutoring for upper level in addition to the traditional lower-level coursework (Windsor & Ivey's, 2018). It was indicated that when retained students had help from parents and mentors, friends who were positive about school, school involvement, and aid in completing college applications indicated factors aligning with post-secondary success (Horn & Chen, 1998). Lewis (2018) stated when students fail and are required to repeat a course it becomes a difficult choice. Her study was conducted over college level nursing students who failed and repeated coursework to continue their dream for licensure. These students are faced with choices such as: remain in the course,

repeat the class, drop out, persist in the program, and any of these being by personal choice or college decision explained (Lewis, 2018).

Administration focused on the vast amounts of students who drop out of school and the associated costs (Hughes et al., 2017). Kabay (2016) stated that America is estimated to spend anywhere from $12 billion to $18 billion for students who are retained. This could attribute to the fact that schools prefer to socially promote students when feasible in place of retention for what teachers attribute to immaturity or falling behind. The inability to complete high school or an equivalency program predicts the economic, social, health, and job struggles for the rest of their lives (Hughes et al., 2017). The projected income loss over the lifetime of students in a 2012 Texas study is $263,440 compared to diploma earners in their cohort class (Hughes et al., 2017).

There are many factors which contribute to post-secondary success. Students having to make choices based on income, health, and academic ability all contribute to their success. The staggering difference in income for those unsuccessful students result in choices for them throughout the remainder of their life (Hughes et al., 2017). With more than one million students from abroad enrolled in U.S. colleges annually, there are problems associated with communication and classroom activities (Maeda, 2017). These students hope to attain global communication skills, world knowledge, and higher order thinking through being a part of the US collegiate system (Urban & Palmer, 2014). There are many factors which impact foreign students and their adverse emotions, while faculty can assist them to be successful in the classroom through application of the self-efficacy theory (Maeda, 2017).

Students who attain a higher self-efficacy in early years of their education are more likely to be interested in a variety of career options. These students pay attention to education to be

open for a successful developed career later in life (Lent et al., 1994). Self-efficacy is tied to

one's cognitive and academic ability to succeed resulting in not having fear to try unforeseen

tasked (Bandura et al., 1996). American college students rank around 16th in the world in regard

to college enrollment while American jobs are in need of college graduates are nearing 33%,

going further to state about one out of every ten low socio-economic kindergartners will graduate

college (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Parental education is a direct tie to student success in school,

to include the amount of years they are enrolled in school and later success after school. Family

income, structure of the family unit, and education level appears to correlate to student success.

There appears to be a difference in the social position of parents based on their educational level

and how they apply that to their child's education (Egalite, 2016)

**Contributing Factors**

The factors which contribute to retention go beyond a student's cognitive ability.

There are the factors of age at the start of school and when retained. Factors relating to social and

dropping out of school based on being retained. Kabay (2016) said one of the failed parts of

education planning is retention as is puts a flaw in our system by making it tainted. In looking at

the history of retention it often goes hand in hand with leaving school early (dropping out).

Grade retention has a controversial connotation for the workforce because students are delayed

in the graduation process. There might also be reluctance from potential employment based on

perceived notions regarding retention. The associated costs of repetition for students at the post-

secondary level also are a factor to consider (Tafreschi & Thiemann, 2016).

In the current world it is hard to fathom taking 23 years to complete eight years of

primary education. In the country of Malawi students often don't start school until the age of six

and are often not continually enrolled. They are pulled out or have school interrupted for

performance, conflictions with becoming an adult, and poor conditions of the school. This causes students to repeat grade levels or courses due to the frequent interruptions and delays in the educational process (Sunny et al., 2017). Five countries conducted a study on nutrition and associated birthweights of students and the likelihood of grade retention. This indicated a correlation between students who had higher birthweights and the lower indication of grade retention (Martorell et al., 2010). Factors associated with students not persisting to school completion after being retained include economic status, mother's academic achievement, and value of education by the family (Horn, 1997; Horn & Chen, 1998).

**Age and Gender**

The age in which a student starts school differs considerably across Europe; four in Ireland, five in England and Netherlands, seven in Denmark, Finland, Bulgaria, and Sweden (Sharp, 2002). In some countries they only have to reach the age limit by the end of the school year while in others they must be the age prior to admission to the school year (Agasisti & Cordero, 2017). Battistin and Schizzerotto (2019) indicated that gender could affect the effort output of the student. They believe girls outperform their male counterparts based on social relationships, motivation, and ability to concentrate which attribute to learning deficiencies. Hwang and Cappella (2018) stated "kindergarteners are often held back or red shirted" (p. 566) in addition to concerns over academics which might not be as severe at this point in time. Any negative notions of retaining kindergarten students were non-factors after a four-year time frame. Dropping out of school and grade retention is higher among boys compared to girls, higher for African American and Hispanic to that of their White counter parts. Indicated by a related empirical study, positive retention outcomes have been reported by students at the middle school age (Hwang & Cappella, 2018).

Minority students were retained 30% more frequently than their white peers based on a sample from National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS). From this study it indicated boys were retained at the rate of 24% to girls at 15% which also showed significance in socioeconomic status (Meisels & Liaw, 1993). Early grade repeaters and students who are retained in their primary years (K-2) of education. These students are able to have success early on with repeated content over peers who have a first-time exposure to the academic topics. They also are able to have more social advancement through being exposed to group settings and higher coping ability in comparison to younger peers (Goos et al., 2013). It is also relevant to add that in 15 African countries boys who come from lower income households and schools with fewer resources were two times higher for repeating a grade level compared to their counterparts who are from more affluent schools and homes. Boys who were two or more years older in age than their grade level peers had a higher frequency of dropping out at the higher-grade levels (Branson et al., 2014).

**Social Factors**

Accelerating a student has negative effects while retaining may have positive effects based on consistent predictions from frame-of-reference research (Marsh, 2016). When students are retained at different age limits there are conceptually different social outcomes. Early grade retention has factors of positive self-awareness and social connections with peers compared to later grade retention might have more detrimental effects on adolescence (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2016). Vandecandelaere et al. (2016) stated kindergartner retention was more socially beneficial compared to that of first graders based on the social comparison theory by Festinger.

Self-efficacy does not seem to be a factor for students who are retained at an early age but might result in a disconnect from school or contribute to not feeling successful based on the

study by Hughes et al. (2017). One of the oldest psychological attributes is self-concept being a key factor to the revolution of positive reinforcement (Marsh, 2016). His focus was on how people can get the most from life by being healthy, normal, and above average. Self-concept is not a factor inside a person but a theoretical factor which is important both as an internal and external force of one's life (Marsh, 2016). There are genetic differences between boys and girls exposing them to preconditioned factors (Hughes et al., 2017). Hwang and Cappella (2018) discussed how early adolescence can be difficult and traumatic times for students with the changes in biological, psychosocial, and academic changes. They go on to state how peers and bonding become an important factor in the success or path taken by a student. This is where it becomes challenging to determine the retention of a student transitioning from middle to high school (Cham et al., 2015).

There is limited understanding of the impact of grade retention on peer relationships, the studies which exist rely heavily of parent and teacher accounts rather than that of the child. The students who were retained were viewed to have more disruptive classroom behavior and fewer classmates and peer groups (Pianta et al., 1997). Feelings rated by students on peers who were retained in grades third through sixth grade, they did not perceive harmful peer relationships (Pierson & Connell, 1992). When students feel rejected or unaccepted, they are more apt to become involved in negative behaviors, potentially have mental health problems, and engage in devious activity. This also is due to them being uninvolved in school and having a hard time connecting with peers due to adjustment problems stemming from retention or academic engagement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Kupersmidt et al., 1990; Rubin et al., 1998).

**Socio-Economic Status**

Socio-economic status (SES) refers to the standing or class of a group of people based on their occupation, income and education level (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020). Further examination of SES revealed it is more than education level and family income but a much broader issue of perceptions based on subjectivity or opinion of others. When understanding student populations that fall into low socio-economic and ethnicity there needs to be the inclusion of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Adverse childhood experiences are when a child is exposed to financial difficulty, abusive or neglected treatment, dysfunction of the home life, and a violent community environment (Felitti et al., 1998). This population of students are often at an increased risk of learning deficiencies which include disorders of mental capacity, physical impairments, and delayed cognitive functions which all can lead to struggling in the classroom.

The more ACEs or at-risk factors a student is measured on potentially the higher possibility of grade retention. There is an underlying belief that grade retention is connected with a students' socio-economic status, race and gender. The earlier a student is exposed with multiple check points on the ACEs scale they are at an elevated likelihood of poorer health risk, to struggle in school, and have relationship issues (Burke et al., 2011; Hinojosa et al., 2019). When students opposite in gender, race, and SES display comparative educational tribulations in early elementary they are not retained but often boys of non-white and low SES families are retained a few years prior to their peers (Raffaele Mendez, et al., 2014; Warren et al., 2014). This group of students tend to make up a majority of the retained student population at an earlier and more consistent rate. The phrase educational malpractice has been used in recent years to explain the relationship to grade retention and school dropouts putting a higher connection between the two

than originally thought. The rate of student retention and dropout continues to grow even though educators and practitioners believe the relationship has a low impact (Hughes et al., 2018; Jimerson, 2004).

**Ethnicity**

In Brazil, students aged 7 to 14 make up 96% of the whole district student enrollment, 44% of those were older than their peers and grade cohort. This varied by country regions by over 30% difference; in the northern part 62% and just above 30% in the southern of the students older than those in their grade level. The overage was due to retention and not based on birthdate or school entry date. This highlights the issue of black male students from disadvantaged homes are more likely to be retained due to not meeting grade proficiency (Ferrao et al., 2017).

In the United States just over 20 percent of children aged 18 and under are being raised by immigrants. These households contain at least one parent who is not authorized to be in the United States, reaching a staggering number of 5 million children, out of the nearly 17 million children residing in immigrant households (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Immigrant families bring their children to the United States for the opportunity of a better education and discover that education does not afford the same equality in all areas. They discover self-efficacy becomes a large part of their child's success in the academic world and beyond after high school. In the United States there is an extended timeframe where unequal assessment scores, student grades, leveled tiers, teacher bias, and the overall evaluation and success are tied to a student's gender, racial identification, and ethnicity all play a part (Bettie, 2014; Bondy et al., 2017; Kao et al., 2013; Lareau, 2011). As more immigrant families bring students to school, they are realizing that public education in the United States places students in classifications based what appears to be racially or ethnically driven (Feliciano, 2009; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2009).

There are groups of student populations which face more adverse effects to their self-efficacy based on their ethnicity; these groups include Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans due to the higher tendency to live at poverty level and other adverse living environments adding stress to the home environment (Macartney et al., 2013). Families who face immigrant status are at higher risk for low self-efficacy of the parents or guardians due to depression, being a non-native, and struggle with school expectations in the home (Peacock-Chambers et al., 2017). This can be seen in students who have parents who have been detained or returned to their country of origin, these students experience high stress or anxiety, afraid of authority, diet and resting patterns are affected, and possibly of family relocating to avoid arrest. It is possible for these students to transpose these feelings in the classroom through poor attendance, low grades, and discipline issues resulting in further set back (Chaudry et al., 2010; Capps et al., 2007; Lopez, 2011)

The intrinsic notion of ethnicity bearing any consequence on self-efficacy at the onset does not seem that it would be a contributing factor, but research shows the opposite to be apparent. Out of the total United States population nearly 13% are born in foreign countries equaling about 43 million people. Students attending school in the United States, of all students around 20% have at least one parent who is foreign, and the number is expect to increase over the next three decades by 13% (Bettie, 2014; Kasinitz et al., 2009; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2009).

**Dropouts**

There are different classifications of students who drop out of school. They can be divided into categories; those who leave on their own accord and those who leave because they violate school mandates and policies. Those students who leave on their own accord often leave due to home environment, financial situations, and personal crisis. These students might have

been able to successfully complete school to graduation if they would not have had underlying issues (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; McNeal, 1997). Whereas, students who are forced to leave school are ones who have been expelled, failed to complete graduation requirements, repeated disciplinary actions, and academic struggles. These are the students who come to be known as frequent fliers, meaning they have repeated discipline or academic warnings. They choose to walk away from school because they cannot see a successful end for themselves (Balfanz et al., 2014; Toldson et al., 2015).

Many times, drop out students were categorized based off factors of not earning a high school diploma or GED by the time of fourteen total years of enrolled schooling from the date of the first attempt at first grade also referred as 5th year cohorts (Hughes et al. 2018). The dropout students have had comparative data linked to earlier studies where students came from poorer urban schools and limited controls for promoted compared to retained students. Dropout factors used to measure in one study consisted of three measures to include; if a child repeated, the number of times repeated, and grades repeated first through fourth (Kabay, 2016). Dropouts do not always occur due to factors associated with academic struggle. Nearly 33 percent of secondary students in the United States have half of their coursework and years completed at the time they dropout. These students are often capable of completing high school but dropout for other reasons. This group of students have a large impact on their own lives, family, and community causing a ripple of lower workforce productivity and stress on services and healthcare system (Bridgeland et al., 2006)

In Texas, it is hard to figure the dropout percentages because of several loopholes allowing students to withdrawal but not be in violation of truancy or attendance laws (Hughes et al., 2017). Uganda also has difficulty tracking dropout rates due to students moving or

misrepresented data (Kabay, 2016). Research indicates that many students move, begin working, and the poor records kept by schools. This theme is continued in data collected which state many of these students only stay at a job for two years before changing professions. Due to this there is continual emphasis on states to improve graduation rates. These rates have become so important that in some states principals are required to complete graduation progress reports and graduation dropout summary reports annually for the cohort class of that academic year. These reports also look at the students retained to the same grade level and amount of severe discipline issues including in-school suspensions and expulsions. The states use these reports to assess funding and accreditation to school districts based on the success of students completing high school.

The possibility of grade retained students being more apt to drop out of school rather than peers who were promoted (Hughes et al., 2017). They go on to say "retention, so far as we can determine, does not impede…children academically or assault their self-esteem in the early years, yet something about the experience apparently weakened repeaters attachment to school" (Hughes et al., 2017, p. 14). This could be more of an indicator for boys than girls based on their social ability to form relationships and bonds easily. Kabay (2016) contributed some of the dropout rates to poor record keeping in Uganda's school system and the frequent movement of students to aid in family income. This causes students to have difficulty to pick up with changes in studies and gaps in their educational process.

The issues surrounding high school dropouts begin well before a student reaches the high school years. The topic of dropout students is related to unemployment rates, lifetime earnings, being placed in jail, poor health, and overall societal implications (Lee-St. John et al., 2018). In the country of Malaysia, boys tend to dropout due to the fewer number of male teachers. Girls are left enrolled in school more often than boys, to aid in the female job outlook. Boys appear to

have more negative peer influence than girls and therefore tend to dislike school more (Jones & Ramchand, 2016). Latin origin students have an increased likelihood of dropping out of school due to higher discipline, being labeled as difficult, suspended or expelled more frequently than their Caucasian peers. This student population is among the least to continue to post-secondary school and to not even complete high school. Their self-efficacy is low based on the misapplication of academic discipline and educational attainment (Kao et al., 2013; Perreira et al., 2006; Rodriguez, 2012).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In this research, I wanted to focus the literature on what was known, unknown and highlight current gaps on grade retention and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an indicator of how personally motivated or driven one is to complete a task to their desired outcome. When provided with positive support students can build their self-efficacy to a higher level. They need to have support from family, teachers, and peers to be able to understand the importance self-efficacy plays in their overall success. Self-efficacy can be both positively and negatively impacted by those around another person through mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic and emotional state. Grade retention indicates that many post-secondary institutions are required to make modifications for students based on the need for remediation (Tafreschi & Thiemann, 2016). Relevant research shows the short-term effects but fails to determine the factors associated with the long-term effects of retention on student success and life experiences (Hughes et al., 2018). High school graduates are deemed to earn more wages in the estimated about of $8,000 more annually to those who have dropped out of school or not obtained a diploma (Hughes et al., 2018). They go on to state in addition, persons aged 25 and above who were dropouts; health are reported to be considerably worse than peers in spite of

earned wages. Most of the research data collected on retention having long-term positive effects are inconclusive. Many of the studies do not have data which show a significance between retention and drop out specifically. They indicate the connection for lack of student success to the other factors such as; age, race, gender, socioeconomic, and a support system. Through this qualitative phenomenological research, I want to add to the impact of the relevant topic graduated adults who were retained. The impact of retention goes beyond that of a student at the point of returning to a grade level. The relevance of lived experiences is to make a connection to post-secondary success and students who have been retained.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. This chapter will cover the research procedures, design, and analysis for a transcendental phenomenological study. The chapter also will include the design setup of research question and guiding questions, the study setting, participants, IRB and other approvals, researcher role, and the method of data collection. The steps will be conducted in a manner to which the study could be replicated by other researchers ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The chapter will include the study designed questionnaires, personal interviews, personal journals, and focus group as to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during K-12 education.

### Design

This study followed a transcendental phenomenological approach of a qualitative study to describe the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. A qualitative method of research was selected for this study due to the desire to understand the lived experiences of young adults who experienced K-12 retention (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental phenomenology was determined best for this study to describe and discover the lived experiences of young adult individuals who had been retained during their K-12 education (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research is a broad explanation of a research approach and manner in which to conduct research on human experiences (Saldana, 2011). Moustakas (1994) explained transcendental phenomenology as to understand an occurrence through open and

undisturbed point of view through self-reflection of the one who experienced the event. Textural description is the explanation of the participant's experience and structural description is the context of how they experienced the phenomenon of retention in K-12 (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Moustakas (1994) explained the struggle human researchers face is the ability to interpret personal meaning coming out of "real and the ideal" (p. 27). My rationale for choosing transcendental phenomenology was the variable of understanding it brings in a philosophical manner to the phenomenon through the real-life dynamics of young adults who were retained in K-12 education. Since this was the first time the participants were explaining the in-depth experience of retention and I have, professional experience, an *epoche* is necessary. I avoided my personal ideas and opinions from interfering in the study through the use of a researcher's journal and interview notes.

<p style="text-align:center"><strong>Research Questions</strong></p>

The following research questions were designed to guide this study:

**Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school?

**Guiding Question 1**

How did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention?

**Guiding Question 2**

How do the young adults explain their K-12 educational experiences and the adult's future in connection with their personal grade retention?

**Setting**

The setting selected for this research study was rural southwest Kansas. This area was

selected because it contains three southwest Kansas large public high schools. Young adult

alumni were selected based on having attended and graduated from one of the three large public

high schools. The potential young adult graduate participants were ages 18-25. Each selected

alumni community graduated from schools where there is also an area community college. These

southwestern Kansas communities are within a 90-mile radius of each other. The school alumni

groups selected are graduates of Southwest High School A (SWHSA), Southwest High School B

(SWHSB), and Southwest High School C (SWHSC) (pseudonyms). This geographic location

was selected for the number of graduates in which to select 12-15 participants for the study and

the possibility of retained graduated students. The three schools are brick and mortar campuses

serving students grades 9-12. The three schools contain the traditional structure of

superintendent, principals, school counselors, teachers, and support staff. The average enrollment

of high school student populations is 500 for SWHSA, 500 for SWHSB, and 300 for SWHSC

(KSDE, 2019). The typical student ethnicity is on average 75% Hispanic, 20% White, and 5%

African American (KSDE, 2019). Each of these sites have pre-existing alumni associations and

alumni social media outlets in which to reach young adult students who were retained during

their K-12 education. The participants of the study are graduates of the area but might not

currently reside in the southwestern Kansas area. The young adult participants' current location

could be outside of the state or country due to college or trade school enrollment or workforce

location.

**Participants**

Purposeful sampling is the selection of people who have been selected based on their

"information rich" account of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015, p. 46). It is considered best practice

to interview anywhere from 5 to 25 participants for a phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). The

selected range of participants were 12 to 15 young adults, ages 18 to 25, who are graduates of

either SWHSA, SWHSB, or SWHSC and were retained during their K-12 education selected

using purposeful sampling. I selected the range of 12 to 15 participants because saturation is

found to occur at 12 participants (Guest et al., 2006). There are varying recommendations for the

different qualitative studies, for a phenomenology is it recommended to have at minimum 6

study participants (Morse et al., 2002). Criterion sampling procedure was used due to all

participants having been retained during their K-12 education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The

participants which were selected for this study are graduated young adults, ages 18-25, who were

retained in K-12 education and pseudonyms was used to protect their privacy (Patton, 2015). The

age group of young adults 18-25 are the most recent graduated adults with the freshest

experience with the phenomenon which is the rational for selecting this group. Grade retention

and age was the only demographic criterion required for the study, as graduated young adults

ages 18-25 who were retained in K-12 education were the focus of the study. Gender, ethnicity,

and other demographics were provided but were not limiting selection criterion for the study.

These demographics provided themes within the study which emerged from the data collection.

These young adults were recruited based on a social media post (Appendix A) sent through their

alumni associations page. A participant recruitment survey (Appendix B) was developed to

select the 13 retained young adult participants of the study (Patton, 2015).

## Procedures

It was necessary to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C) of Liberty

University approval prior to conducting any portion of participant selection and data collection.

Once I obtained IRB approval necessary to conduct the study, I contacted the school districts; SWHSA, SWHSB, and SWHSC to gain their support for the study to help provide validity to the potential participants. Schools contacted did not feel the need to approve or provide consent since the study participants were graduated adults. I provided the participants with a copy of the letter (Appendix D) to the school districts asking for their endorsement of the study, a letter explaining the IRB approval of the research (Appendix E), and proper IRB and consent forms (Appendix F) to the participants showing the validity of the study (Hatch, 2002). These were distributed to the selection group both through their email addresses and mailed if requested. This aided in the validity and reason for the study to the selected research participants.

The study's purpose letter will explain the inherent risks and benefits associated with participation in the research. I used the participant recruitment survey (Appendix B) developed from the pilot study and administered the recruitment survey through the alumni associations pre-existing social media groups and alumni association email list (Doody & Doody, 2015; Hatch, 2002). Once participants returned the recruitment survey (Appendix B) and were selected, consent forms were distributed to the selected 13 participants. The consent forms once completed by the participant were returned to me for the duration of the study. Upon receipt of the participant consent forms, pseudonyms were assigned to the 13 participants using the alphabet and a corresponding gender-neutral name.

Questionnaires (Appendix G) were distributed to the 13 young adult participants to enable more direct questions and answers fixed in nature (Patton, 2015). This allowed the interview portion to be more purposeful and respectful of the participants' schedules. Once the selected 13 participants completed the questionnaires (Appendix G), interviews were scheduled and conducted either face to face at a location acceptable by the participant or through e-

conference using Zoom. Interviews were transcribed by hand to determine if additional field

work was necessary (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were coded using the program ATLAS.ti

and then placed those themes in proper sections of the study to finalize research findings (Hatch,

2002). I analyzed the data, develop themes and align with the theory-based research questions,

outlining any limitations or gaps found within the study (Hatch, 2002).

## The Researcher's Role

The research paradigm is guided by the interpretivist paradigm (Moustakas, 1994).

Commonly used for qualitative research because human behaviors cannot be predicted because

each person acts out of their own beliefs, environment, and other outside factors (Moustakas,

1994). There is no control over interview subjects, human emotion and the approach is very

subjective due to the nature of research (Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative transcendental

phenomenology seeks to view the world through the individual, after setting aside their own

understanding of a phenomenon and recall their initial experience of the phenomenon (Gall et al.,

2007). The instrument in a qualitative study must be a human instrument in where the researcher

elaborates on the phenomenon in their own words (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Merriam, 1998).

I, Suzann Bouray, was the human instrument researcher in this study (Creswell, 2013;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Currently, I serve as the principal of a southwestern

Kansas Alternative School (pseudonym). A majority of the students I serve come from low

achieving academic beginnings, were retained in school, or are even previous dropouts. Many

students enrolled in my school are non-traditional high school adults. I also have a personal

background in the perception of retention. I was not enrolled in Kindergarten at age five but held

out of school an additional year by my mother for being born premature. Other students during my elementary and high school years often perceived me as a retained student due to my age.

I had no connection to the schools or participants of the study beyond an educational interest in the understanding of K-12 retention and the experiences of young adults who were retained during their education process. This allowed me to be sympathetic and understanding to my research participants while not being involved other than the human instrument recorder of their lived experience. I needed to be aware that the participants were explaining their lived experience and there is no path set for how they might react to questions or aspects of the study. There is no intentional harm that was subjected, and bias was minimized as much as possible in regard to the participants (Raheim et al., 2016).

The potential biases I had regarding retention are that grade retention is both beneficial and limiting to students based on my professional experiences. Bracketing is considered a key feature to phenomenology and is important to set aside any personal experience to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I bracketed through the use of a researcher's journal to notate personal experience and potential bias (Fischer, 2009). This is similar to the process described by Mousakas (1994) known as *epoche*. I am a principal of a high school where a high percentage of students have been retained or have dropped out to avoid retention at some point prior to attending my building. In addition, I had bias based on my own personal experience, although not retained but started school one year later based on birth date and being premature. These biases were addressed by not allowing my experience or that of my current students to project onto the participants of the study. The interview questions were open-ended and non-leading when asked by myself to the study participants, asking for clarification in place of using

assumptions (Raheim et al, 2016). I utilized an outside respected source to review findings for any potential biases.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

It is important to gain and understand the point of view of the participants on their personal experiences with retention during their K-12 education through triangulation (Moustakas, 1994). The data collection methods used in this study were interviews, a focus group, and document analysis (Hatch, 2002). Additionally, I used questionnaires (Appendix G) to gather additional information. Prior to the collection of any data for the study a pilot group composed of six adult coworkers reviewed the participant recruitment survey (Appendix B), questionnaire, and interview questions. A participant recruitment survey (Appendix B) was used to obtain the 13 participants for the study. The 13 participants were selected through the use of purposeful criterion sampling of predetermined criteria from the recruitment survey (Appendix B) (Patton, 2015). Questionnaires (Appendix G) were used to aid in the interview process and to provide answers which might be withheld in the interview (Patton, 2015). Interviews were the main aspect of the study as it was the exact words of each participant and their personal account as they remember the event of retention (Merriam, 2009). Document analysis was completed through the use of a participant personal journal as the final way in which data was collected for this study. These artifacts again provided an insight to the thoughts and perceptions from a first-person account of the study participant (Tracy, 2013).

*Participant Selection*

In qualitative research it is common to use a participant selection survey as criterion sampling to select participants with a common phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The participant recruitment survey (Appendix B) was given to all adult graduates who are members of the

graduating class with pre-existing social media alumni group pages of SWHSA, SWHSB, and

SWHSC. The 13 participants of the study were identified as being retained in K-12 education

through the recruitment survey (Appendix B). The recruitment survey (Appendix B) was

comprised of four questions to determine the qualified participants. The questions on the

recruitment survey (Appendix B) include the potential participant's name, graduation year, age,

and whether they were retained during their K-12 education. The recruitment survey (Appendix

B) which was used in the study was conducted as part of a pilot study of six co-workers who

reviewed the content for validity. The pilot study examined the recruitment survey (Appendix

B), questionnaire, and interview questions to maintain credibility and trustworthiness.

**Interviews**

Interviews are the interaction between both the interviewer and interview participant

where knowledge is gained which is the basis for the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews

are a way to understand what the interviewee lived or experienced from their own perspective

and stated in their own words. Noesis is one's ability to bring conscience of meaning to a

person's rationale of their thoughts (van Deurzen, 2015). Turned into noesis, the act of

remembering, feeling, judging, all brought from consciousness (Mousakas, 1994). The

interviews (Appendix H) were conducted at a setting of the choice of the interviewee for their

comfort and ease as well as to minimize distractions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). If the interview

could not be conducted face to face it was set up through e-conference using Zoom. The

interview questions (Appendix H) are designed around Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy.

This theory takes an in depth look at the person's belief to perform personal behaviors with

specific attainments and performance in mind as children grown into adults. All interviews

(Appendix H) were recorded by video and audio to be able to capture the emotions, dialect, and

exact words as the interviewee relived their experience.

Table 1

*Open-Ended Interview Questions*

| Questions |
| --- |

1. Hello, my name is Suzann Bouray, and before we start, I would like to thank you for taking time to participate in this study. As you are aware, I am attempting to learning about the experience of retention in K-12 education and am interested in what you have to share.

2. Please introduce yourself and tell me what you prefer to be addressed as.

3. Please explain your fondest school memory.

4. Please explain your K-12 experience.

5. How was the decision to retain you made?

   a. Who all was a part of this decision?

6. Why do you think you were retained?

7. Do you feel trauma led to your retention? If so, what trauma in your childhood led to your retention? (For example: Divorce or Death of a parent)

8. How were you notified about your retention?

9. How do you remember feeling about the decision to be retained?

10. What were your feelings when you started school the year you were retained?

11. What were your feelings when you started school the following year?

12. How do you remember your friends acting towards you after you were retained?

13. How did your new classmates treat you in your retained grade?

14. Did issues arise at home about your retention? If so, what issues arose at home about being retained, either from parents/guardians or siblings?

15. What about being retained was helpful in your education?

16. Do you think there was another option besides retention that would have helped you succeed in school?

17. How was your personal efficacy affected during school and as an adult?

18. What has been your education since high school?

    a. Formal or Informal (On the Job)?

19. What has been your employment history as an adult?

    a. Was this effected by retention?

20. What part do you think retention played in your personal relationships?

    a. Relationship during your school years?

    b. Relationships as a young adult (18-24)?

    c. Relationships as you continue to age (25+)?

21. What are your feelings about retention for your own children at this time?

22. Is there any information you would like to tell me about your personal experience with retention that I have failed to ask?

      Questions one through three are knowledge questions (Patton, 2015), and were developed as follow-up questions to the questionnaire that had been previously answered and submitted by the study participants. The purpose of the questions was to be non-threatening, straightforward and helped to develop a connection between the participant and myself (Patton, 2015). These questions stayed the same for each interview as they were intended to get the interviewee in the mindset of their school experience.

Question four was for the participant to be able to explain their school experience from their point of view. This allowed them to explain their point of view and establish their feelings towards education, peers, and personal experience. Demanet and Van Houtte (2016) explained the variance grade retention had based on the age of the retained student.

Question five was for the purpose of understanding who made the decision to retain the student. Develops the background as to who played the part in the decision making. The school, teacher, and parents should have determined the best course of action based on data and individual factors for the student according to Klapproth and Schaltz (2015).

Question six was a knowledge question to determine the aspects of retention based on the individual who experienced the phenom. Moustakas (1994) expressed the what and how of the personal experience of the phenomenon.

Question seven was based on the understanding of any traumatic events which might have occurred in the student's life at the time of retention. Hwang and Cappella (2018) explained that students experience varying effects of biological and psychological changes based on traumatic events.

Question eight was a knowledge question intended to switch gears and deescalate any negative or hurtful feelings for the participant. It is important to understand the emotions retention has caused or impacted the lives of students who were identified (Peixoto et al., 2016).

Questions nine through 11 were designed to examine the feelings of the participant regarding their retention. This relates to the self-efficacy theory, Bandura (1977) explaining that a person's psychological state can change the degree and intensity of their self-efficacy. If a person's coping behavior is not engaged from the intensity of self-efficacy, then their ability to deal with challenges and adversity is altered (Bandura, 1997). These needs conflict with one

another and a crisis results; each person then either has a positive or negative result from the event. This is why it is important to gain the understanding of the event of retention from the memory of the interviewee (Moustakas, 1994).

Questions 12 and 13 reflected on the association the interviewee had with peers both before and after their retention. Hwang and Cappella (2018) explain peers are important to a student's success.

Question 14 reflected on the young adult's experiences in reflection to their home experiences. Egalite (2016) discussed the difference in social position and the effects it had on their child's educational experiences.

Question 15 reflected on the outcomes associated with retention. Hughes et al (2018) examined the negative effects dropping out of school based on a retention of a student. There are more negatives associated than positives based on the related research.

Question 16 discussed other avenues available to the student besides grade retention. This may not be known to the interviewee but based on Klapproth and Schaltz (2015) social promotion was an option which school began to utilize as an alternative to grade retention starting around the 1990's.

Questions 17 through 20 reflected on present life and adult experiences in perspective to personal efficacy, employment, relationships, and success. Success builds a strong belief, failures tear it down, and with repeated successes comes a higher attainment of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This is where the notion of personal perseverance comes to play in a person's life. There is an idea that self-actualization is a life-long process gained through life experiences (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016).

Question 17 was relevant to the participant's personal efficacy which relates directly to the theory identified as relevant to this study. It has been established in Bandura's theory that personal or self-efficacy is one of the central themes to becoming a well-adjusted adult (Bandura, 1977; Bandura et al., 1996; Bandura, 1997). I felt it important to understand their self-efficacy both during school and as an adult. This question led to a clarification probe, the understanding of self-efficacy might not be understood (Patton, 2015). In clarifying, I gave the definition of self-efficacy, then restated the question.

Question 18 was in regard to education beyond high school. The rationale behind this question was to understand if retention played any part in their attitude or perception about the education process and their ability to succeed. This fits into Bandura's theory about self-efficacy appraisals and the uncertainty of the outcome without prior life experience (Bandura, 1977). This is a question left toward the end when a genuine connection has been established and does not feel like an attack at the interviewee (Patton, 2015).

Question 19 was about employment and their socioeconomic status. This question is included to see if there is a connection to their opinion of their abilities to obtain a job or their income as a result of being retained. I wanted to understand what role if any their socioeconomic status has had beyond their academic years. This is important to understand their life experience with employment as an adult (Moustakas, 1994). This question was aimed at understanding some of their other answers and to establish their outlook or viewpoint (Patton, 2015).

Question 20 was asking about relationships; it helps the study to determine if the participant has any relationships issues which they might attribute to retention. The understanding of personal relationships over three different parts of their life is important to the

understanding of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). They may not have been willing to share this information if asked earlier in the interview (Patton, 2015).

Question 21 was about their own children and if they would consider retaining them based on their own experience or present feelings towards grade retention. There are so many different aspects as to the purpose of retention and if it is always the best decision (Peixoto, 2015).

The final question, asked for any additional information which I might have missed. This was important because questioning was designed to fit the overall group of participants and obtain personal accounts of their retention and their feelings about it regarding their life (Moustakas, 1994). In giving the participant an outlet to cover any relevant information which the other interview questions did not or address feelings other questions brought into their mind. If it comes down to the interviewee not feeling like addressing questions this could be the one shot question. This could lead into other questions based on what the interviewee has to say (Patton, 2015).

**Focus Group**

By definition focus groups are conducted in a manner where personal perceptions on a specific issue is collected in a neutral setting where the participants are comfortable and non-threatened (Kitzinger, 2005). Four participants were chosen for the focus group discussion (Appendix J) based upon their agreement to participate. The focus group was held virtually in meeting room using the program Zoom. Meeting virtually allowed for a way to gather information in an easy manner where participants are able to speak more openly about their retention (Krueger & Casey, 2014). The intention of the focus group was to allow individual participants to collaborate with other participants who experienced K-12 retention. This allowed

for piggy backing off of thoughts and recollections of others providing a different perspective from the individual interviews. I led the focus group through a series of questions intended to understand the phenomenon more fully.

**Personal Journals**

Personal journals (Appendix I) were used to collect additional data after the questionnaire (Appendix G) and open-ended interview (Appendix H) portions (Moustakas, 1994). I asked the participants to complete a journal after our interview (Tracy, 2013). I wanted to obtain a primary account of their thoughts and memories that come to mind after our conversation. When put on the spot sometimes people forget and think of things they wanted to say or didn't remember to include. This allowed for a place to document personal accounts which might be easier to write about rather than discuss with a stranger. The journals were conducted for five days following the personal interview and consisted of roughly one paragraph for each prompt. In order to accomplish the journal (Appendix I) component, I contacted each participant with a prompt each day for five days (Moustakas, 1994).

*Questionnaire*

It is common to use questionnaires (Appendix G) in qualitative research as a way to collect information in where the researcher does not need to be present (Moustakas, 1994). The questionnaires provided a way to obtain information which the selected participants might not feel comfortable answering in the interview. The questionnaire portion had questions in regard to the participants' demographics, socioeconomic status, personal relationships and home life. The questionnaire used in the study was conducted as part of a pilot study of the same six co-workers who reviewed the content for validity for the recruitment survey (Appendix B). The pilot study

examined the questionnaire to maintain credibility and trustworthiness for the intended research study.

## Data Analysis

In this study, which was qualitative transcendental phenomenological in nature, accounted of the lived experiences of retained K-12 young adults, relies upon Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological reduction process. This was conducted through obtaining IRB approval, getting school endorsements, gaining participant recruitment surveys, selecting participants, and collecting consent forms. Once consent was received I delivered questionnaires, conduct open-ended interviews, and communicated journal prompts for five days following interviews which led me to initiate the phenomenological reduction process and use Moustakas's seven step process. The seven-step process follows:

### Bracketing/Epoche

Bracketing is from Creswell (2013) and epoche is from Moustakas (1994) and they are similar in nature. The purpose is to eliminate any pre-judgement which I have in regards to the topic of retention. This reduced my bias towards the phenomenon and allowed me to interpret the findings as self-reported by the study participants (Moustakas, 1994). The research was focused on the responses and descriptions provided by the participants. In order to achieve this, I had kept a researcher's journal and interview notes. I understood the term retention means to be held at the same grade level for an additional academic year, but I wanted to further understand the process and life experiences of individuals who had experienced the phenomenon. As an educator who has experience with students of like backgrounds, I was able to provide validity to the research topic and be sympathetic to my subjects (Husserl, 1931).

**Coding**

After bracketing was conducted it was necessary to analyze and code the received data from the questionnaires, interviews, and personal journals to develop the themes for the research study. Coding allows for researchers to highlight important phrases and emotions as a result of the phenomenon. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, compared, and brought together for final horizonalization. ATLAS.ti is the software analysis program which was used to find connections between the data to further develop themes and represent those into visual representation (Creswell, 2013).

**Horizonalization**

Moustakas (1994) explains horizonalization as every statement as having of equal value or importance. This is a credible part to choosing which data to keep and disregard from the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Clustering of themes begin to emerge through this process and horizons are formed into clusters (Moustakas, 1994). This was where, as the researcher, I found the relevant data and non-important findings are unused. Themes started to develop out of groups which are formed from the participants' thick rich responses.

**Clustering into Themes**

The questionnaires, interviews, and personal journal entries were entered into the ATLAS.ti program to allow for coding and horizonalization to occur. This met the necessity for triangulation of data and non-pertinent data was removed from the theme clusters (Patton, 2015). This allowed for the focus of the phenomenon to gain research validity. It was important to allow for my researcher notes to be added into these clusters which became important after the collection of data.

**Textural Descriptions**

Moustakas (1994) indicates the need to be categorized into textural and structural categories. Textural is explained by Moustakas (1994) as what the participant experienced as part of the phenomenon. The textural categories were found through the interviews of the participants explaining their life experiences with K-12 retention. Each participant's experience was personal and individual to their life story. It is important to take time to ensure each response by all participants is reviewed and coded accurately for a thick research study (Moustakas, 1994).

**Structural Descriptions**

Structural is explained as how the participants' experiences were in relationship based on the condition or situation (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant's lived experiences are vastly different from one another outside of the same experienced phenomenon. Each situation which they found themselves after the significant event of retention became a basis for structural description of the experience. This was determined as related to the qualifying factors of being a graduate of SWHSA, SWHSB, or SWHSC, ages 18-25, and having been retained during their K-12 education. Imaginative variation is looking at the phenomenon from a variety of directions and allows the factors to be explained as how it happened (Moustakas, 1994).

**Textural-Structural Synthesis**

This is the final step in a phenomenological research study. This step includes both textural and structural descriptions to build a single statement at the core of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This comes from Husserl's (1931) concept of the thing not being what it is without a significant event. There is always more which can be pulled out of the textural and structural descriptions. It is up to the individual researcher to decide if they gathered the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Trustworthiness**

Triangulation of data is important as to the validity of the research (Patton, 2015). That is why analyzing the questionnaires, interviews, and personal journals becomes such an important part of establishing connectivity. These are explained through the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the study (Patton, 2015). It is important for the study to be to be repeatable and grounded in theory, it must be current and include peer reviewed research all of which this research aims to provide a solid foundation.

**Credibility**

To ensure credibility of my study I need to be clear on the purpose of the study and report the institute affiliation (Patton, 2015). Following all regulations as set forth by the IRB and research committee. The importance of tying my research to that of a grounded theory such as Bandura, establishes credibility to the purpose (Patton, 2015). The use of proper disclosure and IRB forms allows participants to know that the study is being monitored and adheres to an ethical code. All participants were provided copies of the research findings before publication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation, peer review, and member checks were used as forms of credibility to the research validity and ensure participants viewpoints are maintained.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability was established by setting a timeline in which to follow for the study. It was important to be considerate of the interviewees time and make all scheduled appointments. Keeping the time frame brief as to be respectful of the participants' time and reschedule when it was evident more time was required. Recording all meetings, interviews, and documents for later analysis and quoting of the participant. It was important to remain neutral for the purpose of research. The research must be kept clear of bias as best possible (Patton, 2015). It was not based

on the personal motivation or interest of the researcher. It adhered to peer reviewed literature which supported the lived experiences of the participants. Documentation of all interviews was stored securely so to refer to them for clarification of research. It is important to keep in mind the ten systematic analysis strategies when establishing the trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability was established with the review of peer reviewed relevant literature. As the researcher, my bias was disclosed and removed from the study, there was no personal motivation, or personal interest other than to add information to the field of research on the topic of retention. All three parts of the data collection process was documented for accuracy of the participants' information (Patton, 2015). It was key to be credible that the experiences are told from the participants' point of view and the researcher has no voice in the personal accounts of the phenomenon.

**Transferability**

It is important to show findings which are transferable to other research areas for additional studies (Patton, 2015). This is also where it becomes evident that additional studies might be necessary on the same topic if it is discovered there are limitations to the study. It is important to ensure all steps of the study are able to be reproduced. Other researchers were able to reproduce the study by the inclusion of the tables, appendices, and detailed descriptions of participant selection, setting, and the triangulation of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The gaps and questions which are discovered during research allowed for further research opportunities to emerge from this study (Patton, 2015).

**Ethical Considerations**

All aspects of the study were conducted according to the guidelines set forth by the IRB. All permissions, consent forms, and pseudonyms were provided and used for the protection of all participants (Patton, 2015). All data collected was stored securely and will be destroyed after a one-year period following publication of dissertation defense as it is personal information of the participants. Storage of all items received or documented electronically were placed in a password protected file. Any physical documents were stored in a locked file cabinet. Bias was noted and indicated in all necessary parts of the study, as to clarify that it was taken into account and had been removed from questioning. Peer reviewed and relevant primary sources were used to guide all research. Honesty and clarification about the purpose of the research was shared with all subjects and are a part of the report findings. All reports were made available to the participants of the study.

**Summary**

It was important to have a clear problem statement and purpose for the study. This study was guided by research of peer reviewed articles and theories developed by primary sources. When starting any study, the approval for the research must come from the IRB committee and the department chair members. The importance of following the guidelines of collecting data to first gain permission from the participants, sites, and to select participants. A pilot study was conducted with the researcher's coworkers to check for bias and appropriateness of the study. The participants were selected using an alumni association or social media group. They answered a recruitment survey to be selected for the study. All participants in the study were graduated young adults ages 18-25 who were retained during K-12 education and were provided consent forms. Once consent forms were returned, they received a questionnaire to answer as part of the

data collection. Upon completion and review of the questionnaire the 13 participants were notified to schedule their interviews. Interviews were recorded, reviewed, and coded for likeness to other responses of the study. The responses to the questionnaires, personal interviews, and personal journals were evaluated using Moustakas's (1994) seven steps of phenomenological data analysis. Then the research of peer reviewed literature was connected regarding trustworthiness, ethical consideration and the study was concluded with research findings and considerations for further research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. Thirteen participants were selected through a social media post/email, participant survey, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect identities, each were individually interviewed, each participated in journaling, and four joined in a focus group. This chapter will relay the lived experiences of each participant to include a brief participant biography, detailed account of their lived experience with retention, and a findings summary. The chapter ends with responses to the central research question and the two guiding questions.

### Participants

The participant selection of 13 young adults formed for this research study was determined using a social media post/email (Appendix A) further narrowing the selection through a participant recruitment survey (Appendix B). The social media post/email was distributed to the Facebook alumni social media pages of three southwest Kansas high schools. Out of this social media post, the target group was retained graduates aged 18-25. There were 28 responses to the social media post, but seven people who responded were eliminated due to their age. Of the remaining 21 respondents, only 13 were willing to participate in the study; this number agrees with the parameters suggested by Polkinghorne (1989).

Table 2

*Participant Information Overview*

| Name | Age | Gender | Race | Grade Retained | Father Education Level | Mother Education Level | Traumatic Childhood Experience | Education Level Beyond High School |
|------|-----|--------|------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Aaron | 20 | M | H/W | 7$^{th}$ | HS | HS | Yes | Community College |
| Brad | 21 | M | W | 9$^{th}$ | Dropout | Dropout | Yes | Military |
| Carmen | 19 | F | H | 11$^{th}$ | 6$^{th}$ | 6th | No | Community College |
| Daniel | 21 | M | H/W | 6$^{th}$ | Unknown | HS | Yes | None |
| Eduardo | 24 | M | H | 11$^{th}$ | HS | Some HS | No | Community College |
| Faith | 25 | F | W | 3$^{rd}$ | Some College | Dropout | Yes | University Master's Degree |
| Greg | 23 | M | W | 5$^{th}$ | HS | HS | No | None |
| Hannah | 22 | F | W | 8$^{th}$ | 8$^{th}$ | 8$^{th}$ | No | None |
| Isaiah | 19 | M | H | 10$^{th}$ | 12$^{th}$ | 10$^{th}$ | Yes | None |
| Jacob | 22 | M | W | 4$^{th}$ | HS | HS | No | None |
| Karen | 23 | F | H | 10$^{th}$ | Unknown | HS-GED | Yes | None |
| Luke | 25 | M | AA/W | 7$^{th}$ | HS | Dropout | No | Technical College |
| Mariana | 25 | F | H | 4$^{th}$ | College | Some College | No | University Bachelor's Degree |

Out of the 13 total participants, there were 8 males and 5 females included in the study. The race/ethnicity of the participants included five Hispanic, five White, two Hispanic/White, and one African American/White. The grade level where retention occurred was as follows: four in elementary, three in middle, and six in high school. Out of the participants, four had parents who did not complete high school, seven had one or both parents who graduated high school, two had one or both parents having some college or above. Of the participants six indicated a traumatic childhood experience. Participants' education level beyond high school graduation:

seven did not continue past high school, one entered the military, four attended community college, and one four-year college/university.

**Aaron**

*Narrative*

Aaron is a 20-year-old, Hispanic/White, male who was retained in the 7th grade. Aaron was from a split home where he was later raised by his mother and stepfather. He has three younger half siblings who are still in elementary and middle school. Aaron thinks his parent's income level was about $40,000. His mother worked part time outside of the home, and the stepfather worked for an area farmer. His biological father had been in and out of jail for a variety of charges. Aaron did graduate from high school and is working on taking classes at an area community college with an income level below $25,000.

*Reasons for Retention*

Aaron stated: "When I was young, I did not feel that I would ever finish school" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Aaron is enrolled at an area community college and is taking classes while working part time. "My mom thought if I was given more time I would grow up and take school serious," said Aaron (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "I now agree that getting older has helped my interest in school," Aaron said (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

Aaron said, "Being a part of a large school helped in people not really knowing who belongs to which class; people move in and out all the time" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "The school pushed for me to be held back because of years of struggling with reading, and my mom felt that I was too young to start high school," stated

Aaron (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). He said, "There were teachers at the school who did not like me, and they just flunked me instead of helping me" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"I had friends who dropped out of high school, and they always told me I needed to just stay in school," Aaron said (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "My mom and stepdad always kept on me to just finish school because life is harder without the piece of paper," stated Aaron (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Aaron stated, "I am not afraid of work, my grandpa is a rancher, and we have land, but I want to make my own money" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "I realized I was good at remembering information when I took a medical terminology class my senior year, thinking I might want to be a sports trainer and would need to go to college," commented Aaron (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Aaron had a school counselor who encouraged him to take the ASVAB, and he scored high enough to be able to enlist in the Army. "I was hoping to qualify for the Marines, but I knew that I could at least pass the entrance exam giving me courage to take college classes" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Taken from his journal, "I feel like I lacked confidence, my dad was not around due to being in prison, he wanted me to do better than him and when he would contact me he told be to make better choices than he did. It made me feel like a better student when I passed the classes that used to be hard for me" (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021).

### *Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

"I don't have any kids, so I haven't thought about it much," stated Aaron (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "I suppose if it is in their best interest and

would help them be successful it would be worth it," wrote Aaron (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021).

**Brad**

*Narrative*

Brad is a 21-year-old White male who was retained in the 9th grade. Brad was from a single parent home, where he was later raised by his grandmother, mother, and stepfather. He has two younger half siblings who are still in elementary and high school. Brad thinks his grandmother's income level was $45,000 to $55,000. His mother had trouble keeping a job since she did not graduate high school. His biological father dropped out of high school. His stepfather graduated high school but did not have any other formal education. Brad went back and forth between living with his mom and grandmother throughout his school years. After high school graduation Brad joined the military; his current income is between $25,000 and $45,000.

*Reasons for Retention*

Brad stated, "I was in a terrible wreck in the summer after middle school when out with some guys and missed a ton of school. This was the reason for losing credits and causing me to be held back" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Brad's current job is a soldier in the United States Army. "I am not interested in taking college classes; my job has taken me outside of the states, and I am getting to travel to places I would have never gone had I went to school" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Brad said, "My mom didn't finish school, so I think I did pretty good" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I think that after my wreck the school didn't talk with my mom about what I needed to finish to stay with my class," said Brad (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). "Neither my mom or my real dad finished school, so they were happy I was still showing up, but it was my grammy who pushed for me to be my best" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). "I didn't start trying to graduate until I moved back into grandma's," stated Brad (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Brad commented, "I still had my same friends and we hung out all the time, so it didn't matter we were not in the same class" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020).

*Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

Brad said, "I moved back and forth between grammy's and mom's house when I was little but mostly lived at grammy's until mom married John" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). "I didn't do so well or care about much when I lived with mom" (Journal communication from participant, January 6, 2021). "Grammy really loves me and encouraged me to join the Army like my cousin" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020).

*Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

Brad wrote, "Now that I have my own baby coming soon, I think that it would be best if retention happened in grade school" (Journal communication from participant, January 6, 2021).

**Carmen**

*Narrative*

Carmen is a 19-year-old, Hispanic female who was retained in the 11th grade. Carmen was from a two-parent home, where her parents moved from Mexico when she was three years

old. She has three older siblings who live in the area. Carmen was unsure of her parent's income level but knows they were poor growing up. Her father worked for an area rancher, and her mother was a stay-at-home mom. Her parents both finished school in Mexico and did not go beyond the 6th grade. Carmen is taking some classes from an area community college and lives with her boyfriend and one-year old daughter. They live off her boyfriend's income, which is between $45,000 to $65,000 as a cattle hauler.

### Reasons for Retention

Carmen said, "It don't bother me about not finish school with my class because I had quit to have my daughter" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). "I want to go to school to be a baby nurse, work in the hospital," said Carmen (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). "I only had couple of grades to (paused for word) classes to take to graduate" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Carmen stated, "I had to finish to be a nurse to go to college" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021).

### Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention

"I get my diploma after my friends, but I still see them around town," she said (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Carmen replied, "My principal, Mr. Henry, didn't think I could finish school on time because of the baby" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). "So I had to finish my three classes the next year," she said (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021).

### Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships

"I always did my best and got A's" Carmen said (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Carmen said, "My baby daughter is why it was important for me

to finish school and want to take college", "I wanted to finish school because my ESL teacher called me to ask if I was coming back to school," stated Carmen (Journal communication from participant, January 23, 2021). Carmen wrote, "I had plans to go to college to be a baby nurse to help girls and their babies" (Journal communication from participant, January 23, 2021).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

"I want my daughter to stay in school and be a successful; I hope she does not have to wait like me" Carmen replied (Journal communication from participant, January 23, 2021).

## Daniel

### Narrative

Daniel is a 21-year-old Hispanic/White male who was retained in the 6th grade. Daniel was from a two-parent home, where he was raised by his mother and stepfather. He has one older sibling who does not live in the area. Daniel thinks his parent's income level was about $45,000 to $65,000. His mother worked part time outside of the home as a cleaning lady, and his stepfather worked for an area discount store. His biological father was believed to be back in Mexico; he did not know much information about him. Daniel moved after high school to work for a large distribution center but is now unemployed, and his income level is below $25,000.

### Reasons for Retention

Daniel said, "I didn't really like school that much, and I just wanted to be done" (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "School was hard, and teachers didn't help me except Miss Lindsey and Miss Ashley," commented Daniel (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "I moved from Texas to Kansas and liked Texas better, so did my parents", "Mom said my teacher Mrs. Johnson didn't do anything good for me," Daniel replied (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021).

### *Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I was held back in Texas and repeated 6th grade when I moved to Kansas," Daniel said (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "My teacher Mrs. Johnson worked with me in the resource room, and she didn't help me so I quit going there," commented Daniel (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "My mom never liked Mrs. Johnson; she said that she didn't want to help me learn and get my diploma," Daniel replied (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "I just don't want to go to school anymore; I got my piece of paper, and that's enough," said Daniel (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"I am happy with my life, I have friends, I have money" said Daniel (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "I just want to make money and move to Dallas where my friends are, get out of small-town Kansas," Daniel said (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). Daniel mentioned, "My brother-in-law works for the airlines, and I think that would be a good job for me; it pays real good, and he makes lots of money" (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "Everyone that is around here does not care about me and what I do, so I need to move where my friends are," Daniel responded (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). "No one has helped me out or done anything for me except my mom," Daniel said (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

"I don't have any kids yet and probably won't my boyfriend does not want them. Maybe later after we get married," wrote Daniel (Journal communication from participant, January 29, 2021).

**Eduardo**

### Narrative

Eduardo is a 24-year-old Hispanic male who was retained in the 11th grade. Eduardo was from a two-parent home, where both of his parents completed some high school in the United States but did not graduate. He had seven siblings: five older and two younger than himself. He thinks his parent's income level was below $45,000. His father worked for an area packing plant, and his mother was a stay-at-home wife, who sometimes made meals to sell in the community. Eduardo took courses in diesel mechanics and now owns his own semi-truck, hauling cattle for area feedlots with an income level $45,000 to $65,000.

### Reasons for Retention

"I felt like I just needed to finish and get done with school," Eduardo commented (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). "I stayed friends with my group, we were from different grades levels, and school did change that" said Eduardo (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). "I needed to finish high school to be able to go to mechanic school," he said (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). Eduardo replied, "My high school teachers understood that I was working more hours to support my girlfriend and our new baby" (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I really didn't have negative thoughts, I know why I didn't pass my classes, I had a family to take care of, and school came lower than that" Eduardo said ((Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). "I don't think teachers thought I would actually come back and finish, most of the kids in school just stopped and went to work but I couldn't work on trucks without mechanic school," Eduardo wrote (Journal communication from participant, December 27, 2020).

*Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"It was up to me to grow up and take responsibility; my girlfriend and baby are relying on me," Eduardo responded (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). "She (girlfriend) did not go back and finish school; she stays home with Emmanuel (son)," he said (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). "My dad and uncle helped me to get into trucks since I helped them fix theirs when I was younger, so this is why I knew it would be a good way to support my family," stated Eduardo (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020).

*Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

Eduardo wrote, "If my child's school thought retention was the best and only option for him to graduate then I would agree" (Journal communication from participant, December 29, 2020). "It would also depend on the reason for wanting him to repeat classes," said Eduardo (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020).

**Faith**

*Narrative*

Faith is a 25-year-old White female who was retained in the 3rd grade. Faith was from a two-parent home, where she had an older brother and sister. Faith's parents' income level was believed to be around $25,000 to $45,000. Her father was in the Marine's, and her mother stayed home and cared for the children. Her father completed some college while her mother dropped out of high school. Faith did receive special education services while in elementary and high school. She has completed her bachelor's and working on her master's degrees and is now a special education teacher; her current income level is $43,000.

*Reasons for Retention*

Faith said, "I knew education was important, but I didn't know the difference it would make in my life" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "My dad and grandma really encouraged me work hard and graduate. They wanted me to go on to college and really believed in me," Faith mentioned (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "I had teachers who talked with me about how good I would be at helping kids like myself who struggle with school," Faith said (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "Once I was retained, I was admitted into special education and placed on an IEP, which began the process of making school easier to understand, actually changing my whole life," stated Faith (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I always had things tougher than most students, as I struggled early on with hearing issues being partially deaf," Faith said (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "My classmates didn't seem to notice because after I was retained, I started in the SPED

program, and they knew I was academically behind them anyways," Faith responded (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "I didn't have the same teacher and gained new friends, I remember feeling smart and popular. It was like I was a new student who was getting all sorts of attention, it really made a difference in how I felt about going to school and learning," corresponded Faith (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021).

### Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships

"I am a fighter and don't allow other people's opinions to bother me; I have came back from far worse than having to be in school an extra year," Faith stated (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "I think retention played a part in me not always trusting other's thoughts about me and has allowed me to grow as a person," Faith composed (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021). Faith said, "My sister and I became closer, since we ended up in the same class due to my being retained" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). "Personal efficacy definitely grew more after my retention. I believe I had more people who cared about my well-being than they did before; I was able to get the help in school that I needed, which allowed me to be able to go on to college and now help other students like myself," stated Faith (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

"Now that I am in education, I feel that if I was asked by my own child's teacher to retain them, I would want to view the data to ensure it is not more serious than just minor gaps and not a true learning deficiency," replied Faith (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021). "In the field of special education, it is important to make sure which route a student is on and if the classroom teacher is making adjustments for learning when deficiencies are first

recognized but I will be a strong advocate for my children," wrote Faith (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021).

**Greg**

*Narrative*

Greg is a 23-year-old White male who was retained in the 5th grade. Greg was from a two-parent home, where his parents were migrant agriculture workers. He has two younger brothers, one who is in high school, and the other is out of school. Greg thinks his parent's income level was about $45,000 to $65,000 while they were in the agricultural field. Later, they wanted to raise their family in one location and went to work for an area grain business, causing their income to drop around $25,00 to $45,000. After graduation, Greg did not feel further education was necessary and went to work in the grain field. His current income level is in the $25,000 to $45,000 range.

*Reasons for Retention*

Greg responded, "I always struggled in school, needing more time to finish work and did not like to read; I am not very good at reading" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "We moved around a lot when I was in grade school; my mom and dad worked for farmers, and I never caught up until we stopped moving. It was then that I got help from Ms. Jaminez, and she helped me to pass my classes and finish school" Greg replied (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

Greg said, "I never really had friends outside of my brothers since we moved so much; we lived in Nebraska and Kansas when my parents worked in farming, so it didn't make any difference about repeating fifth grade" (Personal communication with participant, January 10,

2021). "Teachers never really expected much since we moved in and out to different schools sometimes during the year," reflected Greg (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

### Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships

Greg added, "As a family we weren't really part of the town since people didn't know us because my parents worked a lot" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "We stopped moving when I was in middle school right before starting high school, and that helped me to get to know more people," stated Greg (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "I never really thought I would finish school because it just wasn't fun and it was hard for me," Greg said (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "Ms. Jaminez worked with me to help me pass English it was real hard," wrote Greg (Journal communication from participant, January 18, 2021).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

Greg replied, "I don't plan on moving around so I don't think my kids will have the same problems" (Journal communication from participant, January 18, 2021). "I suppose it would depend on what the school said was the reason and if the teacher is nice," Greg wrote (Journal communication from participant, January 18, 2021).

**Hannah**

*Narrative*

Hannah is a 22-year-old White female who was retained in the 8th grade. Hannah is Mennonite Low German and has seven siblings. Hannah was raised in a bilingual home, where her parents still spoke their native language, Plautdietsch. Hannah was unsure of their family income level as the families within their community work together to help one another. Her

parents did not go beyond 8th grade as that is custom in their culture. She is married to a local farmer who was a member of her community church.  She is currently employed by a family in her community at their café and does their payroll reports. She is making below $25,000, but this does not include her spouse's income.

### *Reasons for Retention*

"I was retained in the 8th grade, and my parents didn't think I needed to continue school but I wanted to be normal like my friends," commented Hannah (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). Hannah wrote, "Our church is becoming more accepting of students finishing school, so more girls are staying to finish to work or open businesses" (Journal communication from participant, January 26, 2021). "I don't think a college degree is necessary, but maybe taking some online courses for business or accounting would be helpful for my husband's farm," said Hannah (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021).

### *Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I think I was retained because I wasn't very good at English; both writing and speaking took me longer," stated Hannah (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). "I still took a test every year to see if I needed language classes," Hannah recalled (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). "In school I worked hard to be allowed to continue because my parents were unsure if it was the best decision," said Hannah (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). "I had to beg them to keep letting me stay in school because many of my siblings did not get to finish," Hannah stated (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"I was able to explain to my parents the use of my school to help the family, neighbors, and our church," responded Hannah (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). "I believe this helped them to see a reason for me to finish," Hannah added (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). "I use what I learned in math and business class to help me at the restaurant and my dad and husband's farms," wrote Hannah (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021).

### *Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

"I think when I have children, I will send them to our church school first and see if they want to go on to town school when they are older," Hannah said (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). Hannah commented, "If they take longer with classes they won't have to start over" (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021).

### Isaiah

### *Narrative*

Isaiah is a 19-year-old Hispanic male who was retained in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Isaiah is from a two-parent home that he indicated was strained. He moved to live with his aunt the year following his retention. His father started his senior year but dropped out, and his mother dropped out at 10<sup>th</sup> grade. He did not talk much about siblings other than they still lived at home with his parents. His parent's income was below $25,000, and he had to find ways to help pay the bills. Isaiah is currently working for an area auto mechanic, deciding if he wants to attend technical school for mechanics and is currently making below $25,000.

*Reasons for Retention*

"Being held back allowed me to move from Tulsa to live with my aunt in Kansas in a way was good," Isaiah said (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). He continued, "I had another chance to be free and change my life" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Isaiah stated, "I took a exploration class on the computer that said I was good with my hands, and I like cars so I might take classes from the tech school" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"Being held back saved my life," Isaiah said (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). "I was friends with a rough crowd and having to live with my aunt got me away from a bad situation," replied Isaiah (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Isaiah commented, "School was not a worry, and I knew I was (umm) safe when I was there" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). "Being flunked gave my crew the idea I would just hang with them instead of going to school," replied Isaiah (Journal communication from participant, December 13, 2020).

*Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"I didn't have close friends to worry about when I left Tulsa to start over in Kansas," said Isaiah (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). "I become close with my aunt's friend who has a shop, and that is where I work now," Isaiah responded (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). "I knew I had to get away to be able to help my family, and flunking helped me do that; had I stayed with my parents my life would be different," commented Isaiah (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020).

Isaiah said, "I keep to myself other than at the shop; I go there and home not really anywhere else" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

"I don't know about kids; they don't fit into my plans right now," reflected Isaiah (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). "It really would depend on what the reason is," wrote Isaiah (Journal communication from participant, December 13, 2020).

**Jacob**

### Narrative

Jacob is a 22-year-old White male who was retained in the 4th grade and received special education services. Jacob is the middle brother to Greg. Jacob's parents were employed as agricultural migrant workers when he was younger, and they moved around frequently. He thinks his parents made good money in the $45,000 to $65,000 range. They stopped moving when the agricultural farming program ended. Jacob remembered his mom not working anymore and his dad working for the grain elevator. He had a baby with his high school girlfriend, who he is no longer dating. Jacob works seasonally at the grain elevator and an area discount store, earning below $25,000.

### Reasons for Retention

"I wanted to quit school, but my girlfriend at the time was younger than me so it was okay to keep going," said Jacob (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Jacob stated, "I don't think the teachers thought I could finish because I was so far behind, and reading was tough" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "School was not that important; I went because that is where my friends were, so it was no fun to stay home," responded Jacob (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention"*

"I was held back in elementary when we moved to Nebraska; I was in the 4th grade, and my brother (Greg) was also made to repeat 5th grade," said Jacob (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "When I was young we moved a lot, maybe 4 times, so I was never in the same school very long," responded Jacob (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Jacob stated, "I remember some teachers were nice and tried to help me with stuff I didn't know" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

*Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"Miss J. was the best teacher I had (pause) she really wanted to make sure I understood and learned how to read" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Jacob commented, "I didn't have friends very long because we moved so much until we moved to Kansas, and that's when I met Vicki (ex-girlfriend)" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). "My mom really wanted to make sure I read and was able to get a good job (Journal communication from participant, January 16, 2021). Jacob responded, "I wanted to work for the elevator like my dad; that way I could stay near my friends and Vicki" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

*Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

"I don't want to have Ivy have to repeat any grades, I want her to get good grades and have friends," Jacob wrote (Journal communication from participant, January 16, 2021). Jacob said, "It is hard to tell; Ivy is still a baby but she is smart and funny, so I don't think I will have to worry about it. If it is recommended by the school, Vicki and me will have to decide" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

**Karen**

*Narrative*

Karen is a 23-year-old Hispanic female who was retained in the 10th grade. Karen was raised by a single mother, who received her GED in the last couple years. Karen did not talk about her father and does not have any siblings. She was raised by her mom who worked three and four part time jobs, earning below $25,000. Karen was retained while she attended school in Oklahoma; she moved to Kansas and was placed on an Individualized Education Plan through the special education department. Karen works for a traveling construction company, employed seasonally, and earns $25,000 to $45,000.

*Reasons for Retention*

"School was never easy but being held back didn't make me like it more," Karen said (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). "My teachers in Oklahoma did not care to help me learn anything, so my mom had me change school to Kansas," she stated (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). "When I moved to Kansas, the teachers were more helpful, and Mr. Terry worked to get me caught up," wrote Karen (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021).

*Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I don't think I should have been retained; the school I was at was stupid and just didn't count any of my classes to graduate," Karen said (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). Karen stated, "After having to make up almost two years of school from Oklahoma, I just wanted to be done; I just wanted to work and not worry about school" (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"I just got engaged and work with my boyfriend on a road crew; I drive the flag truck,"

Karen said (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). "My mom just got her

GED when I changed schools and that was why I wanted to finish school. Mr. Terry worked with

me to graduate to make my mom proud," communicated Karen (Journal communication from

participant, January 28, 2021). "I wanted to finish early, but I had to take almost all of my high

school classes over because Kansas didn't count my stuff from Oklahoma" (Personal

communication with participant, January 22, 2021).

### *Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

"I won't let it happen to my kids I don't think it is right to not let them finish," Karen

wrote (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021). "If the school wants to make

them repeat, I will find a different school" (Personal communication with participant, January

22, 2021).

### **Luke**

### *Narrative*

Luke is a 25-year-old African American/White male who was retained in the 7th grade.

Luke was from a divorced home, where he was later raised by his mother and stepfather. He has

one younger sister who graduated high school last May. Luke's parents struggled and made

below $25,000. Luke graduated from an area technical school and is now employed as a shop

foreman for an area feedlot earning in the $25,000 to $45,000 range.

### *Reasons for Retention*

"I didn't want to go to college, but knew I wanted to work in a shop either in the cattle or

oil field," responded Luke (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). Luke

said, "I never did well in school when it came to math and reading, but I liked working with my hands in shop class" (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "I was in sports in middle and high school, so it never made a big deal what grade I was in," stated Luke (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "I was offered a sports scholarship in baseball but didn't think college was for me," Luke added (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021).

### *Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"Like I said before I played sports so most of the kids, I played with were older so grade didn't matter," Luke said (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "My mom talked to me about repeating 7th grade, and it didn't matter to me as long as I still got to play baseball," recalled Luke (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021). "School never became easier I just got lucky and did homework with friends," wrote Luke (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"My dad lived in Texas, and I saw him on holiday's and in the summers," said Luke (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "He worked in the oil fields and made decent money, drove a nice truck, and lived in a big house, so I thought that might be a good option for me, so I guess that gave me confidence," reflected Luke (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). Luke said, "I lived with my mom and her husband; we didn't have extra money, but my dad helped pay for my stuff" (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021).

### Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention

"I never thought about it since I don't have kids," Luke said (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "I would let the principal or teacher know that it is okay as long as it doesn't mess up high school or sports options it would be okay," Luke's journal stated (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021).

## Mariana

### Narrative

Mariana is a 25-year-old Hispanic female who was retained in the 4th grade. Mariana was from a two-parent home, her father is a college graduate, and mother has some college. Her father worked for an area breeder farm as an office manager. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom. She has one younger sister who is currently in high school. Her family income was $45,000 to $65,000. Mariana has finished her bachelor's degree and works for an area financial company as an accountant, earning $25,000 to $45,000 and working towards obtaining her certified public accounting license.

### Reasons for Retention

"I always liked school and being retained didn't change that," Mariana said (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "My dad wanted me to go to college, so I knew I had to do well in school. I studied extra to make sure my grades were A's," she replied (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "I was young when I was retained, I was in grade school, I don't remember it being that big of a deal. Our middle school started in the 5th grade, and our grade school building ended at 4th grade," recalled Mariana (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "I am still studying, now for my CPA

license, so there is more on the line than what I remembered from grade school or even high school," Mariana stated (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021).

### *Thoughts And Memories Of Personal Experience Due To Retention*

"I don't know that I was really a part of the decision; maybe I talked with my parents or teacher at school about repeating the 4th grade," said Mariana (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "I also don't think I faced many if any challenges, the school was big enough that several elementary buildings funneled into one middle and high school," wrote Mariana (Journal communication from participant, January 21, 2021). Mariana said, "I was part of the ESL program and took the KELPA up until my sophomore year when I passed it" (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "My parents did wait to enroll my sister in kindergarten until she was six, I don't know if this had anything to do with us being a part of the ESL program," recalled Mariana (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021).

### *Personal Account On Self-Efficacy And Relationships*

"My friends and classmates were all competitive when we got older, always trying to see who could get the best score," wrote Mariana (Journal communication from participant, January 21, 2021). "I made lifelong friends from grade school through high school and even now," Mariana said (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "I really think that being retained worked out for the best, I didn't struggle in school and my reading improved greatly," wrote Mariana (Journal communication from participant, January 21, 2021).

### *Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention*

"When it comes to making a decision about my own children, I would need to take into account the feelings of both myself and my husband," stated Mariana (Personal communication

with participant, January 18, 2021). "I would want it to happen when they were young, maybe even younger than right before middle school, to allow them time to form strong friendships and get the most out of their education," wrote Mariana (Journal communication from participant, January 21, 2021).

## Results

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of 13 participants who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study approach was necessary to understand the lived experiences of these retained young adults (Moustakas, 1994). The participants, aged 18-25, now are at different phases of their young adult lives: working, attending college, serving the country, and still looking for work. In reviewing the data collected from personal interviews, personal journal entries, and a focus group, these were undisturbed points of views (Moustakas, 1994). Through document analysis of the questionnaires, interviews, and personal journals, commonalities and themes developed from the participants responses based on their own lived experiences of retention (Merriam, 2009). From horizonalization four themes emerged from these personal accounts: feelings towards education after being retained, thoughts and memories of personal experience due to retention, personal account on self-efficacy and relationships, and ideas regarding their own children's retention (Moustakas, 1994).

### Focus Group

Out of the 13 research study participants, seven were interested in participating in the focus group initially. When it came time to schedule the date for the focus group meeting, only four of the participants were available and still willing to participate with a group. Two of the

focus group participants were brothers, and the other two did not know each other prior to participating in the Zoom meeting. The focus group consisted of Greg, age 23 and Jacob, age 22, who are brothers, Daniel, age 21, and Carmen, age 19. There was some difficulty with setting up a focus group through Zoom, which was necessary due to participants locations and COVID-19 restrictions of public meeting places.

There were varying reasons for retention across the focus group; Greg was retained in the 5th grade, the same year Jacob was held back in the 4th grade, both due to being behind in their reading levels. Greg said, "My mom and teacher made the decision for me to repeat 5th grade because I was behind in my reading. My mom made the choice to do the same thing with Jacob to keep us in different grade levels" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Jacob added, "After I was held back my mom made the decision to put me in special ed" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Daniel was retained in the 6th grade when he moved from Texas to Kansas. Daniel said, "The choice was made at my school in Texas, and my mom decided to go ahead and keep me in the 6th grade when we moved to Kansas." Carmen was retained in the 11th grade when she missed too much school for the birth of her baby. Carmen responded, "My school principal suggested it would be best for me to do my junior year over since I would miss so much school" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

When asked about how each of the participants found out about their retention, responses were as follows: Carmen said, "I had been a part of the process with the school, since I was retained solely based on the amount of school days missed for having my baby" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Daniel responded, "I don't remember being a part of the decision, other than my mom asking me if it bothered me to repeat 6th grade."

Daniel continued, "It didn't since I had just moved, and nobody knew me anyhow" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Greg said, "I remember my mom telling me that she had had a meeting and the school feeling it would be better for me to retake 5th grade to be able to become stronger in my reading" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). "I don't remember the way I found out; it really didn't matter since I didn't want to be in the same class with Greg," Jacob replied (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

Many of the responses were similar to what the participants had replied to the previous question. Daniel said he was with a new group of friends and teachers, so it was more about being the new kid in school rather than being retained. Greg and Jacob said it was very similar for them since they had just moved to Nebraska at the time they were retained. Carmen replied, "It allowed me to focus on being a new mom and also to keep up with having good grades since I knew I wanted to go on to college" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

When I asked the group what they liked before and after their retention, I received a wide variety of answers. Carmen said she liked being a part of the clubs and groups at school; she was a part of the choir and student government. After her retention she said she liked just being able to focus on the few classes she had left to be able to be done with high school (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Greg replied that he was pretty young and didn't have many things that he remembered liking about school; it was hard for him with moving and reading being difficult. After retention, Greg said, "I got the help I needed; I don't know that I would have got that without being held back" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Daniel commented he remembered loving being at school

because of his best friend when he lived in Texas. His retention happened before moving to

Kansas. After he moved to Kansas, school became easier, and he liked it sometimes because he

got help with his classes and did better with his grades (Personal communication with

participant, February 27, 2021). Jacob mentioned that he remembers school being about recess

when he was little and was young when he was retained, and it wasn't until high school that he

began to focus on grades (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

When I asked the group if they believed there was another avenue besides retention, they

explained the following. Daniel responded he wasn't sure if there was another option; his grades

were not good when he was in school in Texas and really didn't understand some of the math

and English, they made him take (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

Greg said he didn't think there was a way around it because the school recommend it to his

parents and his parents agreed with the decision (Personal communication with participant,

February 27, 2021). Carmen stated, "I could of completed my GED but that would not have held

the same benefits for going to college since I wanted to go into the medical field" (Personal

communication with participant, February 27, 2021). She added that her school counselor

thought she would be able to apply for more scholarships with a high school diploma (Personal

communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Jacob said he didn't know if it would have

been better to have not been retained, he did like that he and his brother were not in the same

class because it gave him a chance to make his own friends (Personal communication with

participant, February 27, 2021).

When asked about the process or steps that would have been helpful in place of retention,

these were the responses I was given. Greg and Jacob both said that it helped them to read better,

and they did not know what could have been done besides being held back when they moved to

Nebraska (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Carmen said that she felt if the school would have allowed her to complete classes from the computer or come into the school for the required courses in place of having to take an entire grade level over would have been more helpful (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Daniel said that he did not know what other option other than retention would have helped in elementary school since he always had a hard time reading (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

When the group was asked what changes could be made to the process of retention that would benefit the success of all students, a variety of answers were given. Daniel stated, "it would be best to just let kids keep in the same grade with their friends and teach them what they need (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Carmen said, "to allow courses to be completed at a student's own pace; faster or slower, not all kids are on the same level" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Greg responded, "to allow kids to make up the class they aren't good in over the school vacations" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021). Jacob contributed "to allow kids to just stay where they are until high school and then place them at the level they need, not all kids are going to college" (Personal communication with participant, February 27, 2021).

Table 3

*Codes and Themes*

| Codes | Occurrence | Emerged Theme |
|---|---|---|
| Too Young/Immature | 7 | Reasons for retention. |
| Had children | 5 | |
| Didn't like school/take it serious | 9 | |
| Moved | 27 | |
| Reading/Struggled | 23 | |

| School/Teacher recommended for retention | 3 | |
|---|---|---|
| Like/Disliked by Teacher<br>Friends/Family Support<br>Positive/Negative relationship with school personnel<br>Age when retained | 11<br>32<br>6<br><br>3 | Thoughts and memories of personal experience due to retention. |
| Wanted to stay in school<br>Work<br>Military (them or family)<br>Confidence/No confidence<br>Better student<br>College<br>Traumatic experience | 7<br>11<br>3<br>8<br>6<br>7<br>14 | Personal account on self-efficacy and relationships. |
| Successful<br>Child's Age<br>Reasons<br>Friendships | 6<br>3<br>8<br>3 | Ideas regarding their own children's retention. |

## Theme Development

To develop the central focus of the research I began clustering into themes, triangulation of data was used from the questionnaires, interviews, and personal journals of the 13 participants. Coding and horizonalization were also parts of the theme development process. When I started the theme development portion of my research study, the first stage of coding used was Provisional Coding (Saldana, 2016). Provisional Coding creates a list of codes prior to the beginning of the data collection. According to Saldana (2016), Provisional Codes can be changed, removed, or addition of new codes. Provision Codes emerged from the data collection portions of the study to include struggling student, relationships, retention experience, and future. These codes were conceptualized from the research questions, researcher's prior knowledge, and educated assumptions. Through reading the 13 participant documents that included interviews, personal journals, and focus groups, an initial set of code words emerged.

The second stage of coding used by the researcher included the use of Atlas TI and Focus Coding to further determine the essential categories (Saldana, 2016). Focus Coding looks for common and important codes to create the prominent categories from the data collection. The researcher used the Provision Codes in the Atlas TI program, which in turn created an immense amount of data. Thus, leading the researcher to utilize Focus Coding to narrow the data into categories. Focus Coding occurred through the Atlas TI program by narrowing large amounts of data collected from the 13 study participants.

The third stage of coding utilized for this research study was Pattern Coding. Pattern Coding is a way to group the categories into smaller amounts of categories or themes (Saldana, 2016). Pattern Coding was used by the researcher to establish themes from the second stage of coding. Themes were established by horizonalization, where each statement was given equivalent merit until themes emerged. The key words, similar phrases, and expressions from their individual personal accounts were assessed to materialize the textural and structural descriptions of the retained young adult's lived experiences to where the accounts could be made more aware to those outside of their personal lives. For this study the analysis of data determined the important and methodical themes to include these reasons for retention, thoughts and memories of personal experience due to retention, personal account on self-efficacy and relationships, and ideas regarding their own children's retention.

**Emerged Theme 1**

***Reasons for Retention***

Seven of the 13 study participants indicated that they moved during their K-12 school experience. Some moved between houses while others moved states. Brad said, "My home life wasn't very stable, so the courts moved me back to Grammy's from my mom's house (Journal

communication from participant, January 6, 2021). Daniel stated, "It was hard for me to leave my friends behind; they were the only reason I liked school" (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). Faith claimed, "When I was little, we moved because my dad was in the Marines; I don't know if that had anything to do with my retention" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). Greg wrote, "We moved when a job was done with a farmer, sometimes we would stay for a couple years and others we would move twice in a year, I think that's why I didn't catch onto reading very well" (Journal communication from participant, January 18, 2021). Isaiah commented, "I had to move, for the safety of my family and myself. I didn't have a choice the gang said if I stayed I would die. I can't go back they let me out because I was moving far away to an area where there was no gangs. School really was where I went to be safe" (Journal communication from participant, December 13, 2020). Jacob replied, "I attended school in both Nebraska and Kansas, I don't know if I lived in other states when I was younger" (Journal communication from participant, January 16, 2021). Karen said, "Moving schools helped me pass the classes that my teachers in Oklahoma never cared to help with" (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021).

Nine of the thirteen indicated that they struggled in some facet of school, and this in part contributed to their K-12 retention. Aaron stated, "I struggled with reading as far back as I can remember" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Hannah responded, "It was tough to go back and forth from Plautdietsch to English, it was expected of me to speak my native language at home and church" (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021). Luke said, "School was hard, I always relied on friends to make sure I was eligible to play ball. My homework grades were good but I rarely passed tests since I couldn't get help with them" (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021). Mariana commented, "Being

a dual language learner it was difficult to keep everything straight; even though I was an honor roll student, I had to work twice as hard for things to make sense" (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). Of the nine participants, five of them received special services: Daniel, Faith, Greg, Jacob, and Karen. Daniel wrote, "When I started school in Kansas I was placed in special education for reading and math, Mrs. Johnson didn't like me and didn't help me. She had two ladies in her room who did all the work" (Journal communication from participant, January 29, 2021). Faith recounted, "I struggled in school, I couldn't hear very well due to being deaf in my left ear, it caused problems for me in reading and speech" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). Greg mentioned, "I got help from Ms. Jaminez in reading and English. She helped me with all of my English classes; I was not strong in it" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Jacob recalled, "I was started in special education when I was in grade school; I didn't do well mostly because reading was hard" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Karen responded, "Mr. Terry pushed for me to better understand my classes and to help me graduate" (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021).

**Emerged Theme 2**

***Thoughts and Memories of Personal Experience Due to Retention***

Ten of the 13 study participants indicated they had either a positive or negative experience with a classroom teacher, paraprofessional, or school administrator. Of the ten, four of them had positive relationships with at least one teacher, and six discussed negative experiences with school personnel. Carmen stated, "It was because of my teacher calling me when I was home with my baby that made me care about coming back to finish school" (Journal communication from participant, January 23, 2021).  Daniel recalled, "Miss Lindsey and Miss

Ashley were the only ones who would sit with me and help me read my chapters, they understood school was difficult for me. Mrs. Johnson just thought I was being lazy" (Journal communication from participant, January 29, 2021). Faith responded, "Ms. Judith expressed how I was always caring for other students in the class and wanted to help them succeed in school" (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021). Luke wrote, "My baseball coach always wanted to make sure I was getting my homework turned in, so he helped me with working with teachers and other students" (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021). Aaron said, "Many of my teachers also had my dad as a student so didn't have faith in me to do much better than him" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Eduardo replied, "When I became a dad, I think most of my teachers just expected me to drop out" (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). Greg posted, "Teachers never took time to get to know me or help me stay up with the class" (Journal communication from participant, January 18, 2021). Jacob wrote, "It wasn't until I was in high school that I really had help from teachers" (Journal communication from participant, January 16, 2021). Karen replied, "In Oklahoma my teachers always tried to tell my mom I just didn't try, but truth was they didn't want to help me understand" (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021).

Of the 13 participants all of them had support from either a peer group or family in regard to their retention. Aaron recalled, "I took the advice of my friends and dad I decided it best to stay and finish high school" (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021). Brad said, "My grammy was always there for me and wanted me to do better in school than my mom; she was always supporting and showing up for school events" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Carmen stated, "I got lucky with having family who would

help watch Mia, so I could go to school" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Daniel responded, "My mom always would go to the school and visit with Mrs. Johnson about making sure I was getting the help I needed from the resource room" (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). Eduardo commented, "Having friends both younger and older made it easier to just get done with school" (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). Faith claimed, "My dad wanted to see me finish school and go to college like he did" (Journal communication from participant, January 15, 2021). Greg mentioned, "Both my parents encouraged me to finish school because that was the only way to get a decent job" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Hannah verbalized, "Times have changed since my parents were in school and I really wanted to be allowed to finish high school with my friends" (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021). Isaiah commented, "My aunt urged me to go to school, so I could stay in Kansas and not have to move back to Oklahoma" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Jacob wrote, "My mom wanted me to stay in school and graduate to not have to move around for work like they did' (Journal communication from participant, January 16, 2021). Karen stated, "My mother wanted me to get a high school diploma and not a GED like her" (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). Luke wrote in his personal journal, "Sports was everything to me in school and my parents always showed up to my games and it made me feel special" (Journal communication from participant, January 14, 2021). Mariana mentioned, "Both of my parents had gone to college, so it was important that I follow in their example" (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021).

**Emerged Theme 3**

*Personal Account on Self-Efficacy and Relationships*

Twelve of the 13 participants indicated that having the ability to obtain decent employment helped them to persevere to finish high school. Aaron replied, "I am taking some classes at the tech school, so I can maybe open a mechanic shop" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Brad said, "The army does not like to sign people up who don't have a high school diploma; they really want people with a good head on their shoulders" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Carmen recalled, "I knew when I was in high school, I wanted to be a nurse and that didn't change even after I had to repeat my classes" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Daniel stated, "It didn't matter what I did for a living; I just wanted to get done with school and get a high paying job" (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). Eduardo said, "It was important for me to be able to go to school for diesel mechanics since I knew it would be better to work on my own equipment" (Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). Faith stated, "I always had teachers who thought I would be good working with students, so finishing high school was a requirement to go on to college" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). Greg recalled, "I just didn't want to barely make ends meat, it was important to be able to get a good job" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Hannah stated, "It was important for me to find a way to be a contributing part of my family, to prove to them that finishing school was of value" (Personal communication with participant, January 20, 2021). Isaiah mentioned, "I really had personal motivation for finishing school; I could not go back to Tulsa and getting a good job allowed me to make sure I could stay in Kansas working for the auto shop" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Jacob claimed,

"Watching my parents make good money in the agriculture field made me want to be able to get a job there after high school" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Karen recalled, "Getting done with school allowed me to get a decent job and not struggle like my mom did when I was in school" (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021). Luke said, "I was motivated by living with my mom instead of my dad, we struggled financially at my mom's, but dad's house had no troubles with money" (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). Mariana claimed, "The reason for me being in school was to always go on to college to be able to get a secure job" (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021).

When asked about a traumatic experience that led to their retention, six of the 13 study participants indicated that they had trauma as a part of their childhood. Aaron said, "My dad was put in jail when I was in grade school, and I think that made a difference in how teachers treated me" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Brad recalled, "I had to live with my Grammy from when I was a baby because my mom was in and out of jail. I moved in full time with my mom in junior high until I had my wreck. Grammy insisted that I move back in with her because the court thought it would be best" (Personal communication with participant, December 28, 2020). Daniel mentioned, "I have had many boyfriends and girlfriends since junior high, I like both which always seems to cause drama within my group of friends, it was bad in school and hard for me to focus on my work." (Personal communication with participant, January 23, 2021). Faith stated, "I was molested by my mom's son when I was in grade school, around the first grade; after that the difficult stuff became even harder" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). Isaiah said, "Having to always run and hide from the gang and act like I wanted to be a part of it made school tough; I had no choice, I had to help my parents

with bills" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Karen responded,

"My school in Oklahoma cheated me out of all of my classes, causing me to have to start over;

that's why we moved to Kansas" (Personal communication with participant, January 22, 2021).

**Emerged Theme 4**

***Ideas Regarding Their Own Children's Retention***

Four out of the 13 participants have children of their own at this time; many of the others

have opinions but don't have a definite thought on the topic at this point. Brad claimed, "With a

baby on the way, the earlier the better if it is necessary at all" (Personal communication with

participant, December 28, 2020). Carmen said, "I will ensure Mia gets help early on if she begins

to struggle in school" (Personal communication with participant, January 12, 2021). Eduardo

replied, "Emmanuel needs to be falling behind his classmates and struggling with his reading"

(Personal communication with participant, December 18, 2020). Jacob stated, "Ivy's still a baby;

it would depend on what Vicki thinks" (Personal communication with participant, January 10,

2021).

The other nine participants did not have children at the time of the study but had strong

opinions about retention regarding their possible future children. The nine participants described

not wanting their children to experience retention without a valid reason behind having them

repeat a grade level. Even though seven of the nine had positive experiences regarding their own

personal K-12 retention they wanted to be the primary decision maker if retention was necessary

for their own children.  Aaron stated, "Retention is not something to throw around just because a

kid isn't ready for school" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021). Daniel

said, "With my current relationship, kids are not a part of the plan yet, but if I do have a kid and

retention is brought up by the teachers, I would need to know that they just weren't taking the

easy way out" (Journal communication from participant, January 29, 2021). "As being a special education teacher, I feel strongly about getting ahead of any educational setbacks my children may have. This should allow for retention as being the last option, after all other interventional measures have been taken" (Personal communication with participant, January 8, 2021). Greg responded, "Having moved during my school years I think that led to why I was poor in reading and always behind." "I think staying in one location will help my kids to not miss out on school or have to learn different stuff all the time, this should hopefully avoid having to be retained during school" (Personal communication with participant, January 10, 2021).

Hannah stated, "Our church community views education differently for kids, grade level is not what it is based on, our kids will move on to the classes once they are successful" "Retention would only be a concern if they were to attend a public school in our area" (Journal response from the participant, January 29, 2021). Isaiah commented, "Even though, kids are not a part of my current plans, I would want to know that the school tried everything possible to avoid retention. Sometimes, I think when you are Hispanic, the teachers don't take as much time to make sure you are understanding what is being taught" (Personal communication with participant, December 7, 2020). Karen commented, "I was retained because my school in Oklahoma didn't care about me finishing. I don't want my kids to have teachers who are mean and tell them they are not trying" (Journal communication from participant, January 28, 2021).

Luke responded, "I was really active in athletics in high school, and I think that is a important outlet for kids" (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "Retention might be good for them in their schoolwork but if it doesn't allow them to play sports during school then it is pointless" (Personal communication with participant, January 9, 2021). "Having a connection with their friends is important for kids and the younger those relationships

are changed the better" said Mariana (Personal communication with participant, January 18, 2021). "If retention is what is decided best for my child educationally then I hope that both my husband and I would support the school. This would be dependent upon there not being any other available option and the grade at which the school is suggesting my child be retained" replied Mariana (Journal communication from participant, January 21, 2021).

**Textural-Structural Synthesis**

Participants shared the phenom of being retained in K-12 education and persisting on to graduate high school. These participants experienced traumatic childhood events, struggles in both reading and math, and frequent family relocation. These participants described many reasons to have become a retention statistic but prevailed due to their own self-efficacy. The students who struggled in math and reading had problems early on either due to their age in school, moving for parents' jobs, being English Language Learners, or having cognitive learning deficiencies. Their self-efficacy developed due to relationships with family, peers, and teachers. The personal accounts portrayed specific relationships created out of what appeared to be a negative experience which in turn ended up being a positive for most of the participants.

It was evident in the study that the participants had support based on the descriptions they gave of their retention experience. They talked about having support from their parents, friends, and teachers within their schools. The participants described experiences with their school that was extremely difficult, and retention allowed them to overcome their weak areas in either reading or math. Other participants explained how being retained in addition to moving to another school was an opportunity to start over without the stress of their previous school. Some participants even moved states and being retained due to non-passing coursework allowed them a chance they would not have had otherwise. Other participants explained how their friends or

another person in their life gave them the fortitude to continue on in school despite having been retained. The participants had personal goals or reasons to finish school.

**Research Questions Responses**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation. There was one central research question and two guiding questions which directed this study. When the 13 personal participant interviews were completed, all participants responded through five journal prompt responses, and the study was finalized by a four-participant focus group. The central and guiding questions were answered by participants through similar themes that emerged during interviews, personal journals, and a focus group.

**What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school?** There were 13 total participants included in the research study: five females and eight males. The racial makeup of the participants was one African American/White, five Hispanic, two Hispanic/White, and five White. All 13 of the study participants felt confident about recalling their K-12 retention. All the participants graduated from a southwestern Kansas high school within the last seven years. The participants ages range from 19 to 25. There were two 19-year-olds, one 20-year-old, two 21-year-olds, two 22-year-olds, two 23-year-olds, one 24-year-old, and three 25-year-olds.

Ten of the 13 study participants had either positive or negative experiences with school personnel: four positives and six negatives. All 13 participants indicated some form of support either from family or friends. Ten of the 13 participants remembered the school playing a part in

their retention. Most of the 13 participants talked about their mother being the main communicator with the school, and the others talked about other family members.

Nine of the participants were retained in middle or high school, and four participants were retained in elementary school. Ten of the participants were five years old when they started school, and three were six years old based on the state age guidelines and their birthdate. Three of the participants, two boys and one girl, who were age five when beginning kindergarten had birthdays after May of the year they started school, making them among the youngest of their classes. Aaron recalled, every year when school started getting to celebrate his birthday the first couple of weeks because of his August 7th birthday.

Thirteen of the participants discussed parents, teachers, and administration as being a part of the retention decision. Twelve of the thirteen recalled being notified about their retention by a parent, and the thirteenth talked about meeting with the principal and school counselor.

The study participants indicated their family income levels growing up based on the best of their knowledge. Two did not know the income level, two stated below $25,000, five participants thought between $25,000 and $45,000, and four believed between $45,000 and $65,000.

The thirteen participants discussed family dynamics and their primary caregivers. Ten of the 13 responded they lived in a two-parent home. One participant only lived with their mother, another moved between parents and grandparents, and another moved to attend school and lived with an aunt. Twelve of the 13 participants had siblings, while three had siblings who were also retained during their K-12 education.

Six of the participants are single, one is married, one is divorced, and five are in a partner relationship. Ten of the participants have jobs with one serving in the military, two are full-time college students, and one is unemployed. The reported income levels are five participants

earning below $25,000, six participants earning between $25,000-$45,000, and two earning between $45,000-$65,000.

**How did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention?** Ten of 13 participants included friends in their fondest school memories. Three of the 13 study participants talked about teachers being a part of their school memories.  All 13 of the participants felt that employment was a main reason for them to finish and graduate high school. Two of the 13 participants talked about the military as a career choice, one of them joining the Army. Six of the 13 participants indicated a traumatic event during their childhood, which may have had a part in their retention. Six of the 13 study participants discussed having taken college courses, with four of the six having completed their college program and graduated.

Trauma was experienced by six of the 13 participants. Five of the 13 participants were on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and were formally placed in Special Education at some point of their K-12 education. Four of the five had positive experiences with the special education teachers, and one did not connect with the resource room teacher.

Eight of the participants discussed friends as being an important part of their K-12 experience and helping them during the years of school. One talked about having to relocate due to having connections to a rough group of friends and it being what saved his life. Two had negative experiences with teachers and school.

Eight of the 13 participants mentioned reading, math, or difficulty in school as the reason for their retention. Three of the participants indicated either a baby or other health issues being the reason for retention. Two of the participants stated school attendance, and little assistance from the school is why they were retained.

Six of the 13 participants had a traumatic experience occur during their K-12 education leading to their retention. Two of the six who experienced a traumatic event indicated a lack of school support and family communication. One indicated having a parent who was incarcerated made a difference in how he was treated and his attitude toward school. One discussed poor choice in friends led to a horrific car wreck, ending him up in the hospital for an extended period. One participant discussed the molestation by a family member caused her to shut down further losing ground when she was already a struggling student. One student mentioned involvement with a gang led to him missing classes, having poor attendance, and then being retained.

Twelve of the 13 participants were notified about their retention by their both parents and teachers. These twelve indicated the decision was made by their parents at the encouragement of the school or classroom teacher. One of the study participants was notified by the school principal and guidance counselor about lacking credits and the need to repeat classes.

All the participants did not specifically mention negative feelings directly related toward their K-12 education retention. Five of the 13 study participants mentioned moving to Kansas from another state and that being part of the retention decision. All the participants had positive experiences the year they were retained. Three mentioned the retention was a turning point for them in their education. Four of the 13 participants recalled having mixed feelings about school the following year. Two mentioned being worried about students accepting them into their graduating senior classes. Two mentioned being worried more about being a new student in new schools.

Four of the 13 participants stated they did not fit in with their new classmates, and they were not highly bothered by the situation. Three of the participants were accepted due to already being

in peer groups or on sports teams. Six of the 13 participants said they had good relationships with their new classmates due to their ages.

Eleven of the 13 participants did not remember any issues arising at home from the result of retention. The parents and guardians were part of the process on some level during the retention. Two of the participants remembered it being discussed at home frequently because of wanting to ensure they not be placed in the same classroom or grade level.

**How do the young adults explain their K-12 educational experiences and the adult's future in connection with their personal grade retention?** Nine of the 13 participants had difficulties with reading or math and struggled in school. Of the total 13 participants, five of them received special education services. Five of the 13 study participants were English Language Learners (ELL). Seven of the 13 participants reported moving as a part of their educational setback.  Four of the 13 participants indicated that they have children of their own. There were three of the 13 who thought age played a role in their K-12 retention. Only two of the 13 indicated that they did not like school. Four of the total participants have children of their own and mostly agree that retention would have to be agreed upon based on a significant learning concern.

Eight of the 13 study participants mentioned retention allowing them to get help in school in the areas of math or reading. Four of the seven went on to enroll in college programs with three of them having degrees. Six of the 13 indicated that being retained allowed them to complete high school with a diploma.

Alternative options to retention, five of the 13 participants discussed special education as being what helped them with their struggles with school. One discussed a language tutor helping with her language barrier while in school and getting help earlier might have made a difference.

Two of the participants indicated having more caring teachers would have made a difference in how they performed in school. Five of the 13 did not see another option besides retention.

Three of the participants indicated that their personal efficacy was realized in school after their retention and led them to be successful now. Eight of the participants did not have any idea that at the time they were in school they had personal efficacy. Now as adults, seven of those eight have a better understanding of personal efficacy and how it effects their future. Three of the 13 described personal efficacy and the affects it had on their adult life.

Twelve of the 13 study participants are either currently in post-secondary school, graduated from a program or college, or received training from their employers. Two of the 13 participants are full-time college students. Ten of the participants are either employed part-time or full-time with a company or own their own business. One of the participants currently is unemployed.

Twelve of the 13 participants mentioned friends and personal relationships being a part of their school years. One of the twelve did mention that friendships were negative and a bad influence. During their young adult period ages 18-24, five of the 13 participants are in a personal relationship with another partner; one is married. Three of the 13 participants were aged 25 years, one was divorced, and one had a long-time girlfriend.

Four of the 13 participants either have children or are expecting a child. Nine of the 13 participants do not have children currently. Two of the participants would want any retention of their child to happen before leaving grade school. Four of the participants believe retention could be positive with support from the school. One of the participants feels retention should be a last resort. One participant does not agree with retention as an option for their child and would change schools to avoid it.

## Summary

The study consisted of thirteen participants ranging in ages 18-25 who were retained in their K-12 education and persisted to graduate from a southwestern Kansas school. These participants were selected through a social media post/email and participant survey, where pseudonyms were used protecting their identities. Each participant was interviewed, all participants participated in a journaling activity, and four participants agreed to join in the focus group. This process allowed an in-depth look into their thoughts on their personal K-12 retention and experience with self-efficacy. As a result, the study demonstrated young adults' perceptions of retention did not impact their self-efficacy, but in fact, personal relationships played a prominent role in the development of their personal self-efficacy.

There were four themes that developed from the data collection. The themes were reasons for retention, thoughts, and memories of personal experience due to retention, personal account of self-efficacy and relationships, and ideas regarding their own children's retention. These themes aided in the answering the central and guiding questions. The central question and guiding questions were answered contributing to the hopeful impact of the study. When looking at the collected information, there were many varying pieces, but the primary response from all participants was the influence of family and peers on them persisting through to graduation. Further, the main indicator for them wanting to complete high school was based on the ability to become employed and be able to financially support their own family in the future. The data collected on the positive and negative relationships with school personnel was the most intriguing as it shed a light on how the students felt toward their own academic performance. They either were able to continue because they liked school, had a reason to keep liking school, or just going through to be able to move on to the next life event. Most of the students had some

point of their K-12 experience where they had positive support from at least one person within

their school building.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

## Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study approach is designed to understand the lived world or experience lived by a person or persons (Moustakas, 1994). A transcendental method as explained by Moustakas (1994) is to understand an occurrence through open and undisturbed point of view through self-reflection of the one who experienced the event. A phenomenological study is the scientific approach concentrating on the direct experience of human subjects. This final chapter includes a summary of findings, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings, delimitations, and limitations, as well as recommendations for future research on the topic of retention and self-efficacy.

## Summary of Findings

The research focus was on the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation. This included data collected from interviews, personal journals, and a focus group. The data was gathered virtually and from electronic mail communications. From the collection data I was able to record, transcribe, code, and analyze all the data contributing to theme development.

The research study looked to answer a central research question and two guiding questions. In asking the questions to 13 study participants, ages 18 to 25, who experienced retention during their K-12 school experience, four themes emerged. The four themes were reasons for retention, thoughts and memories of personal experience due to retention, personal

account on self-efficacy and relationships, and ideas regarding their own children's retention. The first theme aided in answering the central research question, and the following three themes helped to answer the two guiding questions.

Many of the young adults described their lived experience of retention and persisting on to graduate from high school in a positive point of view.  The idea of retention being positive as reflected by two participants where they described completing school. Isiah's experience of retention in the 10th grade was described as a new start on life. He described his retention experience, "When I moved to Kansas, starting over in 10th grade allowed me to learn things I missed the first time." Faith also had a positive experience with retention, implicating it changed her life. She described her experience as "Being retained allowed me to get the services I needed to be successful in school due to my hearing disability."

All the study participants described the part the school and their families played in their retention experience. The ages of the students at the time of retention determined the necessity of a parent or guardian to be included in the decision to repeat a grade level. Brad reported the following decision about his retention, "Mom met with the principal and counselor to decide how I could stay in school and graduate. They explained the only way to graduate with the required number of credits was to repeat my freshman classes." As described by Mariana, "My parents had meetings with my teacher, and it was decided the best time to be retained was before going into middle school." Greg also described his experience, "My mom met with the school and talked about how far behind I was in reading; they decided it would be best to repeat 5th grade."

The first guiding question aimed to understand the positive or negative effect retention had on the young adults' self-efficacy. When interviewing, the participants were not aware of

what self-efficacy meant so, I had to explain it to them. Once the participants realized it was one's belief in their own ability, attitude, and cognitive skills, they were able to reflect on their personal experiences (Bandera, 1977). Retention was a painful subject for Karen, but when discussing how it connected to her self-efficacy, her mannerisms were visibly noticeable. Karen recalled:

> When I attended Oklahoma High School, I was mad and didn't want to go to school. I never passed any classes, and my teachers were mean; that is why they held me back. Moving schools and attending Kansas High School, the teachers worked with me to help me understand. Mr. Terry spent days trying to help me connect with my assignments, and it helped me to want to finish and make my mom proud of me.

Eduardo and Carmen both had similar experiences with retention in connection with having a child during their high school years. Eduardo remembered feeling the need to push through and finish school because of his newly added responsibilities. Eduardo said, "Ultimately it was on me to make sure I could support my family, and the only way to do that was to graduate high school." Carmen commented, "I wanted my daughter to be proud of me and not to think that she was the reason I was not successful."

Negative effects were noted by one participant at the time of his K-12 schooling. Daniel said, "I felt that my teachers really singled me out with being held back, Mrs. Johnson was supposed to help me, and she didn't. The point of going to her classroom was to improve and not fall backwards."

The second guiding question focused on the young adults' K-12 school experience and their future in connection with being retained. Brad responded:

Being retained allowed me the chance to mature a little more and begin to make better

choices. My friends when I was in school did not have to keep their nose clean like I did,

they had room to mess up. Looking back, I think that is what has allowed me to be where

I am today. I have been in the Army for a little over two years and am getting promoted

to specialist [Rank E4].

Hannah mentioned:

I was allowed more time to understand English which was important for me to be able to

continue and graduate. As I have been out of school and working, it is even more

important for me to be able to speak since I work at the restaurant.

Jacob explained retention and his future as:

Being retained allowed me to be more flexible when things are not going easy. I always

had a hard time in school with reading and so I knew college was not for me, but I did

want to be able to have a good job.

Luke commented:

Being retained in junior high allowed me to develop more in sports. This I think allowed

me to become a stronger athlete. When it came to schools looking at recruiting me, my

grades were better than they would have been if I weren't retained. Sports in turn gave

me the ability to understand the need for consistency which carries over to my job.

## Discussion

This study of young adults who graduated high school and were retained during their K-

12 experience added to the empirical and theoretical literature. Four themes emerged to include

reasons for retention, thoughts, and memories of personal experience due to retention, personal

account on self-efficacy and relationships, and ideas regarding their own children's retention

validated and broadened the literature. Empirical literature was supported and extended through the descriptions of grade retention, life experience of retained young adults, school starting age, and other demographics. Theoretical literature was validated and expanded through participant reflection of K-12 retention, academic success, and personal persistence. The study findings hopefully will contribute to the literature focused through the lived experiences of young adults, who were retained in K-12 and persisted on to graduate high school with an emphasis on personal relationships and positive future outcomes.

**Empirical Literature**

This study of retention and self-efficacy increases the breadth of existing empirical literature. There is a gap of the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education and persisted on to graduate high school. My study has brought to light a positive side to the practice of retention and the long-term effects on young adults. The practice of retention has been a long ongoing debate of the effectiveness and practice in United States schools. The participants in the study were able to be open and honest with their personal accounts of retention and self-efficacy. My study provides a precise view of the student perspective of their treatment prior to and after retention from administration, teachers, peers, and family. This will hopefully provide parents and school personnel a vision for the use of academic retention.

This study validated areas of empirical research on the topic of grade retention and self-efficacy. Participants provided actual personal accounts through thick rich descriptions of their experience of K-12 retention and self-efficacy. The use of a transcendental phenomenological approach yielded new information to the idea on retention and self-efficacy for young adults which little had previously been researched.

Empirically, there is limited literature on positive outcomes due to the practice of retention in K-12 education (Cham et al., 2015; Lewis, 2018). The participants in my study indicated more positive outcomes from retention than negative. The empirical literature is narrowed on young adults lived experiences of K-12 retention and successful completion of high school (Ferguson et al., 2001; Hughes et al., 2018). This study provided an in-depth account of 13 young adults, aged 18-25, who were retained and persisted on to graduate high school. The practice of grade retention is still being used over three centuries later, from the known start time (Owings & Magliaro, 1998; Range et al., 2011; Xia & Kirby, 2009). The current practice of retention is reflected through the 13 study participants all being retained at some point during their K-12 education.

The retention of students and connection to other underlying contributing factors were evident in connection to empirical literature (Gary-Bobo et al., 2016; Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016). The participants in my study indicated poor treatment from teachers, low socio-economic status, varying family dynamics, and strained academic ability. This study was able to highlight more positive outcomes of perseverance despite grade retention than historically shown in prior researched negative experience outcomes.

Jackson and Huang (2000) discussed students who had both parents as a part of their family structure had a more positive self-outlook and better education outcome. The participants in my study mostly discussed the support of their parents or other family members during their school experience (Huang, 2014; Young et al., 2019). The study indicated that most of the young adults did not discuss having a negative self-outlook or lack of connection with peers (Cham et al., 2015; Peterson & Hughes, 2011).

This study aids in broadening the literature on grade retention specifically to age, gender, and birth effect (Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016). This study coincides with the aspect of a students' age and grade retention. Of the 13 study participants, 10 were age five when they began kindergarten and three were age six. The age a student begins school varies throughout the world; some start at age four, and others wait until age seven (Sharp, 2002). The research extended the literature on the practices of school start date and age of kindergarten students in relationship to grade retention (Agasisti & Cordero, 2017). Three of the study participants were the youngest in their class with birthdays after May but prior to state age cut-off date.

This study supports male students are retained at a higher rate than their female counterparts as eight males to five females were retained. Hwang and Capella (2018) research on grade retention revealed higher retention among boys compared to girls. Birth effect is the understanding that a child's birthdate compared to a cut-off age based on a set date are disadvantaged the closer their birthdate is to the cut-off date. This current study found that there were five participants who were at a disadvantage due to birth effect. The participants, who indicated their age when starting school as relevant, had birthdates after January and prior to the cut-off requirement.

It is relevant to see the impact the choice to academically retain students made through this research study. In examining young adults who were retained during their K-12 education who explained their lived experience on the practice of grade retention. Participants of the study described their lived experience of retention, graduation from high school, and life beyond the short-term effects of retention (Mawhinney et al., 2016). All but one of the participants who were retained either are attending college, are employed by a company, or work for themselves (Andrew, 2014; Gangl, 2006).

Inconsistent to Kabay (2016) research on dropout rates and students who frequently moved, this study found that students who moved multiple times were still able to graduate high school. Also, contrary to Yang et al. (2018), there were limited social implications for the retained students as they all were able to graduate high school despite being held-back and all but one participant is currently attending school or employed. All of the study participants indicated the importance to finish school to be able to earn a decent income. Cham et al. (2015) literature indicated the opposite that the nation's economy is affected by the number of students not completing high school or dropping out in lieu of grade retention.

**Theoretical Literature**

This study is based on Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. This theory concentrates on one's own ability to succeed in specific situations stemmed from a negative or stressed event (Bandura, 1995). One guiding question of the study asked, how did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention? The participants in this study described both negative and positive events in their life specific to their grade retention and further success. All participants were able to graduate high school despite being retained during their K-12 education. Seven of the 13 participants went on to take or complete college courses. Of the 13 participants, 12 of them currently have stable employment or goals towards employment (Lee-St. John et al., 2018).

This study adds to the gap in grade retention and self-efficacy literature because of the lived experiences of young adults who were retained and persisted to graduate high school, exhibiting mostly positive outcomes from the practice of grade retention. Further, these participants indicated personal relationships were a major contributing factor to their self-efficacy.

The participants in the study all talked about retention and school as being up to them to grow past their educational setbacks (Bandura, 1999). The participants who were retained beyond grade school had a specific reason to continue through graduation of high school and not become a dropout statistic (Bandura, 1994). Reinforcing literature on self-efficacy, retained young adults who persisted on to graduate high school saw retention as just another hurdle in their path to finish school. Many of the study participants struggled with school, specifically regarding their ability to read.  Six of the participants in the study described being an English Language Learner and that contributing in part to their retention. Thus, these participants still ground through the set-back of retention to successfully complete high school and become a positive statistic. Other participants in the study wanted to do more than their parents in connection to completing high school to in turn make their family proud of their accomplishment.

Self-efficacy is broken into four primary categories: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal/social persuasion, and somatic and emotional states. Bandura (1994) explains mastery experience as being successful with a new task due to previous experience with a similar task. All of the study participants were able to have some level of mastery experience even though being retained in their K-12 education. Faith indicated:

 I was successful because I began to figure out reading and comprehension with the help of my teachers. Once, I knew I could do it each time became that much easier. Up until that point I had little belief in my own abilities.

Vicarious experience was not reflected by all participants in the study. In reviewing the data collected in the study, two participants stuck out that fit in the vicarious experience part of

self-efficacy. This is often seen through teachers when they work with students who have a difficult time in the classroom. Karen stated:

> My teacher, Mr. Terry, really showed me the way to get through school. I felt like I had
> been making it harder than necessary. He just made it seem easy, and that allowed me to
> follow his lead and make my mom proud.

Verbal/Social persuasion was explained by Bandura (1994) to show others the ability to increase self-efficacy through praise and spoken affirmation. Several study participants reflected on their teacher's role in helping them to persist in building their self-efficacy ultimately leading to completing high school. Daniel explained:

> I didn't like most of my teachers because they didn't care about helping me learn
> anything. Miss Ashley worked with me in math, and she took time to reteach parts that I
> didn't understand. Miss Lindsey was there every day to help me in English and Social
> Studies. I was able to pass my classes that I had taken twice because I finally got help and
> began to understand. It was because of those two ladies who cared about helping me; they
> told me I could do it and had faith in me.

Somatic and emotional states is more about the fear of failure in aspect to a specific task (Pajares, 2002). Many of the participants did not discuss stress or fear until they were discussing their own children and future as it connects to their personal relationships. In looking at my notes from the interviews, I remember the interview with Karen. Researchers notes and thoughts:

> Karen was talking about not letting her kids finish school. She herself finished school and
> graduated but is afraid that her children might have similar struggles like she did when
> she attended school in Oklahoma. Even though she was able to overcome and graduate
> when she moved to Kansas; she talked about the need to find a different school for her

own kids if retention were to happen to them. The somatic and emotional state was not

for her but for her future children.

According to Mahjoub (2017), students are not retained without reason, but it is specific

to each student and their academic ability, grade requirements, teacher and family input. Each of

the participants in the study indicated academic struggle based on the textbook reason for

retention as it relates to self-efficacy: not performing based on a specific standards, cognitive

gaps, and even personal fortitude. The study found ties to the self-efficacy literature with

participants personal accounts of grade retention. The 13 participants went through their life

experience as a retained K-12 student who was able to persist on to graduate high school. Self-

efficacy was acknowledged by the participants to have played a crucial role in varied aspects in

their current place in life. As the researcher, I was able to look through an objective lens while

the participants told their personal accounts of grade retention and self-efficacy. In reviewing my

notes, I recalled:

> As the participants told their lived experience with retention, there were phases of varied
>
> emotion. Isiah talked about retention saving his life, and while this account was being
>
> explained, he broke down into tears at the thought of surviving walking away from his
>
> former gang ties. I could tell through his personal life story this was indeed a life
>
> changing event.

Retention can develop a sense of failure in students based on low self-efficacy

specifically to certain subject areas (Domenech-Betoret et al., 2017). This study rebukes this idea

of developing low self-efficacy. Seven participants out of the thirteen indicated a struggle in

reading, which led in part to their retention. Sometimes teacher's use verbal persuasion when

working with students to help the students achieve more than their own self-belief (Bandura,

1994; Begren, 2013; Brown et al, 2005). Eight of the participants mentioned teacher's support affecting them in either a positive or negative memory as helping them to continue through to graduation.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

The focus of this study was the lived experiences of young adults who were retained in K-12 education and persisted on to graduate high school. Thirteen participants were included in the study describing their retention and self-efficacy demonstrating a divergence to traditional dropout rates and negative experiences stemming from grade retention extending on prior literature. After data analyzation, it became clear that the participants in the study had self-efficacy due to relationships with teachers, family, and friends. There is theoretical, empirical, and practical importance of this study as shown in the implications.

**Theoretical Implications**

Bandura's self-efficacy theory was the theoretical framework for this study (Bandura, 1977). The theory is rooted in understanding that people who have self-efficacy are more likely to be successful in life. The study's population was comprised of young adults aged 18-25, who had been retained and graduated from a southwestern Kansas school. The theory of self-efficacy was demonstrated in the life experiences of the young adults who were retained during K-12 schooling and persisted on to graduate high school.

This study aligned with Bandura's self-efficacy theory framework's four factors: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic and emotional state (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2002). Participants described different aspects of their life experience through growing academically out of a temporary set-back of grade retention. Mastery experience was one area that each of the participants was exposed to through being retained and going on to

graduate high school. They each described their retention and how academically they were able to overcome struggles they had in school. Not all participants explained a vicarious experience, but there were five participants who indicated support from teachers to help them succeed in the classroom.

Verbal persuasion was highlighted often throughout the study when participants described relationships with peers and family. Somatic and emotional states was just beginning to become evident for many of the participants. The age group of the study was 18–25-year-olds; the older participants seemed to have a better grasp on their self-efficacy in relationship to events in their life. They were more confident in their answers and where they were at in life at the current time.

**Empirical Implications**

The implications of this study focused on young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. To further add to the research of Dong (2009), this study did provide validity to the ratio of male to female retained students whose birthdates fell later in the school calendar year and nearing the school age cutoff date. This study also expanded the literature on retained students struggling in the foundations of reading. Out of the participants in the study, 62% of them indicated a struggle in reading and math, which contributes to the empirical literature (Gonzalez-Betancor & Lopez-Puig, 2016).

Hwang and Cappella (2018) mentioned early adolescence adds to the trauma and tough times students experience with changes in biological, psychosocial, and academics. This current research included young adults who explained various traumatic experiences and how the trauma along with being retained impacted their lives. This study expands on the literature from Cham et

al. (2015) on peer bonding and the importance of peer relationships through the school years. It further supports the research by Pierson and Connell (1992), which indicated younger retained students did not experience harmful peer relationships. This study indicated the importance of peer relationships to the participants and their fortitude to succeed in school.

Prior literature indicates slightly above 20 percent of children under the age of 18 are being raised by immigrants living in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2011). This current study had 38 percent of the participants indicate they were part of an immigrant family household. The aforementioned literature brought attention to immigrant students being at a higher risk for poor attendance, low grades, and discipline issues in addition to other setbacks (Chaudry et al., 2010; Capps et al., 2007; Lopez, 2011). This current study also added additional support of immigrant students being at higher risk for attendance, grades, and discipline.

**Practical Implications**

The most beneficial part of this study comes out of the practical implications. The practice of social promotion can cause damage to social and academic skills (Jimerson et al., 2006; Mawhinney et al., 2016). This current study revealed retained students were able to minimize educational deficiencies and build self-efficacy through not being socially promoted. K-12 schools to include administrators, teachers, special support programs and families should be made aware of the option for retention to aid students in closing education gaps as well to build students' self-image.

Kabay (2016) noted age as a component for the start of school in connection to grade retention. As indicated by this current study, age was a factor in retention among the participants. The student's age is a consideration that schools should start being aware of prior to enrolling

students at the kindergarten level. Five participants in the current study were affected by their age when they started school and noted that might have in part lead to their retention.

Grade level assessment scores and grade level mastery are means schools around the world use for retention. This is not a practice common to the United States, but the data is available for the purpose of state and collegiate use. Seven participants in the current study mentioned moving during their school years as a contributing factor to their retention. Schools could apply this data to inform decisions for grade placement for transfer students from other districts and other states when enrolling them with a cohort class.

### Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations were an inherent part of the design process as this was a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. Creswell and Poth (2018) state the purpose of data collection in the natural setting as well as conducting personal interviews is necessary to obtain the lived experiences of the participants. The use of the phenomenological approach was selected to gain a common experience from the 13 study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). The decision for the transcendental approach was to use personal accounts from the participants while being an open and undisturbed point of view (Moustakas, 1994). The focus of this study was limited to young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. The study was delimited to young adults aged 18-25 who had been retained during K-12 education and graduated high school. The study was delimited to 13 participants who had been retained during their K-12 education and graduated from a southwestern Kansas school. The sample size of 13 participants was used because it was within the range of 12 to 15 participants necessary for saturation (Guest et al., 2006). This regional area was selected based on the proximity to area colleges, large high

schools, and driving distance to the high school where I was employed, making it accessible to collect data.

There were two main limitations to this study. The first limitation was the COVID-19 pandemic taking place during the time frame of this study and data collection period. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions within the nation, states, and local counties hampered the ability to meet in person and face-to-face. This required all personal interviews and the focus group to be conducted virtually via Zoom. The second limitation was the age range of the participants within the study which was 18-25 years. The age range limited their scope of self-efficacy based on the number of years post high school graduation.

## Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided an in-depth perspective into the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted on to high school graduation: however, additional research is necessary. Future studies should include a larger age range with a focus on minority ethnic diversity. The participants included in this study were made of up one African American/White, five Hispanic, two Hispanic/White, and five White. These demographics are underrepresented according to the building report cards of southwestern Kansas schools (KSDE, 2019). A future study which included a higher minority ethnic diversity could lead to a greater understanding of the practice of retention.

Another study population to include in future research would be students who started school with a late birthdate in comparison to the school mandated start date. This study included five participants who were impacted by birth effect. This could benefit K-12 school districts to reevaluate their policies of the starting age for kindergarten students. This could also be beneficial to families in planning for preschool or kindergarten preparatory programs.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to evaluate schools use of academic screeners in students' home languages. This would be beneficial to schools to determine if their dual language learners are behind academically or if they are struggling due to language barriers. Families could also benefit from being misidentified and struggle less with school communication. Students could also benefit from being mislabeled with learning deficiencies and setbacks outside of their cognitive ability.

## Summary

Retention is an ongoing debate in the field of education and the worry of its long-term effects on student's self-efficacy. There is a thin line between making grade retention a positive or negative experience for the students, parents, and school community. The idea of academic retention has to be looked at from the standpoint of the whole child, not just one factor. This entails academic, behavioral, cognitive development, and age (chronological and developmental). My study aimed to focus on the need to provide understanding on outcomes of self-efficacy of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted on to graduate high school.

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school. This study was needed because there is little research focused on the self-efficacy of young adults who were retained and graduated. The theoretical framework which guided this study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. The study data was collected from 13 young adult participants who were retained during their K-12 education and graduated high school from a southwestern Kansas school. Triangulation of data was used to answer these questions through the use of participant

interviews, journal entries, and a focus group. Four themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes were (a) reasons for retention, (b) thoughts and memories of personal experience due to retention, (c) personal account on self-efficacy and relationships, and (d) ideas regarding their own children's retention. Out of these themes, the focus of the phenomenon developed around their personal relationships and positive future outcomes.

My study posed one central question and two guiding questions that were developed to determine the gap in empirical literature. The central question was What are the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation from a southwestern Kansas school? The two guiding questions were How did the young adults believe their self-efficacy was influenced either positively or negatively by grade retention? How do the young adults explain their K-12 educational experience and the adult's future in connection with their personal grade retention? All of the participants in the study experienced the same phenomenon of grade retention and persisting on to graduate high school. The differences each participant faced was their individual experience of retention and self-efficacy.

My study emerged implications for families, teachers, and school leaders on the topic of academic retention and self-efficacy. The implications surround the importance of school readiness, teacher support, personal relationships, and the importance of student success. The age and developmental readiness of students is important to their ability to be successful with the rigors of all day school. Young students do not come prepared for the switch from the home or daycare setting to actively engage their cognitive abilities. If schools are not prepared to address the cognitive gaps in young learners, they will continue the cycle of social promotion and increased student dropout rates. The schools need to have a retention plan or program in place to

meet the needs when it arises for students and families. The earlier schools can identify students who could benefit from additional time in subject areas or grade level repetition the less the education gap. This plan also needs to ensure a support system is in place for students based on faculty, staff, and peers they trust to guide them in the direction of school completion.

What is the meaning of all of this? Retention is not an issue to avoid but to understand how it can be used for the success of students. If grade retention is used to fill the cognitive gap and provide necessary educational support for students, then by all means it is purposeful. If grade retention is used with the purpose that the student will catch up on their own and eventually get it, it is no more effective than social promotion. An example of this is Faith; she was retained due to cognitive gaps and health deficiencies. She now has been able to surpass these educational barriers and setbacks to go on to be an advocate for Special Education students. She understands the struggles facing these students because of her personal experience and is now able to provide them with the necessary guidance to build their self-efficacy. Retention does not always need to be viewed in a negative or positive stance but regarding a student's whole being to include age, cognitive ability, self-efficacy, and support system of home and school.

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# APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA POST/EMAIL TO ALUMNI

Social Media Post/Email to Alumni

Alumni of SWHS A/B/C

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of adults K-12 education who were retained, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

You need to be a graduate of SWHS A/B/C, be between 18-25 and have been retained at least once during grades K-12. If you are willing to participate you will be asked to answer a questionnaire, participate in a recorded interview, participate in a recorded focus group and complete a journal for the study. The participants will be allowed to review their full interview transcripts prior to the writing of the findings. It should take approximately four hours to complete all of the procedures. Your name and retention grade will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, message me from this Facebook post to receive a screening survey. Once you have been qualified for the study you will be provided with a consent document through your email address, and questionnaire. I will contact you to schedule an interview through email or phone number on your qualifying survey.

The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and complete the questionnaire within two weeks to ensure participation in the study. You can return both to me electronically, or at the time of the interview

If you choose to participate in the study, you will receive a $25 gift card.

Sincerely,

Suzann Bouray
Liberty University Doctorate Student

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SURVEY

1. Name: _____

2. What year did you graduate high school? _____

**3.** Age: 18-25 _____ 26-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ 56 & Above _____

4. During your K-12 education were you retained or held back an additional year of schooling?  Yes_____  No_____

   If you answered **YES** in **Question 4, please complete the rest of the survey**

**Phone Number:** _____

**Email Address:** _____

**Gender:** Male _____         Female _____

**Race/Ethnicity:** Black or African American _____     American Indian _____   Asian _____

   Hispanic _____  White _____  Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander_____
   Other _____

**Place of Employment (Optional Question):** _____

# APPENDIX C: EMAIL OF APPROVAL TO SCHOOLS

Email of Approval on District/School Letterhead

To Whom It May Concern:

As a graduate student of LIBERTY UNIVERSITY's School of Education I, Suzann Bouray, am conducting a research study for partial completion of the doctorate in Educational Leadership. USD A/B/C is participating in this project and is authorizing the student to do the following:

1. Collect demographic data on a particular school and its surrounding community.
2. Send surveys to all alumni who are member of the alumni association and Facebook alumni group page.
3. Interview 13 alumni adults of the school about issues related to retention.

Sincerely,

Superintendent

**APPENDIX D: SCHOOL ENDORSEMENT**

Liberty University

June 30, 2019

Superintendent
Southwest High School A/B/C
PO Box ZZZ
Southwest, KS 12345

Dear School Administrator:

As a graduate student of LIBERTY UNIVERSITY's School of Education, I am requesting your approval for a research study. The study is for a partial completion of my doctorate in Educational Leadership in which I am required to do the following:

1. Collect demographic data on a particular school and its surrounding community.
2. Send surveys to all alumni who are member of the alumni association and Facebook alumni group page.
3. Interview 13 alumni adults of the school about issues related to retention.

If you are willing to have your school participate in this study, please provide me with written authorization on your school letterhead. I will provide copies of your letter to interviewees to assure them that you are aware and approve of the study. Attached is a sample letter with wording that would suffice if you would like to use it as a model.

Thank you for considering this request. If you would like further information, you may contact my professor:
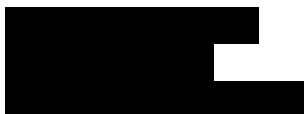
Sincerely,

Suzann Bouray

Attached:     Letter of Approval

**APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL**

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 1, 2020

Suzann Bouray
Jose Puga

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-263 A Phenomenological Study of Academic Retention: The Lived Experiences Of Adults Who Were Retained In K-12

Dear Suzann Bouray, Jose Puga:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at ██████████.

Sincerely,
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**
***Administrative Chair of Institutional Research***
**Research Ethics Office**

**APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM**

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC RETENTION: THE LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF ADULTS WHO WERE RETAINED IN K-12
Suzann Bouray
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the life experiences of adults who were retained during K-12 education. You were selected as a possible participant because you graduated high school and were retained during your K-12 education. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Suzann Bouray, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to understand the life story of young adults who were grade retained during their K-12 education and were still able to graduate high school.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. **Participate in a Questionnaire:** This will take about 30 minutes and needs to be submitted within 2 weeks of participant selection.
2. **Participate in a Personal Interview:** Interviews will be scheduled after all Questionnaires have been received.  Interviews will be conducted either in person at a place convenient for you or through an internet meeting place, Zoom.  A link for the interview will be provided to you.  All interviews will be audio and video recorded. Participants will be allowed to review their interview transcription prior to the writing of the findings. This will take about an hour's time.
3. **Participate in a Focus Group:** A group will be formed from about 6-7 of the participants to collectively share their personal experience of K-12 retention. The focus group will be selected based on common themes from the personal interviews. This will take place in a neutral meeting space if available or in a private internet meeting place. A link for the focus group will be provided to you. All focus group sessions will be audio and video recorded**.** This will take about an hour and half of your time.
4. **Complete a Personal Journal:** A journal will be provided for you to record personal thoughts which come to mind after the personal interview.  You will also be able to insert photos, school records, or other information you feel relevant to the study.  The completion of a journal will take about a total of an hour over the course of the study.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of how retention plays a part in one's life experience.

**Compensation:** Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Each participant will be issued a $25 gift card at the conclusion of the study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. All research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations, but no identifying information will be used. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Suzann Bouray, you may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Jose Puga, at ██████████████.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, ████ ███████████████████████████████████████████ or email at ████████████.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant                                                    Date


_____

Signature of Investigator                                                   Date

**APPENDIX G: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS**

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of young adults who were retained during their K-12 education and persisted to high school graduation. The purpose of this questionnaire to capture demographic, retention, family, and employment information.

1. Name: _____

2. Age: _____

3. Birthdate: _____

4. Race/Ethnicity: _____

5. Gender: _____

6. How old were you when you started school? _____

7. In what grade(s) were you retained? _____

8. What was your age when you were retained? _____

9. Do you feel confident about recalling the details of why you were retained/held back?

   Strongly Agree ___    Agree ___    Undecided ___

   Disagree ___    Strongly Disagree ___

10. Were you in receipt of Special Education Services or on an Individual Education Plan

    (IEP) while in school?  Yes_____   or   No_____

11. What was your families estimated income level when you were in K-12 school?

    Below $25,000_____    $25,000-45,000_____    $45,000-65,000_____

    $65,000-85,000_____    $85,000-100,000_____    $100,000 & Above_____

12. What was your father's highest level of education?

    No high school diploma or GED _____    High School Diploma or GED _____

    Associates/Technical School _____    Bachelors _____    Masters _____

    Higher _____

13. What was your mother's highest level of education?

No high school diploma or GED _____ High School Diploma or GED _____

Associates/Technical School _____ Bachelors _____ Masters _____

Higher _____

14. Who was your primary care giver?

Both parents _____ Mother _____ Father _____ Grandparent(s) _____

Family member _____ Guardian _____ Other _____

15. How many siblings (if any) do you have? _____

16. Were any of your siblings retained? Yes _____ No _____

17. What year did you graduate from high school? _____

18. What is your marital status? Single _____ Married _____ Remarried _____

Divorced _____ Widowed _____ Partnership _____ Other _____

19. What is your current employment? _____

20. What is your income level? Below $25,000_____ $25,000-45,000_____

$45,000-65,000_____ $65,000-85,000_____ $85,000-100,000_____

$100,000 & Above_____

**APPENDIX H: STANDARDIZED OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Hello, my name is Suzann Bouray, and before we start, I would like to thank you for taking time to participate in this study.  As you are aware, I am attempting to learning about the experience of retention in K-12 education and am interested in what you have to share.

2. Please introduce yourself and tell me what you prefer to be addressed as.

3. Please explain your fondest school memory.

4. Please explain your K-12 experience.

5. How was the decision to retain you made?

    a. Who all was a part of this decision?

6. Why do you think you were retained?

7. Do you feel trauma led to your retention? If so, what trauma in your childhood led to your retention? (For example: Divorce or Death of a parent)

8. How were you notified about your retention?

9. How do you remember feeling about the decision to be retained?

10. What were your feelings when you started school the year you were retained?

11. What were your feelings when you started school the following year?

12. How do you remember your friends acting towards you after you were retained?

13. How did your new classmates treat you in your retained grade?

14.  Did issues arise at home about your retention? If so, what issues arose at home about being retained, either from parents/guardians or siblings?

15. What about being retained was helpful in your education?

16. Do you think there was another option besides retention that would have helped you succeed in school?

17. How was your personal efficacy affected during school and as an adult?

18. What has been your education since high school?

   a. Formal or Informal (On the Job)?

19. What has been your employment history as an adult?

   a. Was this effected by retention?

20. What part do you think retention played in your personal relationships?

   a. Relationship during your school years?

   b. Relationships as a young adult (18-24)?

   c. Relationships as you continue to age (25+)?

21. What are your feelings about retention for your own children at this time?

22. Is there any information you would like to tell me about your personal experience with retention that I have failed to ask?

**APPENDIX I: PERSONAL JOURNAL ENTRY PROMPTS**

1. What further memories do you have about school and being retained?

2. What do you remember most about the process of being retained?

3. What challenges did you face regarding being retained in school?

4. What made you either feel confident or lacking confidence after your retention?

5. What would be your response to your child's administrator or teacher if they recommended grade retention as the best option for your child?

**APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP PROMPT QUESTIONS**

1. How was the decision to be retained made? Who was involved with the retention decision?

2. How did you find out about your retention?

3. How do you remember feeling about this decision?

4. Explain what you liked about school prior to your retention? What did you like after your retention?

5. Do you believe that there was another avenue besides retention? Explain.

6. If you feel that retention was not helpful for you, what other process or steps would have been helpful? Explain.

7. What changes could be made to the process of retention that would benefit the success of all students?