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How is A Child's Perception of Self Affected by Retention?

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Administration
and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Brenda Sue Tweed

December 2001

Dr. Ronald Lindahl, Chair

Dr. Russell Mays

Dr. Elizabeth Ralston

Dr. Russell West

Keywords: Retention, Retained, Social Promotion, Nonpromotion, Junior Primary, Transition,
Self-Esteem

ABSTRACT

How is A Child's Perception of Self Affected by Retention?

by

Brenda Sue Tweed

The purpose of this study was to inform educators of the impact of grade retention on a child's perception of self and to provide recommendations and practical applications for educators in the future.

Although the long-term effects of grade retention are still unclear, the number of students being retained annually is steadily on the rise. Conflicting beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of the retention experience make it difficult to clearly predict which students will benefit from being retained.

A large body of research reports the impact of grade retention on scholastic achievement. As retention has usually been considered to remediate academic difficulties, the effectiveness of retention is logically studied in terms of academic performance. However, because educators recognize the importance of affective variables, it is equally important to assess the effectiveness of retention in terms of self-perceptions and engagement at school.

The focus of this inquiry was to explore the effects of retention as reported by twelve 5th and 6th grade students who had been retained. Because logical and theoretical arguments have been made for the negative effects of retention on a child's self-image, this study examined the self-esteem of retained students. Research techniques included open-ended questions and interviews, using Patton's qualitative interview guide approach.

From the findings, the investigator reached the following conclusions: (a) for the participants in this study, being retained was not detrimental to their perceptions of self; (b) all participants perceived others to like them well; in fact, 5 of the 12 reported that others liked them better following their retention experiences; and (c) all students in this study believed that retention helped them to do better in school.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my two children, Courtney and Garrett, who have patiently supported my quest for lifelong learning. I am eternally grateful for their unselfish understanding of the importance of education and for the sharing of my time.

I also dedicate this work to my mother, Judy Franke, who served as surrogate parent at sporting events and ran her grandchildren here, there, and everywhere; without her I could have never achieved my educational goals.

And finally, but certainly not least important--to my loving husband, Donnie Tweed, the finest man I have ever had the privilege of knowing.

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In addition, I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Ron Lindahl, my committee chair. I am also thankful for the dedication of the remainder of my committee members--Dr. Russ West, Dr. Russell Mays, and Dr. Elizabeth Ralston.

A special thanks goes to the students who made my study possible--I feel richer for getting to know each of them on a personal level. And last, I want to thank my doctoral cohort. The bonds of friendship developed with this incredible group of women will remain eternal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Last year, a male pupil struggled as the youngest, smallest first grader in his school. Academically, the 6-year-old held his own, but older classmates drowned out his discussions and teased him. His self-confidence crumbled; he began squinting excessively and urinating nearly 20 times a day. When medical and academic testing ruled out a physical or mental disability, the young boy's parents requested that he repeat first grade. The child accepted the decision reluctantly--at first. But as he finished his second year of first grade, his physical symptoms had disappeared and he was considered a well-liked class leader by his peers.

Can this be the case for other retained students? Researchers have found that students who have a strong self-concept, who do not pose any behavioral problems, and whose academic achievement is not significantly delayed may not be harmed by retention (Dawson & Ott, 1991; Katz, 1984). These researchers also suggested that students who have had excessive absences or numerous family moves could also possibly benefit from the repetition of a grade.

Can educators predict who will benefit from retention? According to Lieberman (1980), some researchers suggested that it is, in fact, possible to predict which students will benefit from nonpromotion and have encouraged educators to create decision-making procedures that will assist in choosing likely candidates for successful retention. One particular instrument, Light's Retention Scale (LRS), was developed in 1977 (Light, 1981). The LRS was designed to assist professionals in making sensitive and often difficult decisions about promoting or retaining a child. Its extensive psychological and academic literature reviews of grade retention allow educators and parents to better understand the advantages and drawbacks of nonpromotion.

Although the LRS was intended to aid in the decision-making process, there are those who have rejected such a method. Smith and Shepard (1987) concluded from their own review

of the literature and their own research that educators were simply unable to predict accurately which students would be successful. Similarly, a 1984 review of the LRS by Vasa criticized the model for “providing no psychometric evidence of the reliability or validity of the scale” (p. 447). The author also suggested that the use of the LRS as a tool for counseling would not seem justifiable without more evidence of the content validity of the 19 factors and levels of candidacy for retention.

It seems obvious from these conflicting beliefs that there is disagreement regarding whether one can clearly predict which students will benefit from the retention experience. While much is known about the effect of grade retention on measured achievement, studies about how grade retention influences students' attitudes toward themselves and school are scant and results are mixed. Therefore, this investigation does not attempt to determine what defines success or failure of retention. Rather, it seeks to explore, through the discussion of their thoughts and feelings of how their own self-perceptions have been impacted by the retention experience, the self-perceived successes or failures of some previously retained students in various schools in East Tennessee.

Statement of the Problem

Many students are retained annually. The precise extent, nationally, of in-grade retention proves difficult to ascertain because the U.S. Department of Education does not collect national retention data. However, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that 21.3% of adolescents were retained in at least one grade (Resnick et al., 1997). This number certainly indicates that retention is a serious problem within schools today.

A large number of researchers have investigated the impact of grade retention on scholastic achievement (Doyle, 1989; Holmes, 1989; Holmes, 1983; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Karweit, 1991; Niklason, 1984; Overman, 1986; Smith & Shepard, 1987). The majority of studies conducted over the previous two decades indicated that nonpromotion

negatively impacts academic achievement, personal adjustment, and student motivation (Holmes, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1990; Walters, 1995).

Nonpromotion, or retention, has been the rallying cry for the proponents of “back to the basics” (Bossing & Brien, 1980) for some time. They argue that only those students who have successfully completed the academic requirements of the current grade should be promoted to the next grade. Because retention is usually considered by educators as a means to remediate academic difficulties, the effectiveness of retention is logically studied in terms of academic performance. However, because educators recognize the importance of affective variables, it is equally important to assess the effectiveness of retention in terms of self-perceptions and engagement at school. These theories provide the foundation for this study.

The school system chosen for this study currently serves over 11,000 students (preK--12) in the district. Demographically, the county can be described as mostly suburban, with several rural schools included. Presently, the school system is comprised of four primary (K-4) schools, two intermediate (3-5) schools, four middle (5-8) schools, six elementary (K-8) schools, four high (9-12) schools, one alternative school, and one center for special needs students. Fortunately, retention data are available for this school system (See Appendix A). The most recent retention data available were from the 1999-2000 school year. Complete promotion and retention data for this district over the past five years is located in Appendix A. The number of students retained in the district at the end of the 2000 school year clearly indicated similar patterns and levels of retention at each grade level compared to other areas of the nation. The greatest percentage of students in the district was retained in grade nine (14.98%), followed by grade one (11.01%) and finally kindergarten, with a retention rate of 7.29%. Interestingly, the smallest percentage of students retained was in fifth grade (.19%). Only 2 students out of 957 in grade 5 were retained countywide. What does this indicate about possible imbalances in grade promotion criteria for different educational levels? Could educators be asking too much of students as they enter kindergarten or first grade? Is the educational system overwhelmingly

demanding of high school freshmen just entering new schools? Are students coming to school unprepared and incapable of meeting minimal standards? These and other questions remain to be answered and related to the efficacy of the retention experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how a child's perceptions of self are impacted by retention. Because logical and theoretical arguments have been made for negative effects of retention on a child's self-image, this study attempted to examine the self-perceptions of retained students.

Definition of Terms

1. Grade Retention. The term grade retention as used in this study refers to the practice of requiring a student to repeat a grade level. Grade retention is recognized by other terms and phrases including nonpromotion, flunking, failing, and being held back. The terms grade retention and nonpromotion will be used interchangeably throughout this study.
2. Prekindergarten. The term prekindergarten as used in this study refers to a special class designed to provide a head start for children who are old enough to start kindergarten, but who are determined not to be academically prepared. These students attend a regular kindergarten class the year following their prekindergarten placement.
3. Transition. The term transition as used in this study is defined as a class for children who have completed kindergarten and are determined not to be academically prepared for a regular first-grade classroom. The terms transition, transition first, and junior primary will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

Delimitations and Limitations

After analyzing the student population data provided by a school system in East Tennessee, I determined that there were three middle schools that have been in operation during the entire five years for which information was provided (See Appendix A). The three schools were of average size and were similar in terms of student population; hence, any one of the three schools in the district would have the same probability of housing similar homogeneous groups of retained students. Therefore, this study was delimited to students enrolled in the fifth and sixth grades during the 2000-2001 school year, in average size, rural middle schools in a school district in East Tennessee. The pupils who participated in the research had been retained in one grade level during their previous school experience, which could include transition or prekindergarten. The limitations of this study included conceivable exaggerations and possible lack of honesty from the participants due to varying backgrounds and possible embarrassment.

It must also be clearly noted that although all participants were in the fifth or sixth grade, each may have been retained at a different grade level. Varying perspectives of the retention experience were expected due to the reliability issue of memories that may have occurred six or seven years previously. Limitations may also include hesitation on the part of the participants to openly discuss their true feelings with an adult interviewer. It is likewise important to consider the limitations presented by only 12 participants of 35 consenting to take part in this study. Bearing in mind that the students' experiences were reported as mostly positive, it could be plausible that the results may be skewed.

Assumptions

A major assumption for this study is the belief that self-esteem is significantly associated with personal satisfaction and successful functioning. Because this study was based upon answers given through oral responses, it is assumed that the participants were generally reflective, forthright, and honest in providing accurate data.

Overview of the Study

This investigation consisted of a qualitative research inquiry on the effects of retention on a child's perceptions of self. Chapter 1 has presented an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 provides an outline to the methodology that was used. Chapter 4 contains transcribed information collected from the participants in the study and the researcher's interpretation of that information. Chapter 4 also includes a thorough analysis of the data. In Chapter 5, the reader is presented with findings and conclusions drawn from gathered participant information. A full summary includes a discussion of recommendations for future research and practical applications for the schools included in the study, and potentially for other schools, based on the findings. It is anticipated that the results of this study may provide a clearer insight into feelings the previously retained children in this specific study possess about the retention experience and its effect on his or her perceptions of self.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Retention Defined

Dawson, Rafoth, and Carey (1995) defined retention as “the practice of requiring a child to repeat a grade or requiring a child of appropriate chronological age to delay entry to kindergarten or first grade” (p. 3). "Transition, second-year, or pre-" classes are traditionally considered equivalent to retention because the child does not move on to the next grade level. Although some view these situations as separate from retention, for the purpose of this study, students who were placed in these types of classes were considered retained.

Historical Overview

It was not until about 1860 that grade retention developed into a common practice in U.S. elementary schools to classify pupils into various grade groupings, with promotion contingent upon mastery of specified content. When the one-room schoolhouse began to be replaced by graded schools in the mid-19th Century, students were promoted on a "merit" system, the mastery of a stringent, inflexible academic standard for each grade (Rose, Medway, Cantrell, & Marus, 1983). Ayers (1909) stated that retention was commonplace--three out of every four students were retained at least once during their first eight years of school. Being promoted was considered a significant accomplishment. Maxwell's (1904) age-grade process study became the foundation upon which school system reports on promotion, retention, and school discontinuation were based. During the two decades following that study, researchers began to analyze the efficacy of nonpromotion in terms of student achievement.

The intent of grade retention was to enhance school performance by providing more time for pupils to strengthen academic skills (Reynolds, 1992). By the 1930s, researchers were

presenting the negative effects of retention on achievement (Kline, 1933). This prompted changing attitudes toward the role of schooling, and the psychology of the individual student created a shift toward an approach called "social promotion," in which pupils were passed on to the next grade with their peers, receiving academic assistance when needed. This policy change was due, in part, to the concerns of social scientists that nonpromotion could be harmful or damaging to students' social and emotional growth (Darling-Hammond, 1997). In a summary of research conducted between 1924 and 1948, Goodlad (1954) determined that retention did not lessen the deviations in pupil achievement levels and did not produce positive scholastic gains. Otto (1951) stated that retention provided no specific educational value for students and that the academic gain of retained students was smaller than the gain of their promoted peers.

Researchers began to look at a possible relationship between nonpromotion and dropouts in the mid-20th Century. A study by Berلمان (1949) pointed out that children who had been retained had a greater chance of school discontinuation than those who were promoted. At the same time, there was a great amount of literature in circulation stressing the importance of keeping students in school (Anderson, 1950; Holbeck, 1950; Moffit, 1945; Nancarrow, 1951; Sandin, 1944).

The trend over the next several decades was to continue to advocate social promotion. However, opponents of social promotion argued that the lack of a fixed standard for academics represented a disregard for achievement, and that this disregard eliminated a child's motivation to learn and be successful (Feldman, 1997).

After nearly 50 years during which social promotion was the standard policy, the trend began to move back toward competency-based education (Holmes & Matthews, 1984). The 1980s was an era of low support and low confidence in public schools. The publication of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) prompted a great number of school systems to implement more rigorous promotion and retention policies even without supportive research evidence (Roderick, 1995). As a result, the number of children

retained in-grade has increased. For the vast majority of the public in general, it was counter intuitive to think that retention was not beneficial to help pupils attain basic skills (Natale, 1991).

Despite the mixed sentiment on the efficacy of the retention process, more stringent nonpromotion policies and academic competency requirements are being established. This higher standards movement appears to be in direct response to poor academic performance by the nation's youth. Since immediate reform has been commanded, it is yet to be seen how effective these changes will be over time.

Current Research on Retention

There are no accurate data to determine the exact numbers of students who have been retained nationwide, although estimates have been made. A number of researchers have implied that the practice of nonpromotion has persevered and has perhaps grown. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (1990) reported that by the 9th grade, approximately 50% of all U.S. school students have been retained. Since 1975, the level of nonpromoted students parallels statistics from the early 20th Century (Shepard & Smith, 1990). Using U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census data for 1992, Roderick (1995) suggested that 40% of male students and 20% of female students in the United States had been retained by age 14. Roderick also reported a steady increase in retention rates over the previous two decades (See Table 1).

For almost 50 years, research has shown that grade-level retention provides no academic advantages to students. Yet, the practice is gaining increasing attention as schools face political pressure to demonstrate accountability for student achievement. Publications including USA Today (Ritter, 1997) and Education Week (Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997) have addressed the topic. Research suggests that retention is on the rise. According to one study (Roderick, 1995), from 1980 to 1992 the national percentage of retained students increased from approximately 20% to nearly 32% of enrolled students.

Table 1

Percent of Students Enrolled Below Their Modal Grade

Year	Ages 6-8	Ages 9-11	Ages 12-14
1992	19.3	21.0	30.9
1990	21.5	57.6	31.0
1988	20.4	28.4	29.7
1986	19.2	26.5	27.3
1984	16.6	23.9	27.0
1982	16.6	22.8	23.9
1980	14.3	20.3	22.6
1978	12.4	19.5	19.2
1976	10.6	18.1	19.8
1974	10.3	17.8	21.7
1972	10.7	19.6	21.9

SOURCE: U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census, "School Enrollment: Social and Economic Characteristics of Students" (Roderick, 1995).

Researchers have debated the benefits and drawbacks of both retention and promotion throughout the history of education. According to Kimmey and Woodward (1997), retaining a child in the same grade for a second year is neither academically nor economically justified. A paper by the researchers reviewed six longitudinal research studies published in the 1990s on the effects of repeating a grade. They reported that the significant majority of studies conducted prior to 1990 communicated negative effects of retention on scholastic achievement and personal adjustment. The authors found that most of the more recent studies they reviewed on the effects of repeating a grade did not report negative outcomes, but neither did they report benefits from retention or social promotion. Kimmey and Woodward stated that most of the studies conducted after 1990 concluded by recommending that schools use alternative methods of remediation for those students who are at risk for scholastic failure. The increase in retention rates appears to be a direct result of the American public's concern for stricter policies for grade promotion. However, recent indications concerning these policy solutions seem to signify an upswing in increased rates of retention rather than improved academic success or heightened student motivation. According to researchers, after more rigorous promotion criteria were put into effect, rates of retention have increased significantly (Allington, 1992; Elliget & Tocco, 1983; Gottfredson, 1986; Morris, 1991; Rose et al., 1983). This surge of retention would certainly be meritorious if student academic performance were enhanced.

A Look at Six Longitudinal Studies

The six longitudinal studies (one book and five articles) reviewed by Kimmey and Woodward (1997) are summarized in the following paragraphs describing the key findings of grade retention. These six studies were chosen by the authors through a selection process with explicitly set criteria. All other studies not meeting these guidelines were eliminated. All six studies contained research data on academic achievement. Four of the six studies also looked at personal adjustment (social, behavioral, and/or emotional development) of retainees.

The Impact of Retention on Academic Achievement. A 1994 study by Alexander, Entwisle, and Dauber (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997) was conducted in Baltimore, Maryland, following students from 20 public schools for eight years. The study began in 1982 when the children entered first grade, through 1990 when the students finished seventh grade. The researchers discovered that first-grade retainees made gains on test scores and grades on report cards during the grade that was repeated, but were unable to maintain those gains. During the years after retention took place, many of the students were moved into special education programs and repeated another grade. The authors speculated that children who are retained in first grade might suffer long-lasting consequences because it is the first year of formal schooling. They also contended that it is likely that pupils who are not promoted in first grade may possess significantly greater problems than pupils who are retained in later grades.

When the researchers looked at personal adjustment of the children who had been retained in first grade, the students showed progress in terms of liking school, academic self-image, self-efficacy, and expectations for achievement. The researchers found these gains remained evident until grade seven, at which time they diminished. This may be attributed to a less supportive school structure in the middle school years, according to the authors. They suggested that students who are marginal might also have trouble coping with a new curriculum as well, contributing to a loss of self-esteem.

Finally, this study determined that repeating a grade was not beneficial to those who repeated first grade, students who repeated more than one year, or pupils who were sent into special education programs. The findings suggested that the retention experience did produce limited positive effects for those students who repeated only once in a grade other than first. It was found that these students made progress at a more rapid rate, and the performance gap remained steady between this group and promoted students.

The next study reviewed was conducted in 1990 by Johnson, Merrell, and Stover (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997). The researchers examined the academic achievement scores of

57 fourth-grade students who had been retained in kindergarten or first grade. The study took place in a western state using students selected from a pool of 604 fourth graders from four school districts.

The students chosen for this study were divided into three groups according to specific characteristics. Twenty had been retained, 20 had been promoted in a regular manner, and 17 had been recommended to be retained but were placed in the next grade level or socially promoted. All students were given the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT).

This study showed that by the fourth grade, no substantial incongruencies could be found on achievement scores among the retained group and the socially promoted group. However, both groups scored much lower than the group who had been promoted on most of the content areas of the MAT. The authors concluded that neither social promotion nor retention is an effective choice, and they suggested looking at other options for students being considered for either.

The third study of interest was performed in 1992 by Mantzicopoulos and Morrison (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997). Marin County, California, was the site chosen for this study, and the sample consisted of 53 retained children from two school districts. These students were compared to their promoted peers academically and behaviorally from kindergarten through second grade.

The instruments chosen for academic comparison were the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) or the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). A Revised Behavior Problem Checklist designed by Quay and Peterson (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997) was also chosen to evaluate students.

The results yielded similar patterns when looking at reading and math scores of the compared groups. When making a same-age comparison, nonpromoted students scored above average during the second year of kindergarten. However, in the following year, mean scores of the retained group were equivalent to the socially promoted group. When making a same-grade

comparison, the retained students scored significantly higher than did those who had never been retained during their second year of kindergarten. In first grade and second grade, however, mean scores again were similar.

Because students were not matched on behavior problems, results on the behavioral effects of retention were more difficult to discern. Teachers rated future retainees as more immature and inattentive during their first year of kindergarten. By the second year of kindergarten, both groups' ratings paralleled one another, and these ratings remained intact through the end of second grade. The study concluded that retaining students in kindergarten does not elicit long-term positive outcomes academically. They, too, recommended alternative interventions.

Pierson and Connell (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997) studied the effects of retention involving subjects in grades three through six in upstate New York. The correlation between retention and academic performance, student engagement, and student perceptions concerning their self-efficacy, autonomy, and degree of social acceptance was the focus of this project.

The study found that the academic performance of the retained students was significantly lower than a random sample group, but about the same as a matched ability group and matched achievement group. The researchers were unable to identify significant differences between students who had been retained and any of the groups used for comparison in terms of peer relatedness or perceptions of self-worth. The authors found that the retained students possessed a significantly lower perception of their cognitive abilities than the random sample group, but were similar to the achievement-matched group and ability-matched group. The authors finished by suggesting that floundering students may benefit from retention, contingent upon parents' and teachers' support and understanding of the child's causes of his or her failure. This study did not apply to older children who were retained, or children who had been retained more than once.

Reynold's study in 1992 (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997) investigated the effects of early grade nonpromotion on math and reading achievement, perceived competence, and teacher ratings. The sample included 1,255 children from the Longitudinal Study of Children at Risk in the Chicago Public Schools. Of these low-income children, 95% were African American and 5% were Hispanic.

The study determined that children who had been retained were more likely to be males, and had parents who had never completed high school. The children in this sample who had changed schools were found to be 7% more likely to be retained than students who had not transferred. In addition, students whose parents were uninvolved in their education were 18% more likely to be retained.

Reading and math scores were found to be negatively affected by the retention experience in this study. Retention promoted a positive but statistically insignificant effect among teacher ratings of personal adjustment in this study. Lastly, there appeared to be no negative effects caused by retention with regard to feelings of competence. As with the other studies, this research suggested that other types of interventions be considered.

The sixth study examined was conducted by Westbury in 1994 (as cited in Kimmey & Woodward, 1997). Short-term and long-term effects of grade repetition on ability and academic performance were the focus of this inquiry. Students in the sixth grade in a large urban school district in Canada were the subjects. As with other studies, achievement test scores were used to collect and compare data. The findings of Westbury's study indicated that retention neither weakens nor strengthens performance relative to the general population of students in the district. The author argued that retainees should have outperformed their matched control group, given the opportunity to be exposed to the same material twice and being a year older when they took the same test. Since this was not the case, the researcher concluded, as did the others, that repeating a grade is an ineffective intervention for academic remediation.

Is Retention Research Reliable?

Although the previously mentioned studies were all longitudinal research, or investigations that described changes in a sample group's characteristics over time, none traced retainees into the high school grades. Research on the academic and social consequences of retention beyond middle school is minimal. It has been determined, however, that high rates of dropping out of school have been associated with retention. In a study by Grissom and Shepard (1989) it was discovered that students who had been retained had a drop out rate 20% to 30% higher than did students with similar records of poor achievement.

A comprehensive review of the research on social promotion and retention was conducted by Jackson in 1975. He began by examining all literature relative to retention. The foundation of his examination relied only upon sources that reported original research. He analyzed each source for flaws in methodology and concluded that the practice of grade retention could produce no reliable evidence that retention is more beneficial than promoting students who exhibit serious adjustment or academic difficulties.

Subsequent research reviews have also identified methodological flaws (Carstens, 1985; Labaree, 1984), and contradictory results (Johnson, 1984). Because of the recognized flaws in methodology, and the amount of time that has passed since these studies were completed, both Jackson (1975) and Labaree concluded that inferences should not be made from past research findings to the population of students currently under consideration for retention.

Retention: Solution or Problem?

Although both Jackson (1975) and Labaree (1984) criticized the methodology used in studies of retention, neither noted an obvious dilemma that exists with the measurement of success or failure associated with the practice of retention. As previously mentioned, nearly all researchers have used academic achievement to gauge the effectiveness of retention. Those studies concluded that retention was an ineffective treatment because retained students exhibited

no academic gain over those promoted at the end of the academic year following retention. For example, an Illinois Fair Schools Coalition paper (1985) scrutinized the findings of independent auditors of the New York Promotional Gates Program, which concluded that the Gates pupils had not done remarkably better than pupils with comparable scores who had not been retained. This contention suggested that in order for retention to be considered effective, the child who has been held back must produce more notable gains in scholastic achievement than the promoted counterpart.

The conclusions from meta-analytic studies conducted on the practice of retention are also ambiguous. A meta-analysis of 44 original research studies was administered by Holmes and Matthews (1984). Their research compared 6,924 promoted students to a group of 4,208 retained students. Findings from the meta-analysis concluded that the groups of students who were not promoted on average “scored 37 standard deviation units lower on the various outcome measures” (p. 229) than pupils in the group who had been promoted to the next grade. However, research by Peterson, DeGracie, and Ayabe (1987) compared the scholastic achievement of pupils not promoted in primary grades to a matched group of promoted pupils over a period of three years. They found no substantial evidence that students benefited from retention in terms of same-year comparisons. On the contrary, the researchers stated that their findings could not produce proof that nonpromotion is as damaging academically as other studies have determined. The research to date is genuinely inconclusive as to the academic advantages or disadvantages of nonpromotion.

Attitudes Toward Retention

It is a common viewpoint among educators that students should repeat a grade rather than be promoted unprepared for the next grade level. A 1986 Gallup poll concluded that 72% of those who responded indicated that promotion from one grade to the next should be stricter than it is to date. Shepard and Smith (1990) determined in their study of kindergarten teachers’

attitudes about retention that “teachers believe . . . the pupil career should be driven by competence or readiness rather than social promotion and . . . for the most part they act according to those beliefs” (p. 330). Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that instructors at all grade levels (K-7) held the belief that retention was an acceptable practice in schools because it prevents pupils from having to face daily nonsuccess and provides motivation for them to work harder. Anderson and West (1992) also concluded that nonpromoted students and their parents believe in the necessity of retention in schools. Further, they found that the greater part of the parents surveyed reported that retention assisted the progress of their own child in school.

Characteristics of Repeaters

Students who are retained differ substantially from nonretained pupils along several dimensions. Dauber, Alexander, and Entwisle (1993) stated that children who are held back are typically poor, African American, male, and often the offspring of high school dropouts. In addition, retained students produce lower test scores, are considered by their parents to be less capable of doing school work, receive lower conduct marks during the first quarter of school, and are more apt to have moved to a different school between kindergarten and first grade.

A child may also be considered for retention if he or she has been absent frequently, has a high level of activity, has limited English-language skills, or has parents who are unwilling or unable to intercede for the child. Retention is also more commonly used in the primary grades. In a few cases, the teacher may feel that the child is capable of moving forward, but the parent may prefer that the child be retained. Because most schools have vague policies regarding retention, the decision typically falls to the classroom teacher (Sakowicz, 1996).

Scholastic difficulties are in fact, the most prominent factor in the prediction of retention. Poor grades in math and reading and low performance on standardized tests are strong predictors of nonpromotion (Dauber, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1993).

Retained children characteristically come from lower-income households headed by single females (see Figure 1). They have had no prior preschool experience and are disproportionately language minority and/or ethnic minority students (Zepeda, 1993). Students possessing learning disabilities are also more likely to be candidates for nonpromotion than the general population (McLeskey, Lancaster, & Grizzle, 1995). Byrnes (1989) determined through a survey of principals and teachers that children retained in-grade were described as being immature and having low self-esteem and low motivation. These factors are certain to generate implications for the retained child and his or her own personal adjustment.

Research on the Varied Effects of Retention

Personal Adjustment

Research indicates that retention produces negative social implications. Kindergarten students who were retained indicated a slightly more negative attitude toward school than did a matched control group (Shepard & Smith, 1989). Retained students may have more behavioral problems than those who are not retained (Meisels, 1993). Rumberger (1987) suggested that retention contributes to a permanent disengagement from school. Holmes and Matthews' meta-analysis (1984) not only looked at achievement effects of retention, they also calculated effect sizes on three measures of personal adjustment: (a) social adjustment, (b) emotional adjustment, and (c) behavior. They found that retained students on average scored lower than promoted students on these measures of personal adjustment. Johnson (1984) argued that children who have been retained in school exhibit characteristics of learned helplessness. Students in his study commonly attributed failure to themselves, but denied responsibility for their success. The negative internal perception by the child appeared to occur in spite of parents' position on the retention. Moreover, according to Dawson and Ott (1991), parents of retained children, even those who supported the retention decision, reported that their children experienced adjustment problems and teasing because of nonpromotion. This research highlights various negative

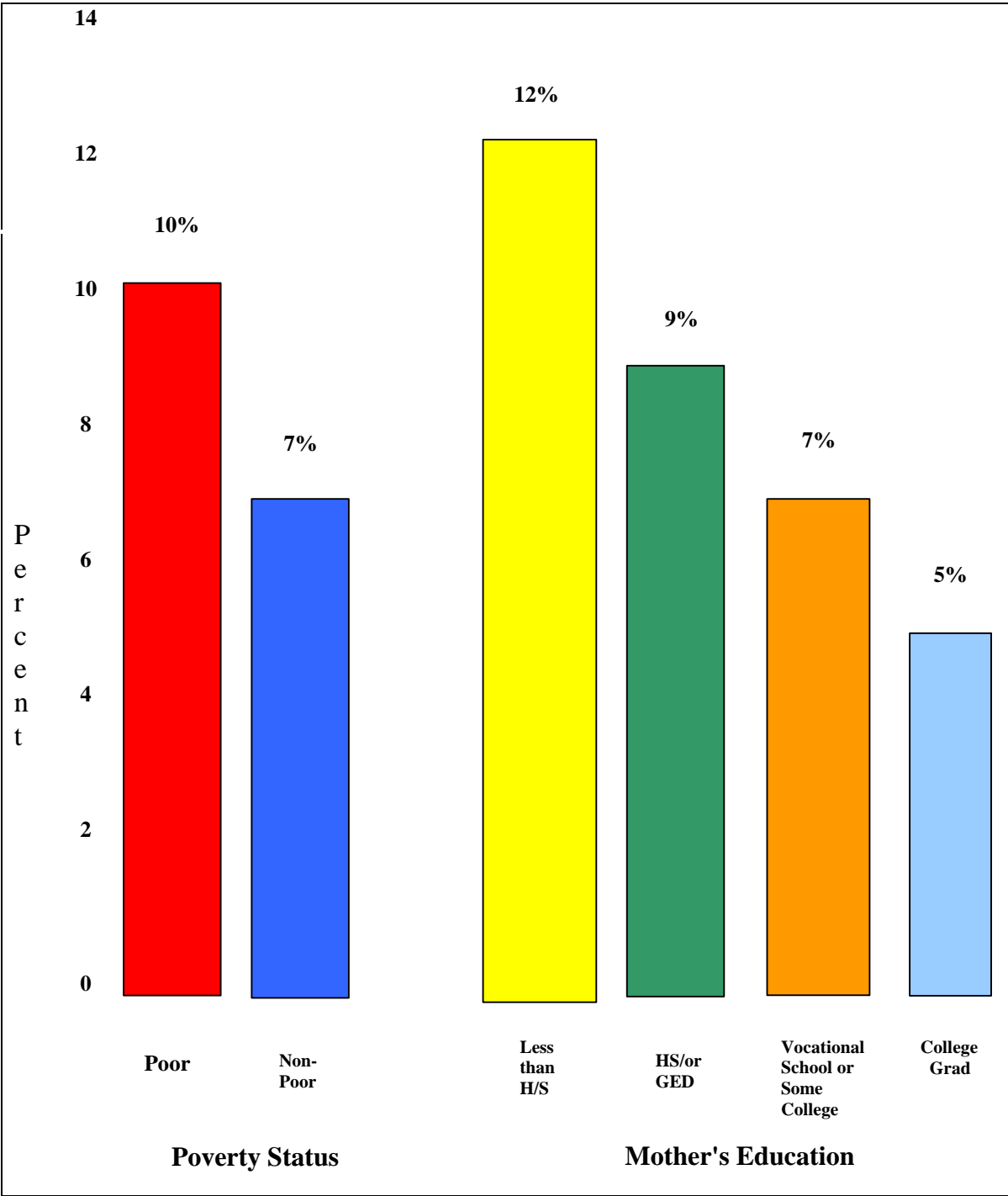


Figure 1. Retained Children and Household Status

SOURCE: U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey of 1995.

personal implications found through studies of retained children. However, there are studies that exist which suggest retention can provide academic benefits for many students. The next section will look at one such study.

Who Benefits Most from Retention?

The long-held belief that early retention is best for students continues to be refuted in literature (Johnson et al., 1990; Mantzicopoulos & Morrison, 1992; Thomas et al., 1992). Studies of retention in kindergarten indicated that retained students have significantly lower scores on standardized achievement tests than do nonretained students (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994). Another study showed no differences in achievement for retained kindergarten students and the matched control group (Smith & Shepard, 1987). Some research indicated that early retention may produce a short-lived increase in achievement; however, this gain vanishes in two or three years (Karweit & Wasik, 1992; Owings & Magliaro, 1998; Snyder, 1992).

Alexander, Entwisle, and Dauber (1994) researched a combined group of retained fourth through seventh graders. The researchers stated that they combined these groups for statistical purposes because too few of the students in these age groups repeat only one single grade to examine them separately. They also stated that the period of follow-up after retention was too minimal to comment on the consequences of nonpromotion. The researchers concluded that the academic gains of later retainees consistently surpassed the children retained in earlier grades when comparisons were made. Surprisingly, the later retained group even exceeded gains made by a comparison group of students who had never been retained. The study also determined that in all but one situation, the grade-level gains favored the later retained group over the slower performers and were even close to, or above, the academic gains for all never-retained children.

Alexander (1994) and his colleagues found one possible exception to their findings when examining scores on the California Achievement Test-Math Concepts and Application Subtest. The scores in grades four through seven favored promoted children over retained children (119-

111 = 8), but even this test was found to favor the later-retained group when same-age totals were used for grades five through eight (103 points) as the comparison basis. The authors explained that the four through seven interval did not reveal what happened to the youngsters during the two-year cycle of their repeated grades. Even so, the researchers stated that the situation of later retainees proved through their findings to be radically different from the nonpromoted counterparts who were retained in earlier grades. Their study suggested that in early grades, retainees progress at about the same pace as other youngsters who have been promoted. The authors also commented that their research provided them with the knowledge that the later retained students perform well following the retention year as well.

Alexander (1994) and his colleagues had difficulty suggesting that nonpromotion either harms or helps children retained at higher-grade levels. Their research discovered that the students in their sample group were performing satisfactorily previous to, during, and following retention. Although more specific comparisons for fourth-through-seventh-grade repeaters separately indicated a slight drop in academic performance according to test scores during the failed year, the repeated grade showed academic recovery. The research findings from their study suggest that successful outcomes for later retainees provide yet another unfavorable premise against which retention in the early grades can be based.

The Link Between Retention and Dropping Out of School

Rates of students who have dropped out of school have become a focus of national attention. Educators have increasingly recognized that considerable portions of the school population are, for various reasons, at risk for dropping out. Many studies show the association between retention and dropping out of school (Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989; Dawson & Ott, 1991). Grissom and Shepard (1989) stated two hypotheses that may possibly shed light on the relationship between grade retention and dropping out. They explained that repeating a grade may increase the possibility of dropping out, or poor academic achievement may account for

both retention and dropping out. The researchers presented an extensive analysis of studies in which they attempted to demonstrate that the practice of nonpromotion by itself increased the chance that students will eventually drop out. For example, they discussed a series of studies that took place in the Chicago public schools that attempted to make adjustments for student achievement prior to examining the effect of nonpromotion. One of those studies (Schulz, Toles, Rice, Brauer, & Harvey, 1986) concluded that the rate of academically average students (students who had previously been retained) who dropped out of school was 13% higher than the rate of normal-age students who had never been retained and who had equivalent achievement test scores in the area of reading.

As mentioned previously, retention in school has traditionally been associated with dropping out of high school (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1987; Rumberger, 1987; Wagenaar, 1987), perhaps because repeating a grade increases children's adjustment problems in school (Kellam, Branch, Agrawai, & Ensminger, 1975). One national study showed a dropout rate of about 40% among those who had been retained, compared to only 10% among those who were never held back (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971). The 1995 Current Population Survey (CPS) data confirmed that students who have been retained in school are generally at higher risk of school dropout: 24.1% of retained youths aged 16-24 were dropouts in 1995 compared to 10.1% of young adults who were never held back in school (See Table 2). Although Black students (see Table 3) were slightly more likely to be retained, dropout rates were comparable for Black, White, and Hispanic students (U. S. Department of Commerce, 1995). In a study of students who dropped out of high school in Washington, DC, more than 78% had been retained at least once; more than 52% had been retained two or more times; and 22% of the dropouts had never been retained (Fine, 1991; Tuck, 1989). An investigation by Grissom and Shepard (1989) determined that students who had been retained were 20% to 30% more likely to drop out of school than students with similar academic achievement levels.

Table 2

Rate, Number, and Distribution of Status Dropouts

Characteristics	Status Dropout Rate	# of status dropouts (in 1,000's)	Population in 1,000s	% of all dropouts	% of population
Total	12.0	3,876	32,379	100.0	100.0
Grade repetition					
Ever retained	24.1	1,034	4,290	26.7	13.3
Never retained	10.1	2,842	28,088	73.3	86.7

NOTE: Because of rounding, details may not add to totals

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, October 1995, Unpublished data.

Table 3

Rate and Distribution of Status Dropouts

Characteristics	Status	% of		Status	% of	
	Dropout	all	% of	Dropout	% of	% of
	Rate	Dropouts	Population	Rate	Dropouts	Population
Total	24.1	100.0	100.0	10.1	100.0	100.0
Sex:						
Male	21.8	57.7	63.7	10.3	48.6	48.0
Female	28.1	42.3	36.3	10.0	51.4	52.0
Race-ethnicity:						
White, non-Hispanic	23.9	61.6	62.3	06.5	44.0	68.8
Black, non- Hispanic	23.8	20.3	20.6	09.4	12.7	13.7
Hispanic	25.9	16.5	15.3	30.7	41.3	13.6
Region:						
Northeast	20.8	15.2	17.6	06.6	12.0	18.4
Midwest	25.0	20.3	19.6	06.9	16.6	24.4
South	26.6	50.5	45.7	11.7	39.9	34.4
West	29.7	13.9	17.0	14.0	31.5	22.7
Income*						
Low	36.8	43.4	28.5	20.1	39.0	19.6
Middle	22.2	51.6	56.1	09.9	55.4	56.8
High	07.7	05.0	15.5	02.4	05.6	23.6

Note. * / Low income is defined as the bottom 20% of all family incomes for 1994.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, Unpublished data: October 1995

Young people drop out for many reasons, but being behind in school is one of the strongest predictors even when other risk factors like minority status and poverty background are taken into account (Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Pallas, 1984).

Economic Impact of Retention

Although retention is commonplace, not much is known about its costs. Some costs are clear-cut, but others are hard to assess because firm evidence is lacking. One obvious consequence of retaining youngsters is increased national education costs. In the mid-1980s, the expenses for having a student repeat a grade were about \$3,500 (Harvard Education Letter, 1986). As per pupil expenditures have increased, this figure has risen as well. Shepard and Smith (1990) estimated the annual cost of retaining students nationwide to be 10 billion dollars. Retention also affects achievement after high school. A study conducted by Royce, Darlington, and Murray (1983) reported that, compared with similar students who had not repeated a grade, repeaters were more likely to be unemployed or not seeking work, to be receiving public assistance, or to be in prison. Delayed entry into the work force could possibly be another consequence of retention. The cost of supporting a child for an extra year is passed along to parents. Dropouts are also less likely to receive postsecondary schooling, another route to higher earnings. Lower incomes equal fewer taxes paid, therefore providing the public with fewer monetary resources to support society. Thus, researchers argue that the direct excess educational costs for teaching students who repeat a year is, in actuality, only a small fraction of the long-term costs to the student and to society.

Psychological Costs to Students who have been Retained

Retention may also produce psychological consequences involving self-esteem or happiness, too. These psychological costs may involve not only the students, but their families as well. A study of previous research contended that children view retention as punishment and

experience emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness when not promoted (Setencich, 1994). From 1990 to 1997, 66 studies were conducted on retention, with only one supporting it (Lenarduzzi & McLaughlin, 1990). Children who are retained are understood to see themselves as misfits or failures (Kellam et al., 1975). Kellam and colleagues also maintained that parents worry a great deal about the socioeconomic consequences of children being off time in school and that children's adjustment problems seem to increase with grade repetition, possibly because it disrupts peer relations. When children move from grade to grade, they generally keep the same peers, but retention causes a separation in these groups. Evidence indicates that school performance deteriorates when peer groups are disrupted (Felner & Adan, 1988; Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982). The overly simplistic view of retention as a panacea for education woes ignores its negative impact on children. Considering all these factors, there is a strong indication that a child's self-esteem is influenced by the retention experience. The next section will present research findings associated with this hypothesis.

Retention and Self-Esteem

What is Self-Esteem?

In 1890, James referred to self-esteem in his book, Principles of Psychology, as being based on how well one compares to others in his or her field. One places self-esteem at the mercy of others. Thus, there is a vested interest in being with inferiors and fearing talent. He stated that self-esteem equals success divided by pretensions.

By 1967, Coopersmith introduced his own updated version of self-esteem in the book The Antecedents of Self-Esteem. He described self-esteem as being the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains of him or herself; that is an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes him or herself competent, successful, significant, and worthy. From the Children's Self-Concept Scale (1997), Piers and

Harris defined self-esteem as a relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and an evaluation of one's own behavior and attitudes.

Another definition of self-esteem was given by Bednar, Wells, and Peterson (1989) in the book, Self-Esteem: Paradoxes and Innovations in Clinical Theory and Practice. They stated that self-esteem is a subjective and enduring sense of realistic self-approval. It reflects how the individual views and values the self at the most fundamental levels of psychological experiencing. Fundamentally, then, self-esteem is an enduring and effective sense of personal value based on accurate self-perception.

Understanding these insightful descriptions leads the researcher to conclude that self-esteem refers to the way a person thinks and feels about him or herself. It is comprised of both one's evaluation of personal competence as well as one's basic worth as a human being. Adverse thoughts can be generated when one dwells on tasks that cannot be done well, leading to poor body image, or negative beliefs about other's perceptions of him or her. The next section takes a look at factors that may influence an individual's self-esteem.

Factors that Influence Self-Esteem

Among the significant people believed to have an effect on children's feelings and attitudes toward themselves are parents and, later, teachers. There is evidence that children's perceptions of the way their parents feel toward them, whether accurate or not, correlates significantly with their self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). A teacher's ability to influence the personality development of his or her pupils has also been widely recognized (Perkins, 1957).

The influence of peers on children's self-esteem is also an important dimension to consider. Theorists hypothesize that evaluation from the peer group constitutes one of the more decisive determinants of both self-esteem and achievement (Harter, 1983).

According to Greenier et al., (1999), people with high self-esteem feel capable of meeting life's challenges and feel worthy of happiness. In determining one's own level of self-esteem,

one looks internally to evaluate feelings, thoughts, and personal actions. Individuals also look externally at interactions with others in an effort to construct an accurate view of who he or she is. Psychologists believe that when a person looks internally, he or she has a view of who he or she currently is (called the actual self) and a view of who he or she wants to be (called the ideal self); the greater the similarity between the two selves, the greater the self-esteem. The greater the difference between the actual and ideal selves, the lower the self-esteem. Research suggests that people often work to change their actual self in an effort to become closer to their ideal self. When people look externally to evaluate themselves, they look to see how others respond to them. If it is found that others have a positive view of their actions and thoughts, this can serve to support a positive self-esteem. However, if others are not positive toward them, self-esteem can suffer. Occasionally, people purposely tailor their behavior to present themselves in exactly the manner they would like for people to see them. This type of "impression management" can also serve to increase self-esteem, as people are more likely to respond positively to this managed impression.

Greenier et al. (1999) posited that most people think about self-esteem with the assumption that it is unchanging and stable. They conducted a study to explore that concept. The study included 134 undergraduate men and women enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. The results of the study showed that people who had low self-esteem rated negative events as more negative than those with high self-esteem did. More importantly, people with unstable self-esteem tended to rate negative events more negatively than those with stable self-esteem. Further, people with unstable self-esteem were also found to rate positive events more positively than those with stable self-esteem. The independent raters found more negative events relating to social acceptance and social rejection for those with unstable self-esteem. Overall, the results seemed to support two important ideas. First, people seem to differ with respect to the stability of their level of self-esteem. Second, people with unstable self-esteem are more significantly impacted by positive and negative daily

events than those with stable levels of self-esteem. The researchers suggested that people with stable self-esteem appear to be somewhat more insulated from the effects of daily events.

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and School Achievement

Over the past several decades, research has recognized that there is a possible relationship between self-esteem and school achievement. In 1967, Coopersmith reported that a child's self-concept predicted his or her ability to read in first grade at least as well as measures of intelligence. Scheirer and Krant (1979) reported on several studies that demonstrated findings based upon the belief that educational achievements are influenced by self-concept. Wylie (1979) suggested that there is considerable empirical evidence that self-concept predicts and influences achievement in school from the primary grades through undergraduate education. Brookover (1985) found there was a significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. In 1987, Holly compiled a summary of all the available studies that looked at relationships between retention and academic achievement. Findings indicated that most researchers supported the idea that self-esteem was more likely the result than the cause of academic achievement. However, he acknowledged that a certain level of self-esteem is required in order for a student to achieve academic success and that academic achievement and self-esteem go hand in hand. According to Covington (1989), as the level of self-esteem increases, so do achievement scores; and as self-esteem decreases, so does achievement. Furthermore, and perhaps most important, he concluded that self-esteem can be modified through direct instruction and that such instruction can lead to achievement gains. Finally, Walz and Bleuer (1992) concluded that factors important to school success, such as positive feelings about self, absenteeism, and school retention, are affected by successful school self-esteem programs. This study focused on relationships between a child's self-esteem and the nonpromotion experience. The next section examines research on the effects of retention on self-esteem.

Impact of Grade Retention on Self-Esteem

It is clear that self-esteem is built upon the experience of success. When individuals experience success, they grow in self-confidence. As self-confidence grows, they feel empowered to face new challenges. As they succeed in confronting each challenge, they develop the capacity to cope with whatever comes their way. Finally, this feeling leads to further growth of self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-esteem.

How is a child's self-esteem impacted by retention? Because many psychologists and educators agree that self-esteem is a crucial factor in the development of a child (Harter, 1983), it is also important to consider the consequences of retaining a child to his or her self-esteem.

The quality of research studies on the relationship of retention on self-esteem has thus far been questionable (Harvard Education Letter, 1986). Some studies, for example, examine pupils only after retention takes place. If the retained students had a lower effort level or feelings of competence below those of their peers, it could be that retained students displayed these same characteristics before retention. Without knowledge of a student's status prior to retention, researchers conclude that it is impossible to ascertain how retention may have affected them.

Simmons and Blythe (1987) suggested that another serious downfall is that the majority of studies do not follow a comparison group of students who have not been retained. The researchers contended that a general decline in performance with age could be seen for any group, whether or not they had been retained. For example, on average, all students' liking for school tends to decrease with age (Epstein & McPartland, 1976; Harvard Education Letter, 1992).

Holmes (1989) suggested that another problem is the lack of published research on the topic of self-esteem and its relation to retention. During his research, Holmes reviewed 63 studies; of those, only 20 were published. Holmes stated that published research provides some quality assurance, as it has been examined by researchers in the same field to determine whether

it merits publication. He noted the fact that so much of the evidence originating from unpublished sources is an issue of concern.

The majority of educational research does not support grade retention of students (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Hauser, 1999; Kelly, 1999). Holmes' 1989 analyses identified 54 of 63 empirical studies on retention that resulted in overall negative effects of the experience (as cited in Kelly, 1999). An independent study of 1,200 minority children in Chicago conducted by Reynolds and Shepard in 1992, confirmed the negative effects of retention on primary grade students (as cited in Kelly, 1999). Holmes' research unearthed only nine previously conducted studies that resulted in positive effects for the retained participants. The nine studies all identified the common elements of having been suburban schools, providing special classes with low student/teacher ratios, having individualized plans for the students, and early identification of students who were at risk. Holmes also noted that a year after retention took place, second grade students considered at risk, who were not retained and received the same type of help as the retained group, outperformed the students who had been retained (as cited in Kelly, 1999).

Opponents to retention argue that it causes students to develop a negative attitude toward school and, thus, causes a negative effect on student improvement (Holmes, 1989; Reynolds, 1992; Roderick, 1995; Rumberger, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1990; Smith & Shepard, 1987). Darling-Hammond (1998) noted that self-esteem may also be reduced by retention, suggesting that in the long run, students who have been retained actually do worse than students who have not been retained. The researcher stated that this is perhaps partially due to students not receiving more appropriate instruction when they are retained, particularly if students give up on themselves as learners. The National Association of School Psychologists in 1998 noted that multiple retentions increased the likelihood of a student dropping out of school (as cited in Smith & Shepard, 1987; Setencich, 1994; Sakowicz, 1996). Natale (1991) suggested that researchers have connected the practice of retention and its impact on self-esteem to the dropout problem.

According to Banicky (2000), there is a link between retention and lowered self-confidence when one compares retained students to students with similar abilities who have never been retained. The researcher also recognized findings from a 1980 study by Yamamoto that revealed students rank grade retention as the third most feared life experience. The only two experiences dreaded more by students were blindness, followed by the death of a parent. A newsletter presented by the Intercultural Development Research Association (1999) suggested that students who have been retained suffer low esteem and regard the retention experience as a stigma or punishment, not as a positive situation that will benefit them.

The report, Passing on Failure, presented by the American Federation of Teachers (1997) indicated that significant costs and serious problems are associated with retaining children. These problems included student alienation from school, serious classroom discipline problems, and a significantly increased rate of dropping out of school.

Despite the abundance of negative research available to educators nationwide concerning the retention of students, many schools still explore retention as the preferred remedy for academic deficiencies. Grant (1997) suggested that teachers could oftentimes correct an inappropriate grade placement by having the student repeat the grade. Grant explained, "When you have 365 birth dates and two genders and kids who are low birth weight and are living in poverty, someone is going to be assigned to the wrong grade" (p. 39). Research suggests that many teachers in the United States agree with Grant. Smith and Shepard (1987) interviewed 40 teachers in Boulder, Colorado. Almost all teachers from the 10 different primary schools agreed that they would prefer to make the mistake of retaining a student who might not have needed to be retained than to promote a child who needed to repeat the grade. There was also no question, according to the majority of teachers, that a child's adjustment and ability to achieve would be improved by a repeated or extra year before the first grade.

Advocates of retention logically denote that social promotion, or promoting a child regardless of achievement, places an unprepared child into society. The Northwest Regional

Educational Laboratory (NREL) (1999) maintained that a child's readiness and self-esteem could actually be bolstered by improving his or her academic foundation through retention. Proponents cite grade retention as a necessary measure to provide students with the basic knowledge and skills they need to get ready for the future. They assert that grade repetition has a positive effect on attitudes toward school and student achievement (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994; Gredler, 1999).

Evidence supports the fact that most schools do not promote self-esteem since the level of self-esteem declines for most students, retained or not, the longer they are in school (Reasoner, 2000). Nearly all researchers and education policy analysts agree that it is best to give students appropriate opportunities for learning, such as additional resources, extra help, and qualified teachers, rather than retaining them (Oakes, 1999). Retention has long been used as a treatment for student academic failure. The NREL (1999) proposed that without other goals for remediation or intervention, retaining children frequently puts students in a situation almost identical to the environment they did not find success in the first time.

The self-esteem issue has not been completely disregarded in the debate over whether or not retention is an effective treatment for scholastic remediation. Those who support social promotion assert that keeping students with their same-age peers encourages them to feel socially accepted, and therefore maintains self-esteem; those who support retention believe that placing students in classes with intellectual peers encourages them to feel more academically competent, which in turn contributes to higher self-esteem. However, the literature to date is still lacking in this area.

Although this particular study was not conducted using a broad group of participants, it is hoped that valuable information will be attained through in-depth discussions of the retention experience with the selected group members. The intent of this study is to acquire information that may be used to better serve students in their own school district. Chapter 3 will describe the qualitative methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Focus of the Inquiry

The purpose of this study was to explore how a child's perceptions of self are impacted by retention. Because logical and theoretical arguments have been made for negative effects of retention on a child's self-image, this study examined the self-perceptions of retained students. Research techniques included open-ended questions and interviews using the qualitative interview guide approach (Patton, 1990). The participants attend various middle schools in one district in East Tennessee.

Fit of the Inquiry Paradigm to the Focus

Through the review of literature on retention, I narrowed down the topic for my research to how retention affects a child's perceptions of self. I chose this out of a desire to learn more about a topic that has very little conclusive research available. The majority of studies I found focused on retainees in the younger grades. One particular study by Alexander, Entwisle, and Dauber (1994), however, followed a sample group of students from the beginning of first grade all the way through seventh grade. The students in their sample had all been retained in first grade. These retainees showed affective gains throughout school; that is, until seventh grade when the researchers declared that the students' positive academic self-image, self-efficacy, liking of school, and high expectations for grades evaporated. This immediately piqued my curiosity. The authors provided their explanations as to the factors that contributed to the phenomenon, but I decided to go to the source--the retainees themselves--to learn how they perceive retention has affected the way they feel about themselves. The authors' findings suggested that the middle school experience plays a role in the diminished affective domain of

the retained child. This rationale prompted my choice of interviewing fifth- and sixth-graders for this study. Although all participants in this study are currently in the fifth or sixth grade, it must be emphasized that each may have been retained at a different grade level and will have his or her own unique experiences. In order to explore a variety of directions and possibilities before focusing on the details, multiple perspectives were explored for richer context.

Open-ended interviews were conducted with a group of retained students for this study. Qualitative research is grounded on the assumption that features of the social environment are constructed as interpretations by individuals and that these interpretations tend to be transitory and situational. Qualitative researchers develop knowledge by collecting primarily verbal data through the intensive study of cases and then subjecting these data to analytic induction.

Qualitative research is multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was the research design of choice for this study because it provided an avenue through which to attain thick, rich, descriptive information from the participants about how their perceptions of self have been affected by retention.

Participants

Thirty-five students in the fifth and sixth grade who had previously been retained and who currently attend various middle schools in the chosen district were asked to participate in this study. The names of students who met specific criteria set forth for this study were provided to me by the district. I then examined relevant permanent records and documents provided by the schools, to verify that retention had taken place. The purposeful sampling method was chosen for this study in order to identify all retained students who could provide rich information concerning their own retention experience and its impact on their perceptions of self. As I was looking for a complex, holistic picture of the retention experience, I attempted to locate a group of students through criterion sampling. After analyzing the student population data provided to

me by the school system (See Appendix A), I determined that there were three middle schools that have been in operation during the entire five years for which information was provided. The three schools were all similar in terms of student population; therefore, any one of the three schools in the district would have the same probability of housing similar groups of retained students. Students from smaller K-8 and Intermediate Schools were also contacted for this study in order to provide a wider variety of experiences from the participants. Each participant met three specific criteria for this study: (a) The child must currently be in 5th or 6th grade, (b) the child must have been retained, and (c) the child must not have been retained more than one time. After visiting the field, I sought to obtain saturation of emergent categories using the constant comparative method of data analysis.

All 35 parents or guardians were contacted by phone first. Many parents immediately dismissed me because they did not know who I was. Several did allow me to send copies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms and my questionnaires for review, but none were returned. On follow-up phone calls, I was told that they were "not interested" or they wished to keep "family matters" private, or they did not like the consent form, and/or did not understand why I needed to talk to "their" child (feeling singled out). In this rural/suburban school system, many heads of households do not have college backgrounds. Perhaps a lack of understanding of research in higher education may have frightened some families. One mother agreed for her child to participate initially; however, when I called back to remind the participant to return the consent form, the father answered, firmly stated "no," and hung up the phone. Many of the children in this study told me that their retention is rarely, if ever, discussed with their families. Conceivably, many people do not like discussing the issue and prefer to leave it in the past. All who responded to the initial contact and returned permission forms were included in this study.

Successive Phases of the Inquiry

The first step I took in my research was to receive authorization from the Institutional Review Board. The next action I engaged in was to obtain permission from the school system (see Appendices B and C, respectively) and building principal where I performed my study. After securing permission from the school system superintendent and building principals to proceed with my research, the district provided me with a list of prospective participants that matched the criteria I had established for my study. Their parents' or guardians' names and home phone numbers were provided as well, contingent upon sharing my findings with the system when my study reached completion. Each prospective child's parent or guardian was then contacted by the investigator, initially by phone. The purpose of the study was briefly outlined, and the investigator then requested permission to send copies of the Informed Consent Form (See Appendix D) and questionnaire used in the interview for inspection by the parent or guardian and prospective participant. After all the respondents returned permission forms, I performed a pilot study of questions that I created after thorough research of the literature on retention and its correlation with self-esteem (See Appendix E). The format I used is what Lofland and Lofland called an unstructured interview or “a guided conversation . . . to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis” (1995, p. 76). The pilot study was conducted with five participants. The intention of this unstructured interview was to determine whether or not my proposed interview guide consisted of truly open-ended questions and to help develop and test my own interviewing skills. The object of an in-depth interview is to get the person being interviewed to talk about experiences, feelings, opinions, and knowledge. Dichotomous response questions can create a dilemma for the respondent and the researcher. To avoid putting the participants in an uncomfortable situation, I made necessary changes to the proposed questions based upon revelations from the pilot study. The pilot study participants were randomly selected by the researcher. The results of the pilot interviews are not included in this study because the information was used primarily to build upon my interviewing skills and to

refine the set of interview questions I had created. The pilot interviews were not given to the auditor. Additionally, the results of those interviews did not reveal any contradictory findings to the 12 participants involved in this research project. The study took place in the spring of 2001.

The pilot interviews did lead to the addition of one topic of discussion, however. The topic that was added included parental involvement in sports activities versus school functions and meetings with teachers. This addition may assist the interviewees in their own reflection of emphasis of academics versus athletics within each of their families. A possible correlation may exist among family attitudes and feelings of academic success or athletic accomplishment.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used to obtain primary data was in-depth interviews with the retained students who had agreed to participate in this study. Qualitative researchers rely quite heavily on in-depth interviewing. Qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. An assumption that is fundamental to qualitative research is that the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it.

After interviews were conducted, I asked all participants to meet with me again for the purpose of member checking. I then looked for commonalties among the participants' perceptions of the experience and attempted to generate suggestions from the retainees' perspectives as to how teachers and parents can better serve students who may be candidates for retention.

Data Collection and Recording Modes

The interview data were collected in the setting of small conference rooms at the schools that the participants attend. Each participant was audiotaped. The participants were informed that everything that was said would be written down by a professional transcriptionist. Extensive field notes were collected through interviews and examination of relative documents in students' cumulative records. The raw data in the field notes were organized into readable narrative description with major themes, categories, and illustrative case examples extricated through content analysis. The findings, understandings, and insights that emerged from my fieldwork and subsequent analysis are included in this study.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of my study began with the gathering and organization of the data. Through constant comparison, I identified categories using the data I had gathered and decided which categories were theoretically significant. Data were then coded into the QSR Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building (NUD.IST) software system. NUD.IST was designed to search, and organize qualitative data. The NUD.IST program aids in the creation of a categorical system and identifies possible relationships between categories. The coding scheme was altered and developed according to the information gathered and emergent themes that surfaced. The grounded theory approach was followed throughout the analysis of data, which involved drawing on constructs from the immediate data I collected rather than pulling from existing theories. I went back to the data to use triangulation, which included interviews, member checking, and reviewed literature as corroborative evidence for the validity of my research findings. An auditor was used to document that materials and procedures were used consistently through each phase of my study.

Logistical Issues

In order to preserve confidentiality, primary research participants (35 students in the fifth and sixth grades who had previously been retained) and their parents and guardians were initially approached by the investigator by phone. The investigator briefly described the objectives of the study. If the potential participant and his or her guardian agreed to take part in the study, I then sent an informed consent form along with a copy of the questionnaire to each family for review. A permission form requiring both parent and student consent was secured prior to the onset of all interviews. The form requested a home phone number in the event I needed to contact or meet with the student or parent at a later time.

Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Data

In an attempt to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic inquiry techniques to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is a researcher's ability to demonstrate that the object of a study is accurately identified and described, based on the way in which the study was conducted. In this research study, I spent considerable time with the participants. Each participant interview lasted from one to three hours. I made every effort to establish a genuine rapport with each child, free from pretense. My primary goal was getting to know as much as possible about each one of the students and his or her perception of the retention experience. Extended amounts of time were involved in the research process. During the constant comparative analysis, member-checking visits occurred on two separate occasions. The purpose of these follow-up visits was to eliminate possible unintended distortions or misconceptions. Member-checking visits ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours each. Students were given as much time as needed to fully discuss their answers. I attempted to ensure that this study was credible through the use of triangulation, or a combination of research methods such as interviews, examination of relative documents including students' cumulative records, and member

checking. I visited the participants at school for their interviews, and audiotape recorded all responses for transcription. Member checking was also incorporated into this study so that the participants could read the outcomes of my research and assist in producing a case report.

Providing large amounts of thick, rich, descriptive detail enhances transferability, or the ability to apply the results of my research to a similar context. This was obtained through my detailed description of the participants, which allows the transfer of information to other settings with shared characteristics. This will better enable someone else to use what has emerged from my study.

Dependability, or the ability to account for changes in the design of the study and the changing conditions surrounding what was studied, was achieved through the use of an auditor to ensure honesty and accuracy of the collected data. The inquiry audit included the taped interviews of all research participants, the transcriptions of all interviews, the investigator's journal, and the investigator's notes from the categorization process. The auditing process was conducted by a volunteer member of the district where this study took place. The auditing process proceeded after all data had been collected, organized, and analyzed. Halpern's procedures, as outlined in Lincoln and Guba's Naturalistic Inquiry (1985), provided the foundation for the auditing process (See Appendix F). See Appendix G for a copy of the auditor's findings.

Confirmability, or objectivity, which allows for the findings of my study to be confirmed by another researcher conducting this same study, was established by the use of a peer debriefer. A teacher colleague served as the peer debriefer for this study. The results from the auditing

Summary

The study was conducted in several rural/suburban middle schools in a district in East Tennessee. Because of the characteristics of the study, the investigator operated under a naturalistic paradigm and employed qualitative methodology. All students in the fifth and sixth

grade who had previously been retained once during a prior school experience were asked to participate in this study. These students were identified by personnel in the district, and relevant documents were reviewed by the researcher in order to verify retention. Patton's (1990) purposeful sampling technique was chosen to identify participants who would provide rich, descriptive information concerning their own retention experiences. Sample units were drawn serially until redundancy was achieved. Data from five pilot interviews were used to create an interview guide. Information collected from the qualitative interviews was analyzed through inductive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Credibility or trustworthiness was attained through triangulation, referential adequacy, and peer debriefing. Dependability and objectivity were ensured through the use of an inquiry audit.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to identify how a child's self-perceptions are impacted by retention, with the assumption that self-perceptions could be openly and honestly expressed through the interview process. Twelve students in the fifth and sixth grades at various middle schools in one East Tennessee school system were purposefully selected to participate in this investigation. The students interviewed had previously been retained once. Each of the 12 students voluntarily participated in qualitative in-depth interviews with the investigator. These interviews as well as five pilot interviews took place in the spring of 2001.

Over the past decade, I have taught grades 3 through 5. My experience working with intermediate grade students assisted in providing me with insights that helped in developing a bond with the interviewees. My experience with children who have been retained, and children I have personally retained, made me keenly aware that my knowledge of this subject is limited to my own situations and that broader knowledge could only be acquired through the actual experiences of nonpromoted students.

The information collected from the students, 5 fifth-graders and 7 sixth-graders, was inductively analyzed. Chapter 4 contains descriptions of the participants, an overview of how the participants perceived their own retention experience, and how those experiences affected or impacted their perceptions of self.

The location for the student interviews took place in small conference rooms that generally were similar, being void of detail or decorations to prevent distractions. Walls were bare, with the exception of a small chalkboard in one of the rooms. A table was placed between the interviewer and interviewees during all interviews, with a chair on either side of the table. The audio cassette recorder was placed on the table in plain view and within easy reach of each

participant. The students were discreetly summoned one at a time from their classes for their individual interviews. Office personnel in each school assisted me by calling for each student to come to the office, where I met each child and introduced myself. I then escorted each student to the interview room. Before any interviewing took place, I reviewed the objectives and previously signed permission forms with each participant. I asked each child, personally, if he or she was willing to participate in my study, and each replied in the affirmative.

Introduction of the Participants

The motivation for this study was based on my concerns as an educator as to the effects of retaining a child on his or her perceptions of self. Many studies are conducted based upon the quantifiable academic effects of retaining a child, but few exist that describe the opinions and feelings of the students who have actually lived through the experience.

Of the 12 participants interviewed, 6 were male and 6 were female. Their ages ranged from 11 to 13 years. At the time of the interviews, four of the participants lived with both biological parents, four lived with his or her biological mother and a stepfather, one resided in a household headed by a single biological mother, and two participants lived with a stepmother and biological father. Each child came from a household that had other children living there. Of the 12 interviewees, 4 had siblings who had also been retained. All of the participants interviewed were Caucasian. For the purpose of anonymity and to protect those involved, all participants have been given fictitious names.

Participant #1

Brooke was 13 years old and in the sixth grade. She was tall for her age, blonde, thin, and fair-skinned. She spoke very quickly and had a slight speech impediment with a nasal inflection. She appeared confident and relaxed, the oldest of three girls, all of whom had been

retained. She was very candid about serious issues that had taken place during her short life and presented herself as being very responsible.

Brooke had been placed in a remedial, or "transition," first grade class the year following kindergarten. Upon completion of the transition year, she then went on to another year of first grade in a regular classroom. Brooke's father, whom she described as supportive and loving, died during the year following her retention. At the time of the interview, Brooke lived with her grandmother. She explained that her mother lost her parental rights due to an "alcoholic problem." When asked how long she had lived with her grandmother, Brooke replied, "eight years in October." When asked if she liked living with her grandma, she said, "I think it's fun. She cooks, keeps the house real clean. She helps us with our homework, gets us to school on time."

When discussing things she liked, she included basketball and church. She said she plays basketball on a team with her cousin. She also stated that she goes to church every Sunday with her grandma. When asked about things she disliked, she answered, "I don't like certain movies that's violent." She said she never did like softball, soccer, and cheerleading, sports in which she had previously participated in the past. When asked why, she said it was because there were always different places for practices. She then added that they were "kinda hard."

Participant #2

Anthony was 12 years old and in the sixth grade. He was quite tall and very thin, with dark hair, dark skin, and a pleasant smile. He appeared bashful at first. While answering questions, he would make direct eye contact only with quick glances and then look at the table or floor while discussing the rest of his answers. Anthony was retained in the fourth grade. He told me he was presently the Jr. Beta Club (a school honor society) Vice President and had just been elected as President for the following school year. At the time of the interview, Anthony lived with his mother and stepfather. They have one child together, who lives in the same household

and is seven years younger than Anthony. His stepfather has two children from a previous marriage who visit their father biweekly. Anthony's father is remarried and lives in the same community. His father and stepmother have a 2-year-old son together, and his stepmother has two sons close to Anthony's age from a previous marriage. Anthony stays with his father every weekend and says he sees his father in-between at school and athletic functions. Despite the variety of family members, Anthony appeared quite grounded and content. He added that everyone gets along well.

When discussing things that he liked, he said "sports." He shared that he has "played pretty much always." He plays basketball on the school team, and has played baseball, soccer, and football in the past. When asked to discuss dislikes, he hesitated, and then said that there is nothing he does not like.

Participant #3

Cameron, a 12-year-old in the sixth grade can be described as fair-skinned with light brown hair and freckles. He was thin and of average height. He appeared uncomfortable during the interview. He hesitated and snickered a lot and seemed nervous by fidgeting in his seat and curling his tongue into a "U" shape frequently.

At the time of the interview, Cameron lived with both parents and two older brothers. Cameron was in a prekindergarten class before spending a year in a regular kindergarten classroom. Both of Cameron's brothers had been retained. One had just recently graduated from high school with no plans for college and the other, he described as making "straight A's." When asked if he thought this particular sibling would go to college, he replied, "probably." Cameron said he would like to go to college if he could play football. "I like lots of sports," he added. He pointed out that football was probably his favorite sport, and that he had always participated in sports since he was "little." When discussing his athletic ability, Cameron radiated self-

assuredness, clarifying to the interviewer that he had won the top sports award, "Mr. Athletic," two years in a row for his grade level in the school's athletic Field Day.

Participant #4

Sheila was a sweet young person who appeared, by her display of bashfulness, to lack self-confidence. She seemed not to understand some questions. She smiled a lot but was hesitant, inconsistent, and indecisive while answering questions. Sheila was 13 years old in the sixth grade. She was retained in kindergarten. At the time of the interview, Sheila resided with both biological parents and a much younger sibling.

Sheila can be described as a large-framed young woman--a bit tomboyish. She was more physically mature than her peers in the sixth grade but wore loose clothing as if to avoid flaunting her developing figure. Sheila had straight, dark hair, cut in a pageboy style, and a perpetual smile.

Sheila's interests were described this way, "um . . . dirt bike riding--I have a mini bike, but it's too small now. I like basketball and softball." Sheila established that she had played basketball on a junior league team for two years and currently plays outfield in softball. She said she wants to play second base instead. When asked about her dislikes, Sheila said, "hum . . . (long pause) . . . homework." I then asked if she had lots of homework. She replied, "sometimes." She described the assignments she takes home as extra work and work not finished during the day.

Participant #5

Krissy was an 11-year-old girl in the fifth grade. She can be characterized as petite, peppy, and self-confident. She came into the interview room with a set of notes she had prewritten for her interview. Krissy has one younger half-brother and lives with her biological mother and stepfather. Her biological father, whom she visits every July, lives in another state.

Krissy explained that she has "four stepbrothers and a stepsister" who are biologically her real father's children from his marriage previous to the one to her mother. When asked if they were older than her, Krissy replied, "Yeah, way older than me."

Krissy's retention experience included a year of prekindergarten with a repeat year of kindergarten in the regular classroom. Her interests included listening to music and dancing. She shared that she used to be in a dancing group while attending the Boys and Girls Club, but because that is now over, she will be joining a musical drama camp during the summer. She also told me that she will be joining a swim team that starts just before the drama camp. She stated that she likes math and she likes school. When discussing her dislikes, Krissy commented that she did not like doing subjects at the end of the day because she gets really tired. As I was leaving her school after finishing my interviews, I noticed Krissy sitting in the office waiting to see an administrator. As I was walking by, I asked her why she was in there. She told me with a giggle that she had bitten someone while they were playing. When I asked why she would do that, she just giggled again and shrugged her shoulders.

Participant #6

Wendy, a bashful 12-year-old in fifth grade, took a while to open up to me. Initially, most of her answers to my questions were of one word and proceeded by long pauses. She was a very big girl for her age, much taller than most of the students I saw the day I visited her school. She wore braces and had shoulder length, light brown hair.

Wendy resided with her biological father and stepmother at the time of the interview. Wendy shared that she has one biological brother in fourth grade and her father and stepmother have one daughter together who is in kindergarten. She explained that her stepmother had two older children from a previous marriage. Altogether there are five children, four who live in the same household. Wendy was retained in third grade. The next year, she entered into a "looping"

class or program, which has kept her with the same teacher and same group of students for three years.

The discussion of likes and dislikes led me to envision a child who prefers to be alone or remain isolated from others. When asked what she likes to do in her free time, she responded, "hmmm, sometimes I'll sit down and I'll read my book, but sometimes I just sit there and lie down on my bed. . . and just do nothing." She did not mention any physical activities when asked about things she liked, so I asked her if she played sports or anything. She then told me she played soccer, but did not elaborate. She also mentioned later that she liked to play with her cat. When I asked, "What are some things that you don't like?" she responded, "hmmm, (pause), I don't know."

Participant #7

When I asked the office staff to call Kathy, my next interviewee, the secretary informed me she was already there. Unfortunately, it was not to see me. She had gotten in trouble in the lunchroom, I was told, for talking back to the teacher on duty. The assistant principal told me to go ahead and take Kathy to interview because she was busy and it would be a while before she could get to her anyway. As I looked at the chairs in the office, I saw what I truly believed to be a boy and a girl sitting there waiting. I made eye contact with the child I presumed to be the only girl, waved my fingers toward myself, and called out the name "Kathy." To my surprise, the other child stood up and walked toward me. Kathy's haircut, clothing, and body language all appeared quite mannish. I was taken aback, but immediately noticed that Kathy was most certainly in possession of some female attributes, which she had attempted to keep well hidden with her oversized football jersey. She had dark hair that was cut short, small eyes, broad shoulders and a large frame.

Kathy was 12 years old and in the fifth grade. Kathy was retained in second grade. She appeared very defensive and unhappy. Of course, it was not an optimal time for her to be interviewed, but after spending time with her, I surmised that this was her true demeanor.

At the time of the interview, Kathy resided with her single, biological mother. Her mother had remarried after her parents divorced, but she is no longer with the stepfather. Kathy's own biological father is remarried and lives in another state. She lives with two of her biological siblings.

When Kathy was encouraged to share her interests, she told me that she likes to "play football, play baseball, hang out, play on the computer, play with friends." She shared that she had played on a soccer team, but quit. When I asked Kathy to tell me about things she did not like, she replied, "coming to school."

Participant #8

I had been given an unfavorable introduction to Frank, a small, blond-haired boy, by one of his classmates. As the office staff requested Frank's presence, a male student who was seated in the workroom connected to the office (possibly placed in In-School Suspension) overheard and asked me why I wanted Frank. He told me that Frank was "mean." I replied to the student that Frank was helping me with my school project. He replied, "He ain't smart." I ended the conversation by telling the young man that Frank was the perfect person to help me. I then met Frank and took him to the interview room, avoiding traveling by the workroom. Frank was retained during the previous school year. He is 12 years old and a student in the fifth grade for the second time. He was extremely lethargic throughout the interview and mumbled frequently. At one point during our conversation, his eyes were almost completely closed and I asked him if he was about to fall asleep. He replied with a gradual "no." When I asked him if he was just thinking, he replied, "yeah, I'm thinking." Frank was not clean. His fingernails were long, with dirt evident under and around each nail. After about 15 minutes into Frank's interview, I had a

strong impulse to prop the closed door open a little to allow for ventilation. There was a distinctly pungent odor of soured shoes filling the small space we occupied. As Frank answered questions, he sat very still and spoke slowly, but dug his fingernails into the wooden armrests of the chair he was sitting in.

Frank lived with his biological father and a stepmother at the time the interview took place. His biological mother lived in another state. Frank told me he has a 1-year-old half-sister, a 4-year-old half-sister, three more half-sisters, and two half-brothers. He explained that only his sisters reside in the same household that he does.

Frank told me that he likes to play video games and enjoys playing basketball at his cousin's house. He said he likes talking to his cousin. Frank also stated that he likes to study things under a microscope that he has at home. When discussing dislikes, Frank said, "Kids bug me and get mad at me."

Participant #9

John was a tall, well-built young man with light blond hair, cut in a military style. He appeared to be very serious. John spoke with a slight lisp. He explained to me that he needed glasses and has had them in the past, but his family has not recently had the money to get him a new pair. I asked John for permission to pass that information along to the guidance counselor, and he agreed. I spoke with the counselor before I left the building that day. The school counselor was responsive and grateful. He explained that the school had worked with John's family in the past, and assured me that he would get John what he needed.

John was very polite. He explained to me that he had started third grade at another school in the county and when his family moved halfway through the school year, he enrolled at his present school. Since he was making poor grades at the time, he was placed back in second grade. His younger sister, who had previously been in the second grade, encountered the same situation and was placed back in first grade upon her enrollment at the new school.

John was very open with me and appeared to be confident. He kept himself focused during the interview by pulling the fringes off a piece of spiral notebook paper that had been ripped out, and then placing the scraps in piles and moving the piles around. I had placed the paper and a pencil there in case the participants wanted to scrawl while they talked. John's interview lasted the longest by far, of any of my interviews. After hearing him describe his large family and their busy lives, I presumed John was relishing having someone give full attention to him while he talked. John was 13 years old, in the sixth grade, and lived with his mother, step dad, and several siblings at the time of the interview.

Participant #10

Tommy was a husky, dark haired boy with freckles and a meek disposition. He mumbled frequently while giving answers, but made consistent eye contact with me. Tommy, a 13-year-old in the sixth grade, likes to play football and baseball. He also shared that he likes math. Tommy has played both football and baseball on teams for several years. His free time is spent mostly with his family. He enjoys playing soccer, football, and basketball with his friends during recess at school, but said he never visits his friends at their homes after school or has friends over to his house. The only dislike he mentioned was reading.

At the time of the interview, Tommy lived with his biological parents and a younger brother. His mother has two older children, a boy and girl, from a previous marriage. His father has two older sons from a previous marriage.

Like other children in his situation, Tommy has experienced events well beyond his years. As he described his family to me, he shared very personal details void of any emotion whatsoever. When I asked if his family talks much to each other about these serious issues he described to me, he said that they did not.

Participant #11

Lisa was a 12-year-old in the fifth grade. When the interviewer began by asking Lisa to tell all about herself, she responded, "Okay, I have two stepbrothers, two brothers, one stepsister, and my mom and my dad, and there's my aunt, and um, I'm very shy, and sometimes when I do something that I really ain't supposed to, I fib." When asked why she thinks she fibs, she replied, "'cause I won't get in trouble."

One would describe Lisa as a cute girl. She had a short haircut that shaped her face and her bangs were pulled to the side with a small bow. She wore a woven matching short skirt and vest with a pullover short sleeve shirt underneath. She sat very upright in her chair and kept taking deep breaths and puffing out throughout our conversation. Her chestnut brown hair enhanced the dark circles under her eyes. She had a slight under bite and a visible, as well as audible, lisp. She fidgeted frequently and I noticed that her hands shook a little from time to time. During the interview with Lisa, the audio cassette tape cut off, and she jumped like a frightened animal.

Lisa shared that her interests included roller blading, swimming, and playing with her brothers. She explained that she does not like to do math, but she has to. She also said that she did not like to do any kind of sport that involves running.

Lisa appeared to be a very confused child. Throughout her interview, she made contradictions. For example, when asked why she thought she did not like sports that required running, she replied, "Well, I'm not a very good runner, and sometimes I usually fall and usually twist my ankle or break my leg." When asked if she had ever broken her leg, her response was, "No, but I've twisted my arm when I was a little girl."

Lisa was placed in a transition first grade classroom following her kindergarten year. She then went to a regular first grade classroom the next year.

Participant #12

Earl was an extremely tall youngster who looked out of place in his surroundings. Thirteen years old and in the sixth grade, Earl appeared to be over six feet tall. He walked with his shoulders hunched forward as we made our way to the interview room, so I surmised that he was cognizant of his dissimilarity to his peers and he compensated by trying to make himself appear shorter. I did not refer to his height to avoid drawing attention to it.

Despite Earl's towering stature, he exhibited blatant feminine gestures. He crossed his legs during the interview, with his torso turned toward one side. He also laid his hands atop one another and placed them on his bent knee several times. When feigning embarrassment, Earl placed his hand over his mouth, a gesture normally associated with the female gender. Earl had explained to me that the reason he had not been in school for the past week while I had been interviewing, was that he was sent to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC), due to getting in trouble. He elaborated by saying that his teacher did not like him.

Earl lived with his mother, stepfather, and an 18-year-old half brother at the time of the interview. He and his brother share the same biological mother. Earl shrugged his shoulders when asked about things he liked. When asked to discuss his dislikes, he replied, "teachers and school."

As each child interviewed in this study can be described as possessing varying characteristics, each retention experience for these students presented diverse situations as well. The following section reveals each participant's recollection of what it was like when the discovery was made that he or she was going to be retained.

Participants' Perceptions of the Retention Decision

Brooke described her retention experience in this way:

I was retained in first grade [transition first], but it wasn't bad. My first grade teacher told me. I really didn't like my first grade teacher. My dad explained things to me to make it easier for me. They [teacher and father] decided together for me to be held back.

When asked what it was like for her when she found out she was going to be retained, she responded in the following manner:

I thought that I had failed. But my parents had a talk to me about it and then I figured out that this was probably what was best for me. I found out a month before school was out. My dad told me that I was not failing, that I would understand more stuff, it was better for you and it would help you better understand things. I thought I would never have any friends, and my parents would be so mad at me. But I have lots of friends and my parents are not mad at me.

When asked to explain why she was retained, Brooke said, "I'm not exactly sure, but because of some subjects that I failed." I then asked Brooke to explain why she used the term "failed" to describe her experience. She replied:

My mom said she had--she was like that in school. She didn't understand some things. And when she told me try to keep your grades up at least to a 'C' and you'll pass, but don't bring it down to an 'F' or you will fail. I was like, oh my gosh!

Anthony gave this description of his retention, "I was retained in the fourth [grade]. My dad made the decision and he kinda talked to my mom about it." Anthony discussed what it was like for him when he found out he was going to be retained, "Well, at first I was kind of nervous 'cause I'd already moved schools once, and I knew how it was to be different, and then I knew more people than I thought I did." Anthony was then asked to share his recollection of why he was retained. His response was:

Because my age. I was younger than everybody [June birthday]. They said it would affect me in high school when everybody was drivin' and I'd feel bad 'cause I wasn't drivin' and stuff. Before I was retained, I was a 'B/C' student.

When I first spoke with Cameron, he shared that he did not really think he had been retained. He felt his situation was different because he went to prekindergarten, then to a regular kindergarten class. He explained the reason for his situation by saying, "The reason why was to get extra confidence in sports, and then . . .[pause], that's pretty much." Cameron described what it was like for him in the following way:

My two older brothers both did the same as me [both were retained as well]. My parents wanted to give them extra time for sports. My dad always tells people it's best to keep their sons back for sports. It makes them better. We didn't really talk about it, it was just the way it was.

Sheila provided this account of her retention experience: "I think it was my kindergarten teacher's decision. I think it was my mom or my teacher that told me." When asked to discuss why she was retained, Sheila said:

They said that um, I had, uh, I was born with somethin' and the nurse, she said when I was little, I really didn't know how to speak well or read. I would try to switch 'p' with 'q' and 'm' with 'w'.

Krissy shared a similar experience to Cameron's like this:

Everybody in my prekindergarten class went on to kindergarten so I never thought of that as being retained. It felt kinda good, though, because I'd had like, a start for kindergarten and I was like not, not, ready for kindergarten [before] and it was a lot better.

Krissy explained that it was "a lot better" for her the second year in kindergarten because it "put me ahead of the other kids and gave me extra time." She explained that no one discussed the decision for her placement with her. She told me she just assumed it was the way things were supposed to be. When asked why she was retained, Krissy shared, "'cause of that test you take to start kindergarten, my mom told me."

Wendy used the following description of her retention experience:

Well, Mom . . . , Mom [step mom] and dad came up with the idea and I, and they told me that it was up to me to make the choice, so I told them I would. And then, like, last year sometime, Mom goes, [Wendy], I know that if you weren't retained, you would have failed this year. I kept telling you. I go, 'yeah, I would have.'

Wendy shared her thoughts on what it was like for her when she found out she was going to be retained in this way:

I was, I felt good about it because, in third grade when I was in Mrs. ____'s class, for some reason I kept falling asleep in her class. And I needed to be held back because I wasn't paying attention like I was supposed to and I didn't get enough out of it.

Wendy told me that her family was on spring break, toward the end of the school year when she discussed the issue with her parents and made the decision. When asked to elaborate on why she was retained, Wendy said, "Sometimes I don't pay attention, too. That was basically my problem, and that's still my problem, not being able to pay attention if I don't take my medicine [Dexedrine], so sometimes . . ."

Kathy described her retention in second grade by saying, "My mom wanted to keep me back a grade. She told me I was gonna go back to second, and that was okay." Kathy described the reason why she was held back, "'Cause I made a ton of bad grades and my mom wanted to keep me back a grade." Kathy explained that her mother told her about the choice she had made to retain her in the summer, after school was already out.

Second time fifth-grader, Frank explained that his parents also made the choice to retain him. Frank had moved from out of state to a school within the county where he currently attends. He was given placement tests that recommended him for two "modified classes." He told me that his parents were not aware that he had been in two remedial-type classes until they received his report card in the mail. When asked if he remembered why he was retained, he shared, "Yes, because I was in two modified classes, but I had very good grades, and my parents held me back because I was in two modified classes." He further added that he found out "a couple of days after the end of school 'cause we had our, me and my sister had our report cards mailed to us." Frank also elaborated that when his parents made the decision to retain him, "I felt kinda mad because on my report card it said I would go on to sixth." Frank stated that he was not involved in the decision, but his parents "asked me if it was okay and I told them yeah." Frank explained that he is at a different school in the county this year because his family moved. He told me that he was not bothered by being retained because he was at a new school with new people.

John's experience of moving homes and schools in the middle of a school year also came with being placed back in second grade after he had already spent half a year in third. He shared that his mom made the decision about him being retained, and his dad was glad that he was moving to a new school. He shared his feelings concerning the experience, "I, it made me feel kinda mad because I didn't want to be retained because I had worked all that time and I was being retained to a lower grade." He expressed that he had felt that way "until about a week, after I started getting used to the new school."

John also told me that he had failed social studies, science, and reading at his previous school. When asked to explain his progress, he stated, "I was making D's and F's." Even though John's parents supported the school's decision for him to be retained, he explained, "My parents, I think they felt that it was kinda dumb that I got retained because I couldn't read."

Tommy shared, "I was put in junior primary after kindergarten. My mom told me that it would help me do better since I had not learned all I needed to in kindergarten." He explained that he found out when he received his report card at the end of kindergarten.

Lisa began to describe her retention experience in the following way:

I moved, I moved when I was in kindergarten, we moved two weeks before school was out, so they retained me. I was in kindergarten, they retained me and put me in transition [first grade]. And after that I went to first grade, which we did mostly tests, tests, tests.

When Lisa was asked whose decision it was to retain her, she replied, "the teacher's." I then asked Lisa what it was like for her when she found out she was going to be retained. She described it this way:

Well, I was a little scared and I wanted to go to first grade because my mom said I knew a lot of stuff, but it probably would have been stuff that would have been in the first grade, but they retained me in the transition.

The interviewer subsequently asked why Lisa had been retained and she shared:

Uh, I didn't know. I moved two weeks before school was out and I only knew a little bit in that school. And when I got my report card from that school, it said I passed at that school, but at this one [new school] I got put, . . . it said I was retained.

When asked who told her that she was going to be retained, she supplied, "First it was my kindergarten teacher, then it was my mom and dad." She explained that her parents told her "probably three days before school began." She said that her parents told her as follows:

Well, my mom told it in a different way than my dad. She said that I'd be going to transition which was kindergarten and first grade, and I went 'you gotta be kidding.' Then my dad was just plain honest. He said 'You're going to be retained to the transition!' and I nearly fainted. And uh, I was sick at the time that they told me, so I missed the first day of school.

Earl described his retention experience like this:

I was put in junior primary 'cause my teacher and my mom thought it would help me better. I could not read yet and did not know a lot of my sounds too good, so it would give me extra time to get ready for first grade.

He reflected that his mom and his teacher decided together, right before the end of his kindergarten school year. He expressed his reaction this way, "I was sorta glad because I never really felt like I could do as good as the other kids in my class. Now I could get some extra help to be as good as the others."

Considering the serious issues many of these children have been faced with in their short lives, it is quite possible that being retained is not that significant in comparison. Death, divorce, assimilation of new family members through parents remarrying, moving, and other emotional trauma can toughen children. It is important to recognize that retention is only one factor of many that contributes to a child's perception of self. The next section will take the participants' reflections of the experience a step further and examine their perceptions of how others felt about them in relation to retention.

Participants' Perceptions of Others in Relation to the Retention Experience

Research has long recognized that the way one perceives him or herself is in direct relation to the way one believes others view him or her. The following quotes provide insight into the perceptions of the participants of this study as to the thoughts and opinions that others hold toward them.

Brooke shared the following viewpoint when asked to describe the way she believes others see her, "Others think I'm nice. I have lots of friends. All of my friends think I'm a very nice person and like me the way I am." Brooke also stated "people never did say anything to me about being retained." She added, "I like school and I like my teachers. I think all my teachers like me." When asked to elaborate about her teachers, she expressed the following perspective, "I feel like my teachers have always done all they can to help me. It [the retention] doesn't get mentioned. I don't even think my teachers know."

Brooke explained that her family was supportive of her retention. In relation to the experience, she stated, "They [parents] saw my grades and knew I wasn't doing so good. They knew retention would be better for me." She added, "My teachers said 'you need help--it will be better for you. You'll get more help.'" When asked if she has anyone whom she feels she can really trust to confide in, she shared that her grandmother was the one person who never "let her down" and is always "there for her."

Anthony expressed his views in this way, "I think they [parents] were kinda glad that I made the right decision to be held back." He shared that his teacher at the time the decision was being made, "really talked to me about it to make sure it was okay with me." Anthony related that he has "lots of friends." He shared the names of four friends specifically, whom he considers his "best" friends. He also stated that he has "lots of friends in other grades."

He shared that he believes others see him "the same way" as they did before retention. However, when discussing how his peers supported him in his candidacy for the Beta Club election, he stated, "It made me feel good being elected as an officer to Beta Club. It was my second year in the new grade and they voted me in."

When asked if he felt he could have achieved the honor had he not been retained, he replied "probably not. I'm not even sure I would have been in the Beta Club." The investigator further inquired about his leadership positions within the school when Anthony shared that he is a reporter on his school's news broadcast that airs daily on the televisions in each classroom. He stated that he feels confident and enjoys being in front of the camera where all the students see him. When asked if he felt he would have had the confidence before being retained, he answered, "no, 'cause I was kind of bashful then." When asked if he had anyone he could talk to and trust--to confide in if he had problems, he answered, "my parents." When asked why, he shared, "I just feel like I can." He added that his parents "make him feel good."

Cameron shared this viewpoint of how others see him, "I have lots of friends. Most are the same grade as me. I have friends in my class, but I also have lots of friends that are older and

younger than me." Cameron snickered when asked how he thought others perceive him. He then replied, "uh, uh . . . class clown. They think I'm funny, a good friend." He continued, "I've always liked my teachers. And they like me, but some days. . .some days when I'm joking around, it makes them in a bad mood all day."

Cameron stated that his teachers and parents have always been helpful and supportive of him and that he is "well liked" by others. When discussing his friends, he added this anecdote of children in his same-age peer group:

A couple of my friends who were in kindergarten with me were held back, and a couple of my friends went on to first grade. This year they're in seventh. It made me feel weird when I saw them [recently] 'cause I wished I was up there in seventh with them. But now I feel fine that I got all my friends and stuff. I do better in sports now and probably wouldn't if I was in seventh.

Sheila expressed her relationship with others by saying, "Sometimes I stay with my friends and sometimes they stay with me." Sheila has experienced some negative actions from her classmates, "When I don't understand stuff, they say I'm stupid and retarded. Some kids make fun of me 'cause I can't, . . . because I'm not able to say words right. Make fun of me."

However, Sheila also shared, "I see them be mean to others" [too]. She stated when the children are not kind to her she just tries "to ignore them." Sheila added that sometimes she thinks about telling those children "that those [people] shouldn't tell me that I'm stupid and retarded when I can't answer something. I'm just a person." Contrary to the negativity she has experienced at times, when asked if those same people had ever said things to her that made her feel good, she said, "They say I'm smart, kind, [when I answer] stuff that I do know."

Sheila expressed her opinion that she has liked most of her teachers and they have liked her. Then she said there were some teachers she really did not like. She explained that she really did not like her kindergarten and first grade teachers "'cause [they] always got mad at me if I didn't do something right. If I'd tell them I didn't understand, they'd get so frustrated." When asked if the teachers ever said anything to her to make her think they were mad, she replied, "No,

I could just tell by the way they were acting that they were frustrated." I then asked how that made her feel and she shared, "kinda sad. I'd try my hardest--they'd still get frustrated."

When asked how her parents felt about her being retained, she answered in this way: "My mom said, she didn't really say nothin'. She was just like, it was better for me. It would help me better with things." The researcher then asked Sheila to express how it made her feel when her mom said it would be helpful to her. She answered, "I was kinda mad then, but now it's okay." Sheila also added that her father "never" talked about the retention decision, then or now. Sheila confided that she has "no one" she can talk to or really trust to share personal issues and feelings with. Sheila concluded by telling me that her "friends" helped her to feel better about herself because "they were kind."

Krissy expressed that she has "lots of friends in school," and added, "most of them are in my class." When asked to describe how others see her, she said, "I think they think I'm pretty smart. I'm not like a straight 'A' student; I make A's and B's, but I'm pretty smart. I think they see me as nice, sometimes, a little bit mean." Krissy added that they make her feel "good." She added, "we just like, hang out and we go everywhere and we do everything together."

When asked to describe her relationship with her teachers, she said that she liked "most of them." She added, "Well, in second grade I had a really mean teacher." She expressed that it made her feel "bad--she was like, always mean." She continued that it made her feel bad about "myself as a person." When asked to describe some of the things her teacher did that made her feel bad, she answered, "She'd like, she'd just say it like, she didn't want me doing this and she don't want me in her class, and she was like, always mean."

Krissy described her prekindergarten teacher by saying, "She was really nice." The investigator encouraged Krissy to elaborate, and received this response, "Well, every time I got in trouble she wouldn't really, like, just punish me, she'd just tell me that it's not the right thing, doing that, and she like, helped me with all this stuff I needed help with." She described her kindergarten teacher similarly, "Like, she would like, she'd like, help me with all my work and if

I'd like, forget some stuff, she would, like help me with it and she would like, just not get real mad at me."

Krissy was candid about her support system and when asked if she had anyone that she could talk to and trust, she replied, "definitely the guidance teacher." She shared that she talks to the teacher privately "at the end of the day 'cause I'm second line and it takes about, like thirty minutes for my bus to get there." She explained that her relationship with the guidance teacher started this way, "Well, my friends would tell me about her, because when I just started to school, I was like, well is the guidance teacher nice? Is she, uh, mean, and all that stuff?" She continued by explaining her reasons for visits with the guidance teacher, "Just because, like, sometimes my friends would like, make me feel bad, so I had to talk to her." She said that the teacher makes her feel "better."

She shared that being retained has "definitely" been helpful in the way that others see her and the way she sees herself. She added that "a few teachers" were "really helpful" along the way.

Wendy was uncertain at first when asked about how she thinks others see her in school. She answered, "I don't know" initially, but after she was encouraged to delve further into her thoughts, she replied, "umm, I guess that I'm a good student some of the time, but not all of the time." When asked to describe how she feels about herself as a student, she answered, "umm, good about myself."

Wendy explained that she is in the third year of a looping program and shared that she likes her teacher and her teacher likes her. Wendy shared that she enjoys doing things by herself. She stated that she has "one or maybe two" friends she likes to be with. When describing the teacher who retained her, Wendy shared, "She's, . . .she's one of the better teachers that you could have. Uhm, she at least tries to help you when you, if you need help, unlike some teachers who don't care."

When asked how others see her, she repeatedly answered that no one treats her any differently than before being retained. Wendy shared that she is not bothered by people who asked if she had been retained. She explained:

A bunch of them [have asked] because, see, I'm like one of the taller kids in my class, and I always have been, you know, for the past three years, and they keep, and for like, the past two years, in third and fourth grade, they um, see all these kids were just coming up from second grade and they thought I failed, and they would ask me, and I would tell them the truth, and then, and then, like, fourth grade when I got, when we got a couple more new students, they asked me. I didn't feel bad about it or anything.

She continued, "I would tell them why, 'cause, see they, I would tell them what really happened. I would tell them I was just retained, and if they asked me why, I would tell them."

Wendy shared that she feels differently, or more confident about herself, than she did before being retained. I asked her to tell me some of the things she does now that she probably would not have done before. She answered with these thoughts, "I wouldn't, I wouldn't even, I mean, I didn't go outside but very-- it was very rare for me to go outside." When asked why she thought that was, she explained:

I'm not, . . .don't know, for some reason I just didn't want, I just never wanted to go outside, and I, . . .so I stayed in. And then, until, like a couple of summers ago, umm, then my mamaw knew somebody who, who had just moved down the road, and they had a daughter who was about my age, and she wanted me to go meet them. And I did, and like a couple of summers ago we started going bicycling once or twice a week and that's kinda how I got started going back outside.

Wendy also added something she enjoys doing now that she never did before the retention experience, "sit down and read a book."

When asked if she had people in her life that she felt like she could talk to and trust about how she feels, she replied, "Yeah, it's just like a whole bunch of people. I mean, my family and my teachers and my friends." She added, "They make me feel ten times better, like if I wasn't feeling good that day, they'd find some way to cheer me up. I don't know how, but they would."

The investigator asked Wendy to share what has made retention a good experience for her and she replied, "Well, the support of my family and my teacher." She also supplied that "kids in my class" were a support. When asked if it would have made a difference if she had

been in a classroom with another teacher that did not try as hard to help her, she shared, "Yeah, I think it would have made--I think I would still be back at square one, and not doing good."

Kathy's opinions of others at the time of the interview reflected her anger due to just being sent to the principal's office. When asked if she liked her teachers, she said "no." When asked if she thought her teachers liked her, again she replied "no." When the investigator inquired as to why she thought that was, she answered, "'cause." When encouraged to elaborate, she stated, "'cause they yell too much and they get on me too much." When asked to share whether she thought the teachers picked on other people too, she replied, "no, not that much." She shared that she had not had problems before she moved to her current school. When questioned as to why she decided to switch schools, she stated, "Because we had to move." Kathy expressed that she missed her friends from her previous school. She said, "The teachers, they help you more and I know everybody else there." When the investigator questioned why Kathy thought the real problems started at her new school, she agreed that it was probably because she did not want to be there.

When asked if she had ever tried to talk to any adult at school about her problems, Kathy said she had never tried to talk with the guidance counselor. When asked why she thought that was, she answered, "'Cause I don't know what those are."

Kathy shared that she thought the teacher who retained her did everything she could to try to help her do her best. Kathy expressed the way her peers and family see her as "alright." But when asked to describe how her previous teachers felt about her, she replied, "good." This is in direct contrast to the way Kathy believes her current teachers see her. Kathy continued to describe her current situation, "When I came here, they were harder on me and stuff. I've been getting F's." When the researcher inquired of Kathy as to the grades she was making before moving schools, she replied, "A's and B's." When asked if she ever asked for help with her schoolwork, she answered, "no." She responded in like fashion when asked if her teachers ever offered to help her. She stated, "no, 'cause half the time we do it together." When I asked Kathy

what her plans were to improve her current situation, she answered, "We [her family] ain't gotta worry 'cause we're going back next year--to our other school." Fortunately for Kathy, she did reveal that she has her mother and her sister to confide in and trust.

When Frank was asked to express how others see him, he stated, "Well, a lot of kids don't like me." When asked to explain why, he said, "'cause I tell on them." However, when I asked Frank to tell me about his friends at school, he shared that he felt like he had good friends. He said, "I have more friends at school 'cause I don't have like, any friends at home." He reflected that his responsibilities at home keep him from having friends there. Frank expressed that his teachers like him. When describing one particular teacher, he stated, "Yeah, I've done pretty good--one time a teacher called mom on a cell phone and told her how good I was doing."

When asked if he liked his teachers he answered, "yeah," adding, "they were good and they were all nice." The researcher questioned Frank as to whether he thought his teachers who retained him did everything they could to try to help him. He replied, "Yeah, they were really the best teachers around." Frank disclosed how his parents felt about his retention as follows, "They didn't like it a little bit, they were kinda disappointed themselves." When asked how their opinion made him feel, he replied, "Um, they made me feel a little bit mad, but I was okay with it because they were doing what they could." Frank shared that a couple of people have asked him why he was retained, and he explained that he answered his friends, "'cause my parents said I was." Frank continued by expressing that his parents were "kinda disappointed in him" when the decision was made for him to be retained. When asked to reflect upon how his teachers felt about him in relation to his retention, he answered in this way, "Um, they kinda felt I was a little bit more mature than the rest of them." The researcher then requested Frank to clarify his response by asking if he was referring to his teachers this year or the previous year in which he was retained. He answered, "Both--well, the teachers last year, they had, very rarely any kids that were mature." Frank stated that he had never been made fun of because of his retention. Like Sheila, he mentioned that he had been teased about other things, but other children in his

class have been teased as well. Frank was asked to describe how he feels about himself presently in contrast to the way he felt about himself before being retained. He expressed that he does not feel any differently.

Finally, Frank was asked to divulge if he has anyone in his life that he can talk to and trust about how he feels. He answered as follows, "I used to, and they stopped riding the bus." Frank shared that he felt like retention provided him with an advantage that his peers did not have--the opportunity to experience extra time in class. He added that retention is beneficial to students "because they might need a little help."

John expressed his retention experience by saying, "Because down there [before retention] I think I was more thought of as an idiot, because I was failing everything, and up here, [after retention] I'm making good grades, so I think everybody has looked at me as a leader to show the younger kids what to do right and all." When asked if he has anyone he can confide in, he answered, "Yeah, some of the teachers, and some of the students." The researcher continued by asking John if he thought that retention was helpful in the way he felt about himself. He answered:

I think it has, because if it hadn't, if I wasn't retained, I'd still be down there in that school, instead I moved up here and I met a lot of good teachers and kids; teachers who actually care about what I make, grades and stuff.

I asked John if he could remember people along the way who have been positive, and have helped him to feel good about himself. He responded:

Mrs. _____, she was, when I came here, when I was mad, I used to yell and scream, and say 'Dang it all,' because I'd dropped my book and everybody'd start laughing and I'd say 'shut up,' and I'd just get mad over that, and then one time my dad had spilled coffee all over my math, no, my reading book, and a page had ripped out, and we used to take classes and go up there and read a page, and she asked me why I hadn't read in a while, and I couldn't tell her. I was too afraid to tell her that my dad had done something to the book. And she gave me another book and I read it to her.

When discussing how his friends see him, he replied, "They make me feel happy because they like me."

Tommy viewed retention as a "good thing." He shared that he confides in his mother when he has private things to discuss. Tommy explained that he feels the same about himself as he did before he was held back. He shared that others like him and do not view him any differently than they did before being retained. When asked how he thinks his teachers feel about him, he answered, "They like me alright 'cause I try real hard and don't ever get in trouble." He expressed that his teachers were "good."

Lisa boldly described others' perceptions of her, "Well, they're kind of jealous because I have, I'm more prettier, and I have more clothes, that are not out of style, and sometimes they think I'm a kind and generous person." Lisa expressed that she has lots of friends. When describing her teachers, she explained, "They're very nice and they try to help me bring up my grades." Lisa stated that she liked her teachers and felt that they like her too. However, her description of the teacher who retained her varied somewhat from her previous statement. She shared, "Well, it was Mrs. _____, my first grade teacher, and she wasn't all that nice, but when she got mad, her head blew off." When asked to clarify, she added, "Well, she had a bad temper." Lisa described her parents' feelings toward her retention, "Well, they were a little unsure, but for my sake, they wanted me to be retained more and more." She described how their opinions made her feel, "It made me feel a little excited and a little scared." She further elaborated, "Well, I felt excited because I'd get to go to a new classroom and meet new people." Lisa shared that she believes others see her differently now. She asserted their perceptions when she said, "I'm smarter like they are." She also agreed retention gave her an academic advantage over her peers who were not retained. Her list of confidants included her mom, aunt, niece, and sister. When asked why she trusted them, she explained, "Because they, because they're always honest about it, and they never lie to me about what's happening, what's going to happen, or is happening." Lisa concluded by saying that she feels retention has been helpful in the way she feels about herself.

Earl portrayed his retention experience by saying, "I think retention was good for me and people treat me better. My teachers have always been nice to me up until this year." Earl shared that he has a few very good friends but does not like to hang out with a lot of people. Earl stated that he could confide in his older brother.

This section characterized the participants' reflections of how others perceive them in relation to their retention experiences. The evidence gathered from the participants clearly refutes the opinion that children who are retained are ridiculed and teased by peers, thus creating negative feelings of self-esteem. The students interviewed for this study stated that peers accepted the fact that they had been retained without question. Only one participant commented on being taunted by peers, and interestingly, the incident took place prior to being retained. Many of the participants felt others showed more regard for them following retention because they had an increased understanding of academic material, more confidence in their own abilities, and they participated in more classroom and extracurricular activities. From the participants' declarations, it appeared that many of the students were able to discard inhibitions that were present prior to being retained. The next section will illustrate the participants' recognized concerns, and fears they felt about being retained.

Participants' Concerns Toward Being Retained

Many students express anxiety when faced with new or uncertain situations. Society generally associates retention with "failure" or not meeting academic expectations. Through review of the literature and interview with retainees, the researcher concluded that there is a myriad of possible reasons students are retained; not meeting academic expectations is only one of many. This section examines the perceived fears the students experienced after initially being told they would be repeating a grade.

Brooke stated:

I was worried I was not gonna know anybody--gonna feel stupid. But my teacher said there would be a few people who would be there from this class--so I thought that would be nice. I felt better once I found that out.

She added, "Since my parents thought being held back was best for me, it made me feel better. My mom was with my dad when he explained. This helped me out so I wouldn't be all upset about it."

Anthony's greatest fear was being "different." As described earlier, he had experienced moving schools once and was frightened of not knowing anyone as before. However, his fears dissipated once he realized he knew people and would have friends. Other than that, he had no concerns and shared, "My dad really thought this would be best for me. Even though my grades weren't failing, he told me it would help me since I was so young for my grade. My mom thought so, too."

Cameron's confident attitude was reflected in his response, "I didn't really have to worry 'cause I didn't know anybody and didn't care. I didn't have any friends before that." Cameron also stated, "It gave me a good start. If it had been like, been like third grade, I wouldn't have agreed."

Sheila imagined one of a child's greatest fears when she first heard she was going to be retained. She shared her dramatic thoughts, "I thought that, um, I was gonna be taken away from my mom or something." I asked her what made her think that. She smiled and shrugged, but gave no verbal response. When asked if anyone ever told her that she would be taken from her mother, she answered "no." Another, more realistic concern of Sheila's was conveyed by, "I wouldn't see my friends." When asked to discuss any worries or concerns she may have had about being retained, she explained that she never worried about it at all.

At first, Wendy looked as though she was thinking about the researcher's question, and then asked, "hmmm, about what?" After the question was repeated, she answered, "No, no, not really, because I was kinda comfortable with being held back because I needed it. And so, that's why."

Kathy stated that she was "okay" with being retained in second grade. She explained that she found out about the decision in the summer. She did not worry about friends that would be going on to third grade, because, as she stated, "half of 'em was already in first grade, so we'd all be in the same grade now." Kathy's younger brother was also retained and she shared that he was "okay" with it also.

Frank found out he was going to be retained a couple of days after school was out for the summer. He shared that he did not have anything he was worried or concerned with about being retained, but shared:

I was kinda mad because I'd been trying real hard and stuff. I took this one [placement] test [when I moved to the school from out of state]. That's what got me in all my classes [two that were modified]. It's like they used different cards. When I finished testing, I was in two modified classes. That's why I didn't go on the next year. My mom and dad wanted me to do the year over at a new school.

John shared his concerns over being placed back in second grade in this way, "I was okay with it because my brother actually made me feel good because he knew if I moved to a different school, I'd have better teachers who could teach me." He stated that he was not worried about anything.

Tommy shared John's sentiments toward his own retention experience. He reflected in this way: "There wasn't anything I was worried about." He added, "My mom told me it was best for me so I never really thought any more about it."

Lisa expressed her views this way, "Well, I was worried that I might not have a good, a nice teacher." When asked if there was anything else she was worried about, she answered, "Well, I was worried that I might get picked on." The researcher encouraged Lisa to explain her response. She answered, "Because I was the smartest and most talented, and everybody was jealous of me except for a few girls and boys, well [I was] Miss Popularity."

Earl expressed that he feared a new situation. He explained his feelings by saying, "I really didn't know what to expect since I was small and I really hadn't done a lot of things, I didn't know what to expect. I still get kind of nervous anyway when I start a new school year."

From the participants' accounts, it can be suggested that positive attitudes and support from parents, teachers, and others are elemental in creating a nonthreatening, healthy transition for the retained child. The majority of students in this study stated that his or her parents felt it was the best decision, therefore eliminating any fears or uncertainties the child may have had initially. The way children perceive experiences in their lives often influences how they perceive themselves. The following section presents the participants' retrospection of their nonpromotion experiences and how they perceive themselves in relation to those experiences.

Influence of Retention on Self-Perceptions

The primary focus of this study was to encourage students who have been retained to reflect on that experience in terms of how they perceive themselves in relation to that experience. The following excerpts from the interviews shed light on the participants' perceptions of retention and how it has affected the way they feel about themselves.

Brooke shared, "I am glad they retained me. It really did help me and helped me understand other things I didn't before.

Anthony agreed by saying:

I'm glad I was retained 'cause I feel like now I have more friends who are actual friends and stuff, and I get better grades. I'm feeling better about myself 'cause I'm making straight A's and B's. I feel better about myself, my grades, and I think, . . . I feel better about myself at sports.

When asked to share his overall opinion of the retention experience, Cameron expressed his feelings like this, "I think it's helped. I'm not sure I could do as good in sports, and school is easier than it would be in the seventh [grade].

Sheila shared her thoughts in this way, "They [my teachers] would get frustrated when I couldn't understand. They would explain it, I still didn't understand. I would just try my best. They would get frustrated at me." She went on to share that once her teacher had made the decision to retain her, the teacher acted differently toward her. She added, [My teacher] "wouldn't get as mad—she would just tell me" [the answers]. She said she felt much better about

herself once her teacher backed off. She thinks teachers see her differently than before she was retained in kindergarten. She said she did not want to ask for help in kindergarten because she saw her teachers get mad. She continued, "Teachers don't get mad or frustrated [at me] now."

Krissy shared her opinion this way, "Well, I feel a lot better now than I did then, because now I know a whole lot more stuff, and I'm like, I'm like ready for this, because when I started prekindergarten, I was kinda scared." When asked if she feels success with everything she now does in school, she replied, "most of it."

Wendy enthusiastically expounded:

Well now I feel better about myself because I know, I know that now I actually know half the stuff that the kids that were in my class, Mrs. _____'s class [the retained year] knew. I now know that I know as much or maybe just a little bit more than they do at this point."

When asked how that made her feel, she shared, "It makes me feel good on the inside."

Kathy said that her retention experience made her feel "good because I got to be with more friends." In reference to her schoolwork, she added, "Now it's easy, 'cause I done did it once." Kathy stated that she felt being retained made her do better in school. When asked how that made her feel about herself, she replied, "Good, because I got, like A's and B's."

When Frank was asked about his experience, he stated that it was good "'cause I know I'm really smart and I never did do good in elementary schools."

John, who had been placed back a grade when he transferred to a different school within the county, recalls his experience in the following way:

I think it was okay because I met, . . . uh, it made it better since I was in second and the students were okay, so I think it made me feel a little happier than when I was in the third grade. . .

John admitted now that he is making As and Bs, it makes him feel good about himself.

When Tommy was asked to share how he perceived retention has touched him, he stated, "I think it made me feel better than before. Even though sometimes I still have trouble with things, I know I wouldn't be doing as good if I was a grade ahead."

Lisa expressed her view by establishing that she sees herself as "very talented." She stated that she thought retention was helpful "because I knew more than they did [classmates] and I was smarter." When asked if she feels differently about herself now in comparison to before she was retained, and if so, how, she explained, "Yes, like I know that I am becoming someone in life and that I have a future." The researcher then encouraged Lisa to share how she felt before she was retained. She described, "I felt like I had no future, you know in life, because I was always being picked on and teased." Lisa said that prior to retention, her classmates called her a "'geek', 'dork', and a 'nerd'."

Earl established that, "I feel better than I did when I was having so much trouble with my schoolwork. Now I can do what everyone else does, and sometimes I can even help other people."

The analysis of data presented the 12 participants' thoughts and feelings on their retention experiences. Their descriptions helped to identify how they perceived themselves in relation to that experience. Self-perceptions are influenced by many factors and retention is only one determinant in how the participants perceived themselves. It is important to recognize that for some of the students, retention occurred several years previous to the interview, and during that time many events could have influenced the memories of these children. It may have been difficult for the interviewees to separate their retention experience from so many other factors that determine self-esteem. However, the preponderance of positive experiences described by the participants must be recognized. Perhaps common factors among the retainees influenced their positive experiences. Those factors included participation in athletic or other extracurricular activities, parental support and involvement in the retention decision, and peer acceptance. The next chapter summarizes those findings and presents the investigator's recommendations for practice and suggestions for further research on this topic.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

Examination of the 12 interviews conducted for this study revealed that 10 of the 12 participants indicated they had trouble with academics prior to retention but did well after being retained. The other two retainees had been placed in prekindergarten classes, but one stated it was "a lot better" than going straight to kindergarten and both said it gave them some extra time.

The second student also shared, "I think it's helped. I'm not sure I could do as good-- sports, and school is easier than it would be in seventh" [the grade for his same-aged peer group]. The consensus of these participants was that retention helped improve their academic performance.

Several of the students wished that they had worked harder so they would not have had to be retained. However, the majority of participants (11 of 12) supported retention as a good choice for students who have had a hard time in school.

The one child who did not agree experienced a much different situation than the other 11 students. Instead of starting a fresh new year of school after the decision had been made, he had completed half of a year in third grade, only to be placed back into second grade upon changing schools. The stigma associated with this child's experience can only be imagined.

All 12 participants perceived others to like them well prior to retention. Nevertheless, five of the students felt that others liked them better after retention. They suggested that because they were doing better in class and in sports, they were looked up to and admired more. Clearly, for the participants in this study, being retained was not detrimental to their perceptions of self, and, in some situations, improved it. Additionally, a few of the students expressed concern or fears of being made fun of or teased when they found out they were going to be retained.

Surprisingly, further questioning revealed that not one had been taunted or ridiculed by his or her peers about being retained.

Only one of the participants experienced a negative remark. But upon further investigation, the participant shared, "Some make fun of me 'cause I can't, . . . because I'm older and not able to say words right." She also stated, "I see them be mean to others" [too]. When asked if those same people ever say things that make her feel good, she said, "They say [I'm] smart, kind, when I answer stuff that I do know." Ironically, this child was the only one of the participants to express negativity from others and was also the only participant to state that she did not have anyone to confide in or trust to share her feelings with.

Several of the students mentioned that when they had been asked by peers why they were retained, the answers they gave sufficed, and the other students accepted the fact without question. One child even expressed support from others. He stated that when he shared the fact that he had been retained and what had happened, "They [other students] went, well, stuff like that's happened to me, too." One participant shared that the teasing for her occurred prior to retention. The evidence gleaned from these interviews directly contradicts the societal belief that students who are retained suffer from esteem issues when ridiculed by their peers (Feldman, 1997; Resnick et al., 1997). Therefore, this study does not support the argument that retention should be avoided because the social ramifications could be devastating.

Although the majority of students who participated in this research study indicated that retention helped them to do better in school, and that it was beneficial to the way they perceive themselves, it must be noted that this sample is too small to make a general inference that retention is beneficial to all students in all situations. Although 35 retained students were invited to participate in this study, only 12 children consented. Of those 12, most appeared to be confident and self-assured. It might be possible that only those students who thought retention was a positive experience were willing to discuss it. It should be noted, however, that these opinions are supported by research that concluded retained students do not suffer from a lower

self-worth or inappropriate behavior any more than their promoted peer group (Pierson & Connell, 1992).

When the gathered evidence from this study is reviewed in terms of self-esteem, self-worth, and overall perceptions of self, it can logically be inferred that retention is not devastating to a child. In fact, one retainee interviewed is the Junior Beta Club Honor Society President-elect for the next school year. This is one of the highest academic honors available to a child his age. This child who had been a self-proclaimed "B/C" student, may have never made the honor roll, much less become a member of the Beta Club if he had not been retained. Overwhelmingly, the participants in this study were involved in sports or other organized activities. This supports the conclusion that the participants feel confidence in themselves and perceive themselves to be competent enough to participate in peer activities and events. Another interviewed retainee had received the top "Mr. Athletic Award" two years in a row for his grade level. This honor seemed to have generated an aura of self-confidence for this child. Had he been promoted along with his same-age peers, the opportunity for him to achieve this esteem may have never presented itself. These examples seem to justify why all 12 of the students in this study shared that they feel better about themselves overall than they did prior to being retained.

None of the students interviewed for this study expressed disapproval on the part of a parent toward his or her retention. Each participant reported that his or her parent agreed to the decision. In addition, several students stated that a parent or parents made the decision independent of their child's teacher or school. Many of the students interviewed stated that their parent(s) asked how they would feel about being retained, and included them in the decision-making process. Participants commented that because a parent or parents supported their retention and thought it was for the best, they were fine with the decision. Not one child expressed resistance toward the final decision.

The more involved and supportive the parents were of the retention decision, the more likely the child was to perceive retention as a positive decision and an improvement to his or her

own self-esteem. For these children, they believed it gave them an extra boost socially, as well as academically. According to the findings of this particular study, the "attitude" of all involved in the decision-making process was unequivocally the key to the child's feelings of success and self-worth. The participants all suggested that because their parents encouraged the retention by making the decision themselves, or supporting their teacher's decision, it was the right thing to do and they therefore accepted it without question.

Behavior of the students in this study was an issue of concern on the investigator's part. Of the 12 children interviewed, two had been in the principal's office for infractions on the days I was at their schools to interview. Another student had been away for a week at the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) for serious and repeated behavior problems. This discovery correlates with findings from a study by Byrd of the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry conducted in 1997. Byrd's study suggested that children who started school when they were a year or more older than their classmates were 70% more likely to display extreme behavior problems (as cited in Portner, 1997). Resnick et al. (1997) agreed by stating that any youngster who is not in sync with classmates, even a child who just looks older, is more likely to exhibit behavior problems as a teen. This hypothesis may explain why Earl, the tallest and most physically out of place of the students interviewed, was repeatedly getting into trouble. Self-esteem issues not directly related to the retention experience could possibly be a factor in the behavior of these three students.

Definitive research on the issue of self-esteem has been difficult due to the multitude of definitions and variety of self-esteem measures used. Also, there are an abundance of factors that influence one's perceptions of self. It is still important however, to consider the significance of self-esteem and its relationship to many of the problems facing society's youth today. When children feel competent, needed, and accepted, they will be able to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves as well as others. This will, in turn, improve their community,

society, and world. The following section provides recommendations for practice based upon the findings of this study.

Recommendations for Practice

Because of the inconclusive research on the effectiveness of retention and social promotion, there is a need for alternative strategies to assist struggling students. It is important to identify preventative measures to minimize student academic failure. The following are strategies that schools can use to address this problem:

1. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the more successes educators can build into a retained student's learning experience and capacity to feel self-sufficient, the more opportunities will be created for students to increase their self-esteem.
2. Self-esteem plays an important role in children's decisions to engage in healthy behavior throughout their lives. Therefore, enhancement of self-esteem should be encouraged through organized school programs.
3. Schools should promote self-esteem by teaching students well, therefore making them genuinely successful. Teachers should assist children in reaching their maximum level of learning through affective methods and a variety of teaching styles.
4. Based upon this researcher's professional background, it is believed that a false inflation of self-esteem may make children vulnerable to disillusionment in the end; therefore, children with special needs should be provided with an environment in which they can achieve true success.
5. Because experts generally agree that parental involvement in a child's education, and indirectly self-esteem, remains one of the most important factors in determining his or her academic success, educators should encourage parents to become more involved in the education of their children.

6. The findings of this study concluded that eligibility for promotion should be based on multiple measures rather than one source in order for retention to be successful in terms of a child's self-esteem.
7. Based upon the findings of this study, it is recommended that tutoring or mentoring programs are established for students who are struggling academically. Benefits include improved academic performance, better attitudes toward school, and enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence.
8. Educators should work together to establish and maintain a positive, supportive, and secure school environment to "empower" students within the school to feel a sense of purpose through that supportive environment. Support services should be readily available and accessible for all students, and especially for those who have been retained.
9. Schools can implement remedial programs such as tutoring, summer school, after-school programs, and year-round schooling for students struggling to meet performance standards at key grades, specifically kindergarten, first, and second grades. Social promotion and retention both try to remedy problems after they have occurred. Prevention of these situations should be the goal of educators.
10. Redesigning schools to provide for different teaching strategies is necessary to address variations in how students learn while aiming for high standards. Organizational changes that provide for more extended contact between teachers and students can be justified by examination of education in other areas of the world. In high student achievement countries such as Norway, Japan, Denmark, and Sweden, there is virtually no retention of students. Teachers often stay with their pupils for multiple years and teach them multiple subjects. These "looping" strategies help to establish close, sustained relationships among educators and their students. Research has suggested that these relationships are factors that can be linked to school success.

11. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that retained children be encouraged to participate in athletic and other extracurricular activities. Each child in this study participated in sports and activities of one form or another, and each described a healthy perception of self.

Recommendations for Further Research

Schools must begin to think about student success and failure in fresh new ways. As practices, neither social promotion nor retention has been found to be adequate responses to low student achievement. As a result of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The findings of this particular study are only true for the 12 participants involved. Further research should examine this topic with another group of participants.
2. Future research should further evaluate teaching methodologies, as well as the effect of a positive school environment, to better understand the impact of direct and indirect teaching pertaining to the enhancement of self-concept/self-esteem.
3. Further research should reinterview the same 12 participants after graduation from high school and make a comparison of perceived self-successes or failures in relation to the retention experience.
4. Further longitudinal research should examine students' perceptions of self prior to retention and subsequent to the experience, to determine if there is an alteration.
5. Further research should examine the process of retention, including the child in the decision-making procedure.
6. Future research should examine the effects of different levels of self-concept and self-esteem on adoption of healthy behavior, and share the results with teachers.
7. Future research should examine grades and standardized test scores of retained students and compare them to the self-perceived academic successes of those students to determine if self-perceptions are genuinely based in fact.

8. This particular study looked at students from a mostly rural East Tennessee school system. Future research should examine students from a much larger inner-city school system.
9. All students in this study were retained only once. Future research should focus on students who experience more than one retention.
10. Future research should examine established practices that have been found to provide support and education for families of retained students. These findings should be made readily available to educators and parents.

As long as retention will be used as a means to remediate academic difficulties, it is imperative that society provide support for the retained child as well as the retained child's family. As this study suggests, students who are retained with support and nurturing tend to feel better about themselves and perceive themselves to be better students than before the retention took place. Society should be reminded of Kahil Gibran's reflection: "The significance of a man is not in what he attains but rather in what he longs to attain." Attitude is key.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

District Promotion/Retention Data (1996-2000)

For Year 1996

Total System:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	912	42
1	852	86
2	788	19
3	861	10
4	814	10
5	816	8
6	864	8
7	850	3
8	858	6
9	803	165
10	647	99
11	577	36
12	541	24
Total	10183	516

School # 03: (Alternative Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	2	0
8	8	0
9	18	4
10	9	2
11	3	1
12	3	0
Total	43	7

School # 015:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	45	0
1	41	1
2	32	0
3	38	0
4	35	2
5	31	0
6	37	0
7	31	0
8	37	0
Total	327	3

School # 020:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	176	21
10	154	18
11	142	12
12	130	3
Total	602	54

School # 025:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	18	1
1	14	1
2	23	0
3	20	0
4	15	0
5	25	0
6	20	0
7	21	0
8	20	0
Total	176	2

School # 032

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	92	8
1	91	2
2	69	1
3	95	1
4	78	0
5	95	0
6	77	0
7	76	0
8	70	0
Total	743	12

School # 035:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	88	1
1	72	7
2	63	7
3	66	1
4	65	0
5	75	0
6	76	2
7	73	2
8	64	3
Total	642	23

School # 040:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	50	2
1	45	3
2	42	1
3	26	1
4	55	0
5	43	0
6	51	0
7	49	0
8	55	0
Total	416	7

School # 044:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	161	5
1	153	14
2	141	2
3	172	2
4	146	2
Total	773	25

School # 045

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	121	6
6	152	0
7	137	0
8	153	1
Total	563	7

School # 050:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	26	4
1	22	0
2	25	1
3	18	0
4	21	0
5	18	0
6	26	1
7	19	0
8	29	1
Total	204	7

School # 055:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	392	124
10	329	65
11	297	13
12	260	21
Total	1278	223

School # 060:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	215	18
1	218	33
2	176	3
Total	609	54

School # 061:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	237	3
4	201	5
5	216	2
Total	654	10

School # 062:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	199	5
7	213	1
8	215	1
Total	627	7

School # 065:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	194	2
1	178	24
2	199	4
3	177	2
4	183	1
Total	931	33

School # 066:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	179	0
6	205	0
7	210	0
8	190	0
Total	784	0

School # 070:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	217	16
10	155	14
11	135	10
12	148	0
Total	655	40

School # 080:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	23	1
1	18	1
2	18	0
3	12	0
4	15	0
5	14	0
6	21	0
7	19	0
8	17	0
Total	157	2

For Year 1997

Total System:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	821	50
1	883	138
2	876	24
3	828	6
4	890	10
5	831	9
6	844	5
7	882	8
8	851	17
9	713	569
10	677	143
11	549	49
12	566	25
Total	10211	753

School # 03: (Alternative Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	5	0
8	1	0
9	7	17
10	6	9
11	6	8
12	4	1
Total	29	35

School # 015:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	38	0
1	42	2
2	40	1
3	38	1
4	45	0
5	39	0
6	36	0
7	39	0
8	31	0
Total	348	4

School # 020:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	173	41
10	151	28
11	146	7
12	147	5
Total	617	81

School # 025:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	16	1
1	21	1
2	16	1
3	19	0
4	23	0
5	16	0
6	21	0
7	20	0
8	20	0
Total	172	3

School # 032

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	86	9
1	94	12
2	100	6
3	79	0
4	99	3
5	83	1
6	94	0
7	78	0
8	78	0
Total	791	31

School # 035:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	70	0
1	68	21
2	66	8
3	69	0
4	73	0
5	60	1
6	77	0
7	78	0
8	79	1
Total	640	31

School # 040:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	44	3
1	46	2
2	50	0
3	48	0
4	31	0
5	57	0
6	50	0
7	53	0
8	57	0
Total	436	5

School # 044:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	146	3
1	150	23
2	152	1
3	146	0
4	175	3
Total	769	30

School # 045

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	143	4
6	129	4
7	141	4
8	132	16
Total	545	28

School # 050:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	24	3
1	23	1
2	24	0
3	27	0
4	20	0
5	21	0
6	21	0
7	25	0
8	20	0
Total	205	4

School # 055:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	348	181
10	326	75
11	258	28
12	293	19
Total	1225	303

School # 060:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	190	16
1	220	45
2	215	4
Total	625	65

School # 061:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	178	4
4	224	4
5	198	2
Total	600	10

School # 062:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	209	1
7	205	2
8	203	0
Total	617	3

School # 065:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	184	15
1	188	30
2	194	2
3	204	1
4	184	0
Total	954	48

School # 066:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	198	0
6	188	0
7	216	1
8	207	0
Total	809	1

School # 070:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	185	30
10	191	31
11	135	6
12	122	0
Total	633	67

School # 072: (Special Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
10	3	0
11	4	0
Total	7	0

School # 080

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	23	0
1	31	1
2	19	1
3	20	0
4	16	0
5	16	1
6	19	0
7	22	1
8	23	0
Total	189	4

For Year 1998

Total System:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	883	53
1	891	114
2	922	25
3	905	7
4	845	10
5	914	5
6	840	20
7	855	18
8	897	0
9	805	242
10	711	92
11	651	36
12	523	29
Total	10642	651

School # 03: (Alternative Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	3	0
8	4	0
9	15	14
10	8	2
11	12	1
12	7	0
Total	49	17

School # 015:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	38	3
1	36	2
2	49	1
3	40	2
4	37	1
5	49	2
6	40	0
7	36	0
8	37	0
Total	362	11

School # 020:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	201	29
10	182	14
11	157	0
12	141	9
Total	681	52

School # 025:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	18	1
1	19	0
2	17	2
3	17	0
4	22	0
5	22	1
6	15	0
7	19	1
8	21	0
Total	170	5

School # 032

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	118	7
1	108	4
2	105	1
3	100	1
4	90	1
5	103	0
6	83	0
7	93	0
8	68	0
Total	868	14

School # 035:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	81	0
1	73	18
2	77	3
3	70	0
4	67	0
5	74	0
6	61	1
7	66	8
8	74	0
Total	643	30

School # 040:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	45	3
1	48	3
2	45	0
3	58	0
4	49	0
5	34	0
6	63	0
7	57	2
8	53	0
Total	452	8

School # 044:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	161	2
1	148	37
2	149	5
3	152	0
4	142	1
Total	752	45

School # 045

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	171	2
6	144	1
7	131	4
8	148	0
Total	594	7

School # 050:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	16	1
1	22	2
2	20	3
3	22	0
4	27	0
5	17	0
6	23	0
7	21	0
8	26	0
Total	194	6

School # 055:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	378	165
10	337	49
11	306	26
12	249	15
Total	1270	255

School # 060:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	198	16
1	202	35
2	215	8
Total	615	59

School # 061:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	230	4
4	186	6
5	232	0
Total	648	10

School # 062:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	179	18
7	203	2
8	223	0
Total	605	20

School # 065:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	185	20
1	208	12
2	213	0
3	194	0
4	205	1
Total	1005	33

School # 066:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	189	0
6	214	0
7	203	0
8	214	0
Total	820	0

School # 070:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	202	34
10	181	27
11	173	9
12	125	5
Total	681	75

School # 072: (Special Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	1	0
1	2	0
2	2	0
5	1	0
6	2	0
7	6	1
8	3	0
9	9	0
10	3	0
11	3	0
12	1	0
Total	33	1

School # 080

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	22	0
1	25	1
2	30	2
3	22	0
4	20	0
5	22	0
6	16	0
7	17	0
8	26	0
Total	200	3

For Year 1999

Total System:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	877	47
1	901	112
2	930	24
3	996	15
4	923	8
5	872	7
6	936	18
7	889	17
8	894	7
9	838	273
10	707	95
11	616	56
12	598	20
Total	10941	699

School # 03: (Alternative Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	3	0
8	13	0
9	15	22
10	6	7
11	6	2
12	3	2
Total	46	33

School # 015:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	48	2
1	37	0
2	40	0
3	50	0
4	42	0
5	38	1
6	43	0
7	29	0
8	38	0
Total	365	3

School # 020:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	227	40
10	183	16
11	164	2
12	132	4
Total	706	62

School # 025:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	18	1
1	12	1
2	17	0
3	20	0
4	15	0
5	23	0
6	25	0
7	19	0
8	17	0
Total	166	2

School # 032

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	100	8
1	115	7
2	108	1
3	113	1
4	99	1
5	89	2
Total	624	20

School # 034:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	107	0
7	88	0
8	91	0
Total	286	0

School # 035:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	53	0
1	83	15
2	77	5
3	76	0
4	78	0
5	68	2
6	73	2
7	68	4
8	67	0
Total	643	28

School # 040:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	48	3
1	42	3
2	53	0
3	49	0
4	47	0
5	55	0
6	41	1
7	62	2
8	57	0
Total	454	9

School # 044

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	131	1
1	161	39
2	140	1
3	154	4
4	148	3
Total	734	48

School # 045:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	132	1
6	171	1
7	159	0
8	141	7
Total	603	9

School # 050:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	22	5
1	21	3
2	25	3
3	23	0
4	20	1
5	29	0
6	19	0
7	24	0
8	18	0
Total	201	12

School # 055:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	374	155
10	315	37
11	279	38
12	296	11
Total	1264	241

School # 060:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	209	13
1	213	33
2	228	10
Total	650	56

School # 061:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	221	6
4	250	1
5	201	0
Total	672	7

School # 062:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	236	14
7	204	11
8	215	0
Total	655	25

School # 065:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	214	14
1	195	10
2	215	3
Total	624	27

School # 066:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	197	0
7	216	0
8	212	0
Total	625	0

School # 068:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	226	3
4	202	2
5	214	0
Total	642	5

School # 070

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	215	56
10	193	35
11	165	14
12	165	3
Total	738	108

School # 072 (Special Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
2	2	0
4	1	0
5	1	0
6	1	0
7	1	0
8	6	0
9	7	0
10	10	0
11	2	0
12	2	0
Total	33	0

School # 80

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	34	0
1	22	1
2	25	1
3	28	1
4	21	0
5	22	1
6	23	0
7	16	0
8	19	0
Total	210	4

For Year 2000

Total System:

School # 03: (Alternative Learning Center)

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	864	63
1	918	120
2	921	21
3	976	20
4	1001	11
5	957	2
6	887	10
7	967	11
8	905	18
9	914	164
10	779	87
11	624	25
12	591	4
Total	11304	556

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	5	0
8	10	0
9	19	14
10	10	1
11	6	1
12	8	0
Total	58	16

School # 015:

School # 020:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	44	4
1	45	3
2	46	1
3	38	2
4	46	1
5	43	0
6	37	0
7	49	0
8	32	0
Total	380	11

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	163	16
10	208	19
11	148	4
12	150	0
Total	669	39

School # 025:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	16	0
1	21	2
2	16	0
3	23	0
4	23	1
5	16	0
6	15	0
7	32	0
8	20	0
Total	182	3

School # 032

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	117	12
1	109	6
2	112	5
3	112	1
4	121	0
Total	571	24

School # 034:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	100	0
6	93	0
7	110	0
8	83	0
Total	386	0

School # 035:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	74	0
1	55	10
2	82	3
3	78	0
4	82	0
5	77	0
6	60	1
7	75	0
8	72	0
Total	655	14

School # 037:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
5	1	0
6	0	1
7	1	0
8	2	0
9	5	5
10	6	3
11	5	0
12	1	0
Total	21	9

School # 040

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	43	1
1	49	0
2	48	0
3	51	1
4	51	0
5	47	0
6	52	1
7	40	0
8	58	0
Total	439	3

School # 044:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	128	4
1	138	31
2	154	2
Total	420	37

School # 045:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	149	2
4	158	1
5	149	0
6	141	0
Total	597	3

School # 046:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
7	165	4
8	147	16
9	141	0
Total	453	20

School # 050:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	17	6
1	22	2
2	21	0
3	24	2
4	20	0
5	22	0
6	27	0
7	19	1
8	21	0
Total	193	11

School # 055:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	357	96
10	364	42
11	291	18
12	272	4
Total	1284	160

School # 060:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	199	13
1	215	47
2	214	9
Total	628	69

School # 061:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	240	10
4	223	4
5	244	2
Total	707	16

School # 062:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	208	7
7	243	6
8	226	2
Total	677	15

School # 065:

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	201	22
1	234	15
2	200	1
Total	635	38

School # 066

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
6	233	0
7	212	0
8	217	0
Total	662	0

School # 068

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
3	233	2
4	244	2
5	228	0
Total	705	4

School # 70

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
9	229	33
10	191	22
11	174	2
12	160	0
Total	754	57

School # 80

Grade	Students Promoted	Students Retained
K	25	1
1	30	4
2	28	0
3	28	0
4	33	2
5	30	0
6	21	0
7	16	0
8	17	0
Total	228	7

APPENDIX B

Letter To Superintendent

September 1, 2000

Mr. XXXX XXXXXX
XXXXXX County Schools
XXXX Street
XXXXXXXXXXXX, XX XXXXX

Dear Mx XXXXXX:

I am presently a teacher for the County School System, as well as a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. This fall I would like to conduct research within our system with the intention of acquiring valuable information that may be used to better serve our students.

My research proposal centers around the issue of grade level retention. Although my review of literature revealed a large body of research on the effects of retention on academic achievement, very few researchers have investigated the effects of retention on a child's self-esteem.

I would like to conduct open-ended interviews with students in the fifth- and sixth-grade who have been retained once. It is possible that I may interview parents, teachers, or the school guidance counselors to obtain supportive research data.

I am seeking your permission to communicate with students who have experienced nonpromotion and are currently enrolled in XXXXXX XXXXX schools. If permission is granted, I would propose to contact Xxx XXXXX and Xx XXXXX to obtain a list of students who might provide valuable insight into the feelings and reactions in regard to the effects of retention on their self-perceptions. Written consent will be secured prior to the onset of all interviews.

Please complete the attached permission form and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope I have provided. If you have any questions, you may reach me at xxx-xxxx. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Brenda S. Tweed

APPENDIX C

School System Permission Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR : Brenda S. Tweed

TITLE OF PROJECT : How is a Child's Perception of Self Affected by Retention?

Please place a check by one of the following statements and return this form in the envelope provided.

_____ I agree to allow Brenda S. Tweed to contact potential interview participants for a dissertation study centering around the effects of retention on a child's self-esteem.

_____ I do not agree to allow Brenda S. Tweed to contact potential interview participants for a dissertation study centering around the effects of retention on a child's self-esteem.

Signature of Superintendent _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

East Tennessee State University
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR : Brenda S. Tweed

TITLE OF PROJECT : How is a Child's Perception of Self Affected by Retention?

Dear Parent,

Each year parents and teachers make the very important decision to retain students in their present grade. I am interested in finding out how your child's retention experience affected his or her self-esteem, and what contributes to making grade retention effective or ineffective. I hope to interview all fifth- and sixth-grade students in your child's school who have previously been retained. I would like to find out what these students' opinions are about retention. They are, after all, the experts.

The interview will take anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour and a half, depending upon what your child would like to share. I will be asking very general questions during the interview. All information provided will remain strictly confidential, and your child's real name will not be used. I will be audiotaping my conversation with your child so that I may listen carefully to what your child has to say. A professional transcriptionist will transcribe all of our discussion.

By placing your signature below, as well as having your child sign, you are agreeing to have your child participate in a tape-recorded interview. Please sign the permission form attached below and return it to Xx. Xxxxxxx in the envelope provided. I will schedule the interviews during students' free periods or other convenient times at school. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Brenda S. Tweed at xxx-xxxx, (home), xxx-xxxx (Xxx Xxx Middle School) or Xxx Xxxx at XXXX at xxx-xxx-xxxx. This project has the support of the Superintendent and Board of Education, Xxxx, and Xxxx.

Thank you for your cooperation.

(Date)

(Signature of Student)

(Date)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Phone)

(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

Proposed Interview Questions for study of retention:

Introduction:

"Hi, I am Mrs. Tweed. I'm a teacher and I am also a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I'm studying about how being retained makes students feel about themselves. Today I'd like for you to share some of your thoughts and feelings about being retained. I'm going to be taping our conversation so that I can listen carefully to you, rather than worrying about writing everything down right now. I want you to feel free to tell me as much as you would like about the questions I will ask. I just want you to tell me everything you think and feel about being retained because how you feel about you is very important to me."

1.) "Let's start by you telling me all about yourself."

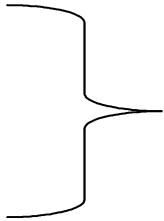
- Age
- Likes/dislikes
- Friends
- Family
- Hobbies

2.) "Tell me about school. . ."

- What do you do really well in school?
- What do you have trouble with?
- How do you feel about yourself as a student?
- How do you think others see you in school?
- Friends?
- Teachers? (tell me about -- Do you like them? Do they like you?)
- Parents/siblings?

3.) "Can you remember what it was like for you when you found out you were going to be retained?"

- Why were you retained?
- Whose decision was it? / Were you involved?
- Who told? When? What were you told?
- What grade?
- What worries or concerns did you have?
- What do you think about the teacher who retained you?



How did these make you feel?

4.) "Tell me how your parents felt about you being retained?"

- Did they discuss it with you?
- How did their opinions make you feel?

- 5.) "Did anyone ever ask you how you felt about being retained or what you thought?"
- Do differently?
 - Do the same?
- 6.) "When you found out that you were going to be retained, tell me how you think other people felt about you."
- parents
 - teachers
 - friends
 - siblings
- 7.) "Tell me how the way other people felt about you being retained made you feel about yourself."
- Parents
 - Teachers
 - Friends
 - Siblings
- 8.) "Do you feel differently now about the way they see you?" Explain.
- 9.) "Do you think you feel differently about yourself than you did before you were retained? Explain."
- Examples
 - Actions
- 10.) "Do you ever have anyone you can talk to and trust about how you feel?"
- Why can you trust them?
 - How do they make you feel?
- 11.) "Now that time has passed, tell me if you think being retained has been helpful in the way you feel about yourself."
- Changes? / Do differently?
 - Things that were positive, helpful
 - People

"Thank you for spending time with me today to help me with my school project. It was very nice to meet you. Have a great day."

APPENDIX F

Audit Agreement

MEMORANDUM

TO: Debby Bryan
FROM: Brenda Tweed
SUBJECT: Auditing Procedures for Research Project
DATE: April 5, 2001

I am glad you agreed on March 30 to proceed with the auditing of the research I am conducting for my doctoral dissertation. Thank you for your commitment to this project.

In reviewing available criteria on establishing trustworthiness, I have chosen to modify Edward S. Halpern's (1983) procedures for auditing naturalistic studies which is found in Appendix B of Guba and Lincoln's Naturalistic Inquiry (1985). After you establish familiarity with the audit trail components, I feel the following questions should be addressed:

1. Can the audibility of the data be confirmed? In other words, are the data complete, comprehensive, and useful? Can linkages be established?
2. Can confirmability be established? Are findings grounded in the data collected? To what degree is researcher bias evident in the findings?
3. Can dependability be established? Did purposeful sampling occur? Can working hypotheses be identified? Were the methodological decisions that occurred during the course of the research sound?
4. Can the credibility of the research project be established? In addition to referential adequacy, does evidence of triangulation and peer debriefing exist?

The audit trail components which I will be entrusting to you include: audio cassettes of the interviews, computer disks containing the transcriptions, hard copies of the transcriptions, and my journal (which contains field notes, peer debriefing notes, permission forms, and personal notes on the progression of my analyses) as well as chapter 4 of the dissertation.

Again, thank you for undertaking this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns you might have regarding the audit process.

APPENDIX G

Audit Findings

TO: Brenda Tweed
FROM: Debby Bryan
SUBJECT: Dissertation Audit Report
DATE: May 25, 2001

Please accept this auditor's letter of substantiation for inclusion in your doctoral dissertation. Using criteria as set forth in your memorandum dated April 5, 2001, I am aware that auditing procedures have been based on a modification of Halpern's (1983) procedures for auditing naturalistic studies found in Appendix B of Guba and Lincoln's Naturalistic Inquiry (1985). Using your original questions as my guideline, I submit the following:

1. The data were found to be complete, comprehensive and useful for the purpose of your study. Linkages were straightforwardly established. Therefore, the auditability of the data is hereby, confirmed.
2. Discussion with the researcher and examination of procedural information took place throughout the study. No evidence of researcher bias was found. Examination of raw data, discussion with the researcher, and review of document entries confirm objectivity on the part of the researcher. The findings are based on data collected and, are hereby, confirmed.
3. Dependability was established through research procedures applicable for a naturalistic study. The working hypothesis, sampling, and the methodological decision path was identifiable throughout the study. The process of inquiry and thoroughness of trustworthiness procedures hereby confirm the dependability of the study.
4. The credibility of the research project was established through confirmation of the use of data triangulation, including prolonged engagement with participants, relative documents, raw audio cassette recordings, field notes, and personal notes on the progression of researcher analyses. The credibility of the study is, hereby, confirmed.

Based on my observations and through progression of the auditing trail components, I attest that you have consistently maintained the highest possible standards, using professional ethics and integrity throughout your study. Thank you for allowing me to play a part in your contribution to this body of knowledge.

VITA
BRENDA SUE TWEED

Date of Birth: February 18, 1966

Place of Birth: Carmel, New York

Marital Status: Married

Education: Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee;
Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education
1992

Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee;
Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction,
1995

Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee;
Educational Specialist Degree in Supervision And Administration,
1996

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D.,
2001

Professional Experience: Teacher, Pigeon Forge Primary School;
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, 1992-1999

Teacher, Pigeon Forge Middle School;
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, 1999-present

Publications: Published, The Mailbox. Teacher Magazine

Honors and Awards: Pigeon Forge Primary School Teacher of the Year, 1997
B-97.5 Teacher of the Month, April, 1999
Sevier County K-4 Teacher of the Year, 2000
Pigeon Forge Middle School Teacher of the Year, 2000
Nominated for Disney Teaching Award, 2000
Member, Kappa Delta Pi National Honor Society in Education
Member, Gamma Beta Phi International Honor Society