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Retention Pathways for African American Males

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RETENTION PATHWAYS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

by

THADDEUS L. SHUBERT

(Under the Direction of Devon Jensen)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of a dropout prevention intervention on attitudes toward education among African American males in a rural alternative school in southeast Georgia as a means of understanding retention pathways for this population of students. The researcher approach to retention personified the slogan “Think Globally, Act Locally” by examining the nationwide dropout rate in the United States and implementing a dropout prevention program in a rural Georgia county. African American males have an alarmingly high attrition rate at the middle school, high school, and college levels and so research on how to retain these students is needed. Using a sample of 16 African American males enrolled in an alternative middle school, the study investigated the influence of the “Go to High School, Go to College” dropout prevention curriculum intervention on students’ attendance, behavior, and academic performance. This quasi-experimental study used a pre-test and post-test design, with subjects serving as their own control. Dependent variables included attendance, behavior, and academic performance. The descriptive statistics were compared for each tool to

determine changes in scoring before and after the intervention. The findings of this study affirm that early prevention measures are essential to changing an adolescent's perception of the importance of persisting beyond high school graduation to the university/college level. Students who learn to prioritize their academic pursuits in middle school are more prepared to overcome the academic and non-academic factor that led to attrition and to continue their education after high school graduation.

INDEX WORDS: African American male, Alternative school, Attrition, Graduation, Historically black colleges and universities, Incarceration, Mentoring, Persistence, Predominantly white institutions, Retention, Retention pathways, Retention programs, Socioeconomic status, Social mobility, Wage mobility

RETENTION PATHWAYS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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2014

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DEDICATION

This journey is a testament that the race is not given to the swift nor to the strong but to the one who endures until the end. I am standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me, because of their inspiration and commitment to education, I will stand a little taller, work a little harder, and my shoulder will hold up the ones who will follow me. To God be ALL the glory.

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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

“A mind is a terrible thing to waste.”

-United Negro College Fund, 1972

Following the civil rights movement, the United Negro College Fund’s (1972) campaign came to summarize for millions the importance of a college education as a means of uplifting the African American race. The organization’s famous quote became a recognizable part of American culture that is still used today to emphasize the necessity of improving the recruitment, academic progression, and graduation rates of African American students.

In the United States, a college degree is an invaluable economic asset. College graduates are more prepared to compete in the global market, have increased earning potential, and can access networking opportunities not available to those without a degree. A college education thus creates a context in which individuals have more opportunities for leadership experiences and thus greater social and educational mobility. In the 21st century, a college degree has become the standard for most entry-level positions.

A college education increases an individual’s lifetime earning potential, decreases their chance of living in the poverty, and provides access to a higher level of healthcare. College graduates can expect to earn 66% more than high school graduates over a typical work life of 40 years (Deardoff & Kupenda, 2011). African American males with college degrees earn an average of \$12,500 more annually than their counterparts with high

school diplomas (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Sixty-eight percent of gainfully employed college graduates have employer-provided health insurance, compared to 50% of high school graduates (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010).

Topic Background and Context

In light of this recognition of the importance for African American males to not only complete high school but also earn a college degree, this study focused on four central themes:

1. The importance of obtaining a college education.
2. The challenges of first-generation college students.
3. The high school dropout rate epidemic.
4. The role of the professional school counselor in Retention Pathways.

Retention programs at the secondary and college levels were developed to counteract the enormous number of students, particularly African American males from, dropping out before earning a high school diploma or college degree. According to Harper (2009), among all U.S. ethnic groups, African American males have the highest rate of student attrition after their freshman year of college. However, this achievement gap between African American males and all other ethnic groups can be better understood through a retrospective investigation of the foundation of student success at the secondary education levels.

Retention Pathways is an intervention strategy that creates and implements educational infrastructures with the goal of increasing the retention, progression, and graduation rates of African American males in K-16. Rooted in the overall education and

career planning process, Retention Pathways has been implemented in Georgia's private and government funded pre-K programs, after-school programs in grades K-12, and retention programs at the postsecondary level.

In high school classrooms nationally, African American males are among the highest percentage of dropouts and the lowest percentage of graduates. Fewer than 50% of all African American males in high school graduate with their cohort (Sommer & Dumont, 2011). Only 52% of African American males graduate from high school in four years. In comparison to 14% of Hispanics students and 5% of Caucasian student who dropped out of high school prior to earning a high school diploma. For many males who are not successful in the traditional setting, alternative education is an option that will allow them to beat the odds and earn a high school diploma. In relation to retention, there is a strong correlation between alternative education and dropout prevention (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Alternative schools in the U.S. were developed in the 1980s to address the needs of at-risk students who were not adequately served in the traditional school setting. These schools are designed to accommodate at-risk students in a non-traditional setting who are failing academically. Alternative schools are traditionally characterized by the following components: smaller classroom size, diverse curriculum, decision-making skills, and comprehensive guidance and parental involvement programs. The early movement focused on differentiated instruction and emerged from the need to provide American students with an emphasis on school choice, teacher preparation, graduation standards, and policies. Fifty-five percent of all American students were not graduating

from high school, and as a result, in October 1999 the National Center for Education Statistics (2000) called for changes in the educational system to meet the needs of students who were falling through the cracks and being left behind their more successful classmates.

Lange and Sletten (2002) found that alternative schools are ideal for this population because of their small size and because they provide an environment in which success strategies can be implemented for individual students. In addition to smaller school size, the key components of these alternative settings that help students achieve success are its lower teacher-to-student ratio and its greater focus on academic remediation. For many students who struggle in mainstream educational settings, issues such as truancy, suspension, and discipline all contribute to poor academic performance. In response to this cycle of failure, alternative schools offer a unique learning environment that can be more responsive to these particular students' academic needs and challenges.

At the postsecondary level, the University System of Georgia (USG) developed the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) in 2002 to increase the number of African American male who are recruited for, retained in, and graduated from colleges and universities in the USG system. In this university system, the initiative was implemented on 26 of 35 campuses statewide. The purpose of AAMI is to ensure that more males graduate from college and to increase their social and educational mobility, thereby, providing long-term benefits to both the students and society. In 2007, nearly 6.2 million young people were high school dropouts (Amurao, 2013). Every student who does not

complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity (Harper, 2009). The initiative responds to a national epidemic that only 35% of African American males graduate from college. As a result, the job market is saturated with under-qualified and unemployable men who are less likely to support themselves and their families (Mosely, 2009). It aims to ameliorate the social catastrophe of undereducated black men lacking the job skills, opportunities, and professional contacts that result in gainful employment and productive contributions to society.

According to Baum, Ma, and Payea (2010), only 57% of all first-time college students will earn their bachelor's degrees at a four-year institution. These researchers further indicated that although completion rates are higher at private not-for-profit (65%) and public four-year (55%) institutions than at private for-profit institutions (22%), nationally the average amount of time needed to complete an undergraduate degree has increased to six years. Moreover, regardless of the type of institution at which the student matriculates, there is a substantial gap in college students' completion rates based on their race, ethnicity, and gender.

Gender has the greatest impact on the gaps found within races and ethnicities. Black, Caucasian, and Latina females are more likely to complete their undergraduate degrees than their male counterparts. According to Baum, Ma, and Payea (2010), in 2009, Black women (21%) and Black men (18%) had a smaller gap of college completion rates than Caucasian males and females and Latino males and females. In 2009, U.S.-born Latino males and females had a higher educational attainment than Hispanic immigrants. However, the undergraduate college completion rates of Caucasian

females (25%) and males (26%) were the highest compared to all other ethnic groups (Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010). Black women graduated from college at a higher rate than black men. Yet as discussed above, students who complete a college degree earn a lifetime of social and economic benefits. Therefore, Black men are at a disadvantage to their female counterparts who are completing undergraduate and graduate degrees at a higher rate.

In order to address the issue of secondary and post-secondary dropout rates, educators would benefit from examining the student holistically during the middle school years. The benefit of this approach would be to get a better understanding of the foundation laid in grades K-5 to determine the best strategies to prepare the student to succeed academically in high school and college. At this point, preventive strategies can be implemented that are specifically designed to help the student overcome the academic and non-academic factors that will impede retention in post-secondary education.

Many institutions of higher education that are concerned about graduating African American males have begun to focus more attention on the recruitment, progression, and graduation of this population. Although public colleges and universities in Georgia have increased the number of African American males they graduate, they are still part of a larger national struggle to meet the educational needs of this population. As a result, African American males represent the highest percentage of college dropouts among all racial and ethnic groups (Hafer, 2007). As both a state and institutional initiative, AAMI seeks to have a positive impact in helping African American males graduate from college.

AAMI is an innovative holistic dropout prevention program designed to meet the academic as well as the nonacademic challenges African American males face on Georgia's college campuses. The goal of this intervention is to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of this population. The program is designed to serve as a road map for African American males who are capable of succeeding academically, but who need guidance in removing or understanding the many roadblocks that they will encounter in higher education. With the collaboration of university faculty, staff, and administrators, a learning community of support is created on each campus to promote student achievement (USG, n.d.).

Since African American males nationally represent the highest student population in K-16 to drop out of high school and college, retention programs were developed to ensure that these students have the academic and non-academic support to help them succeed and eventually graduate. However, it is unknown how retention programs at the middle school level will lay the foundation for the successful transition from middle school to high school and eventually to higher education. Therefore, this study was important because it addressed the issue of retention programs at the middle school level to increase student awareness of the importance of obtaining an education early in a student's academic path. The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of adolescent African American males about the importance of obtaining an education.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of everything researchers and educators know about secondary and post-secondary retention rates, strategies and prevention programs - especially the retention

rates of African American males - this ethnic and racial group in high schools and colleges/universities still has the highest attrition rates. Nationally and in the state of Georgia, K-16 institutions have invested millions of dollars in retention programs to address the disparity between the failure of African American males, African American females, Caucasians, and Latinos; yet, there have been limited positive outcomes (Osiero, 2012). This challenge of administrators to effectively address the plight of an identified at-risk segment of their student population has resulted in the inability of this population to earn high school diplomas, enter, persist, and graduate from college. Consequently, their likelihood to become productive members of society has been diminished.

During the past decade, retention programs have been identified as a possible solution in assisting African American males to overcome the academic and non-academic factors that prevent them from secondary and post-secondary student achievement. Go to High School, Go to College is a national program of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., that was created in 1922 as an intervention that concentrates on the importance of completing secondary and collegiate education as a road to future social, economic and professional advancement. The target audience is pre-adolescent and adolescent males because of their need for support as they make the transition into manhood. Members of the fraternity serve as positive role models for the participants as they develop mentor/mentee relationship. Retention programs such as the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum are a systematic series of intervention and strategies that were designed to increase a student's likelihood to graduate from college.

Furthermore, researchers have known that retention programs were created to support struggling students within the context of middle school, high school, and post-secondary settings.

Therefore, an examination of the foundation for learning has to be done of the student's early years in grades K-5. This retrospective probe will reveal the academic and non-academic challenges of the participants so that their educators can develop and implement interventions that will positively impact the perception of the importance of education. Therefore, the issue of college retention cannot be addressed during the student's freshman year but instead the issues that lead to attrition can be identified as early as in primary school.

This being said, there is little empirical evidence of studies implementing Retention Pathways in middle school. The Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was thought to inspire its participants' to progress from middle school to post-secondary education. This progression can be accomplished through an array of services that correlate with the academic and non-academic factors that contribute to the high attrition rates of African American males. These factors include experiences such as academic preparedness, social isolation, male-to-male mentorship, and cultural emergence.

The design of this study was to investigate the perceptions of middle school African American males regarding the value of education at an alternative school in rural Southeast Georgia. This study will also determine what impact the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum had on their attitudes about progressing through the educational

system. Finally, the assumption is that the participants will increase their motivation to obtain a high school diploma and college degree.

Research Hypotheses

This study surveyed middle school African American males currently enrolled in an alternative education program in a rural Southeast Georgia school district to determine the impact Retention Pathways had on their perception of their readiness to overcome the academic and non-academic obstacles to succeeding in secondary and higher education.

The following null hypotheses and hypotheses were utilized to guide this study:

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention does not significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education.

The following primary Research Hypotheses was utilized to guide this study:

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention does not significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education.

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention will significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education.

In addition, the following sub-questions will guide the primary question:

The intervention does not significantly impact the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement.

The intervention will significantly impact the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement.

The participants' perception about educators is not significantly altered as a result of the proposed intervention.

The participants' perception about educators will be significantly altered as a result of the proposed intervention.

There will be no significant difference in the perception among the participants and their engagement in the intervention program as it relates to the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models.

There will be a significant difference in the perception among the participants and their engagement in the intervention program as it relates to the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models.

Significance of the Study

Existing research on the characteristics of intervention programs on the retention, progression, and graduation rates of African American males is widely published; Tinto (1975) postulated students who socially integrate into the campus community increase their commitment to the institution and are more likely to graduate. Therefore, the impact these strategies may have on African American males in alternative middle schools who are transitioning to high school with intentions to advance to post-secondary education is limited. In addition, prevalent research on retention programs has been conducted from the perception of the collegiate scholars, not from the perception of middle school students in an alternative school setting. Thus, the perception of middle

school, alternative education, and African American males on the effectiveness on retention programs may serve to fill a gap in the literature. In addition, the researcher will identify intervention strategies deemed as effective in the Go to High School, Go to College Curriculum to help better understand the attributes needed in an alternative school setting.

Lastly, this study is designed to provide the school community and their stakeholders with strategies to change the student's negative perception of the importance of education. Administrators will be encouraged to support their staff members who propose preventive strategies that are designed to address their students from a cultural perspective as a means of changing their negative mindset about education. School Counselors will be encouraged to incorporate preventive interventions into the individual, small group, and classroom guidance session with student as a means of teaching skills for academic persistence and success. Educators will get a better understand of the need to address each student from a culturally sensitive perspective and to understand that all students, especially minority students have academic and non-academic factors that are unique from their Asian and Caucasian counterparts. Parents will benefit from this intervention because it will make them more aware of the advantages of enrolling their students in educational and extra-curricular activities/initiatives that empower their students from a culturally sensitive approach. Community stakeholders who serve as mentors and positive role models will acquire a greater appreciation for the impact that their volunteerism has on each student that they mentor. The overall benefit of this intervention is to empower the entire educational community about the benefits of early

intervention programs as a means of preparing students to further their post-secondary educational pursuits beginning in middle school.

This research study used a survey that was created using multiple assessment criteria deemed effective at measuring student readiness for addressing the academic and non-academic challenges of higher education. The findings can provide insight to school leaders pertaining to implementing a community outreach initiative in an alternative school. In addition, if applicable, the retention programs may aid in preparing alternative school students to make the transition to institutions of higher education.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

African American Males- African American Males who are also referred to as Black Americans or less commonly Afro-Americans, and formerly as American Negroes are citizens of the United States of America who have total or partial ancestry from any of the native populations of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Alternative School – Alternative Schools are an educational establishment with a Curriculum and methods that are nontraditional. These schools have a special Curriculum offering a more flexible program of study than a traditional school.

Attrition – Attrition is the reduction in a school's student population as a result of transfers and/or dropouts.

Graduation – Graduation is the action of conferring of an undergraduate academic degree.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Historically Black Colleges and Universities are institutions of higher education that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community in the United States, including public and private, two-year and four-year institutions, medical schools and community colleges.

Mentoring – Mentoring is a personal relationship between a more knowledgeable person who helps to guide a less experienced person through the college experience.

Persistence – Persistence is the characteristics of a student's continuation behavior that leads to graduation in higher education.

Predominantly White Institutions – Predominantly White Institutions are institutions of higher education where Caucasian students account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment.

Retention – Retention is the ability of an institution to keep a student enrolled from admission through graduation.

Retention - Retention on the primary, elementary, secondary level is the inability of a student to remain enrolled and to persist annually with his classmates from one grade level to the next as prescribed by the local, state, or national board of education.

Retention Pathways - The creation and implementation of Retention Pathways is a trend in increasing the retention, progression, and graduation rates of African American males in K-16. The concept has its roots in the over-all education and career planning process involving all students.

Retention Programs - Retention Programs are a systematic series of interventions and strategies that are designed to increase a student's likelihood to graduate from college.

Social Mobility – Social Mobility is the movement of individuals or families, and their change in income, and social standing position that may measure health status, literacy, or education to others.

Wage Mobility – Wage Mobility is the movement of individuals or families in relation to others as a result of their change in income.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

As with all research, there were limitations, delimitations, and assumptions inherent in this study. Although all 7th – 8.5th grade males enrolled in the district's alternative school had the opportunity to participate, there was limited control as to who opted not to participate in the survey. All 16 students (100%) who met the criteria of ethnicity and gender consented and participated in the study. I had no control of the participants. This voluntary study included parents and students who accepted the invitation. In addition, the survey results were limited by the possibility of response bias and/or lack of honesty about how well the student participants perceived that their preparedness to make the transition to the traditional learning environment.

Surveys that were not completed by student participants reduced the sample size and may have made the findings not generalizable to the Go to High School; Go to College Curriculum in Georgia. The assumption was that the objectives and successful practices identified determined how well the curriculum prepared the participants to

make a successful transition. Retention programs have proven effective for increasing the retention rates in higher education, but not for secondary education students, which may have been a limitation. The use of academic and non-academic criteria may have helped determine that middle school African American males and collegiate African American males are aligned with regards to common risk factors that lead to attrition.

The one group pretest-posttest design had the following threats to validity: history, maturation testing, instrumentation, sample size, and statistical regression. The researcher took the following preventive steps to eliminate threats to the research designs:

(1) History - a field trip to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia supported the curriculum by introducing the participants to college men currently enrolled in a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). This event took place between the pretest and posttest but had a positive impact on the participants because it gave many of the students a first time experience on a college campus; (2) Maturation Testing – to prevent the threat posed by a longitudinal study, the researcher selected a short time span of 4 ½ weeks that prevented the participants from growing older or internal states from changing; (3) Instrumentation – the researcher conducted a panel discussion to increase face validity with five ineligible middle school students (three black females, one white female and one white male) who did not meet the criteria for this study. The delimitations of this research were that the study confined itself to identified African American males in rural Southeast Georgia via the local school district and may not be generalized to programs outside of the alternative school setting and outside of the state of Georgia. A final delimitation was the researcher facilitated the curriculum that may

have resulted in a dual relationship. However, the researcher engaged the assistance of a master's level community counselor to minimize the researcher's impact on the findings. Thus, the researcher did not participate in the administration of the pretest or posttest.

Ethical Considerations

The major ethical issues in conducting quantitative research are informed consent, beneficence, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for privacy (Mora, 2010). To compensate for these conflicts, the researcher obtained written permission from the superintendent, principal, parents, and students. The informed consent advised the participants about the proposed study and their role, potential risks, and benefits to society. The researcher received approval to conduct the research from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board to ensure that everyone was treated humanely and no harm was done to the participants during the research process. To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the researcher did not use the participants' names to identify the completed surveys. Instead, each participant was assigned a random series of numbers to identify their survey instruments (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction to the topic of Retention Pathways, statement of the problem, overarching and supporting research hypotheses, significance of the study, definition of terms, and limitations, delimitation, and assumption of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of related literature on the importance of obtaining a college education, challenges of attrition for African American males in K-16, and research related to the problem being investigated. The quasi-experimental, pretest-

posttest design methodology and descriptive statistical procedures used to gather data for the study are presented in Chapter 3. The presentation of data analyses from the data collection and data sources are contained in Chapter 4. The summary of the study, findings, a discussion, and recommendations for further study are contained in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of the literature examines the importance of obtaining a college education by using the theoretical framework of Vincent Tinto's Student Departure theory (1988), George Kuh (2005) and A.W. Chickering's (2006) Student Engagement theories, and Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory (1986). The review investigated the struggles of first generation college students, specifically, the challenges of African American males in higher education and the establishment of the African American Male Initiative by the University System of Georgia. Additionally, high school dropout trends, the historical eras of alternative education in the U.S. and the emergence of high school dropout prevention programs are explored. The review of related literature also probes the role of the Professional School Counselor in alternative schools in relation to the ASCA National Model.

The primary theoretical approach focused on the works of Vincent Tinto. Tinto is considered by his followers as the Guru of Student Retention on the post-secondary level. He initiated the national dialogue on undergraduate retention and postulated that social integration is the key to increasing the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates that lead to higher graduations rates. The secondary theorist is Albert Bandura who is created with the Social Learning Theory. This theory compliments Tinto's philosophy because it posits that behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Since the college campus is a new environment for most college freshman, this approach attributes the success of the freshman during their transitional phase is

attributed to the student's ability to observe and adapt to the culture of the college campus. Another philosophical approach by George Kuh addresses the student engagement as the key component to the student's willingness to fully participate in every facet of student activities. Finally, Chickering examines the impact of identity development in seven vectors that address the emotional and psychological milestones that can occur during the freshman year. These four theoretical frameworks complement each other and collectively support the concept of student retention from a academic and non-academic approach.

This research explored the concept of retention, progression, and graduation programs as it relates to African American males and specifically of those who are in the middle school setting. In order to build a foundational understanding for this research topic, this literature review explored the relevant literature, theories, and research as it pertains to retention, progression, and graduation in light of the context of the African American secondary and post-secondary male student. Since education is closely aligned with the needs of community, the review explored the literature as it relates on how education is the means through which citizens can be socially and economically healthy.

There is a folk tale by an unknown author about a nomad traveler who enters a village and asked the elders "How are the children?" The purpose of this question is that if the elders replied the children are well and productive then the traveler would stay. However if the reply was the children are in a state of chaos, then the traveler would depart and continue to the next village. Much like the folk tale, the same is true in the American public school system because the high school dropout rate can determine the

wellness of a community, state, and nation. The high school graduation rate is a measurement of the health of American society and the skill level of its future labor force. According to Amurao (2013), the dropout rate in the U.S. is a real problem that is improving but at a slow pace. As a result, high school dropouts are more likely to commit crimes, become pregnant, and remain unemployed. In 2010, 5.1% of white students dropped out of high school compared to 8% of Black students, 15.1% of Hispanic students, 4.2% of Asian American students and 12.4% of American Indian/Alaska native students.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Georgia's population is 9,919,945 people and African Americans comprise 31.2% of that population. The percentage of Georgians age 25 and older that are high school graduates or higher is 84%, however, African American males 25 years and older only 95,387 have bachelor's degrees, 241,890 have high school diplomas and 110,046 have completed grades 9-12 but have no diplomas.

African American Males in Higher Education have the lowest retention, progression, and graduation rates of all ethnic groups in the U.S. As educational researchers though, we do not know how Retention Pathways for African American males in middle school will prepare them to succeed in high school and post-secondary education. Under this context, this study is important because retention programs in middle school may prepare African American males to succeed in high school and in college.

Retention Pathways

Retention Pathways is an intervention strategy that involves the creation and implementation of appropriate educational infrastructures as a trend in increasing the retention, progression, and graduation rates of African American males in K-16. The concept has its roots in the over-all education and career planning process involving all students. Retention Pathways are visible in the state of Georgia in private and government funded Pre-K programs, after-school programs in grades K-12, and retention programs on the college/university level.

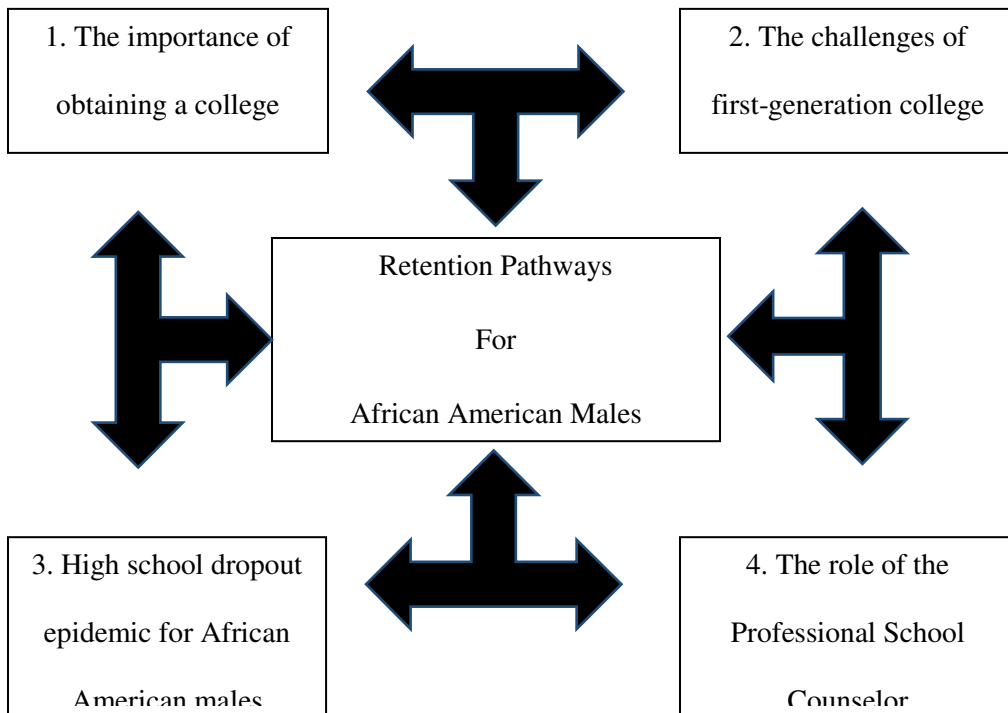


Figure 1. Retention pathways for African American males.

The Importance of Obtaining a College Education

The importance of obtaining a college education as a means to become successful in our society was examined through a theoretical review of student departure, student engagement, and social learning of Tinto (1988), Kuh (2005), Chickering (2006), and Bandura (1986). According to Fox (2012), the overall U.S. unemployment rate stayed at 8.2% in June 2012, while the rate among African Americans rose nearly a full percentage point. There was an increase in the percentage of African Americans looking for a job, rather than job losses. The unemployment rate for blacks rose to 14.4% from 13.6% in May 2012; however, the white and Hispanic unemployment rates remained at 7.4% and 11% respectively. The rate increase is attributed to more African Americans entering the workforce, not to job losses or more people out of work. The percentage of eligible African Americans holding or seeking a job rose in June 2012 to 62% from 61.3% in May. One approach is for researchers and educators to study the impact that Retention Pathways have on the African American male population in secondary and post-secondary settings as one measure of addressing these employment figures. Many middle school, high school, and college/university students have overcome the academic and non-academic barriers that have blocked their educational journeys; yet, without purposeful preventive interventions, they may have failed to succeed in their educational endeavors. Researchers further found that retention programs served as a preventive measure for students who aspired to use their education as a means of improving their social and wage mobility (Deardoff & Kupenda, 2011).

Social mobility is a secondary benefit of higher education. Social mobility is defined as the ability to move from one social class to a higher socioeconomic status. One example of social mobility is as a result of a postsecondary certification. For members of a lower social status, higher education is one vehicle for improving their social mobility (Graham, 2011). Although the goal of higher education is to inspire a new generation to learn for the love of learning, for lower socioeconomic groups and especially first generation college students, education is an attainable means of upward social mobility (Rose, 2011).

In today's modern capitalistic society, African American males need a minimum of an undergraduate degree to compete in the employment market for well-paying jobs. Historically, after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, African American males in the North and South first gained access to formal education that they had been denied previously. As a result, both private and public Georgia institutions like Morehouse, Spelman, Paine, Savannah State, Fort Valley State, and Morris Brown colleges were established to provide African American's the opportunity to gain undergraduate degrees in education, agriculture, and religion (Lynch, 2013). Affirmative Action during the civil rights movement created employment, healthcare, and educational opportunities for all minorities. This legislation gave minorities access to Predominantly White Institutions in the U.S. In January 1961, the University of Georgia desegregated and enrolled Charlayne Hunt Gault and Hamilton E. Holmes as the first African American undergraduate students (Mosely, 2009).

Although leadership development, social, and educational mobility are beneficial for all demographic groups, many institutions of higher learning are struggling to enroll, retain, and graduate African American males from two-year and four-year colleges, and universities nationally (Osiero, 2012). Retention Pathways beginning at the middle school level may be an effective intervention and foundation for teaching African American males the importance of completing their high school education and preparing them to succeed in higher education.

Foundational Theories of Retention

According to Strayhorn (2008), students who succeed in the college environment were those who had a great deal of support from their families, peers, mentors, and community stakeholders. Theoretically speaking, the foundation is based on the eclectic approach to student achievement based on the research of Tinto, Kuh, Chickering, and Bandura.

Tinto

The early theories of student retention, progression, and graduation evolved from the work of Vincent Tinto (1998). At the time of this writing, Tinto is currently employed at Syracuse University and is internationally known as the guru of college retention because of the groundbreaking work that he has completed in the field of higher education. Tinto's theory of college retention has been used to closely examine the principles of student departure from the perspective of intellectual and social isolation/displacement (Tinto, 1998).

Tinto coined the phrase “student departure” to replace the concept of college dropout. The origin of student departure is recognized through two forms: individual and institutional. Individual departure is described as the challenges of academic difficulty, adjustment, and commitment (Tinto, 2003). When a student is not able to meet or exceed the institution’s minimum standard of academic achievement, the consequence could involve the student being forced to leave school. It is usually attributed to limited academic skills, poor preparation, or weak study habits. This unsatisfactory performance can manifest itself in the voluntary or involuntary withdrawal of the student from school. This process accounts for 20% to 30% of the nation’s students who do not earn an undergraduate degree (Tinto, 2003).

Tinto’s close examination of the departure of students during their first year of college revealed that they had an inability to adjust to the academic and social life of higher education. The successful transition from secondary to post-secondary is the test of tenacity that will be determined within the first six weeks of matriculation. Those students who are ill prepared to meet the academic and social adjustments required of higher learning can become overwhelmed (Tinto, 2003). When students feel overwhelmed, this stress can cause students to underperform.

Although some students enter college inadequately prepared to meet the academic and social transition involved, others are better adjusted but are not able to adapt to the situations that they face on the college campus. Those students who are not easily adaptive to their new environment and to the cultures of the college campus are equally

in danger of departure. Their reasons are not because they are academically deficient but because they are lacking the essential social skills (Tinto, 2003).

Bandura

Bandura (1986) posited that a reconceptualized individual is self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating. This stance was in opposition to the established philosophy that humans are governed by outside forces. This theory conceptualized the triadic reciprocity, which recognized the connections among human behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological events, and of reciprocal determinism that governed the causal relations between such factors. An example of Bandura's theory can be observed with the academic and non-academic factors that influence college retention, such as high school coursework and social isolation during the freshman year of college. Bandura's emphasis on the capacity of agents to self-organize and self-regulate would eventually emerge into his later work on self-efficacy.

Another characteristic of students who depart from school is the lack of goals and commitment to completing the program of study. Every student enrolls in college with his or her own goals in mind. For those students who are not committed to completing their college degrees, their personal goals are not compatible with the goals of the institution. For many students, attending college is a social release from their home lives or other environments; therefore, obtaining a college degree is not their ultimate goal. Their intention is to attend college for a short period of time and then depart before graduation. Voluntary and involuntary departures from college are the result of a lack of

commitment that is required related to the effort needed to complete a program of study (Tinto, 2003).

Kuh

In addition to Tinto and Bandura, George Kuh (2009) is revered as an authority in the field of student engagement. Student engagement is defined as the amount of time and energy that a student dedicates to the collegiate experience inside and outside of the classroom setting. Like Tinto, Kuh's concentration is primarily on the social as well as academic involvement of the student body including the resources that the institution dedicates to developing support systems that are designed to promote the retention, progression, and graduation of its student body. Therefore, Kuh defined student engagement as the relationship between the institution and the student. The institution is expected to provide the appropriate resources and support systems that will compel student success and achievement.

Chickering

Like Tinto, Bandura and Kuh, a fourth theoretical approach emerged to address student retention and engagement. Chickering and Gamson (1987) posited that the best formula for addressing the lack of undergraduate recruitment, progression, and graduate rates was the implementation of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. In this realm, the institution should:

- 1) encourage student-faculty contact;
- 2) encourage cooperation among students;
- 3) encourage active learning;

- 4) give prompt feedback;
- 5) emphasize time on task;
- 6) communicate high expectations; and
- 7) respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

The foundation for this movement was to develop professional relationships between the educator and the student that would serve as a support system throughout the student's undergraduate years. In order to effectively remove the academic and non-academic barrier for many college students, the institution has to be an advocate for student achievement and creators of learning communities that are based on these seven principles.

The Academic and Non-Academic Factors That Influence College Retention

Researchers have posited that in addition to the academic factors that contribute to the high attrition rates of college students, there are also non-academic factors that negatively influence student achievement. College retention is a major issue that negatively impacts the daily operations of colleges and universities nationwide. When a college student does not continue beyond the first year of college, the cost to the institution can be astronomical (Tinto, 1998). In contrast, the expense of recruiting new students far outweighs the cost benefits of retaining those who are leaving school before graduation for both academic and non-academic reasons. Sutton and Sankar (2011) asserted that poor academic advising and lack of career counseling were two critical factors that students listed as major obstacles to retention during their freshman experience.

Additionally, the struggle of college freshman attrition dominates the focus of faculty and staff members on the university campus worldwide. Clark and Cundiff (2011) stated that 27% of college freshman do not continue to take classes for a second year and only 40% of first time students earn a college degree within six years. The academic factors that predict academic failure are attributed to the lack of preparation for college level coursework in high school. Students thought that they did not receive the high level of concentration in the academic areas that served as the foundation for their college experience. As a result, their chances of succeeding on the college level were minimized.

Academic Challenges and Support Systems

The inability of a student to adapt to the academic rigors in higher education places them at risk for academic failure. The role of the academic advisor is imperative to guiding the freshman through the first-year experience. Academic advisement is important because it serves as a cohesive bond between the university and the student. The result of a positive advisor-advisee relationship can be higher grades, greater retention, and increased graduation rates. Some of the benefits to academic advisement of the student include: greater knowledge of course structure, mentoring experience, internship possibilities, and career opportunities (Clark & Cundiff, 2011).

In addition to the academic factors that impact student retention in higher education, socioeconomic level, family generation with college background and social support system are three non-academic factors that influenced academic success. Students who possess the ability to value education and the drive to learn in the academic

areas are academically motivated. Academic potential does not only determine this character trait but also by the cultural and psychosocial factors that predict academic achievement (Sommer & Dumont, 2011).

Subsequently, the factor that had the greatest impact on student retention was the perception of student support. Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, and Pugh (2011) stated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for minority students, an indicator of both academic motivation and success, was usually provided by a faculty member. Especially in the African American and Hispanic male population, there is a need for mentoring programs to ensure retention.

Furthermore, first generation college students are more likely than their counterparts to drop out of school. Over 62.1% of first generation college students were unsuccessful at attaining a college degree within eight years. Likewise, disadvantaged students have a higher attrition rate and a lower graduation rate than more affluent students. This disparity is attributed to their inability to adjust to the culture of university life and to rise to the challenge of academic requirements (Sommer & Dumont, 2011).

Non-academic Factors

In addition to the academic factors that negatively influence college retention, the social and financial dynamics also play a major role in student departure. The social aspects of college life include the integration of the student into the culture of the campus. This reaches far beyond the classroom and encompasses the student's ability to establish personal bonds with the institution and other members of the college. This can take place when a student joins academic or extracurricular organizations, thereby

establishing a personal relationship with fellow members of the faculty, staff, and student body (Tinto, 1998).

Incongruence occurs when the student has not established a personal connection with the campus or the members of the college community. The result of this incongruence is social isolation and the absence of intellectual compatibility. As a result of a void of connectedness to the college community, there is a need for the institution to identify strategies to develop an effective retention program for those students who are in danger of departure (Tinto, 1998).

Overcoming Failure and Departure

The initial step of the institution is to identify students who are at “high risk” of departure. Then the next step is to assess what the institution can do to overcome the incongruence that has negatively impacted that student’s college experience and makes them more likely to need academic or social remediation. Finally, institutional services will be accessible to meet the needs of the students and reduce the likelihood of student failure and departure (Tinto, 2003).

As all learning communities on college campuses are varied in their approaches to retention programs for high-risk students, there is one commonality after students are identified as being in need of a retention program in that services should be provided by the institution. As an intervention, members of the institution’s team will begin to assess the need of the students through commitment to aiding the student who is not experiencing academic and social success. After deficiencies are discovered that render

the student isolated from the college culture, a systematic approach is needed to compensate for this feeling of disconnectedness (Tinto, Love, & Russo, 1993).

The institutional commitment consists of reconnection to the educational, social, and intellectual goals of the student and the college. Every institution has a level of educational excellence that distinguishes them from other colleges and universities. When developing retention programs, the institution's focus should not only be on the academic reputation of the college, but also on the impact toward the social and institutional community. The mission of these institutions is to the academic success of each student and to proactively aid their students with the remedial, tutorial, and mentoring tools to accomplish their goal of obtaining a college degree (Tinto, 1998).

Retention Programs

Effective retention programs are also committed to the development of a communal environment where students feel connected and valuable. The programs that experience the greatest amount of success are those that have students, faculty, and staff members who go to the limits to establish, develop, and nurture personal bonds among each member in the academic community. This bond is not per chance, but the result of an orchestrated effort of taking a campus of individuals and making them a community (Tinto & Froh, 1992).

In order for the institution to take student retention seriously, the first-year experience has to be restructured to better align with retention theory. As a key component of this effort, the educational settings' focus has to be redirected to building productive relationships between the student that involves faculty members as a part of

the community that can help guide and direct the student during the transitional first year. The result of this effort will be the revamping of the character of the college that focuses on the educational, intellectual, and social components of every student (Tinto, 2003).

The role of the institution is to expect success for every student and to provide each student with its expectations for academic success within their culture. Once the student understands and accepts that the institution is invested in his or her academic endeavors, then there must be the provision of academic assistance for students who struggle to meet the academic goals of the college. Students who are actively involved in learning and are an invaluable member of the learning community are more likely to stay focused and remain in school until graduation (Tinto, 2003).

Campus Culture

The current trend in higher education is to incorporate freshman seminar courses into the curriculum as a retention strategy. Although this course imparts valuable academic, social, and intellectual strategies for the student to use during their college career, it is the faculty and staff members who teach the courses that have the greatest impact on students. Since this add-on course is not intricately incorporated into the main course of the academic life of these institutions, it is expected to be a one shot cure to retention instead of a continual treatment or strategy (Tinto, 1993).

The first step to reorganizing the campus culture is to systematically redefine the role of the faculty member as a learner and not just a lecturer. Traditionally, professors, instructors, and staff members on the college campus have been restricted by their roles in their respective disciplinary areas. Conversely, peer groups facilitated by faculty

members ideally result in effective learning communities. The result will be students and faculty who are connected to the learning process in more areas than just academic subject matters (Tinto & Froh, 1992).

As the population on college campuses is becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, sexual preference, and socioeconomic status, first generation students are in need of unique institutional support. This population is more likely to have obligations outside of the college experience such as families and employment. They are older than traditional students and less likely to receive financial support from their family (Tinto, 2003).

The key component to adjusting socially to the college experience is the development of a harmonious relationship between the student and the external environment. This collaborative effort can be measured in the areas of self-esteem building, stress reduction, and academic management. Students who are capable of balancing the demands of their university with their personal needs are more likely than not to succeed academically during the first year of college (Sommer & Dumont, 2011).

Sebold (2008) posited that student engagement with extra-curricular activities on the college campus is a strong indicator of the student's likelihood to retain and graduate. The more involved the student becomes in the social and cultural aspects of the campus experience, consequently, the more likely the freshman will be retained. The challenge to the university becomes the development of the most effective and efficient means of communicating the availability of extra-curricular engagement opportunities to the student body. Although many campuses have a plethora of organizations and activities,

if students are not aware of the programs, then they cannot take advantage of them. An effective strategy for the university and freshman is through the effective use of technology via e-mail, social networking, blogging, and text messaging to communicate with the intended audience.

For this purpose of bridging the communication gap between the student and the institution, social integration (Jones, 2010) and institutional commitment have a great impact on student retention. When the student and the university are academically and non-academically synchronized, retention can be achieved congruently. Social integration and institutional commitment are methods that can be used to contradict and eliminate the psychosocial issues that result in social isolation (Petersen, Louw, & Dumont, 2009).

Institutional Integration

Tinto's interactionist theory of college student departure describes the negative reaction that occurs when students do not engage in the formal or informal cultures of the university, and as a result, they do not fit into any aspect of campus life. Similarly, as a student socially integrates into campus activities, the result is the development of an alliance with the school. Subsequently, a support system of peers and faculty is fostered (Jones, 2010).

To promote student retention among college freshmen, academic and social integration programs are designed to help these students assimilate into the first-year college experience. These programs address the freshman orientation dilemma by the use of first-year seminars, service learning, and learning communities. The goal of these

approaches is to help develop students who are not only scholars, but also leaders who can take the lessons taught in class and apply them to the community while developing networks for social and academic advancement. Accordingly, when students feel like valuable parts of the institutional community both academically and socially, they are less likely to depart (Clark & Cundiff, 2011).

Tinto's model of student departure from institutions of higher education set the framework for defining how the academic and social systems of an institution work both independently and collectively to encourage a student to complete their program of study. Consequently, these relationships reduce the opportunity for a student to remain disconnected from the social and intellectual communities of the institution and increase the possibility for graduation. To reduce student departure, the student's academic, personal/social, and career needs must be addressed.

For this purpose, academic and social integration programs are believed to increase the chances of student satisfaction. As a result, the student develops an alliance with the institution that is characterized by academic excellence, student engagement, and perseverance. Student satisfaction is also a predictor of the overall interaction between the students, peers, and faculty. Overall, the more engaged the student becomes, the more likely they are to continue beyond their first year. Student engagement is defined by the effort, interest, and time that the student dedicates to the educational experience inside and outside of the learning environment as a member of the higher education institution (CCI Research, Inc., 2009).

First-Generation College Students

Lynch (2013) postulated that students who do not have parents with college degrees are trailblazers because they are first generation college students. The assumption is that a college degree will enable the graduate to earn more money, live more comfortably, and enjoy a better quality of life than their parents and grandparents. However, there is a disadvantage when parents may lack the knowledge of the college lifestyle and may not be equipped to guide their children from personal experience.

One illustration of the academic and social integration program is TRIO Programs that were developed in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson to help high-risk students to enroll and complete college. The TRIO Programs include Talent Search, Education Opportunity Centers, Upward Bound College-prep programs, and the Ronald E. McNair Post baccalaureate programs. The purpose of this federal initiative was to identify disadvantaged high school students who were in need of additional support systems to help them prepare and excel in their educational goals. This was accomplished by providing test taking strategies and skills for taking standardized college admission exams (Graham, 2011).

Subsequently, after the completion of the junior year in high school, participants and their parent/guardians were trained to complete financial aid forms through workshops. Equally important, the students were taught the steps to apply for scholarships, grants, and loans to help offset the cost of their education. They were provided with experienced financial aid counselors to help them understand the impact of their family income and the best practices to ensure that they received the money that was

needed to pay for college. Many of the students who came from economically disadvantaged families or who were first generation college students had parents who had not completed applications (Woolsey & Shepler, 2012).

Recruitment, progression, and graduation is the focus for many institutions of higher education who are failing to graduate African American males because of a disparity in the school's recruitment of this population and high attrition rates. Although public colleges and universities in Georgia have increased the number of African American males who are graduating, throughout the country postsecondary institutions are challenged with effectively meeting the needs of this student population. As a result, African American males represent a high percentage of college dropouts among all racial and ethnic groups.

The Challenges of African American Males in Higher Education

The low graduation rate of African American males in higher education is not only attributed to a lack of financial resources, a lack of secondary education preparation, and social isolation on the college campus but also due to the lack of mentoring relationships with faculty members. The substandard graduation rate is evident nationwide in high-ranking universities, liberal arts colleges, flagship state universities, and historically black colleges, and universities. In each of these learning communities, black women (2:1) have completed their undergraduate degrees at a higher rate than black men. Jointly, nationwide blacks are only graduating at a 43% rate in comparison to a 63% rate for white students (Mosely, 2009).

In America's high-ranking institutions, Harvard University (95%), Amherst College (94%), and Princeton University (94%) have the highest black student graduation rates. This can be attributed to their more strenuous admission requirement that serve as a gatekeeper for underprepared freshmen. These institutions have developed campus climates that are nurturing environments for black students. In other words, these institution's higher retention and graduation rates are the result of strict admission policies in addition to orientation programs that are designed to address the unique social and academic obstacles that these students will face. Secondly, the establishment of retention programs that offer academic and non-academic supports are fundamental to the success of this population (Harper, 2006).

The rising cost of attending college and the lack of financial aid is an additional obstacle that college students have identified as a pressure that led them to drop out of college before earning a degree. Although Ivy League institutions like Princeton have very generous financial aid programs to assist students from low-income families, 69% of non-returning African American students listed a lack of money as the reason they did not complete their studies (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). For struggling black families, rising tuition cost, books, room, and board as well as travel, and personal expenses have forced minority students to leave college and return to the work force to help support their families.

Similarly, the graduation rate of black students in America's liberal arts colleges is also lower than the national average of 63% for Caucasian students. From 1998-2006, the graduation rate of black students declined from 93% to 81% at Haverford College in

Pennsylvania. This trend is consistent with the Georgetown University (0%), University of Virginia (0%), and Tufts University (-2%) that have shown no growth or recently declined in its graduation rates. Although Oberlin, Davidson, and Trinity are examples of liberal arts colleges that have improved their graduation rates by at least 10 percentage points over the past six years, the black students' graduation rates are showing a decline at Vassar College, and Carleton College (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010).

Finally, a comparison at the nation's Flagship State Universities revealed these institutions as the leaders in successful graduation rates for black students. America's state colleges and universities have traditionally educated 75% of the nation's black students (Strayhorn & DaVita, 2010). Unlike the University of Michigan that places great efforts to recruit students from other states to their institution, "academically average" black students largely attend state institutions from their respective states. Likewise, the University of Wisconsin has a partnership with the Chicago Public Schools to recruit high achieving blacks to attend their school.

In contrast to the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Hampshire that are graduating students at a rate of 60% or higher, the District of Columbia, Alaska, South Dakota, North Dakota, New Mexico, and Nevada have graduation rates of 36% or lower for the same population. North Carolina at Chapel Hill (87%) is an example of a flagship state school that has far exceeded the national average. State Universities are the leading institutions in successfully graduating black students.

Although Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to educate students of African descent, these institutions have a lower graduation rate

than higher-ranking universities, liberal arts colleges, and state universities. These institutions are graduating less than 43% of their black students. Accordingly, 66% of all students enrolled at HBCUs do not earn a college degree (Hudley et al., 2009). This disparity is contributed to the financial hardship that college places on low income families, a lack of academic preparation prior to entering college, and low admissions policies, and lenient application requirements (Hudley et al., 2009).

The challenge for African American males is consistent in high-ranking institutions to historically black colleges and universities where this population is graduating at a much lower rate than black females and their Caucasian counterparts. In the state of Georgia, both private, and state-funded colleges, and universities are faced with the challenge of how to assist their non-minority male population to succeed in higher education. This level of success is defined by the completion of an undergraduate degree. The consensus nationwide and across the state of Georgia has been to develop recruiting and retention programs that will offer both academic and non-academic support systems for these students (Harper, 2009).

As a means of developing a support system for college students, retention programs on the secondary and college level were developed to counteract the enormous number of students who were dropping out before earning a high school diploma or college degree. Of all ethnic groups in the United States of America, African American males have the highest rate of student attrition after the freshman year of college. According to NAACP, \$70 billion is allocated annually to fund incarcerations in our country. Since state supported P-12 schools, colleges, and universities are funded through

the same general fund as the penal system, \$9 out of \$10 is earmarked for the penal system that results in less money being available to fund public education.

The African American Male Initiative (AAMI)

AAMI is an innovative holistic dropout prevention program that was designed to meet the academic as well as the nonacademic factors that challenge African American males on Georgia's college campuses. The goal of this intervention is to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of this population. The program is designed to serve as a road map not only for African American males who are capable of succeeding academically but also those who need guidance to remove the many road blocks that they will encounter in higher education. With the collaboration of university faculty, staff, and administrators, a learning community of support is created on each campus to guarantee student achievement (USG, n.d.).

In Georgia, only 27.5% of the total population of residents over the age of 25 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher in 2007-2011. As a result of the needs of the African American male population who has the highest attrition rate of all ethnic and racial groups, the University System of Georgia (USG) developed the African American Male Initiative (AAMI). This initiative was in response to the challenge of removing the African American male from the bottom of all ethnic and racial groups in regard to retention, persistence, and graduation rates. The goal of this program is to increase the university's graduation rates while improving the state's and nation's degrees conferred to black men (Hafer, 2007).

The goal of the AAMI is to address the low level of recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of black males within the university system of Georgia. Since this is a national dilemma that plagues the arena of higher education on all levels, Georgia devised a program that would close the achievement gap between black men and black women within the 35 institutions, and later close the gap between black men, and all other ethnic groups. The program is a preventive initiative that targets the black male and provides an intervention program that will expand through to college graduation. At its core, the intended outcome will be to prepare its alumnus to compete in a global society with the educational background to become a productive citizen.

The University System of Georgia (n.d.) and the Board of Regents commenced the African American Male Initiative with the intention of guiding young men through the college experience while focusing their attention on the attainment of a college degree. This effort was threefold: recruitment, retention, and graduation. The premise of this proposal is that African American men are capable of success as scholars if given the tools to maneuver through the college experience.

Consequently, the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of African American males have increased, and the gap between the other ethnic, sex, and racial groups is closing. Since 2002, an additional 11,569 black males have enrolled. This is a 121.66% increase among first-time, full-time freshmen. The institution and system-wide retention rates have increased to 3,018 (77.17%). In terms of the increase of the number of degrees conferred, African American males have increased from the 2002 levels to

1,938 graduates. This is an increase of 644 undergraduate degrees that were awarded to members of this population (Hudley et al., 2009).

According to Hafer (2007), there are two different types of approaches to retention: institution-specific retention and system-wide retention. Institution-specific retention focuses on retaining students retained within the same institution, as opposed to system-wide retention that focuses on students who remained enrolled at one of the 35 USG's schools. As a result over a four-year period, there was a 10% increase in the graduation rate. In an effort to improve the outcome of African American males in USG, the enrollment was increased by 24.5% from 2002 (17,068) to 2007 (21,249) (USG, 2012).

Although many students lack the financial resources, academic foundation, and social skills to succeed when they arrive as college freshmen, given a roadmap for success, career mentors, academic advisement, and social training, a nurturing learning experience can evolve during the college experience. Georgia's Board of Regents acknowledged that in order for this at-risk population to close the graduation gap between black females and all other groups, a framework was needed for successful transition during the freshman year. The challenge of this effort was to meet the needs of the African American male population by addressing the issues of recruitment, retention, and graduation (USG, n.d.).

High School Dropout Epidemic among African American Males

In high school classrooms nationally, African American males are among the highest percentage of dropouts and the lowest percentage of graduates. In fact, less than

50% of all African American males in high school graduate with their cohort (Lange & Sletten, 2002). As a result, they are in danger of turning to illegal means to provide the basic necessities for themselves and their family. For many males who are not successful in the traditional setting, alternative education is an option that will allow them to earn a high school diploma and beat the odds of failure or becoming another negative statistic. Due to the use of differentiated instruction, smaller student populations, and concentration on academic and social interventions, there is a strong correlation between alternative education and dropout prevention (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

In the United States, 7000 students drop out of high school annually without earning a high school diploma. An estimated one high school student drops out every nine minutes (Guerin & Denti, 1999). Those students who drop out are more likely to become dependent on the nation's social system because they are unemployed, single parents, or uninsured. If these students do not return to school to earn their diploma, their lifetime earning potential could be negatively impacted. Over a lifetime, high school dropouts will earn an estimated \$260,000.00 less than a college graduate, and pay \$60,000.00 less in local, state, or federal taxes.

Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status also play a major role in the disparity between those who attain a high school diploma and those who do not (Mosely, 2009). Within the African American race, females are 14% more likely to graduate than their male counterparts. Forty-five percent of African Americans will graduate in four years with their co-hort. In contrast with 78% of Caucasian students who graduate, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have a 50% chance of graduating.

In order to contradict the negative stereotypes that plague this population nationally, strategies to increase the graduation rates of African American males from high school were implemented. It was advised that mentor relationships be developed for first-generation college bound students with teachers who share common interest. Academically, it was recommended that more strenuous college level courses be included in the high school course of study to prepare students for higher education. Lastly, parents and students were encouraged to begin planning to handle the financial burden of paying for a college education by participating in financial aid seminars and workshops. The goal of these strategies is to collaborate with the school, community, and home to create an alliance of stakeholders who are fully vested in the African American male's success as a high school graduate as he prepares to transition to post-secondary education.

There are challenges that all first generation college students face. However, the African American males face unique challenges compared with other ethnicities. Retention programs for African American males in alternative education will prepare them to face the unique challenges that they will face in college, so this proposed study is important because retention programs in alternative middle schools may prepare African American males to succeed in college.

High School Dropout Prevention Programs

President Barack Obama has proposed that the high school graduation initiative and advanced placement programs be consolidated into a new federally funded program called College Pathways high school program. In conjunction with the existing dropout

prevention programs under the State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), funds will be allocated to fund middle school and high school dropout prevention programs. The focus of these programs will be dropout prevention and reentry strategies (Georgia Department of Education, 2010)

Harper (2006) addressed the challenges that African American males in higher education experience commence in the K-12 setting. The experience in K-12 lays the educational foundation for this population and explains the stereotypes and obstacles that emerge and are prevalent in the minds of males about the relevancy of education in their lives.

The oldest of all Black Greek-letter organizations, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., established the Go to High School, Go to College initiative in 1922. The purpose of this national program is to encourage young African Americans, especially male, to graduate from high school and pursue a college education. With an emphasis on manly deeds, scholarship, and love for all mankind, Alpha men are committed to giving back to the community in the form of community service projects. This approach to dropout prevention focuses on matching middle school and high school students with college educated men who are leaders in their local communities to serve as role models and mentors. There are undergraduate and graduate chapters of Alpha in all 50 states and internationally that uses this preventive intervention in their local districts (Wesley, 1981).

The intervention was the Go to High School, Go to College program. The current study appears to be one of the first to assess the program's effects on alternative middle

school students in a rural southeast Georgia school district. While a number of recent studies have examined the impact of retention interventions on student achievement, relatively few have adopted experimental or quasi-experimental designs to determine their effectiveness in changing student perception. The underlying premise is that if educators can create more positive images about education, this student population can be retained. The current study addressed this gap in the literature by evaluating the impact of a modified version of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum on a group of middle school students.

Go to High School, Go to College uses a curriculum that focuses on teaching their participants the importance of obtaining a college education while guiding them through the pitfall and challenges that they will face during their journey to academic and social mobility. The program focuses on tutoring, decision-making, and learning. As productive members of society, each mentor and mentee develops a professional relationship that is nurtured as the teen learns more about themselves and how to function in society (Wesley, 1981).

The Origin of the Alternative Education Movement in the United States

The focus of the alternative education Movement shifted to meeting the needs of at-risk students in the 1980s. The early movement focused on differentiation and emerged from the necessity to provide American students with a reformation of school choice, teacher preparation, graduation standards, and policies. Five percent of all American students were not graduating from high school, and as a result in October of 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics posited that changes were necessary in

the educational system to meet the needs of these students. Retention programs were created to assist students who were falling through the gap and being left behind their classmates who graduated within four-years of entering the ninth grade (Dugger & Dugger, 1998).

Alternative education in America has existed since the inception of the American Public School System. Unlike the traditional school setting, Alternatives were created as child-centered, non-competitive schools that focused on autonomy in learning and pace. Open Schools were first established in Massachusetts, Oregon, and Minnesota. The success of these schools laid the foundation for the creation of public Alternative Schools in America (NASDSE, 2004). In the late 1960s, the American schools were undergoing a movement of public school reform that was inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and the quest for equality for all regardless to race, gender, creed, or color.

The goal of retention programs on the secondary and post-secondary levels is to increase the retention, progression, and graduation rates for the participants. The dropout rate for African American males is higher than their Caucasian counterparts in high school and college. On both levels, African American males rank among the highest percentage of dropouts and therefore are the ethnic group that will most benefit from strategies and interventions that will help them to successfully complete their high school and college programs of study.

The History of Alternative Education within Public Schools

Lange and Sletten (2002) identified the 1960s as the beginning of the school reform movement that resulted in alternative education being implemented in the

American Public School System. Advocates of this alternative to the traditional school models believed that alternative educational programs had to be developed to ensure that students who were at risk of failing to graduate from high school would have the support system to succeed and become productive members of society regardless of their race, creed, or socioeconomic status.

Critics of the American public schools declared that the concept of an alternative educational system came into prominence during the civil rights movement at the time of desegregation of schools (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). The foundation of the emergence of alternatives recognized that education must address the changing demographics of students who were diverse based on social class, race, and gender. This movement to provide a comparable quality of education to all school students required special attention to be directed to dropout prevention, special education of at-risk youth, and adolescents. It was no longer acceptable to say that students in economically deprived communities across the United States could receive separate but equal educational opportunities now that the public schools were being integrated (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003).

During the second half of the 20th century, President Lyndon B. Johnson and the American people had declared war on poverty by enacting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). In mainstream America, the public educational system has been scrutinized and exposed for being substandard and inferior because our less advantaged students were failing to graduate and obtain the basic skills to make them able to enter the work force as viable members of society. The movement now focused

on bridging the achievement gap and equalizing the educational playing field by increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate.

The American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (Trusty & Brown, 2005) defines the school counselor's primary role to ensure academic achievement. Delivery, management, and accountability of a comprehensive counseling program accomplish this task. The PSC is expected to provide culturally competent services to their target market. The ultimate goal of this effort is to support the school's mission and collaborate with all stakeholders to promote the student's academic, career, and personal/social growth. The ASCA foundation for accomplishing student development includes a philosophy based on a school counseling theoretical approach that acknowledged the needs of all students. This philosophy is delivered competently by the PSC with a school guidance curriculum. This therapeutic process is best used for individual student planning, responsive services, and system support, management, and accountability (ASCA, n.d.).

The South Carolina Department of Education endorsed the guidance curriculum consisting of developmental activities that create experiences that can be adopted for group activities in pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade. All levels of development are to promote positive mental health and life skills through the use of classroom activities and group activities. The counselor is to facilitate group activities inside and outside of the classroom that complement the school's mission. In this capacity, the counselors interchangeably serve as guide, consultant, and facilitator of the curriculum.

The three areas of awareness and development strategically impact the student's ability to learn, live, and work.

Lange and Sletten (2002) identified the birth of Alternative Schools as parallel with the creation of American Education. Alternatives have their foundation in schools of the Civil Rights era that provided educational opportunities that differed from the mainstream skills based on race, gender, and social class. It is estimated that there are over 20,000 alternative programs in American schools that are designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. Alternative education strives to provide dropout prevention for at-risk students. The alternative movement emerged in the 1950s and 1960s because of the inhumane treatment of students due to racism and prejudice that led to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Alternative education received government funding for the equal and meaningful education of the underprivileged.

Public education was greatly influenced to organize Alternative Schools as a result of the establishment of the John Adams High School in Oregon, the St. Paul Open School in Minnesota and the Murray Road Annex in Massachusetts. They are credited as the first open schools in America. Eventually, the open schools gave way to today's modern alternative school. In comparison to the mainstream schools, all Alternative Schools are small in size, offer one-on-one teacher to student interaction, supportive environments that promote student success, and decision making skills (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Although the definition of alternative programs may vary from different local, state, and national jurisdictions, there are three types of alternatives: types I, II, and III

(Lange & Sletten, 2002). Type I represents schools of choice which include Multicultural Schools, Schools within a school, Magnet Schools, and Learning Centers. These types of schools are based on themes and use innovative programs to attract students. Second are Type II schools that are “last chance” schools before the student is expelled and emphasize behavior modification and remediation. Continuation Schools are designed for students who are failing in the regular school system due to poor grades, pregnancy, and dropouts. The third Type has a remedial focus on academics and/or socio/emotional issues (NASDSE, 2004).

Sink and Stroh (2003) conducted a study of the impact of comprehensive school counseling programs on raising the achievement test scores of early elementary school students. The guiding assumption of this study was that the relationship between the academic achievements, student retention rates, and school counseling enhanced behavior, attitudes, and life-skills. Increases in achievement test scores attested to the efficacy of the CCPs ability to increase the rate of academic development. The impact of CCPs on middle school and high school students was also studied.

A similar study was conducted with seventh grade students in Missouri where 22,601 seventh graders and 4,868 teachers from 184 schools were surveyed to complete this study. The purpose of this study was to determine how seventh grade students were impacted by a fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling program. These studies implied that school counselors in grades K-12 are given organizational structure to promote aspects of student development.

There is a substantial amount of information available about the alternative education movement in America and the emerging role of the Professional School Counselors in relation to student achievement. Data is also available about Comprehensive Counseling Program implementation in Pre-K through 12th grade. The missing link to the Comprehensive Counseling Program chain is the impact of the CCP in the Alternative School setting. Professional School Counselors who work in an Alternative School need to be equipped with proven best practices for at-risk students. The understanding of CCP from the PSC perception is imperative to the successful attainment of academic, personal/social, and career development goals of students enrolled in Georgia's Alternative Schools.

In the United States of America, the obtaining of a college degree is an invaluable investment in the future of a student that is not afforded to those who do not complete an Associate, Undergraduate, or Graduate level degree. From an economic perspective, college graduates are more prepared to compete in the global market because they have extensive networking opportunities and their earning potential is increased with each degree earned. The benefit of earning a college degree in the 21st century is comparable to earning a high school diploma in the previous century. The benefits of a college education for the individual and society include an increase in lifetime earning potential, higher hourly wage gain per year of schooling, lower degree in the poverty level for college graduates, and accessibility to a higher level of healthcare.

Professional School Counselors

The American School Counselor Association (n.d.) has defined the Professional School Counselor (PSC) as a certified/licensed educator with a minimum of a graduate degree in school counseling. The role of the Professional School Counselor is to use leadership, advocacy, and collaboration as a vehicle to increase student achievement for all elementary, middle/junior high, and high school learners. This goal is accomplished by addressing the academic, social, and career needs of their students through prevention and intervention programs as designed by a comprehensive counseling program. The four components of the Comprehensive Counseling Program (CCP) are systematically designed to promote positive mental health for prekindergarten through twelfth grade in the areas of personal, social, academic, and career development. The CCP is implemented through guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support (ASCA, n.d.).

Counseling in Alternative Education

With counseling in the alternative school setting, Guerin and Denti (1999) identified that there are several characteristics of successful programs for working with at-risk youth. Although six of the elements are best delivered in a residential setting, the following five components can be delivered in the educational setting. These include self-esteem building, planning for post-program life, teaching social, coping, and living skills, involving the family, and developing a positive peer culture. In the state of Virginia, Kleiner, Porch, and Farris (2002) stated that Alternative Schools need educators who are trained in the following areas: special education, reading remediation, behavior

modification, and counseling skills. These skills will enable all alternative school students to receive the academic as well as social reinforcement that will prepare them to be successful as they return to the traditional setting.

Alternative educational environments may include residential settings like juvenile detention centers, as well as alternative middle or high schools within the public school districts that serve students who have not been successful in the mainstream school environment. The focus must not solely be on academics, but must also include the social survival skills that will be needed to successful in whatever post-alternative school setting they may enter. These learning centers must focus on basic academics as well as the life skills necessary to be successful and adaptable in society.

Defining the Characteristics of Alternative Education in Public Schools

For the purpose of this literature review, Alternative School will be defined as public schools that are an alternative to the conventional education experience currently offered in America before the ESEA was enacted. Alternative Schools are distinguished from the traditional school by the following criterion: parental involvement, student, and teacher choice; autonomy in learning, and pace; non-competitive evaluation, and a child-centered approach to learning (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Alternative Schools cannot be isolated from the traditional school environments but are designed to complement and bridge the gap in areas where the traditional schools have fallen short. These schools include: Schools without Walls, Schools within a School, Multicultural Schools, Continuation Schools, Learning Centers, Fundamental Schools, and Magnet Schools . Although many of the original “alternatives” did not

survive during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence of alternative education in the 1980s to address the growing numbers of students who were disruptive and/or failing in their home schools.

Types of Alternative Schools

There are three types of Alternative Schools in today's learning environments.

Raywid (1994) classified alternatives into the following three groups.

Type I includes schools that are choice based on a specific theme that is designed to attract students. Magnet schools in Science, Math, Health Sciences, and the Arts are examples of this type of school.

Type II includes schools that are a last chance and place a great deal of emphasis on behavior modification and remediation as an alternative to expulsion. Students are assigned to these schools to earn their way back to the traditional school environment.

Type III schools are alternatives designed with a remedial concentration on severe social emotional and/or academic deficiencies.

Alternative Schools in Georgia

The Georgia alternative education Program began as the CrossRoads alternative education program in compliance with the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. The local school district must provide comparable instructional materials, resources, and textbooks as provided to the traditional schools (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). On the local level, alternative education has the option of providing any combination of the following programs:

- in-school suspension program,

- disciplinary alternative education program,
- school-community guidance center,
- community-based alternative education program, and
- other alternative education program models that otherwise meet the requirements under alternative education Programs.

Local school districts have the flexibility to determine if the alternative education program will be located on or off campus with the following stipulations:

- must follow the Georgia Performance Standards;
- must focus on ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, and self-discipline; and
- must award course credit in the same manner as other programs.

Alternative Schools throughout history were founded to address the academic needs of groups of society who are not effectively served by the traditional school, and consequently have departed from the traditional school setting (NASDSE, 2004). Today, the Open Schools of the past have made way to Schools without Walls, Schools within a School, Multicultural Schools, Continuation Schools, Learning Centers, Fundamental Schools, and Magnet Schools. Educators established these schools as an alternative to the conventional schools that were not meeting the needs of all students (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Retention Programs in K-16

According to Strayhorn (2008), the concept of retention will be used in two different ways depending on the context of the institutional level. University student retention that is oftentimes synonymous with persistence and progression. On the college

level, retention leads to the improvement of the graduation rates for post-secondary institutions. The result of the increase of graduation rates equates the increase of tuition revenue that would be lost if students dropped out or transferred to another institution. University administrators have focused the efforts of their personnel and financial resource to design intervention and Retention Pathways that will address the issue of attrition and how retention rates can be improved.

From an administrative perspective, the loss of revenue can be prevented through the funding of tutoring, first year seminars and extracurricular activities that will keep the students engaged in their classes and as a part of the campus community. The goal of these retention programs is to create an intellectual, social, and emotional connection to the campus experience. Since student engagement is directly connected to student success, it will be less likely for a student to depart or transfer to another school (Strayhorn, 2008).

Although university administrators spend a large percentage of their annual budgets to increase their student retention rates, in the K-12 setting retention is undesirable and takes on a negative connotation. In primary, elementary, and secondary schools in the United States, grade retention or grade repetition is the process of a student repeating a grade or class because they failed to meet the minimum requirement for academic success. Those students who are retained are referred to as repeater or ones who have been held back. Retained students are most likely to be prevented from being promoted to the next grade level or class because of academic, attendance, or behavior deficiencies (Sink & Stroh, 2003).

Unlike in the post-secondary setting, school districts allot a great amount of financial and personnel resources to decrease their retention rates with programs such as after-school tutoring, summer school, and credit recovery programs. Grade retention negatively impacts the student's personal/social, academic, and vocational goals because when students underperform they must be provided with intensive tutorial and remediation in order to compensate for the lack of academic skills (Sink & Stroh, 2003).

Summary

The present study's primary focus was to determine the impact that Retention Pathways had on the recruitment, progression, and graduation rates of African American males in the U.S. The Retention Pathways were designed, inherently, to increase the recruitment, progression, and graduation rates of African American males in K-16 settings. Furthermore, the retention programs provided strategies and interventions to prevent and decrease attrition rates by teaching the strategies for overcoming academic and non-academic factors that influence student achievement.

Go to High School, Go to College is an intervention used to develop and cultivate the importance of pursuing a high school and college education and uses a curriculum that focuses on teaching their participants the importance of obtaining a college education while guiding them through the pitfall and challenges that they will face during their journey to academic and social mobility. The program focuses on tutoring, decision-making, and learning. As productive members of society, each mentor and mentee develops a professional relationship that is nurtured as the teen learns more about themselves and how to function in society (Wesley, 1981).

This literature review cited the importance of obtaining a college education, the challenges of first generation college students, the challenges of African American males in higher education, the high school dropout epidemic for African American males, and the role of the professional school counselor in the alternative school. Studies cited in the literature review were retrospective, in that, these studies captured the characteristics of successful students who were able to overcome the academic and non-academic factors that influence student achievement. Educators and researchers now need to create an effective preventive intervention or program to be implemented in their schools to increase the recruitment, progression, and graduation rates of African American males so that the gender, racial and ethnic gaps may be eradicated in their institutions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The three theoretical frameworks and four theorists who embraced research studies on Retention Pathways in K-16 include Vincent Tinto's Student Departure theory, George Kuh and A.W. Chickering's Student Engagement theories, and Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Retention theorists hold the belief that there are both academic and non-academic factors that influence student recruitment, progression, and graduation rates in high education. Therefore, the researcher's development of Retention Pathways in K-16 included the examination and implementation of interventions that acknowledge the importance of obtaining a college degree, the challenges of first generation college students, the challenges of African American males in higher education, and the role of Professional School Counselors in alternative schools.

Research Design

A pretest-posttest single group quasi-experimental design was appropriate for the study to assess students before and after receipt of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. Quantitative research methods involve the use of data. The selection of a quasi-experimental design affords study participants opportunities to participate in the study without exclusions. Most important, randomization is not necessary for quasi-experimental designs (Garbee et al., 2013). Variables used in quasi-experimental designs do not require manipulation (Goba, Balfour & Nkambule, 2011). Although experimental designs present some challenges in educational settings, a specific goal of applying a

quasi-experimental design in the study was to allow participants to serve as controls (Goba, Balfour & Nkambule, 2011). For example, gender in relation to African American males is identified as an independent variable. Subsequently implying that gender is a natural aspect of the study; whereas, behavior is considered a dependent variable that can be manipulated. Using a quasi-experimental research design was appropriate to aid in answering Research Hypotheses, which were critical to the study (Mora, 2010).

There were four rationales for using a quantitative method as opposed to a qualitative method. The first rationale was to recommend a final course of action for changing the perception of the population about the importance of education. The second rationale was to project the results of a larger population based on the results of the 16 participants in this study. The third rationale was to identify evidence regarding cause and effect relationship between the student's perceptions about the importance of education and the intervention Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. Finally, the fourth rationale was to describe the characteristics of relevant groups of students in alternative and traditional school settings (Mora, 2010). Qualitative methods are used to explore a topic through the use of focus groups, triads, dyads, in-depth interviews, uninterrupted observation, bulletin boards, and ethnographic participation/observation. Quantitative research is more suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to quantify the problem and project the results to a larger population.

Originally proposed for attrition prevention of college students through the landmark research of Tinto, Love, and Russo (1993), Student Departure Theory was

presented as a major source of academic difficulties, social integration, and career goal setting conflicts. Tinto originally wrote of the stress of college students disassociating themselves from membership in past communities. Specifically, the transition from high school to college is described as a difficult process of movement that is expected as a part of life. This process led to the adaptation of behavioral norms that may be unfamiliar in the family of origin. Therefore, the stage of separation requires students to disassociate themselves from membership in past communities that include their local high schools and hometowns.

A secondary retention theory emerged from the student engagement phenomena described by Kuh (2009). Kuh recognized that student achievement and persistence could be measured by the student's academic performance. The concentration of his study was to determine the effects of purposeful educational activities on different racial and ethnic groups in higher education. Kuh's theory led to the concept that student engagement, from the perspective of academic performance, was determined by a population's racial and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, student engagement during the first year of post-secondary education had a significant impact on student grade point averages and the probability of the student persisting after the completion of their first year of college.

In addition to Kuh's theory of student engagement, Chickering (2006) developed the 3 Rs to challenge educators to recognize, respect, and respond to the various individual learning styles within a diverse group of learners. Differentiated instruction is taught to novice and veteran educators by professional learning departments as an

effective method of delivering information across the various developmental levels within every classroom setting. This approach to teaching is a best practice within K-16 learning communities. As a result, educators have been encouraged to systematically assess each individual learning style to determine how to best build on the student's knowledge and skill levels.

Prior to Bandura (1971), psychologists postulated that human behavior was impelled solely by an individual's intrinsic needs, drives, and impulses from a level of unconsciousness. The Social Learning Theory was developed to provide a better understanding of human behavior. From this perspective, human behavior was analyzed to the examination of external influences and by the stimulus events that evoked it and the resulting consequences. This theory rejected the premise that people are helpless beings that are controlled by internal forces and external environmental influences. Therefore, in the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1971).

According to Tinto (1998), Kuh (2008), Chickering (2006), and Bandura (1971), Retention Pathways posit that academic and non-academic factors influence college retention and require a holistic approach to the phenomena from both perspectives. There are academic factors that determine the student's scholastic performance and grade point average. In contrast, there are essential non-academic factors such as social isolation, mentoring relationships, and financial instability that render a student ineligible to overcome, persist, and continue to matriculate in K-16 until graduation.

Intervention

The researcher implemented the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum for 4 ½ weeks during classroom guidance sessions. The 16 participants were divided into homerooms according to grades 7, 8, and 8.5. The classroom guidance sessions took place in the Counseling Center for 55 minutes weekly. The 7th graders met on Tuesdays from 1:00-1:55. The 8th graders met on Wednesdays from 2:00-2:55. The 8.5 graders met on Thursdays from 1:00-1:55.

The procedure was as follows: during the assigned times the students would report to the Counseling Center. The class roll was called and the essential question for that day was written on the dry erase white board. The opening activity began with a 15 minute videotape on the topic to be discussed. The topics were:

What is a man? (based on Chickering's theory of identity)

What does it mean to be an African American man in today's society? (based on Tinto's theory of student departure)

African American men who are positive role models? (based on Kuh's theory of mentoring)

Non-violent conflict resolution practices? (based on Bandura's theory of learned behaviors)

At the conclusion of the 15 minute video, the researcher facilitated an unstructured/open ended discussion with the participants to get them to share their ideas about the topic and encourage them to verbally communicate their feelings and opinions. At the conclusion of the discussion, the participants would share their final thoughts

about the topic and the researcher would list the agenda for the next session on the dry erase white board. At the end of the session students would be dismissed to their next period class when the bell rang.

Variables

This chapter presents a general overview of the protocol in which this research study was conducted. A discussion includes the following: (1) theoretical framework, (2) Research Hypotheses, (3) research design, (4) participant profile, and (5) data collection and analysis.

This study surveyed middle school African American males who were enrolled in an alternative education program in a rural Southeast Georgia school district to determine the impact Retention Pathways had on their perception of their readiness to overcome the academic and non-academic obstacles of succeeding in secondary and higher education.

Participants

The main subjects in this study were 16 middle school African American male students who were enrolled at a rural alternative school in southeast Georgia. All participants were students in grades 7th – 8.5 and between 10 – 17 years of age. This population was enrolled at the alternative school because of violations of the school district's code of conduct via a tribunal panel hearing, parental request, or administrative placement. All students were assigned to the alternative school for a minimum of one semester and not eligible to return to the regular school setting until January 2014, May 2014, or until they qualify for high school.

Instrument

A survey was used as the measurement instrument for the study. In quantitative research studies, surveys help researchers in the study of a population through observation of its members. Most surveys use a sample of members to measure population characteristics (Garbee et al., 2013). The survey is a systematic method for gathering information from a sample for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members. The population studied included the students in grades 7, 8, and 8.5.

Therefore, to measure the perception of the importance of obtaining a college education to African American males in an alternative school, a survey of middle school students who met these criteria was conducted. The goal of the survey was to describe the numerical distributions of variables in the population and to identify the descriptive statistics of mean, mode, and median based on their responses. Understanding that this was a pre-test post-test design, the researcher also calculated gain scores and t-tests to determine the changes in the participant's scores as a result of the intervention.

Instrument Development

The instrument selected for the study consisted of pretest and posttest surveys divided into four sections. The sections included an inquiry into participant perceptions of the intervention. A survey was used to assess student preparedness based on the theoretical approach of the Student Engagement Theory. Participant responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1-4, 4=Strongly Agree; 3 = Agree; 2=Disagree=2; 1= Strongly Disagree. The section included questions based on the

Student Departure Theory. The list of questions aided in assessing participant skills in the transition from alternative education to the traditional learning environment.

Face Validity

A panel discussion for Face Validity was conducted with five ineligible middle school students (three African American females, one Caucasian female and one Caucasian male) who did not meet the criteria for this study. The panel discussion for Face Validity enabled the researcher to conduct a small-scale experiment to determine how and whether to launch a full-scale experiment (Garbee et al., 2013). This procedure took place in the school conference room with the use of a laptop computer and 55 inch television. During the Face Validity, the researcher administered the survey by reading each question aloud to the students and allowing them to critique how much they understood what the question was asking. Based on their responses, the language of the survey was altered to increase face validity in the instrument. They determined that the language used was too advanced for their classmates and needed changing to a basic middle school vocabulary.

Data Collection Procedures

The Burke County Board of Education generates and distributes progress reports after the completion of the first 4 ½ weeks of school. These progress reports were sent home to every student on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 and included, academic grades, attendance, and conduct grades. On Thursday, September 12, 2013, all parent/guardians were invited to attend a mid-day parent meeting to discuss their child/children's success and were given the opportunity to give their informed consent for

their sons to participate in this study. Those parents who did not attend the meeting were contacted by phone and a flyer/ informed consent form were sent home by their child to be signed and returned on the next school day. Each parent and student participant was given a cover letter that contained: (1) a detailed description of the proposed study, (2) possible benefits of the proposed study, and (3) an informed consent form that was enclosed with instructions to affix their signature and return to school on the next business day. Those parent/guardians who did not return the signed form within 48 hours were contacted by phone. It is from this process, that eligible participants were selected for the study.

Research Assistant

A master's level community counselor administered the survey in a small group setting. She administered both the pretest and posttest. Students were placed into three small groups according to their 7th, 8th, and 8.5th homerooms. They were assigned seats in the conference room and given a printed copy of the survey. The counselor read each question to the students aloud as they read them silently. There was a laptop computer and 50 inch television used to project the PowerPoint presentation of the questions on the screen in the front of the room for the students to read. The purpose of using these techniques was to ensure that all student learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) were accommodated.

Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data collected from the surveys was transferred by the researcher and the research assistant and then inputted into a Statistical Package for Social Science

(SPSS) data analysis system. After entering the data into SPSS, the researcher ran descriptive statistics to analyze the data. The Student's t-test was used to determine if the two sets of data were significantly different from each other. T-tests are used to follow normal distribution when the statistical value is known and when two-sample designs involving repeated measures, matched pairs, or "before" and "after" measures. The mean, mode, and median are the descriptive statistics that the researcher used to compute the data (Bell, 2010).

The analysis of the data used Student's t-tests. This test allows multiple measures within the same sample. W.S. Gossett developed the Student's t-test in 1908 to calculate problems associate with inference based on small sample sizes (Boneau, 1960). It is used to determine to what degree two sets of data differ from one another. The possible outcomes include significantly different and not significantly different. It focuses on the differences between the paired data and reports the probability the mean difference is consistent with zero.

Student's t-test is used for a two-sample location test of null hypothesis when the two populations have equal means (Boneau, 1960). The test assumes that two population means are equal. It requires a standard normal distribution and a degree of freedom under the null hypothesis is a positive constant.

Summary

The primary focus of this study was to examine the extent to which Retention Pathways impacted the academic performance of African American male students at an alternative school in Southeast Georgia. The study investigated how African American

males' perception of the importance of education could be altered by a 4 1/2 week intervention. The participants in this study were between the ages of 10 – 17 years of age in grades 7-8.5. Once permission was granted from the University IRB, school district superintendent, parent/guardian, and the building administrator, the research assistant administered a pretest, 4 ½ week intervention, and posttest phases of this study.

Following all procedures, the objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors that impact retention of the African American male learning in K-16 and to inform administrators, parents, teachers, counselors and community stakeholders of the factors that influence the attitudes of middle school learners about the importance of education.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results in four sections. Section one reports the quantitative data recorded to evaluate survey questions 1-5 based on the theoretical concept of Vincent Tinto's Stages of Student Departure. Section two reports the quantitative data recorded to evaluate survey questions 6-10 based on the theoretical concept of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Section three reports the quantitative data collected to evaluate survey questions 11-15 based on the theoretical concept of George Kuh's Student Engagement on Grades and Persistence. Section four reports the quantitative data used to evaluate survey questions 16-20 based on the theoretical concept of A.W. Chickering's Student Engagement.

Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

This study sought to record changes in the perception of the importance of education among African American Male middle school students in a rural alternative school setting in southeast Georgia related to the implementation of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. The researcher used a quasi-experimental design with quantitative survey data from student participation. In this study, 16 students participated in the 4½ week intervention with September pretests and October posttests. The students ranged in age from 12-17 years old coming from grades 7-8.5. Grade 8.5 consisted of students who were retained for at least two grades during their school careers prior to the 2013-2014 school years and were at least 15 years of age. This population represented the oldest students in the school who were working on 8th grade curriculum but were also

taking high school courses via the Internet. The goal of this 8.5 class was to enable these students to enter ninth grade during the 2014-2015 school year with a minimum of four high school credits. Every student participant indicated that they were returning students to the alternative school and were striving to return to the regular middle school setting or earn promotion to the ninth grade by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

The descriptive statistics for the student demographics are listed in Table 1.

Adhering to the delimitations of this study, all of the participants were African American males are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Demographics

Variable		N	%
Gender			
	Male	16	100
Ethnicity			
	African American	16	100
Grade			
	8.5	7	44
	8	5	31
	7	4	25

Table 2 indicates at pretest, the perception of the importance of obtaining an education in conjunction with the Stages of Student Engagement theory of Tinto. Table 3 indicates at pretest, the perception of the importance of obtaining an education in conjunction with the Social Learning Theory of Bandura. Table 4 indicates at pretest, the perception of the importance of obtaining an education in conjunction with the Student Engagement on grades and persistence theory of Kuh. Table 5 indicates at pretest, the perception of the importance of obtaining an education in conjunction with the Student

Engagement theory of Chickering. At pretest, the participants indicated their perceived academic and social support systems, decision making skills, academic proficiency skills, and individual learning styles as indicators of readiness to excel in their studies.

Results for Research Hypotheses One

On the first day of the study, the research assistant who was employed by a local dropout prevention non-profit organization, a community stakeholder with School A, administered the pretest survey instrument. The 20-item Likert scale questionnaire included questions related to the participants' perception of the importance of education with regard to social and intellectual distractions, academic achievement, the role of educators, and individual learning styles. Section one consisted of questions 1-5 from the questionnaire that were related to their perception of the importance of education with regards to social and intellectual distractions according to Vincent Tinto's philosophy. This basically means that the participants recognize the value of education and wouldn't allow those around them to influence them away from being engaged in education. The questions were:

- 1) My family encourages me to do my best in school.
- 2) When I was growing up, I got into trouble in school with my friends.
- 3) I actively participate in an after-school activity.
- 4) I am a positive role model for my classmates.
- 5) My goal after 8th grade is to attend high school.

The students were given four choices: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Just over (40%) 41.2% of the student

participants said they strongly agree that their perception of the importance of education was impacted by both social and intellectual distractions in their past. A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measure of percent change of Theory A is presented in Table 3. As a note to the reader for the upcoming tables: students 1-4 represent the 7th grade participants; students 5-9 represent the 8th grade participants; and students 10-16 represent the 8.5 grade students.

Table 2 Means Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Theory A

Tinto Theory	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Student 1	3.6	3.6	0	0
Student 2	3.2	3.4	0.2	6.25
Student 3	1	3.4	2.4	240
Student 4	2.6	3.4	0.8	30.76
<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>3.45</i>	<i>.85</i>	<i>69.25</i>
Student 5	2.8	3.4	0.6	21.42
Student 6	2.8	2.6	-0.2	-7.14
Student 7	3.4	3.2	-0.2	-5.88
Student 8	3	3.6	0.6	20
Student 9	2.2	3.4	1.2	54.54
<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>2.84</i>	<i>3.24</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>16.58</i>
Student 10	3.4	3.6	0.2	5.88
Student 11	2.6	3.2	0.6	23.07
Student 12	3	3.2	0.2	6.66
Student 13	2.8	2.8	0	0
Student 14	3.8	3.8	0	0
Student 15	2.4	2.4	0	0
Student 16	2.8	2.8	0	0
<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>2.97</i>	<i>3.11</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>5.08</i>

Total Mean Score	2.83	3.23	0.4	24.72
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This table illustrates that the percentage change by Theory A showed good effectiveness because nine out of 16 (56%) subjects reported a positive percent change during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Tinto's theory. It appears that intervention had the most impact with grade seven students with one student having a 240% positive change in perception about social and intellectual distractions. The grade eight participants were more scattered in the results with both positive and negative changes in perception on matters related to social and intellectual distractions. The results within the grade 8.5 students were kind of unique in that the data shows that students were either positively impacted by the intervention or remained neutral. It is questionable whether or not students 13-16 were fully engaged in the intervention. If grade 8.5 students were engaged in the intervention, as it relates to Tinto's theory on social and intellectual distractions perhaps their scores would not be significantly different from grade 7 students. This lends itself to the interpretation that if grade 8.5 students were engaged in the intervention, then they will be consistently positively impacted. It is data that is worthy of further investigation to see just what is really happening with this grade level as it relates to the intervention on Theory A.

Results for Research Hypotheses Two

Section two consisted of questions 6-10 from the questionnaire that were related to the student's perception of the importance of education with regards to

academic achievement according to Albert Bandura's philosophy. Generally, this means that the students had self-control to perform well at school. The questions were:

- 6) I have self-control at school
- 7) I realize that I allow others to influence my behavior
- 8) I often take responsibility for my choices
- 9) I am interested in learning positive behaviors from my classmates
- 10) My goal is to improve my behavior

The students were given four choices: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Just fewer than 40% (34.1%) of the student participants said they agree that their perception of the importance of education was impacted by their academic performance (See Table 4). A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measure of percent change of Theory B is presented in Table 3

Table 3 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Theory B

Bandura Theory	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Student 1	3	3.2	0.2	6.66
Student 2	3.2	3.4	0.2	6.25
Student 3	1	2	1	100
Student 4	3.4	2.6	-0.8	-23.52
<i>Mean Score</i>	2.65	2.8	0.15	22.34
Student 5	3	3.2	0.2	6.66
Student 6	3.2	2.8	-0.4	-12.5
Student 7	3.2	2.8	-0.4	-12.5

Student 8	2.2	3	0.8	36.36
Student 9	3	2.8	-0.2	-6.66
<i>Mean Score</i>	2.92	2.92	.16	7.27
Student 10	2.8	2.8	0	0
Student 11	2.8	2.6	-0.2	-7.14
Student 12	2.2	3	0.8	36.36
Student 13	2.6	2.6	0	0
Student 14	3.2	3.8	0.6	18.75
Student 15	2.4	2.2	-0.2	-8.33
Student 16	2	2.8	0.8	40
<i>Mean Score</i>	2.57	2.82	0.25	11.37
Total Mean Score	2.7	2.85	0.15	11.27

This table illustrates that the intervention had mixed results on the participants with an even split between those reporting positive and negative gain scores. As it relates to the intervention impacting retention, there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Bandura's theory. It appears that intervention had the most impact with grade seven students with one student having a 100% positive change in perception about social and intellectual distractions. The grade eight participants were more scattered in the results with both positive and negative changes in around the value of academic achievement. Similar results appeared for the grade 8.5 students. For grade 8 and 8.5 students, the mixed gain scores show that the intervention is having inconclusive results.

Results for Research Hypotheses Three

Section three consisted of questions 11-15 from the questionnaire were related to the student's perception of the importance of education with regards to the role of educators according to George Kuh's philosophy. The questions were:

- 11) I am passing all of my academic classes
- 12) I often participate in classroom discussions
- 13) When I struggle in a class, I ask my teacher for help
- 14) My goal is to do my best in all of my classes
- 15) I participate in credit recovery programs

The students were given four choices: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Just fewer than 40% (39.2%) of the student participants said they strongly agree that their perception of the importance of education was impacted by the role of educators. A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measure of percent change of Theory C is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Theory C

Kuh Theory	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Student 1	3.4	3.8	0.4	11.76
Student 2	3	3.8	0.8	26.66
Student 3	1	3.8	2.8	280
Student 4	2.8	3.6	0.8	28.57
<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>2.55</i>	<i>3.75</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>86.74</i>
Student 5	3.2	4	0.8	25

Student 6	3.2	3.2	0	0
Student 7	3.4	3	-0.4	-11.76
Student 8	2.8	3.4	0.6	21.42
Student 9	3.2	3	-0.2	-6.25
<i>Mean Score</i>	3.16	3.32	.16	5.68
Student 10	4	3.4	-0.6	-15
Student 11	3	3.4	0.4	13.33
Student 12	2.2	3.4	1.2	54.54
Student 13	3.2	3	-0.2	-6.25
Student 14	3	3	0	0
Student 15	2.2	2.2	0	0
Student 16	2.2	4	1.8	81.81
<i>Mean Score</i>	2.82	3.2	.38	18.34
Total Mean Score	2.86	3.37	0.51	31.49

This table illustrates that the percentage change by Theory C showed some level of effectiveness because nine out of 16 (56%) subjects reported positive gain scores during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Kuh's theory. It appears that intervention had the most impact with grade seven students with one student having a 280% positive change in perception about educators. The grade eight and 8.5 participants were more scattered in the results with both positive and negative changes in perception on matters related to their perception of educators. This is consistent with data presented in the previous tables. There is a trend developing here that suggests the intervention is overall working

more consistently with grade 7 students and is having less of an overall impact on the grade 8 and 8.5 students. Further inquiry is needed on this matter.

Results for Research Hypotheses Four

Section four consisted of questions 16-20 from the questionnaire were related to the student's perception of the importance of education with regards to the role of their individual learning styles according to A.W. Chickering's theoretical approach.

The questions were:

- 16) I know my learning style (listening, seeing, and hands on)
- 17) I learn best when my teacher uses PowerPoint, promethean boards, graphs or videos
- 18) I like lessons that allow me to be active and use my hands
- 19) I enjoy listening to music, CDs, and reading aloud when learning
- 20) I am able to learn by listening, seeing and using my hands

The students were given four choices: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Just over 50% (51.2%) of the student participants said they strongly agree that their perception of the importance of education was impacted by their individual learning style. A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measure of percent change of Theory D is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Theory D

Chickering Theory	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
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Student 1	3.8	4	0.2	5.26
Student 2	3	3.6	0.6	20
Student 3	1	3.4	2.4	240
Student 4	3.6	4	0.4	11.11
<i>Mean Score</i>	2.85	3.75	0.9	69.09
Student 5	3.4	4	0.6	17.64
Student 6	4	3.4	-0.6	-15
Student 7	4	3	-1	-25
Student 8	3.4	4	0.6	17.64
Student 9	4	3.8	-0.2	-5
<i>Mean Score</i>	3.76	3.64	-0.12	-1.94
Student 10	3.8	4	0.2	5.26
Student 11	3.4	4	0.6	17.64
Student 12	2.8	3.4	0.6	21.42
Student 13	3	2.8	-0.2	-6.66
Student 14	3.8	3.8	0	0
Student 15	2.2	2.2	0	0
Student 16	3.2	3.4	0.2	6.25
<i>Mean Score</i>	3.17	3.37	0.20	6.27
Total Mean Score	3.27	3.55	0.27	19.41

This table illustrates that the percentage change by Theory D showed good effectiveness because 10 out of 16 (62%) subjects reported positive gain scores during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Chickering's theory.

It appears that intervention had the most impact with grade seven students in that all the students reported positive attitude changes and one student had a 240% positive change in perception of the value of mentors and positive educational role models. The grade eight participants were more scattered in the results with both positive and negative changes in perception on matters related to their perception of the value of mentors and positive educational role models. In terms of the four theories, this component of the intervention appeared to have the most impact with the grade 8.5 students with 4 of the 7 participants showing positive gain scores.

The survey questionnaire revealed that fewer than 50% (41.2%) strongly agreed that their perception of the importance of education was impacted by both social and intellectual distractions in their past but less than 40% (34.1%) agreed that their perception was impacted by their academic performance. Although fewer than 40% (39.2%) agreed that their perception was impacted by the role of educators, a majority of participants (51.2%) strongly agreed that their perception was impacted by their individual learning style. The data on this component of the analysis is also revealing that the intervention had the most positive impact with the grade 7 students with only one instance of negative gain scores appearing over the four theories.

Results by Grade Level

A total of 16 students participated in the posttest portion of the study. On the last day of the intervention program, a master's level community counselor who was employed by Communities In School of Burke County-Family Connection, Inc. administered the posttest survey instrument. The 20-item Likert scale questionnaire

included questions related to the student's perception of the importance of education with regard to social and intellectual distractions, academic achievement, the role of educators, and the mentor/mentee relationship. See Tables 6-9 for seventh graders, Tables 10-14 for 8th graders, and Tables 15-21. A narrative of the tables will appear after each of the grade-level data is presented.

Table 6 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 1

Student 1	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	3	4	1	33.33
Question 3	3	3	0	0
Question 4	4	3	-1	-25
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>1.67</i>
Question 6	3	3	0	0
Question 7	1	2	1	100
Question 8	4	4	0	0
Question 9	3	3	0	0
Question 10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>20</i>
Question 11	2	3	1	50
Question 12	3	4	1	33.33
Question 13	4	4	0	0
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	4	4	0	0
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>16.67</i>
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	4	4	0	0
Question 18	3	4	1	33.33
Question 19	4	4	0	0
Question 20	4	4	0	0

<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3.8	4	0.2	6.67
Total Mean Score	3.45	3.65	0.2	11.25

Table 7 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 2

Student 2	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	3	3	0	0
Question 3	2	3	1	50
Question 4	3	3	0	0
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	3.2	3.4	0.2	10
Question 6	4	3	-1	-25
Question 7	2	3	1	50
Question 8	4	3	-1	-25
Question 9	3	4	1	33.33
Question 10	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3.2	3.4	0.2	11.51
Question 11	2	3	1	50
Question 12	3	4	1	33.33
Question 13	3	4	1	33.33
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3	3.8	0.8	30
Question 16	3	4	1	33.33
Question 17	3	4	1	33.33
Question 18	3	3	0	0
Question 19	3	4	1	33.33
Question 20	3	3	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3	3.6	0.6	20
Total Mean Score	3.1	3.55	0.45	18.33

Table 8 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 3

Student 3	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	1	3	2	200
Question 2	1	3	2	200
Question 3	1	4	3	300
Question 4	1	4	3	300
Question 5	1	3	2	200
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>240</i>
Question 6	1	3	2	100
Question 7	1	2	1	100
Question 8	1	3	2	200
Question 9	1	2	1	100
Question 10	1	3	2	200
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100</i>
Question 11	1	4	3	300
Question 12	1	3	2	200
Question 13	1	3	2	200
Question 14	1	3	2	200
Question 15	1	4	3	300
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>240</i>
Question 16	1	3	2	200
Question 17	1	3	2	200
Question 18	1	3	2	200
Question 19	1	4	3	300
Question 20	1	4	3	300
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>240</i>
Total Mean Score	1	3.05	2.05	205

Table 9 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 4

Student 4	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	3	4	1	33.33
Question 2	2	3	1	50
Question 3	1	2	1	100
Question 4	2	4	2	100
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>56.67</i>
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	4	1	-3	-75
Question 8	2	3	1	50
Question 9	4	4	0	0
Question 10	4	1	-3	-75
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>-0.8</i>	<i>-13.33</i>
Question 11	4	4	0	0
Question 12	4	4	0	0
Question 13	2	4	2	100
Question 14	3	4	1	33.33
Question 15	1	2	1	100
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>46.67</i>
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	3	4	1	33.33
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	3	4	1	33.33
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>13.33</i>
Total Mean Score	3.05	3.4	0.35	25.83

Results for Grade Level 7

The Research Hypotheses asked how African American adolescent males in an alternative school perceive the importance of obtaining an education differ before and after engaging in a retention program for 4 ½ weeks. The researcher assumed the perception of its importance would increase as a result of exposure to this intervention. Tables 6-9 show descriptive statistics (means), change, and percent of change for the pretest results and posttest results. Participants had response options of 1- Strongly disagree to 4-Strongly Agree so the calculations are based on scores ranging from 1 to 4. For seventh graders, pretest (2.77), posttest (3.03), change (0.26) and percentage (10.12). When looking at the overall perception gain scores during the pretest and posttest, the 7th grade participants' scores indicated that participants were positively impacted by the intervention and their perception of the importance of obtaining a college education was increased. These results indicate that a variable may have been present during the intervention that caused their perception to increase.

Table 10 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 5

Student 5	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	4	3	-1	-25
Question 3	1	2	1	100
Question 4	3	4	1	33.33

Question 5	2	4	2	100
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	2.8	3.4	0.6	41.67
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	2	2	0	0
Question 8	4	4	0	0
Question 9	2	2	0	0
Question 10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3	3.2	0.2	6.67
Question 11	4	4	0	0
Question 12	3	4	1	33.33
Question 13	3	4	1	33.33
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	2	4	2	100
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3.2	4	0.8	33.33
Question 16	3	4	1	33.33
Question 17	3	4	1	33.33
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	3	4	1	33.33
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Score</i>	3.4	4	0.6	20
Total Mean Score	3.1	3.65	0.55	25.41

Table 11 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 6

Student 6	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	3	-1	-25
Question 2	1	2	1	100
Question 3	1	1	0	0
Question 4	4	3	-1	-25
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	2.8	2.6	-0.2	10

Question 6	4	4	0	0
Question 7	1	1	0	0
Question 8	4	3	-1	-25
Question 9	3	2	-1	-33.33
Question 10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3.2	2.8	-0.4	-11.67
Question 11	3	2	-1	-33.33
Question 12	4	3	-1	-25
Question 13	4	4	0	0
Question 14	4	3	-1	-25
Question 15	1	4	3	300
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3.2	3.2	0.0	43.33
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	4	4	0	0
Question 18	4	3	-1	-25
Question 19	4	3	-1	-25
Question 20	4	3	-1	-25
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	4	3.4	-0.6	-15
Total Mean Score	3.3	3	-0.3	6.66

Table 12 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 7

Student 7	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	4	2	-2	-50
Question 3	1	2	1	100
Question 4	4	4	0	0
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	3.4	3.2	-0.2	10
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	2	1	-1	-50

Question 8	4	4	0	0
Question 9	3	2	-1	-33.33
Question 10	4	3	-1	-25
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3.2	2.8	-0.4	-15
Question 11	4	3	-1	-25
Question 12	3	3	0	0
Question 13	4	3	-1	-25
Question 14	4	3	-1	-25
Question 15	2	3	1	50
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3.4	3	-0.4	-5
Question 16	4	3	-1	-25
Question 17	4	3	-1	-25
Question 18	4	3	-1	-25
Question 19	4	3	-1	-25
Question 20	4	3	-1	-25
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	4	3	-1	-25
Total Mean Score	3.5	3	-0.5	-8.75

Table 13 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 8

Student 8	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	4	4	0	0
Question 3	1	3	2	200
Question 4	4	3	-1	-25
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	3.4	3.6	0.2	35
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	2	3	1	50
Question 8	4	1	-3	-75

Question 9	3	3	0	0
Question 10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>1.67</i>
Question 11	4	4	0	0
Question 12	3	4	1	33.33
Question 13	4	4	0	0
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	2	1	-1	-50
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>-3.33</i>
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	4	4	0	0
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	4	4	0	0
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
Total Mean Score	3.5	3.5	0	8.33

Table 14 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 9

Student 9	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	3	4	1	33.33
Question 3	2	2	0	0
Question 4	1	3	2	200
Question 5	1	4	3	300
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>106.67</i>
Question 6	4	3	-1	-25
Question 7	1	1	0	0
Question 8	3	3	0	0
Question 9	3	3	0	0
Question 10	4	4	0	0

<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3	2.8	-0.2	-5
Question 11	2	4	2	100
Question 12	4	3	-1	-25
Question 13	4	0	-4	-100
Question 14	4	3	-1	-25
Question 15	2	3	3	1500
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3.2	2.6	-0.2	290
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	4	3	-1	-25
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	4	4	0	0
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	4	3.8	-0.2	-5
Total Mean Score	3.1	4.6	1.5	96.66

Results for Grade Level 8

The Research Hypotheses asked how African American adolescent males in an alternative school perceive the importance of obtaining an education differ before and after engaging in a retention program for 4 ½ weeks. The assumption was their perception of its importance would increase as a result of exposure to this experience. Tables 10-13 show descriptive statistics (means), gain, and percent of change for the pretest results and posttest results. Participants had response options of 1-Strongly disagree to 4-Strongly Agree so the calculations are based on scores ranging from 1 to 4. For eighth graders, the scores indicated pretest (3.16), posttest (3.31), gain (0.15) and percentage (3.87). When looking at the overall perception change scores during the pretest and posttest, the 8th grade participants' scores indicated that participants were

positively impacted by the intervention and their perception of the importance of obtaining a college education was increased. Only student 7 had overall negative gain scores over the 20 items on the survey instrument. These overall results indicate that a variable may have been present during the intervention that caused their perception to be increased. Past research has pointed specifically to academic and non-academic factors as a reason for low retention rates among African American males in Higher Education. Accordingly, it can be inferred that increased participation in Retention Pathways played a role in the African American adolescent male participants' perception of the importance of obtaining an education for the current study as well.

Table 15 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 10

Student 10	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	4	3	-1	-25
Question 3	2	3	1	50
Question 4	3	4	1	33.33
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Score</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>11.67</i>
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	2	1	-1	-50
Question 8	3	4	1	33.33
Question 9	3	1	-2	-66.66
Question 10	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Bandura Mean Score</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>-3.33</i>
Question 11	4	4	0	0
Question 12	4	4	0	0

Question 13	4	4	0	0
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	4	1	-3	-75
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	4	3.4	-0.6	-15
Question 16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	3	4	1	33.33
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	4	4	0	0
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3.8	4	0.2	6.67
Total Mean Score	3.5	3.45	-0.05	-0.01

Table 16 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 11

Student 11	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question1	3	4	1	33.33
Question2	2	4	2	100
Question3	1	2	1	100
Question4	3	3	0	0
Question5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	2.6	3.4	0.8	46.67
Question6	4	3	-1	-33.33
Question7	1	1	0	0
Question8	3	2	-1	-33.33
Question9	2	3	1	50
Question10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	2.8	2.6	-0.2	-1.67
Question11	2	4	2	100
Question12	3	4	1	33.33
Question13	4	4	0	0
Question14	2	4	2	100

Question15	4	1	-3	-75
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3	3.4	0.4	31.67
Question16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	4	4	0	0
Question 18	3	4	1	33.33
Question 19	3	4	1	33.33
Question 20	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3.4	4	0.6	20
Total Mean Score	2.95	3.35	0.4	24.16

Table 17 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 12

Student 12	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	2	4	2	100
Question 3	2	1	-1	-50
Question 4	3	3	0	0
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	3	3.2	0.2	10
Question 6	3	4	1	33.33
Question 7	1	1	0	0
Question 8	3	3	0	0
Question 9	1	3	2	200
Question 10	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	2.2	3	0.8	53.33
Question 11	2	4	2	100
Question 12	3	4	1	33.33
Question 13	3	4	1	33.33
Question 14	3	4	1	33.33
Question 15	0	1	1	0

<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	2.2	3.4	1.2	40
Question 16	3	4	1	33.33
Question 17	3	1	-2	-66.66
Question 18	3	4	1	33.33
Question 19	2	4	2	100
Question 20	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	2.8	3.4	0.6	26.67
Total Mean Score	2.55	3.25	0.7	32.5

Table 18 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 13

Student 13	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	4	4	0	0
Question 2	2	2	0	0
Question 3	2	1	-1	-50
Question 4	2	3	1	50
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	2.8	2.8	0.0	0.0
Question 6	3	3	0	0
Question 7	1	1	0	0
Question 8	3	3	0	0
Question 9	3	2	-1	-33.33
Question 10	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	2.6	2.6	0.0	0.0
Question 11	3	4	1	33.33
Question 12	3	3	0	0
Question 13	4	3	-1	-25
Question 14	4	4	0	0
Question 15	2	1	-1	-50
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3.2	3	-0.2	-8.33
Question 16	3	3	0	0

Question 17	3	3	0	0
Question 18	3	3	0	0
Question 19	3	0	-3	-100
Question 20	4	0	-4	-100
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3.2	1.8	-1.4	-40
Total Mean Score	2.95	2.55	-0.4	-12.08

Table 19 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 14

Student 14	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question1	4	4	0	0
Question2	3	3	0	0
Question3	4	4	0	0
Question4	4	4	0	0
Question5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	3.8	3.8	0.0	0.0
Question6	3	3	0	0
Question7	1	4	3	300
Question8	4	4	0	0
Question9	4	4	0	0
Question10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	3.2	3.8	0.6	60
Question11	4	4	0	0
Question12	3	3	0	0
Question13	3	3	0	0
Question14	4	4	0	0
Question15	1	1	0	0
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	3	3	0.0	0.0
Question16	4	4	0	0
Question 17	3	3	0	0
Question 18	4	4	0	0

Question 19	4	4	0	0
Question 20	4	4	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	3.8	3.8	0.0	0.0
Total Mean Score	3.45	3.6	0.15	15

Table 20 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 15

Student 15	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	1	1	0	0
Question 2	3	3	0	0
Question 3	2	2	0	0
Question 4	2	2	0	0
Question 5	4	4	0	0
<i>Tinto Scores</i>	2.4	2.4	0.0	0.0
Question 6	2	4	2	100
Question 7	4	4	0	0
Question 8	4	1	-3	-75
Question 9	1	1	0	0
Question 10	1	1	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	2.4	2.2	-0.2	5
Question 11	3	3	0	0
Question 12	2	2	0	0
Question 13	2	2	0	0
Question 14	2	2	0	0
Question 15	2	2	0	0
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0
Question 16	2	2	0	0
Question 17	2	2	0	0
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	2	2	0	0
Question 20	1	1	0	0

<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0
Total Mean Score	2.3	2.25	-0.05	1.25

Table 21 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 16

Student 16	Pretest	Post-test	Gain	% Change
Question 1	3	4	1	33.33
Question 2	4	1	-3	-75
Question 3	1	2	1	100
Question 4	3	3	0	0
Question 5	3	4	1	33.33
<i>Tinto Mean Scores</i>	2.8	2.8	0.0	18.33
Question 6	1	4	3	300
Question 7	1	1	0	0
Question 8	3	1	-2	-66.66
Question 9	1	4	3	300
Question 10	4	4	0	0
<i>Bandura Mean Scores</i>	2	2.8	0.8	106.67
Question 11	4	4	0	0
Question 12	2	2	0	0
Question 13	1	4	3	300
Question 14	3	4	1	33.33
Question 15	1	1	0	0
<i>Kuh Mean Scores</i>	2.2	3	0.8	66.67
Question 16	3	4	1	33.33
Question 17	2	3	1	50
Question 18	4	4	0	0
Question 19	4	3	-1	-25

Question 20	3	3	0	0
<i>Chickering Mean Scores</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>11.67</i>
Total Mean Score	2.55	3	0.45	50.83

Results for Grade Level 8.5

The Research Hypotheses asked how African American adolescent males in an alternative school perceive the importance of obtaining an education differ before and after engaging in a retention program for 4 ½ weeks. The assumption was their perception of its importance would increase as a result of exposure to this experience. Tables 15-21 show descriptive statistics (means), gain, and percent of change for the pretest results and posttest results. Participants had response options of 1- Strongly disagree to 4-Strongly Agree so the calculations are based on scores ranging from 1 to 4. For 8.5 graders, the data indicates the following overall scores: pretest (2.80), posttest (3.35), change (0.55) and percentage (38.29).

When looking at the overall perception change scores during the pretest and posttest, the 8.5th grade participants' scores indicated that participants were generally positively impacted by the intervention and their perception of the importance of obtaining a college education was increased. Total mean scores of -0.01, 24.16, 32.5, -12.08, 15.00, 1.25, and 50.83 highlight this point. These results indicate that a variable may have been present during the intervention that caused their perception to be increased.

An analysis of the pretest and posttest results for Theory A consisted of a comparison of all 16 subjects for questions 1-5. Theory A consisted of Tinto's Theory of

the Stages of Student Departure. The following student data (31.2%) revealed no improvement in their perception of the importance of education was impacted by both social and intellectual distraction in their past for students 1, 13, 14, 15, 16. The student data (56.2%) also revealed that students 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 perception increased of the importance of education was impacted by both social and intellectual distraction in their past. In addition, analysis of the student data revealed that (12.5%) decreased the perception of the importance of education was impacted by both social and intellectual distraction in their past. A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measure of percent change of students 1-16 for all theories is presented in Table 22.

Table 22 Mean Pretest and Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for Student 1-16

Pretest Averages	Tinto	Bandura	Kuh	Chickering	Total % Change
Student1	3.6	3	3.4	3.8	3.45
Student2	3.2	3.2	3	3	3.1
Student3	1	1	1	1	1
Student4	2.6	3.4	2.8	3.6	3.1
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>2.65</i>	<i>2.55</i>	<i>2.85</i>	<i>2.66</i>
Student5	2.8	3	3.2	3.4	3.1
Student6	2.8	3.2	3.2	4	3.3
Student7	3.4	3.2	3.4	4	3.5
Student8	3	2.2	2.8	3.4	2.85
Student9	2.2	3	3.2	4	3.1
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>2.84</i>	<i>2.92</i>	<i>3.16</i>	<i>3.76</i>	<i>3.17</i>
Student10	3.4	2.8	4	3.8	3.5
Student11	2.6	2.8	3	3.4	2.95

Student12	3	2.2	2.2	2.8	2.55
Student13	2.8	2.6	3.2	3	2.9
Student14	3.8	3.2	3	3.8	3.45
Student15	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.3
Student16	2.8	2	2.2	3.2	2.55
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>2.97</i>	<i>2.57</i>	<i>2.83</i>	<i>3.17</i>	<i>2.89</i>
Total Mean Score	2.83	2.7	2.86	3.27	2.91

Table 23 Mean Posttest Measures of Students by Percent Change for All Theories

Posttest Averages	Tinto	Bandura	Kuh	Chickering	Total % Change
Student1	3.6	3.2	3.8	4	3.65
Student2	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.6	3.55
Student3	3.4	2	3.4	3.4	3.05
Student4	3.4	2.6	3.6	4	3.4
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>3.45</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>3.65</i>	<i>3.75</i>	<i>3.41</i>
Student5	3.4	3.2	4	4	3.65
Student6	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.4	3
Student7	3.2	2.8	3	3	3
Student8	3.6	3	3.4	4	3.5
Student9	3.4	2.8	3	3.8	3.25
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>3.24</i>	<i>2.92</i>	<i>3.32</i>	<i>3.64</i>	<i>3.28</i>
Student10	3.6	2.8	3.4	4	3.45
Student11	3.2	2.6	3.4	3.4	3.15
Student12	3.2	3	3.4	3.4	3.25
Student13	2.8	2.6	3	2.8	2.8

Student14	3.8	3.8	3	3.8	3.6
Student15	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.25
Student16	2.8	2.8	4	3.4	3.25
<i>Total Scores</i>	<i>3.11</i>	<i>2.83</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>3.29</i>	<i>3.11</i>
Total Mean Score	3.23	2.85	3.35	3.51	3.23

Table 24 Theory A: Tinto - Averages

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Gain
1	3.6	3.6	0
2	3.2	3.4	0.2
3	1	3.4	2.4
4	2.6	3.4	0.8
5	2.8	3.4	0.6
6	2.8	2.6	-0.2
7	3.4	3.2	-0.2
8	3	3.6	0.6
9	2.2	3.4	1.2
10	3.4	3.6	0.2
11	2.6	3.2	0.6
12	3	3.2	0.2
13	2.8	2.8	0
14	3.8	3.8	0
15	2.4	2.4	0
16	2.8	2.8	0

An analysis of the pretest and posttest results for Theory B consisted of a comparison of all 16 subjects for questions 6-10. Theory B consisted of Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The following student data (12.5%) revealed no improvement in their perception of the importance of education with regards to academic achievement for student 10, 13. The student data (50%) also revealed that students 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 14, 16 perception increased of the importance of education was impacted with regards to academic achievement. In addition, analysis of the student data revealed that (37.5%)

decreased of the perception of the importance of education was impacted with regards to academic achievement (see Table 25).

Table 25 Theory B: Bandura Averages

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Gain
1	3	3.2	0.2
2	3.2	3.4	0.2
3	1	2.5	1.5
4	3.4	2.6	-0.8
5	3	3.2	0.2
6	3.2	2.8	-0.4
7	3.2	2.8	-0.4
8	2.75	3	0.25
9	3	2.8	-0.2
10	2.8	2.8	0
11	2.8	2.6	-0.2
12	2.2	3	0.8
13	2.6	2.6	0
14	3.2	3.8	0.6
15	2.4	2.2	-0.2
16	2	2.8	0.8

An analysis of the pretest and posttest results for Theory C consisted of a comparison of all 16 subjects for questions 11-15. Theory C consisted of Kuh's Theory of Student Engagement on Grades and Persistence. The following student data (18.7%) revealed no improvement in their perception of the importance of education was impacted by the role of educators for students 6, 14, 15. The student data (62.5%) also

revealed that students 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 16 perception increased of the importance of education was impacted with regards to academic achievement. In addition, analysis of the student data revealed that (25%) decreased in their perception of the importance of education being impacted by the role of educators for students 7, 9, 10, 13 (See Table 26).

Table 26 Theory C: Kuh - Averages

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Gain
1	3.4	3.8	0.4
2	3	3.8	0.8
3	1	3.4	2.4
4	2.8	3.6	0.8
5	3.2	4	0.8
6	3.2	3.2	0
7	3.4	3	-0.4
8	2.8	3.4	0.6
9	3.2	3	-0.2
10	4	3.4	-0.6
11	3	3.4	0.4
12	2.75	3.4	1.2
13	3.2	3	-0.2
14	3	3	0
15	2.2	2.2	0
16	2.2	3	0.8

An analysis of the pretest and posttest results for Theory D consisted of a comparison of all 16 subjects for questions 16-20. Theory D consisted of Chickering's Theory of Student Engagement. The following student data (12.5%) revealed no improvement in their perception of the importance of education was impacted by their individual learning style for students 14, 15. The student data (62.5%) also revealed that students 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 16 perception of the importance of education were impacted by their individual learning style. In addition, analysis of the student data revealed that (25%) decreased of perception of the importance of education was impacted by their individual learning style for students 6, 7, 9, 13 (see Table 27).

Table 27 Theory D: Chickering - Averages

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Gain
1	3.8	4	0.2
2	3	3.6	0.6
3	1	3.4	2.4
4	3.6	4	0.4
5	3.4	4	0.6
6	4	3.4	-0.6
7	4	3	-1
8	3.4	4	0.6
9	4	3.8	-0.2
10	3.8	4	0.2
11	3.4	4	0.6
12	2.8	3.4	0.6
13	3	2.8	-0.2
14	3.8	3.8	0

15	2.2	2.2	0
16	3.2	3.4	0.2

Pretest	Tinto	Bandura	Kuh	Chickering	<i>Total Mean</i>	Posttest	Tinto	Bandura	Kuh	Chickering	<i>Total Mean</i>
Student 1	3.6	3	3.4	3.8	<i>3.45</i>	Student 1	3.6	3.2	3.8	4	<i>3.65</i>
Student 2	3.2	3.2	3	3	<i>3.1</i>	Student 2	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.6	<i>3.55</i>
Student 3	1	1	1	1	<i>1</i>	Student 3	3.4	2	3.4	3.4	<i>3.05</i>
Student 4	2.6	3.4	2.8	3.6	<i>3.1</i>	Student 4	3.4	2.6	3.6	4	<i>3.4</i>
Student 5	2.8	3	3.2	3.4	<i>3.1</i>	Student 5	3.4	3.2	4	4	<i>3.65</i>
Student 6	2.8	3.2	3.2	4	<i>3.3</i>	Student 6	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.4	<i>3</i>
Student 7	3.4	3.2	3.4	4	<i>3.5</i>	Student 7	3.2	2.8	3	3	<i>3</i>
Student 8	3	2.2	2.8	3.4	<i>2.85</i>	Student 8	3.6	3	3.4	4	<i>3.5</i>
Student 9	2.2	3	3.2	4	<i>3.1</i>	Student 9	3.4	2.8	3	3.8	<i>3.25</i>
Student 10	3.4	2.8	4	3.8	<i>3.5</i>	Student 10	3.6	2.8	3.4	4	<i>3.45</i>
Student 11	2.6	2.8	3	3.4	<i>2.95</i>	Student 11	3.2	2.6	3.4	3.4	<i>3.15</i>
Student 12	3	2.2	2.2	2.8	<i>2.55</i>	Student 12	3.2	3	3.4	3.4	<i>3.25</i>
Student 13	2.8	2.6	3.2	3	<i>2.9</i>	Student 13	2.8	2.6	3	2.8	<i>2.8</i>
Student 14	3.8	3.2	3	3.8	<i>3.45</i>	Student 14	3.8	3.8	3	3.8	<i>3.6</i>
Student 15	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.2	<i>2.3</i>	Student 15	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.2	<i>2.25</i>
Student 16	2.8	2	2.2	3.2	<i>2.55</i>	Student 16	2.8	2.8	4	3.4	<i>3.25</i>
Total Mean Score	2.83	2.7	2.86	3.27	<i>2.91</i>	Total Mean Score	3.23	2.85	3.35	3.51	<i>3.23</i>

The data in Table 28 shows that the participants saw a distinct value as it relates to education and educational attainment with only one total mean score below 2. All other total mean scores show that the participants scoring above 2. This means that students agree or strongly agree with the premises behind the four theoretical constructs. In terms of the intervention, 12 of the 16 total mean scores showed gains between the pretest and posttest scores. This means that 75% of the students experienced positive outcomes as a result of the intervention.

Table 29 Basic Statistical Measures, Student's t-test score for Theory A

Basic Statistical Measures	
Location	
Mean	0.400000
Median	0.200000
Mode	0.000000

Test	Statistic		p Value	
Student's t	t	2.419434	Pr>[t]	0.0287

The tests p Value 0.3158 (Student's t-test) showed that after Theory B (Bandura) was implemented there was no significant difference. The difference was found in M pretest = 2.7, M posttest = 2.85. Therefore the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was an effective treatment to increase the pretest to posttest scores. Basic Statistical Measures, t-test score for Theory B are presented in Table 30.

Table 30 Basic Statistical Measure, Student's t-test score for Theory B

Basic Statistical Measures	
Location	
Mean	0.14687
Median	0.10000
Mode	-0.40000

Test	Statistic		p Value	
Student's t	t	1.03777	Pr>[t]	0.3158

The tests p Value 0.1544 (Student's t-test) showed that after Theory C (Kuh) was implemented there is no significant difference. The difference was found in M pretest = 2.8625, M posttest = 3.35. Therefore the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was an effective treatment to increase the pretest to posttest scores. Basic Statistical Measures, t-test score for Theory C are presented in Table 31.

Table 31

Table 31 Basic Statistical Measure, Student's t-test for Theory C

Basic Statistical Measures	
Location	
Mean	0.390625
Median	0.400000
Mode	0.000000

Test	Statistic		p Value	
Student's t	t	2.197858	Pr>[t]	0.1544

The tests p Value 0.0441 (Student's t-test) showed that after Theory D (Chickering) was implemented there is a significant difference. The difference was found in M pretest = 3.275, M posttest = 3.5125. Therefore the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was an effective treatment to increase the pretest to posttest scores; however, the difference was not significant. Basic Statistical Measures, Student's t-test score for Theory D are presented in Table 32.

Table 32 Basic Statistical Measures, Student's t-test score for Theory D

Basic Statistical Measures	
Location	
Mean	0.275000

Median	0.200000
Mode	0.600000

Test	Statistic		p Value	
Student's t	t	1.49969	Pr>{ t }	0.0447

This study dealt with the paired Student's t-test. This analysis challenged the traditional approach of parametric versus nonparametric statistics and showed a consensus of the relative power of the independent means of the tests. This study supports the view that researchers can choose from parametric and nonparametric test to analyze without fear that one test is superior to the other regardless to the sample size (Blair & Higgins, 1980).

Summary

The main purpose of this one-group pretest posttest design quantitative study was to determine if there was any impact on the perception of the importance of education for African American male students in an Alternative School in rural southeast Georgia who participated in the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. Data (pretest and posttest) was systematically collected by a research assistant and analyzed by the primary researcher. The original methods section, Chapter 3, indicated that SPSS and Survey Monkey would be used to analyze the collected data. The results of the analysis indicated that the perception of about the importance of an education was increased in relations to the theoretical concepts of Tinto, Bandura, Kuh, and Chickering after the implementation of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. A comparison of mean pretest and posttest measures of percent change of Students 1-16 is presented in Table 28.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purposes of this study were threefold: (1) to develop a better understanding of adolescent African American males in an alternative school setting and their perception of the importance of a college education; (2) to examine if a 4 1/2 week intervention could yield a greater overall change on student perception of education; (3) to discover if changes occur (i.e. directional pattern) in their perception of the importance of post-secondary education. The theoretical approach was based on the framework of Vincent Tinto, Albert Bandura, George Kuh, and A.W. Chickering. Therefore, the theoretical framework is connected to the research hypotheses; consequently, the conclusions are also aligned to the theories as well. Alignment of Theorist/Theory, Research Hypotheses, and Conclusions is presented in Table 33.

Theorist/Theory	Theoretical Framework	Research Hypothesis	Conclusion	Literature Reference
Vincent Tinto Student Departure Theory	Vincent Tinto's (1975) landmark student integration model demarks the start of the current, national dialogue on undergraduate retention. The model theorizes that students who socially integrate into the campus community increase their commitment to the institution and are more likely to graduate (Tinto, 1975).	The Go to High School, Go to College intervention does not help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education	The percentage change by Theory A showed good effectiveness because nine out of 16 (56%) subjects reported a positive percent change during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Tinto's theory.	Tinto, V. (1975). Dropouts from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent literature. <i>A Review of Educational Research</i> , 45, 89-125.
Albert Bandura Social Learning Theory	In social learning theory Albert Bandura states behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Unlike Skinner, Bandura	The intervention does not impact the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement	The intervention had mixed results on the participants with an even split between those reporting positive and negative gain scores. As it relates to the	Bandura, A. (1977). <i>Social Learning Theory</i> . Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

	(1977) believes that humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behavior and its consequences.		intervention impacting retention, there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Bandura's theory.	
George Kuh Student Engagement Theory	<p>Student engagement is frequently used to, "depict students' willingness to participate in routine school activities, such as attending class, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class."</p> <p>However, the term is also increasingly used to describe student involvement in extra-curricular activities in the campus life of a school/college/university which are thought to have educational benefits as it is to student focus on their curricular studies</p>	The participants' perception about educators is not significantly altered as a result of the proposed intervention	The percentage change by Theory C showed some level of effectiveness because nine out of 16 (56%) subjects reported positive gain scores during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Kuh's theory.	Kuh, G.D., Cruce, T.M. and R. Shoup. 2008. Unmasking the Effects of Student Engagement on First-Year College Grades and Persistence. <i>The Journal of Higher Education</i> , Vol.79, 540-563.

A.W. Chickering Student Engagement Theory	<p>Chickering's theory focuses primarily on identity development. It examines this by means of seven vectors of development which contribute to the development of identity:^[2]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Competence • Managing Emotions • Moving through Autonomy toward Interdependence • Developing Mature Interpersonal relationships • Establishing Identity • Developing Purpose • Developing Integrity 	<p>There will be no significant difference in the perception among the participants and their engagement in the intervention program as it relates to the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models</p>	<p>The percentage change by Theory D showed good effectiveness because 10 out of 16 (62%) subjects reported positive gain scores during the pretest and posttest results. Also important here is that there was positive percent change among all three grades surveyed in this survey as it relates to Chickering's theory</p>	<p>Chickering, Alexander W.; Reisser, Linda (1993). <i>Education and Identity</i> (2 ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 978-1-55542-591-3.</p>
	<p>These vectors can be thought of as a series of</p>			

stages or tasks that deal with feeling, thinking, believing, and relating to others.

Table 33 Alignment of Theorist/Theory, Research Hypotheses, Conclusions

Retention in K-12 and retention in Higher Education are both issues of concern for leaders in those respective learning environments. However, retention in K-12 indicates that a student did not meet the fundamental criteria to earn promotion to the next grade. As a result the student is forced to repeat the grade the following year to get the additional reinforcement needed to advance. Unlike retention on the primary and secondary levels, retention in Higher Education is deemed acceptable because it indicates that the student has meet the requirements to remain in school in good standings. Consequently, when a student is retained in post-secondary and has advanced towards college graduations. Retention is positive in Higher Education but negative in K-12.

This study examined the impact of an educational intervention as a component in developing Retention Pathways for African American males attending an Alternative School. The central Research Hypotheses of this study was: The Go to High School, Go to College intervention does not significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education.

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention will significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education. This study employed a sample of middle school, African American male students who attended an alternative school in a rural southeast school district in Georgia. The students' ages ranged from 10-17 years of age in grades 7, 8, and 8.5. Those students enrolled in grade 8.5 have been retained for at least two years and have both behavioral and academic deficiencies. These students are currently enrolled in 8th grade courses in

addition to taking two (World History and Environmental Science) via a computer-based program.

This study examined whether student participation in the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum increased the perception of the importance of education in African American males in an alternative school in southeast Georgia. This intervention program, established in 1922, has the educational objective of helping learners to appreciate the importance of completing secondary and collegiate education as a road to societal and economic advancement. Go to High School, Go to College is designed to be culturally appropriate to teach African American students information and strategies that facilitate success while stressing the value of completing secondary and post-secondary education. The program has components that address violence/conflict prevention, what it means to be an African American male, current events, and mentorship. The primary researcher, who is a certified professional school counselor in the state of Georgia, presented weekly 55-minute classroom guidance lessons in an environment that respected the student's culture and experience, drew on African American traditions, and addressed concerns unique to an alternative school setting.

The researcher reduced the original nine units of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum to 4½ weeks to increase the likelihood of student completion within an academic grading period. With these modifications to the program, it was expected that the participants who completed Go to High School, Go to College would exhibit significantly greater increases in their perception of the importance of education as recorded in the difference between pretest and posttest scores.

There are several possible reasons the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum may have had a positive impact on the perception of the participants. The curriculum places a heavy emphasis on the impetus for making the difference in the success of young African American men, given that school completion is the single best predictor of future economic success. Examples of the units covered include self-esteem, violence prevention, current events, and leadership training. In general, the current study provides evidence that Go to High School, Go to College was successful in creating some positive changes in the goal setting and decision making approaches of the participants.

Research Hypotheses One

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention does not significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education.

The Go to High School, Go to College intervention will significantly help the participants disassociate themselves from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education. Using a quantitative approach, the study used a within subject design to examine the perception of adolescent African American males about the importance of obtaining a college education before and after an intervention focused on the theoretical framework of Vincent Tinto. For this study, findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the perception of the importance of obtaining a college education by African American adolescent males in an alternative school setting after a 4 1/2 week intervention. Data indicated that the perception of the importance of education for African American males was higher after the intervention (November 2013) compared to before the intervention

(October 2013). The results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample of students at an alternative school in a rural southeast Georgia community, who completed the Go to High School, Go to College intervention; however, the results strengthen previous findings that the focus on high school dropout prevention programs that begin in K-12 settings are more effective when the graduation initiatives are designed to encourage adolescents to graduate from high school and pursue a college education (Department of Education, 2012; Wesley, 1981). Additionally, considering the challenge of helping participants disassociate from past negative social and intellectual distractions and establish positive memberships as lifelong learners in secondary education (Tinto, 1993; Tinto & Froh, 1992), the results also reinforce previous findings suggesting that students who are actively involved in learning and are invaluable members of the learning community are more likely to stay focused and remain in school until graduation (Tinto, Love & Russo, 1993). Moreover, since the findings of the current study revealed an increase in the participants' perception of education after the intervention compared to before the intervention, it can be inferred that students who are able to balance the scholastic demands of their schools with their personal needs are more likely to exceed academically and graduate (Sebold, 2008; Sommer & Dumont, 2011; Tinto, 2003). The results of the current study are not surprising given the fact that "when students feel like valuable parts of the institutional community both academically and socially, they are less likely to depart" (Clark & Cundiff, 2011, p. 619).

Research Hypotheses Two

The intervention does not significantly impact the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement.

The intervention will significantly impact the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement.

Similarly, data also indicated that there was a significant difference in the perception of adolescent African American males about the importance of obtaining a college education before and after an intervention, resulting from the theoretical framework of Bandura. For this study, findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the perception of the importance of obtaining a college education by African American adolescent males in an alternative school setting after a 4 1/2 week intervention. Specifically, data revealed that the perception of the importance of education for African American males was higher after the intervention (November 2013) compare to before the intervention (October 2013). The results strengthen previous findings that focus on high school dropout prevention programs that begin in K-12 settings are more effective when the graduation initiatives are designed to encourage adolescents to graduate from high school and pursue a college education (Department of Education, 2012; Palmer, 2012; Wesley, 1981), however, the findings of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample of students at an alternative school in a rural southeast Georgia community, who completed the Go to High School, Go to College intervention. Additionally, considering the impact on the participants' perception around the value of academic achievement (Bandura, 1986; Strayhorn, 2008; Tinto, 2003), the results also reinforce previous findings suggesting that students who are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating are more likely to overcome the academic and non-academic factors that influence college retention (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, since the findings of the current study revealed an increase in the participants' perception of

education after the intervention compared to before the intervention, it can be inferred that the students who are able to recognize and govern the connections between human behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors are more likely to exceed academically and graduate (Bandura, 1986; Mosely, 2009; Rose, 2011). The results of the current study are not surprising given the fact that when “lower socioeconomic groups and especially first generation college students pursue college degrees, education is an attainable means of upward social mobility” (Rose, 2011).

Research Hypotheses Three

The participants’ perception about educators is not significantly altered as a result of the proposed intervention.

The participants’ perception about educators will significantly altered as a result of the proposed intervention

The current study also produced findings that revealed there was a significant difference in the perception of the importance of obtaining a college education by African American adolescent males in an alternative school setting after a 4.5 week intervention in conjunction with the theoretical framework of George Kuh. Data indicated that the perception of the importance of education for African American males was higher after the intervention (November 2013) compared to before the intervention (October 2013). The results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample of students at an alternative school in a rural southeast Georgia community, who completed the Go to High School, Go to College intervention; however, the results strengthen previous findings that the focus on high school dropout prevention program that begin in K-12 settings are more effective when the graduation initiatives are designed to encourage

adolescents to graduate from high school and pursue a college education (Department of Education, 2012). Additionally, considering the challenge of altering the participants' perception about educators as a result of the proposed intervention (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 2003), the results also reinforce previous findings suggesting that students who attend institutions committed to developing support systems designed to promote the retention, progression, and graduation of its student body are more likely to stay focused and remain in school until graduation (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 2004). Moreover, since the findings of the current study revealed an increase in the participants' perception of education after the intervention compared to before the intervention, it can be inferred that the students who attended institutions that provided the appropriate resources and support systems compelled student success and achievement (Kuh, 2009; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). The results of the current study are not surprising given the fact that "when students concentrate on social and academic involvement and use the resources provided by their institutions, they are less likely to depart" (Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Kuh, 2009).

Research Hypotheses Four

There will be no significant difference in the perception among the participants and their engagement in the intervention program as it relates to the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models

There will be a significant difference in the perception among the participants and their engagement in the intervention program as it relates to the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models

From these results, the researcher concluded that the perception of adolescent African American males about the importance of obtaining a college education before

and after an intervention does change after a 4.5 week intervention based on the theoretical framework of A.W. Chickering. Furthermore, the perception of the importance of education for African American males was higher after the intervention (November 2013) compared to before the intervention (October 2013). The results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample of students at an alternative school in a rural southeast Georgia community, who completed the Go to High School, Go to College intervention. As a result, the results strengthen previous findings that the focus on high school dropout prevention programs that begin in K-12 settings are more effective when the graduation initiatives are designed to encourage adolescents to graduate from high school and pursue a college education (Department of Education, 2012; Palmer, 2012; Wesley, 1981). Additionally, considering the challenge of helping participants change the perception of the value of mentors and/or positive educational role models (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Tinto & Froh, 1992), the results also reinforce previous findings suggesting that students who develop professional relationships with educators are more likely to stay focused and remain in school until graduation (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Tinto, 2003). Moreover, since the findings of the current study revealed an increase in the participants' perception of education after the intervention compared to before the intervention, students who sustain professional relationships with educators throughout their undergraduate years are more likely to succeed academically and graduate. (Kuh, 2009; Sebold, 2008; Sommer & Dumont, 2011). The results of the current study are not surprising given the fact that "when students develop professional relationships between the educator and the student, students are less likely to depart." (Clarke & Cundiff, 2011).

Independent Variables

7th Grade Participants

Results from the current study found a significant difference in the perception of the importance of a college education between 7th, 8th, and 8.5th grade participants during the pretest and posttest stages. Seventh graders may have had the greatest percent change in comparison to the older participants because they realize that they have a better chance of returning to the traditional school setting by improving their grades, behavior, and attendance. Therefore, students who were actively engaged during the intervention received the greatest benefits from the materials presented. Many of the older students who were retained in primary, elementary, or middle school for two years or more were not eligible to return to the traditional school setting until they qualify for high school in the 9th grade. They are categorized as over aged students.

As the 7th graders began career exploration with their classroom guidance classes, they may have understood the importance of earning a minimum of a high school diploma to achieve their post-secondary goals to go to technical school, enter the workforce, or enlist in military service. These results affirm many findings from previous scholars (Harper, 2009; Lange & Sletten, 2002) who found African American males who do not graduate from high school are at a higher risk of living in poverty, lack health insurance, and earn less money than their counterparts who earn a high school diploma or college degree. Since the 7th grade participants were the youngest of the three grade levels in this study, the results confirm that Retention Pathways are most effective when presented at the foundation of the secondary school levels before the students have experienced a great amount of failure in school. The sooner the interventions are

presented and their perception is altered, the more impact they apparently have on the student population to earn more money, live more comfortably, and enjoy a better quality of life than their parents and grandparents who did not graduate from high school (CCI Research, 2009).

8th Grade Participants

Results from the current study found a significant difference in the perception of the importance of a college education between 8th, 7th, and 8.5th grade participants during the pretest and posttest stages. Eighth graders may have had the most scattered (positive and negative) percent change in comparison to the other participants because they realize that this is their final year of middle school and they are preparing to go to high school in the fall 2014. Unlike 7th graders who may be transitioned back to the traditional school setting or the 8.5th graders who may have the options of transitioning back to the traditional school setting or adult education (GED, Job Corps, or Youth Challenge Academy) at the age 16, eighth graders are only 14 or 15 years old and have limited options at the end of this school year. Therefore, disengaged during the intervention and received less benefits from the materials presented. Since they were not over aged students they were required to attend the alternative school for the entire 2013-2014 school year and are only eligible to return to the traditional school setting when they qualify for high school in the 9th grade.

As the 8th graders began career exploration to create their Individual Graduation Plans (IGP), they may understand the importance of earning a minimum of a high school diploma to achieve their post-secondary goals to go to technical school, enter the workforce, or enlist in military service. These results affirm many findings from

previous scholars (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Ramirez, 2012) who found that race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status also play a major role in the disparity between those who attain a high school diploma and those who do not. Since the 8th grade participants who were both on target for high school graduation and age appropriate for their grade level, the results confirm that Retention Pathways are most effective when presented at the foundation of the secondary school levels before the students reach high school and become a negative stereotype that plagues this population nationally. The experience of K-12 lays the educational foundation for this population and explains the stereotypes and obstacles that emerge and are prevalent in the minds of males about the relevancy of education in their lives.

8.5 Grade Participants

Overall, results indicated that there was a significant difference in the perception of the importance of a college education between 8.5th, 7th, and 8th grade participants during the pretest (October 2013) and posttest stages (November 2013). However, 8.5 graders indicated a slightly lower level of percent change compared to 7th and 8th graders. Since 8.5 graders are the oldest participants, they may have been less engaged in the intervention, and consequently, did not benefit at the same level that the younger participants increased. In many instances, these participants were 16 and 17 years of age and less interested in completed their high school education and more interested in obtaining their driver's licenses and gainful employment. If they were to successfully earn promotion to the 9th grade at the end of the 2013-14 school year, they would be 20 or 21 years old by the time they graduated from high school. For these participants,

entering college as a 21 year old freshman was inconceivable; therefore, they were not fully engaged in the intervention.

As the 8.5th graders began career exploration with their classroom guidance classes, they may have understood the importance of earning a minimum of a high school diploma to achieve their post-secondary goals to go to technical school, enter the workforce, or enlist in military service. However, many of them explored the possibility of entering GED classes, Georgia National Guard Youth Challenge Academy or Job Corps as an alternative to earning a traditional high school diploma. These results affirm many findings from previous scholars (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003) who found African American males who do not graduate from high school need special attention to be directed to dropout prevention and special education of at-risk youth and adolescents. Since the 8.5th grade participants were the oldest of the three grade levels in this study, the results confirm that Retention Pathways are most effective when presented at the foundation of the secondary school levels before the students have experience a greater amount of failure in school. The public educational system has been scrutinized and exposed for being substandard and inferior because less advantaged students were failing to graduate or obtain the basic skills to enter the work force as viable members of society (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Recommendation for Future Research

The data derived from this study are specific to African American males in a rural alternative school in a southeast Georgia public school district. The first recommendation of this study is to replicate it with other rural, urban, and suburban Georgia school districts. Collecting more data on the perception of the importance of

obtaining a college education of African American males in an alternative school setting would help determine if similar perception issues exist throughout the state.

Future research is necessary to examine the impact of this curriculum and other educational initiatives on target group of alternative middle school students. For example, it is recommended that future studies compare the impact of this modified version of Go to High School, Go to College and the original version on the retention, progression and graduation problems of other African American males in primary, secondary and post-secondary settings. The modified version in this study was designed to promote high levels of student participation in a short-term time frame during weekly classroom guidance sessions with the primary researcher as the facilitator.

However, the original, Go to High School, Go to College curriculum is designed for students in grades 7-12 and should be implemented by groups of adult college-educated men. The suggested activities include field trips, sporting events, community service projects, proper work ethics, goal setting, health and hygiene. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers record the impact of these different versions of Go to High School, Go to College with samples of various ethnicities that may vary in geographical and educational settings (K-12).

Future research may also use experimental, qualitative or mixed methodology (versus quasi-experimental) designs to assess the impact of educational initiatives on perceptions of the importance of education. Few male academic studies have randomly assigned middle school, alternative school students to single group interventions; most rely on control group assignments. In order to increase the numbers of subjects, the researcher would need to include larger numbers of alternative schools. Researchers

should also attempt to recruit a more diverse range of male participants from different racial, cultural, and ethnic demographics. While the current study encouraged students to attend 4 out of 4 sessions, it is unclear whether students who attended every session experienced a greater benefit than those who were periodically absent.

Additionally, being able to compare data with other Georgia Public School Districts with adolescent alternative school males would aid in discovering whether changes in the perception of the importance of education are specific to this rural school district or if other specific characteristics influence the perception of academic achievement. Moreover, the researcher recommends that comparable data for alternative school students from other states, e.g. South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida be collected. This type of study would enable the examination of the perception of the importance of a college education within various demographics of alternative school students (e.g. race, gender, regions, school district size, and socioeconomic status). This data would help reveal if all African American males in an alternative school setting have changes in perception about education after a dropout prevention intervention.

Limitations

The current study presents important findings concerning the impact of Go to High School, Go to College curriculum on the perception of the importance of education by African American males in an alternative school in a rural southeast Georgia. However, several limitations of the study should be noted, some of which constrain the generalization of findings. First, this study focused on a target population of middle school, African American males in an alternative school setting in a rural school district in Southeast Georgia. Current findings may not generalize to other, rural school districts

in the northern, southern, western, or eastern regions of the country. The findings are confined to African American male students and may not generalize to Caucasian, Asian, or Hispanic males in a traditional or alternative school setting. Current findings are confined to middle school students and may not generalize to elementary or high school students.

Future studies should include multiple demographics of ethnicity, including Caucasian, Hispanic and Asian males in both middle schools and high schools. Parent participation would also enable the researcher to determine whether parents note change in the participants' perceptions in their home environments and not restricted to the school classroom only. The pretest posttest design method of data collection utilized in this study may also be considered a limitation. Given that the intervention focused on the perception of the importance of education using a quantitative approach, it is possible that the utilization of a qualitative and/or mixed methodology would have yielded in-depth opened ended responses. Other measures of the participants' perceptions might have been adopted, including observational instruments from teachers, role models, administrators, paraprofessionals, and mentors.

The one group pretest posttest design has the following threats to validity: history, maturation testing, instrumentation, and statistical regression. The research took the following preventive steps to eliminate threats to the research designs: (1) History - a field trip to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia supported the curriculum by introducing the participants to college men currently enrolled in a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). This event took place between the pretest and posttest but had a positive impact on the participants because it gave many of the students a first

time experience on a college campus; (2) Maturation Testing – to prevent the threat posed by a longitudinal study, the researcher selected a short time span of 4 ½ weeks which prevented the participants from growing older or internal states from changing; (3) Instrumentation – the researcher conducted a Face Validity with 5 ineligible middle school students (three black female, one white female and one white male) who did not meet the criteria for this study.

Implications for Educational Leaders

In spite of the current study's limitations, the findings have implications for administrators, school counselors, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. In this study, the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was found to successfully increase the perception of the importance of education by the participants. Results from the study will provide more information to campus leaders, school administrators, school counselors, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders in order to develop, implement, and revise Retention Pathways for African American males at risk of failing to graduate high school or attend college.

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of the importance of education on adolescent, alternative school, African American males in rural southeast Georgia. The results of this study support the theoretical concepts of Vincent Tinto's Stages of Student Departure, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, George Kuh's Student Engagement on Grades and Persistence, and A.W. Chickering's Theory of Student Engagement. In this study, student participation in the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum was associated with an increase in the perception of the importance of education.

This study was designed to provide the school community and their stakeholders with strategies to change the student's negative perception of the importance of education. Administrators were encouraged to support their staff members who proposed preventive strategies that are designed to address their students from a cultural perspective as a means of changing their negative mindset about education. School Counselors were encouraged to incorporate preventive interventions into the individual, small group, and classroom guidance session with student as a means of teaching skills for academic persistence and success.

Likewise, educators have a better understand of the need to address each student from a culturally sensitive perspective and to understand that all students, especially minority students have academic and non-academic factors that are unique from their Asian and Caucasian counterparts. Parents benefited from this intervention because it made them more aware of the advantages of enrolling their students in educational and extra-curricular activities/initiatives that empowered their students from a culturally sensitive approach.

Lastly, community stakeholders who served as mentors and positive role models acquired a greater appreciation for the impact that their volunteerism had on each student that they mentored. The overall benefit of this intervention was to empower the entire educational community about the benefits of early intervention programs as a means of preparing students to further their post-secondary educational pursuits beginning in middle school.

Such results indicate the potential beneficial importance of implementing educational initiatives, such as Go to High School, Go to College, for comparable at-risk

African American male populations. One of the important components of the curriculum's effectiveness appears to have been its focus on equipping participants with the self-confidence, determination, and academic skills to become productive citizens and lifelong learners. Thus, future male intervention programs should consider the incorporation of empowerment curriculums in grades K-12 to provide youth with a foundation of pride and confidence to ensure academic achievement.

The current study suggests that culturally sensitive educational initiatives, such as Go to High School, Go to College, may effectively increase the perception of the importance of education for African American males in an alternative school setting.

The researcher might use a broader range of measures to evaluate educational interventions and the subsequent changes in perceptions in multiple settings, including the home and the classroom. Future studies may also examine the differential impact of Go to High School, Go to College on the immediate male family members of the participants, especially fathers, grandfathers, uncles and brothers.

Finally, future researchers should adopt longitudinal designs to examine the impact of Go to High School, Go to College and other educational interventions on the perception of the importance of education on African American males in alternative school settings over time. The current study assessed change after the implementation of a modified 4½ week curriculum with a pretest and posttest survey design. It would be intriguing to analyze the changes in perception with a comparison group of similar demographics over a period of 6-months, yearly, or longer to determine the change.

Conclusion

For this study, African American adolescent males were analyzed due to their continual history of performing poorly academically as compared to their African American female, Caucasian American males and females in terms of college recruitment, progression, and retention rates (Hafer, 2007; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Monrad, 2007; USG, 2012). Moreover, because academic performance has shown to be intertwined with academic and non-academic factors, it was important to understand what variables may influence both of these. Though past research has studied the low retention rates of African American males in college, until now, no research has been generated about the perception of the importance of a college education among African American males who are exposed to a dropout prevention program in an alternative school setting.

These findings suggest the need for administrators, school counselors, educators, parents, and community stakeholders to develop, implement, and further investigate educational initiatives that incorporate the values and traditions of college-educated African American males, as well as other specific racial/ethnic groups. Interventions that distinguish and acknowledge that African American males have unique academic and non-academic needs as they pursue secondary and postsecondary education may be most effective in helping middle school students who are assigned to an alternative school setting to address their academic and behavioral challenges. These preventive programs would help to increase the college recruitment, retention, and graduation rates among African American males. The results from this study will add to the existing body of literature on African American male's perception of the importance of obtaining a college

education, and ultimately allow for implementation of Retention Pathways as a means of increasing graduation rates of all adolescent African American males in danger of dropping out.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STUDENT RETENTION QUESTIONNAIRE

African American male middle school students in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) vary with respect to how they approach their high school experiences. Some plan to go into military service, the workplace, and others plan to continue their education. This survey is designed to help educators, counselors, parents, and community stakeholders better understand their students' attitudes about the importance of education. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each question honestly. Thank you for taking a few minutes to respond to the following questions:

Strongly Agree (**SA**) Agree (**A**) Strongly Disagree (**SA**) Disagree (**D**)

To what degree to you agree with each statement

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. My family encourages me to do my best in school | SA A SD D |
| 2. When I was growing up, I got into trouble in school with my friends | SA A SD D |
| 3. I actively participate in an extracurricular after-school activity | SA A SD D |
| 4. I am a positive role model for my peers at school | SA A SD D |
| 5. My immediate goal after 8 th grade is to attend high school | SA A SD D |
| 6. I am self-motivated to control my behavior at school | SA A SD D |
| 7. I realize that I allow others to manipulate my behavior | SA A SD D |
| 8. I often feel motivated to take responsibility for my choices | SA A SD D |
| 9. I am interested in learning new behaviors from my classmates | SA A SD D |
| 10. My immediate goal is to improve my behavior | SA A SD D |
| 11. I am passing all of my academic classes | SA A SD D |
| 12. I often participate in classroom discussions | SA A SD D |
| 13. When I struggle in a class, I ask my teacher for help | SA A SD D |
| 14. I set short-term goals to do my best in all of my classes | SA A SD D |

15. I actively participate in credit recovery programs
SA A SD D
16. I know my learning style (auditory, kinesthetic, visual)
SA A SD D
17. I learn best when my teacher uses visual aids
(powerpoints, videos, graphs, promethean boards, etc.,)
SA A S D
18. I am very interested in lessons that allow me to be active and hands on
SA A SD D
19. I enjoy music, lectures, and reading aloud when learning new material
SA A SD D
20. In the classroom, I am able to learn by listening, seeing, and using my hands
SA A SD D

APPENDIX B**TALLY ANALYSIS SHEET**

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Theoretical Concept</u>	<u>Author(s)</u>
1	Stages of Student Departure	Vincent Tinto
2	Stages of Student Departure	Vincent Tinto
3	Stages of Student Departure	Vincent Tinto
4	Stages of Student Departure	Vincent Tinto
5	Stages of Student Departure	Vincent Tinto
6	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura
7	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura
8	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura
9	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura
10	Social Learning Theory	Albert Bandura
11	Student Engagement on grades and persistence	George Kuh
12	Student Engagement on grades and persistence	George Kuh
13	Student Engagement on grades and persistence	George Kuh
14	Student Engagement on grades and persistence	George Kuh
15	Student Engagement on grades and persistence	George Kuh
16	Student Engagement	A.W. Chickering
17	Student Engagement	A.W. Chickering
18	Student Engagement	A.W. Chickering
19	Student Engagement	A.W. Chickering
20	Student Engagement	A.W. Chickering

APPENDIX C**LETTER OF SUPPORT****Mail Message**

Main menu | Options

From: Earl Ishmal
To: Thaddeus Shubert
Date: Tuesday - September 3, 2013 10:30 AM
Subject: Re: Gentle reminder

Mr. Shubert,
Please allow me to apologize for my tardiness, you have my full support in this endeavor.

>>> Thaddeus Shubert 8/31/2013 12:43 PM >>>

Mr. Ishmal,
Since I recently passed my second of three defenses of my dissertation, I am requesting your support as the principal of Burke County Alternative School as I am preparing my application for the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

My dissertation title is Retention Pathways for African American Males. I am attaching my Preprospectus Overview with the outlined details of my proposal.

Please reply to this email by stating that you support my proposed research project at Burke County Alternative School during weekly classroom guidance pending approval from the IRB.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Thaddeus L. Shubert, ABD
Professional School Counselor
Burke County Public School

The Best is Yet to Come!

APPENDIX D**LETTER OF SUPPORT****Mail Message**

Main menu | Options

From: Rudy Falana
To: Shubert, Thaddeus
Date: Wednesday - August 28, 2013 12:50 PM
Subject:Re: Letter of support

Mr. Shubert,

I support your proposed research project at Burke County Alternative School.

>>> Thaddeus Shubert 8/28/2013 10:06 AM >>>

Mr. Falana,

Since I recently passed my second of three defenses of my dissertation, I am requesting your support as the Superintendent of Burke County Public Schools as I am preparing my application for the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

My dissertation title is Retention Pathways for African American Males. I am attaching my Preprospectus Overview with the outlined details of my proposal.

Please reply to this email by stating that you support my proposed research project at Burke County Alternative School during weekly classroom guidance pending approval from the IRB.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Thaddeus L. Shubert, ABD
Professional School Counselor
Burke County Public School

The Best is Yet to Come!

APPENDIX E**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Thaddeus L. Shubert. I am a doctoral candidate at Georgia Southern University in the Educational Administration in High Education program.

The purpose of this research project is to collect data about: a) the perception of middle school African American males about the importance of obtaining a college education; and b) the impact of the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum as an intervention. The findings of this survey will be used to assist administrators, educators, counselors, and parents to better understand the perception of their students in regards to their education.

Participation in this research will include completion in a pretest and posttest researcher designed survey and an intervention. The intervention will consist of four 55-minute classroom guidance session during a 4 ½ week grading period. The intervention will be the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum.

Discomforts and Risks: I do not anticipate any risks to the participants in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Benefits:

- The benefits to participants will be to find ways to increase the retention rates as this study is used by the researcher to increase the knowledge base of retention programs in the study of retention, progression and graduation rates of African American males in K-16.
- The benefits to society will be to decrease the attrition rate as this study is used by the researcher to increase the knowledge base of Retention Pathways in the study of retention, progression and graduation rates of African American males in K-16.

Duration/Time required from the participant: Each participant will be required to participate in a pretest and posttest survey which is approximately 20-minutes. During the 4 ½ weeks following the pretest, each participant will participate in four 55-

minute classroom guidance sessions. The intervention will be the Go to High School, Go to College curriculum. The total estimated time will be 4.5 hours.

Statement of Confidentiality: The survey responses will be input into a program developed on Survey Monkey. The data will be imported into SPSS for a report to be generated. After the SPSS report is generated, the data will be analyzed for themes and commonalities using descriptive statistics. The original surveys, survey monkey reports and SPSS printouts will be filed in a locked cabinet in the home office of the primary investigator at 212 East Eighth Street, Waynesboro, GA 30830. One key will be given to the supervising advisor, Dr. Devon Jensen and the second key will be kept with the primary investigator. All documents will be secured for a minimum of five years.

Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated in any way.

Voluntary Participation: Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the survey. If you decide to participate in the survey, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect.

Penalty: No student's conduct or academic grades of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in this study.

HIPAA: If the research falls under the HIPAA regulations, please go to the following site where additional information can be located on wording that will need to be included in the informed consent form: [HIPAAIC PLEASE NOTE: If your research project does not fall under the HIPAA regulations, please delete this statement \(12\).](#)

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below OR,

- a. I am asking your permission for your child to participate in this study, and will provide him/her with a simplified "assent" letter/verbal description before enrolling them in this study
- b. Provide assent letter or written documentation of the verbal briefing you will give the child (if he/she is too young to read)

this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number

H14085.

Title of Project: Retention Pathways for African American Males
Principal Investigator: Thaddeus L. Shubert, 212 East Eighth Street, Waynesboro,
Georgia 30830, 706-231-4272 and
ts02162@GeorgiaSouthern.edu
Faculty Advisor: Devon Jensen, leadership, Technology and Human
Development P.O. Box 8013, Statesboro, Georgia 30456,
912-478-7267 and devonjensen@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature

Date