Determination of the Relationship between Students' Perceived Values of Education and High School Dropout Rates in an East Tennessee High School

By

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Abstract

Students who fail to graduate high school not only harm themselves, they also inflict a long-lasting impact on the communities in which they live. Many factors have been linked to students dropping out of high school, including low attendance, low socioeconomic status, and minority race. Minority races, specifically African American and Hispanic, tend to have the highest dropout rates in the United States. A school district located in East Tennessee was studied to determine if students' own perceived values of education was a variable affecting high dropout rates. It was found that, of the adult high school students surveyed (who had previously dropped out of the traditional high school), a lack of value of education was not a reason that they dropped out of high school. The implications of these findings were that, despite seeing a value in education, other factors lead to these students dropping out of the traditional high school. The dominant factors that were common among the participants included low socioeconomic status and a lack of formal parental education.

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Problem

In the past 40 years, many high schools in the United States have focused some of their resources on curbing dropout rates to include some sort of dropout prevention program (Burzichelli, Mazckey, & Bausmith, 2011). These authors compiled data about many of these programs to compare their effectiveness on retaining "at-risk" students (students who are identified as likely to drop out before completing a degree). Defining students as at-risk may allow school districts to develop appropriate intervention methods to keep these students in school. In order to label students as at-risk, it may be important to establish a better understanding of the factors that may lead to students dropping out (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Suh, & Suh, 2007). In this study, a relationship between students' self-perceived value of their education, and other factors of high school dropouts was established.

A school district in East Tennessee served as the population for this study. Minority races, a major factor that has been linked to high school dropouts (Griffin, 2002), can essentially be ignored due to the predominantly white demographic of the study population. Although the school district has a problem with high school dropouts, minorities—specifically African American and Hispanic, both of which are typically linked to dropouts—are not largely represented by this district (Tennessee Department of Education - Report Card, 2013). This rural county may have high dropout rates because the student perception of the value of education may be low. The purpose of this study was to examine student opinions about education, by collecting and analyzing data gathered from student surveys and in-person interviews. It is this relationship—students' self-perceived value of education and the desire to graduate from high school—that was the focus of this study.

This chapter contains a brief overview of the background research that initiated this study on high school dropouts; the theoretical framework that supports this research; and the significance, design, and description of the sample population. This study underscores the need for more research that explores the reason(s) behind high school dropouts. Determining the connection between student self-perceptions of education and their desire to complete high school may be used to improve graduation rates and decrease dropout rates in both the county being studied, and in the United States as a whole.

Background

Research concerning high school dropouts has recognized that students failing to complete high school are a national problem (Cookson, 2011; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). This recognition became apparent with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (Meier & Wood, 2004). As part of this law (107-110), schools had to decrease the educational gap between specific groups of students, such as minorities and special education. In addition to decreasing this gap, schools were mandated to increase graduation rates and decrease the number of students who dropped out of school.

In order to solve the problem of high school dropouts, researchers identified specific criteria that have been linked to students who fail to complete high school (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson 2007; Ingrum, 2006; Lowe, 2010; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Factors such as minority status, special education, and low socioeconomic status are often associated with high school dropouts (Ingrum, 2006; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Despite these recognized factors, other unidentified causes may still exist. Additionally, established factors may need to be expanded upon. One factor that may be expanded upon is the relationship between how students view education and their desire to graduate.

Bradley and Corwyn (2002) revealed a definitive link between child development and socioeconomic status (SES). These researchers indicated "that low SES children more often manifest symptoms of psychiatric disturbance and maladaptive social functioning" as compared to children without this financial issue (p. 377). Socioeconomic status (specifically lower income levels) has been established as a contributing factor to students dropping out (Ingrum, 2006). Bradley and Corwyn (2002) and Ingrum (2006) indicated that lower income might cause a lack of development that leads to common traits shared among dropouts. In the current study, an East Tennessee school district was observed to determine if this link does in fact cause an increase in dropout rates. The goal of this research was to provide school districts with precise preventative programs that may effectively lower dropout rates.

Social Concerns for the Study

Social concerns pertaining to high school dropouts can cover a broad spectrum of topics. In this section, some of these topics are discussed, including school characteristics, employment, and parental education.

School characteristics. Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) stated that factors that lead to high school dropouts are not just derived from the students and their families, but also the characteristics of the students' schools, such as the student population, school grade span (e.g., 9-12 grade levels, 8-12, 10-12, etc.) and the actual interactions of teachers and students. Using Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson's (2007) research as a guide, the characteristics of an East Tennessee school district were examined to determine if these factors may be part of the reason that only four out of every five students graduate. The information about the school district studied was gathered from school records that were reported to the state.

Employment. Montmarquette, Wiennot-Briot, and Dagenais (2007) found that students who worked were more likely to have problems than those who did not work. If students need to provide income for their families, then their grades and/or ability to complete high school can be affected. A well-known study by Stevenson and Ellsworth (1991) determined that students who had the desire, or the need, to enter the workforce had less reason to stay in school. However, they did not include student opinions on the value of education.

Parental education. Research has indicated that the more education people have, the higher their income (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Higher levels of income from parents may mean that students will not be economically disadvantaged; hence, they may not need to produce additional income for their family. The more education a parent has, the more likely the child is to complete K-12 grade levels in their education and go on to receive post-secondary education (Parental education attainment and higher education opportunities, 1999). Coleman (1966) found that one of the major factors leading to a student's success in school was the student's family background. The combination of these two ideas (parental higher education levels increase socioeconomic status and students' focus in school) supports White's (1982) comparison of socioeconomic status and a student's ability to do well in school. White indicated that students who do not fall into the low SES category are more likely to excel in education.

Ingrum (2006) looked at several factors that increased a student's likelihood of either graduating or dropping out of school. Factors considered in that study were the mother's level of education, and if the student had a learning disability (special education). The researcher concluded that the more education the mother had, the more likely the student was to graduate high school. The data analyzed for that study also suggested that for "each additional grade completed by the biological mother, the student is 2.72% less likely to drop out of high school"

(pp. 77-78). Ingrum's research determined that a student who has a learning disability has a 47.7% higher chance of dropping out as compared to a student showing average learning capabilities. These findings let the researcher pointed out that students who came from a low socioeconomic family and had a learning disability had a greater chance of dropping out of high school than regular education students who live above the poverty line. In the conclusion, Ingrum (2006) stated that not only do income levels and special education individually impact a student's chances of graduating high school, but as a compounded factor, low income and special education can be more devastating to the chances of a student graduating.

In order to determine the best way to lower dropout rates, it may first be important to understand the reason(s) behind why students fail to complete high school. Identifying students as at-risk for dropping out is an important step in creating these solutions (Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Previous research has identified low socioeconomic status, family support, and many other factors that can help identify these at-risk students (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Coleman, 1966; Montmarquette, Wiennot-Briot, & Dagenais, 2007). Historically, these problems have remained status quo and as such, future research of the factors that cause high school dropouts needs to address this national problem.

An East Tennessee School District

The school district studied in this research consisted of over 91% white students and less than 2% African American students (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). Although minority race, specifically African American and Hispanic, has been associated with high school dropouts, it is not a contributing factor in a school district with so few minorities. The graduation rate for this county in the 2010-2011 school year was only 80.3% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). This rate was significantly lower than both the national

averages and the 85.6% graduation rate for the State of Tennessee. Due to the demographics of the researched school district, race can be ignored, thus placing the focus on other factors that may be contribute to an increasing high school dropout rate in this district.

Theoretical Framework

Seminal studies conducted by Bertrand (1962) and Coleman (1966) may have relevance as indicated by a more recent study by Ingrum (2006). The Ingrum study examined the relationships between poverty, low socioeconomic status, special education, and high school dropouts, while Bertrand (1962) found that some of the main factors that caused students to drop out of high school are low socioeconomic status and a lack of value placed on education by both parents and students. Ingrum (2006) found these reasons to be valid, but added "learning disabilities" to the possible influences on a student's likelihood of graduation.

Ingrum (2006) provided support to the theoretical concepts established by Bertrand (1962), and discussed the findings of Coleman and DeLeirre (2003), which showed that parental lack of value on their son or daughter's high school education is a reason for high school dropout. Ingrum (2006) linked low socioeconomic status to a lack of support from parents, specifically for students with learning disabilities. However, the logical conclusion is that parents of non-disability students may also have difficulty aiding their children with school. One reason for the lack of support from home could be that parents do not have the academic background to help their children. Another reason could be that the parents simply do not care about their child's education, a trait that could possibly transferred to their children (Bertrand, 1962).

Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) focused on school characteristics and what effect they had on high school dropouts. Their findings indicated that a lack of academic achievement among the students was a major cause of dropouts. Additionally, these researchers found that a

lack of family involvement was related to students dropping out. This lack of academic achievement and family involvement seems to relate to the failure of parents to support their children academically. This lack of involvement may stem from parents (and students) not seeing the value in education.

Using theories about high school dropouts that were established by Bertrand (1962) and reinforced by Ingrum (2006) and Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007), this study focused on determining whether a relationship between how students perceive the value of education in their lives and their reason(s) for dropping out of high school exists. Through similar methods of surveys and interviews used by Ingrum (2006) and Lowe (2010), data were analyzed to determine the possibility of a relationship. Expanding upon the significance of student-perceived value of education would strengthen the theorized determinants of high school dropouts, as previously established by Bertrand (1962).

Statement of the Problem

The general problem addressed by this research was high school dropouts. In the United States, for the school years 2010-11 and 2011-12, the National Center for Educational Statistics (US Department of Education, 2014) reported that the event dropout rate for high school students in grades 9 – 12 was 3.3 percent for each school year. This 3.3% accounts for an average number of students that dropped out for each grade level signifying that approximately 13.2% of students that entered high school did not graduate. Students dropping out of high school are a problem not only for the students, but also for their communities and their schools (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). High school dropouts are less likely to become productive members of society and will typically become an economic burden to the community in which they live (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). The No Child Left Behind act of 2001 (107 U.S.C., 110,

2002) requires that schools lower their dropout rates and increase their graduation rate (Meier & Wood, 2004). In order to reduce the burden on local communities and to provide a better future for at-risk students, educators may need to determine a viable solution to the rising problem of high school dropouts. However, before a solution to high school dropouts can be achieved, investigations into the factors that contribute to the decision to drop out may need to be conducted. The specific problem for this research was determining if a relationship exist between students' perceived value of education and their decision to drop out of school.

The Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the issue of high school dropouts in an East Tennessee school district by means of establishing if students' perceived value of education has a direct effect on the student's desire to graduate. This school district, with its lack of minority students, does not fit the type of school system where one would expect such high dropout rates. Therefore, a possible relationship between perceived value of education and the desire to graduate could explain why such a large percentage of students drop out in this school district. In order to gain insight on the opinions of the students, surveys and interviews were used similarly to previous research concerned with high school dropouts (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson 2007; Ingrum, 2006; Lowe, 2010). Identifying important factors and explaining why students drop out of high school may lead to appropriate measures that can be taken by this school district to decrease dropout rates.

The typical factors that relate to high school dropouts may not exist in the researched East Tennessee county. This county is a low-income area; however, it lacks a minority population, which is an established factor for dropout rates in the United States. Yet, in this county there is a high dropout rate, thus indicating the influence of other possible factors in the students' decision

to drop out. The low socioeconomic community is one factor that may contribute to this county's high dropout rate, but identifying other possible factors may be helpful in finding a solution to this problem. Examination of the existence of a possible additional cause to the normal concepts associated with high school dropouts was the goal of this study. The more factors that can definitively be linked to student dropout rates, the more an efficient solution to this problem may be determined and implemented.

Research Question

The research question for this study was as follows:

In a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do student perceptions on the value of education relate to the desire to graduate from high school?

Burzichelli, Mackey, and Bausmith (2011) suggested that, nationwide, some of the contributing factors to a student dropping out of high school include socioeconomic status, parental education level, and race. Using these common factors to identify at-risk students provides a starting place to determine why students choose not to complete high school. Using this same logic, Ingrum (2006) surveyed students, faculty, and community members to examine why students were dropping out of school. Ingrum's (2006) study determined that one major reason was a lack of support from home. This study examined the theories that Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith (2011) and Ingrum (2006) had established, as well as the additional possible factor of student-perceived values of education, in order to determine why students in an East Tennessee school district are dropping out of high school at a higher rate than surrounding counties.

Significance of Study

Considering the implications that dropouts have on educational systems (and on society in general), it may be important to better understand the causes, so educators may provide more relevant solutions to the issue. Since the role of the students' perceived value of education has not been fully studied, an actual determination of the relationship between this factor and students' desires to graduate from high school seems necessary to be established. Many factors tend to suggest that a percentage of students do not care about their education and subsequently drop out (Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). This study intended to provide a link between how students view what they are taught and the need in their lives for this education. Filling this gap in the research may allow educators to find more ways to decrease dropout rates in the United States. A better understanding of the issue of high school dropouts in one school system may lead to an overall better understanding of these issues on a national scale. The more information that is available about high school dropouts, the better chance an individual school district, or even the federal government, has at finding a way to decrease this number and increase graduation rates, thus improving the quality of education in the country.

Research Method

In order to collect and analyze data appropriately, a mixed methods research was conducted. Quantitative data were used to show statistical relationships among variables, such as students' income level, race, and gender, as well as qualitative data about students' opinions. The data were collected via the use of surveys and questionnaires, which were given to students (ages 18 – 20) at an adult high in an East Tennessee county. This method of gathering data was appropriate for researching high school dropouts, because it was previously justified by researchers such as Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007), Ingrum (2006), and Lowe (2010).

Creswell (2009) explained that when dealing with social phenomenon, a mixed method allows for better conclusions. In this study, quantitative questions concerning sex, age, race, income level, parental education level, and desired postsecondary education were asked. Even though these quantitative questions allowed for statistical comparisons to be made, they did not allow the participants to truly express the reasoning behind the answers they provided. That was why qualitative questions were used to give a better insight to the participants' opinions.

Lowe (2010) conducted interviews for a dissertation to determine the reasons why African American students dropped out of high school in North Carolina. Following this example, one of the questions that were asked of the participants in the current study was whether or not they would be willing to take part in an interview at a later date. This interview process allowed more in-depth and specific questions to be asked based on responses from the questionnaires. To gain the best insight on high school students, it is important to focus both on students who intended to graduate and those who did not. Lessard, Fortin, Marcotte, and Royer (2009) proposed that by determining why some at-risk students stay in school, researchers may be able to solve the issue of high school dropouts.

Prior to gathering data in the East Tennessee county used in this study, a pilot study was conducted to show the validity of the instruments. Since these instruments were created specifically for this study, they were initially approved by professors at Maryville College for reliability and validity. After this approval, the instruments were additionally validated by administering them to a small sample of students in different East Tennessee school districts.

To determine why students drop out of high school, surveys and questionnaires were given to approximately half of the 75-100 students at an adult high school, which enrolled students from ages 18-20. This age range was desirable because many of the questions the participants

answered required the students to remember the opinions they had while still in traditional high school (prior to dropping out).

Research Design

The mixed method design, the population, and the sample are discussed in this section. As part of the population discussion, statistics about the overall student population of the researched county are explained. The adult high school students in this school district typically drop out of a high school in the same county, so the information about the K-12 population is included.

Explanatory Design

The mixed methods design used in this research is what Creswell (2009) named *Explanatory Design*. In this method, quantitative data were collected first and then qualitative data collection followed. This order was important because the information collected from the quantitative portion was used to determine what qualitative data would be gathered. Although more weight was placed on the quantitative data, the use of qualitative data to support the quantitative finding was important. It is only through the examination of both types of data that a conclusion was reached.

Study Population

The sample population of adults enrolled in an adult high school was between 18 and 20 years of age. The adult high school in the researched East Tennessee school district offered both GED and high school diploma programs. Since enrollment in these programs is voluntary, the number of students changed drastically throughout the year. The fall semester tends to have the highest enrollment and was the best time to conduct this research. According to the principal of the adult high school, enrollment in the fall typically reached between 75 and 100 students. The ages of the students at the adult high school ranged from 18-70+. However, despite the vast array

of ages, the only students in the sample population were 18-20 years old. The vast majority of these 18-20 year-olds were students who, prior to dropping out, attended a school in the East Tennessee school district under observation. For this reason, the statistics about this East Tennessee county school district were the reference point to the students at the adult high school.

The total student population of the research county was approximately 14,000 (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Of these 14,000 students, 63.8% were considered economically disadvantaged. This level of low-income students is slightly greater than the statewide statistic of 58.6%. This county has a much lower number of minorities when compared to the rest of the state. African American students and Hispanic students, on the state level, represent 24.1% and 7.3% respectively. In the researched county, African American students make up only 2.0% and Hispanic make up just 7.5%. The percentage of white students in this county is 88.8% as compared to the state's 66.3%.

Sample

The actual sample size was less than what had been anticipated, because the number of students that were in the 18-20 year-old range at the adult high school was much lower than expected. Only 22 students met the age requirement of this study, and just 21 of the 22 students chose to be participants. The only student that was in the appropriate age range who did not volunteer to participate was absent from school during the data collection process. The small sample still has significance due to the 95.4% participation of the available students.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope

Acknowledging assumptions, limitations, and the scope of research allows for a critical examination of the information obtained (Stating the obvious: Writing assumptions, limitation, and delimitations, 2014; University of Southhampton, 2014). Assumptions are concepts that the

researcher had to assume to be true in order to conduct the research and limitations are restrictions that may have prevented the study from a more in-depth discovery, and the scope refers to the specifics of this research and how the research is contained within certain parameters (Baron, 2008). These three topics (assumptions, limitations, and scope) are discussed below.

Assumptions

The assumption was made that all of the participants would answer truthfully and would understand the questions that they were asked. Another major assumption was that the participants would remember what their opinions about certain things were several years ago (when they were still in traditional high school). Participants may not accurately recall their opinions from previous years. However, since dropping out of high school was a big decision for these students, presumably the reason(s) they had for doing it should be easy to recall.

Limitations

One major limitation was the time and access to students. Both night and day classes are offered for students at the adult high school, and many of them gain high school credits via credit recovery software. These factors led to a less structured time when students were available. Coordinating with the principal and staff at the adult high school allowed for the creation of a reasonable plan to get the needed number of participants.

The fact that the study focused on students who were in the 18-20 year-old range at the adult high school was also a limitation for the generalization of the findings.

Scope

The scope of this study was limited to one specific school system with specific demographics. The findings, even though unique to this East Tennessee county school district,

may be applicable to not only other schools in the area, but also other schools nationwide that may have similar demographics. Conducting research with all schools would be unrealistic, so the focus of this research was on providing insights that may be applied universally to schools across the United States.

Definitions of Terms

The term "high school dropout" has multiple meanings, depending upon the context in which it is used. As explained by Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, and Thompson (2004), "there are three kinds of dropout statistics, . . . each has a different definition and produces a different rate and slightly different picture of the magnitude of the problem" (p. 9).

For the purpose of this study, three different groups of students were considered high school dropouts. The first group consisted of those who drop out of high school and did not receive any form of diploma for their education. The second group consisted of those who received a high school diploma, but it took them more than the four years and a summer to complete, as mandated by the state of Tennessee. The third group of students considered as dropouts was formed by

those who transferred from a traditional high school to a GED program (even though students may have received a General Equivalency Degree, they still did not graduate with a high school diploma and will, therefore, be listed as a dropout in the State of Tennessee).

An adult high school in Tennessee is defined by the Department of Education (2013) as a school regulated by a local school board in which the students may earn some or all credits needed for a high school diploma. Students must not be enrolled in any other public school (officially withdrawn) and must have a minimum age of 17. Adult high schools are public and

must be made available, free of cost, to anyone who meets these requirements and has not yet received a high school diploma.

Research Findings

The data collected from the adult high school students were statistically analyzed in order to determine similarities between this group of high school dropouts and national and state statistics. Students' perceived values of education in their lives were also examined. The findings of this research are briefly explained in this section.

Comparison to State and National High School Dropout Characteristics

Common characteristics among high school dropouts include minority status, low socioeconomic status, and a lack of parental education (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Griffin, 2002; Ingrum, 2006). The findings of this research concerning these three characteristics are discussed in this section.

Race. On both the state and national level, being considered a minority race, specifically African American and Hispanic, increases the likelihood of becoming a high school dropout (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Nationally, 17.6% of Hispanic students and 9.3% of African American students do not graduate high school. In Tennessee, the dropout rates for African American and Hispanic students are greater than 20% (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The dropout rates for minorities in the researched school district are lower than the state level; however, the percentage of minorities that drop out may be irrelevant when the overall population of this district is considered.

Less than 2% of the students in the researched school district identified themselves as African American (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). The researched county was over 91% white, but the sample population was only 71% white. The 19% of

students who listed themselves as non-white was more than the 9% of this school district. This data is inconclusive as to the effect of race on high school dropouts in this school district, because the participants only represented students who dropped out and then returned to school to complete their high school education.

Socioeconomic status. Low socioeconomic status has been linked to high school dropouts (Ingrum, 2006). According to this research, low socioeconomic status was a common characteristic among the high school dropouts who participated in the surveys.

Nearly 69% of the participants who knew their household income said that it was less than $30,000. Therefore, the majority of these students fall in the low socioeconomic status. In fact, 81% did not pay full price for lunch while in high school (67% free and 14% reduced). In order to qualify for free or reduced meals, the student must fall into the low socioeconomic status. As reported by the State of Tennessee in 2013 (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013), 64.1% of the students in the researched county were considered "economically disadvantaged." A link between socioeconomic status and high school dropouts in this school district was revealed by a higher percentage of low socioeconomic students at the adult high school (as compared to the regular K-12 students). These findings reiterated the existence of the link between low income and high school dropouts as discussed by Ingrum (2006), Bradley and Corwin (2002), and Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007).

Parental education level. The more education a parent has, the more likely the child is to complete K-12 education and go on to receive post-secondary education (Parental education attainment and higher education opportunities, 1999). Coleman (1966) found that one of the major factors in success in school is the student's family background. That finding is still valid as indicated by Ingrum (2006), and the current study in which only 6.5% of parents of these

students had bachelor's degrees, and 22.5% of the students stated that their mothers did not complete high school. From these numbers, it is possible to infer that parental education has the same effect on the researched school district as does the national level.

Student Perceived Value of Education

The purpose of this research was to determine what effect (if any) student-perceived values of education have on students' decision to drop out of high school. The conclusion drawn from this research was that the students who dropped out and returned to the adult high school did see value in education. As explained in Chapter V, there is not enough data to conclude that student-perceived value of education has no effect on high school dropout rates in the school district as a whole, because the only persons surveyed were those who had returned to formal education.

Summary

High school dropouts are a problem on a national level for both the dropouts themselves and the communities in which they live (Ingrum, 2006). Before a solution to this problem can be determined, it may be important that a better understanding of why students drop be acquired. Common characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, and parental education levels continue to be linked to students that drop out of high school.

The determination of an existence of a relationship between high school dropouts and students' perceived value of education, in an East Tennessee school district was the purpose of this research. By using an East Tennessee school district as the population for this study, the factor of race was practically eliminated since over 90% of the students were white. If the statistics about race and dropouts held true, then a school system with very few minorities should have a higher graduation rate than the average. Despite this statistical assumption, the researched

county, according to the statistics of the 2010-2011 school year, had a graduation rate that was lower by 5% than the State of Tennessee's average.

The findings were that the adult high school students in this county did display several characteristics associated with high school dropouts. Low socioeconomic status and lack of parental educational levels were two of the common characteristics that have been identified as items linked to high school drop outs (Ingrum, 2006). The conclusion was that, although there were similarities between this researched school district and national trends pertaining to high school dropouts, students' perceived value of education in their lives was not a reason for these students' decision to have dropped out of high school. The majority of the participants stated that they saw the value in education; however, they still dropped out of school. Due to the nature of the sample (students who returned to formal education), an overall conclusion cannot be drawn about the high school dropouts in this county.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

This study was designed with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the issue of high school dropouts in an East Tennessee county by means of establishing if student-perceived values of education have a direct effect on the students' desire to graduate. The problem statement of this research was: Does a relationship exist between student-perceived values of education and the decision to drop out of high school? There are correlations among the statistics concerning high school dropouts, but there is not a definitive causation about why students do not graduate. The research question that was answered was: *In a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do students' perceptions on the value of education relate to the desire to graduate from high school?*

In the literature, there are many common characteristics among students who do not graduate from high school, including minority status, male gender, low socioeconomic status, and low parental education (Bowers, Sprott, & Taff, 2012; Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011; Chritle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Ingrum 2006; Lowe, 2010.). These characteristics are more of a correlation among those who drop out, as opposed to explaining why they chose to drop out. Some of the common characteristics discussed within this chapter are low-socioeconomic status, minority race (specifically African American and Hispanic), low parental education level, and low school attendance. Many of the traits that high school dropouts have in common can be linked to one another.

Low parental education levels have been linked to low socioeconomic status (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), and a larger percentage of minorities live under the poverty line than do white Americans (McCartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013). According to the U.S. Census (2012),

in 2009 14.3% of whites lived below the poverty line, 25.8% and 25.3% of African Americans and Hispanics, respectively, lived under this same poverty level. Even though low parental education levels and low socioeconomic status can be linked to minorities and high school dropout rates, this study intended to discover yet another common trait that these high school dropouts may share—a lack of desire to complete high school because of a low opinion of the value of formal education. The implications of how values and beliefs affect human behavior is also discussed, to show how this link between a student's opinion and his/her desire to complete high school can affect his/her chances of dropping out.

One section of this chapter specifically focuses on the issue of race as a reason to drop out of high school. Understanding the implications discussed by the literature (Griffin, 2002; Peguero, 2011; Woo & Sakamoto, 2010) about racial issues and success in high school is pertinent to the argument made by this study: although race may be a factor in high school drop outs, there may be an underlying reason that students drop out that has nothing to do with being a low-income minority. This is not to say that the literature on African American students is incorrect; rather, it attempts to reveal another interpretation of their findings, and perhaps emphasize that race is an easy excuse for some students to use as to their reason to drop out.

There is a paucity of literature concerning student opinions and dropout rates. This paucity can potentially be filled as a result of this research. Even though only one school system was studied, the results could be extrapolated to other similar school systems in order to find a solution to the problem of high school dropouts.

In this chapter, several aspects concerning high school dropouts and how this issue has been portrayed in the literature are presented. A brief history is discussed, followed by how the concept of high school dropouts is defined in modern schools. Common characteristics among

dropouts, minority psychological implications, and personality traits of high school dropouts are then discussed. The consequences for both individuals and society as a whole are examined in the next section. Following this, the implementation of programs aimed at decreasing dropout rates, and Tennessee's specific statistics about high school dropouts are discussed. Finally, the gaps in the literature as well as related values, beliefs, and human behavior concerning high school dropouts are explained.

The following is the order of the topics discussed—historic overview, comparison of dropout rates to other countries, high school dropouts, consequences of dropping out, dropout prevention programs, Tennessee schools and dropout rates, gaps in the literature, and values, beliefs, and human behavior. The section pertaining to high school dropouts includes sub-sections that cover common characteristics, minority psychological implications, and personality traits relating to high school dropouts.

Historic Overview of High School Dropouts

A brief history of twentieth-century education in the United States is discussed in this section. To better understand the concept of high school dropouts, the law that required children to attend school is explained. This explanation will enable a link to the steps leading to the first high school dropout to be seen.

In the year 1919, the Progressive Education Association was founded by Stanwood Cobb (Schugurensky, Daniel, & Aguirre, 2002). The founding of the Progressive Education Association began what could be considered modern education in the United States. Informal schooling was no longer an option, since it was now the law in every state in the United States. Education was taking on a new concept as "child-centered curriculum emerged" (Schugurensky, Daniel, & Aguirre, 2002, p. 2).

Funding for public schools was expanded in 1958 with the passing of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (P.L. 85-864; 72 Stat. 1580). This new law provided federal funds for math, science, and foreign languages (Ornstein & Levine, 1984). This funding came four years after the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (347 U.S. 483) in which it was ruled that public schools must be desegregated (Ornstein & Levine, 1984). With these changes in the laws, public school became a place where every child could receive an education equally with the help of public funds.

High school graduation rates have been on the decline since the 1960s (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010). As graduation rates decreased, high school dropout rates increased. This increase is one of the factors that eventually led to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115) which had major effects on the US educational system (Meier, 2004). In addition to new laws governing education, dropout prevention programs started to become important concepts, as keeping students in school was considered a priority among educators (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011).

Comparisons of the US Educational System to other Countries

According to the results of the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) every three years, the United States students ranked 17th in reading, 23rd in science, and 31st in mathematics (OECD, 2013). As compared to other industrialized countries, the United States falls short in the area of public education. According to a publication entitled, “International Test Scores: Poor US Test Results Tied to Weak Curriculum” (2011), the United States scored in the bottom third of the 26 countries studied in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. In addition, the United States also has lower graduation rates than many developed nations. Cookson (2011)

mentioned that the US had graduation rates lower than 10 other developed countries (United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Ireland, Germany, Finland and Denmark). Finland (which reportedly has the best schools in the world), has many cultural and social differences when compared to the United States. These cultural and social differences may contribute to Finland's higher rate of high school graduation as compared to the United States. Hogan (2011) pointed out that Finland's social programs provide children with food, clothing, and housing that, more or less, eliminate the low socioeconomic environment that has been linked in the US to a lower chance of educational success.

Teachers in Finland are paid in a similar manner as US teachers. Even without a higher salary, only about 10% of the college graduates in Finland are accepted as teachers (Wilde, 2012). Finland offered free preschool that was focused on non-academics, such as socialization and self-reflection. This type of environment may aid in these students' further personal development, which can then be linked to higher graduation rates (Wilde, 2012; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002) .

High School Dropouts

The concept of high school dropouts is discussed in this section, and includes a definition, common characteristics, implication of minorities, and personality traits of high school dropouts. Understanding the commonalities shared by students who fail to graduate high school is important to this research.

In Tennessee, a high school dropout has been defined as a student who does not complete high school in the legally allotted time of four years and a summer (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). If a student attends another establishment (such as an adult high school) and receives a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), he or she is not considered a high school

graduate. Special education students who receive a Certificate of Attendance are not considered to be high school graduates either. For the purpose of this study, Tennessee's definition of "dropout" has been used.

Students who are no longer in high school are in one of two categories: either they completed high school by getting the state-required number of credits in the four-year and a summer timeframe and are considered a graduate, or they did not meet the graduation requirements and are considered high school dropouts. Although some of the data discussed within this chapter does not specify on the researchers' definitions of dropouts, using the simplified categories of either high school graduate or dropout will allow for a clearer estimation of graduation and dropout rates.

Common Characteristics of High School Dropouts

Some of the common characteristics that high school dropouts share include low socioeconomic status and minority race -specifically, African American and Hispanic- (Bowers, Sprott, & Taff, 2012). Although these two characteristics are prevalent in the majority of the research on high school dropouts (Ingrum, 2006; Lowe, 2010; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007), they are not the only common characteristics that are shared among students who do not graduate high school. Other characteristics that may be associated with high school dropouts include special education, parental education, gender, and school attendance.

Low income, learning disabilities, and parental education. Ingrum's research (2006) focused on low-income students, students with learning disabilities, and minority students as common traits among the majority of dropouts. Ingrum's study hypothesized that students who come from low-income families, and who have a learning disability will be more likely to drop out of school because these students do not feel like they fit in with the concept of school and of

education. The same study also related the concept of Human Capital Theory to why students drop out. The researcher explained that some students realize that they will make less money if they drop out of high school, but the amount of effort required to graduate is too high for the foreseen potential income that they will earn.

Ingrum (2006) also researched several factors that added to a student's likelihood of either graduating or dropping out of school. Two of the major factors considered were the students' mothers' level of education, and whether the student had a learning disability or not. Ingrum found that the more education the mother had, the more likely the student was to graduate high school. The data suggested that, "each additional grade completed by the biological mother, the student is 2.72% less likely to drop out of high school" (Ingrum, 2006, pp. 77-78). The researcher determined that students with a learning disability have a 47.7% greater chance of dropping out than a student displaying average education capabilities. In conclusion, Ingrum (2006) indicated that not only do the factors of income level and special education impact a student's chances of graduating from high school, but these indicators can be compounded, creating a more devastating factor for students who have both of these traits.

The main topic analyzed concerning socioeconomic status (SES) was income level; however, it is actually a much more complicated concept than just money. The level of an individual's SES has many contributing factors, including "family income, parental education, and occupational status" (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002, p. 371). Since SES is such a complex concept, it has many effects on all of the members of a family. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) suggested that these effects, for children, start prior to their birth and continue well into their adult lives. Further, the SES of their families directly affects the way the children develop as they age.

Children who come from a low-income SES level are more likely to possess underdeveloped cognitive skills, which then develop into poor performance in school.

School attendance. In addition to underdeveloped skills, students who come from low-income families are more likely to have a high number of absences (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). For some students, being absent from school is not a big concern, because they not only have the intelligence to catch back up to their classmates, but they also have educated parents at home who can support them. Although students from a low SES family may have a high level of intelligence, they often do not have parents at home who can help them, since the parents are likely lacking formal education. Therefore, it may seem that there is a cycle of uneducated families falling into poverty, and thus their children may be more likely to fail to complete high school and post-secondary education.

According to Weitzeman et al. (1982), students who miss a lot of school are much more likely to fall behind and to drop out of school before graduation. Weitzeman's study focused on children's health and revealed that students who miss a lot of school, for whatever reason, usually fall behind in their studies. According to Bradley and Corwyn (2002), students from low SES families are more likely to miss school, and it does not matter whether the child is ill or simply lacks motivation from their parents. Students have an increased chance of dropping out of school regardless of the number of absences in high school if they did not do well in kindergarten through eighth grades, or they missed too many days during the elementary school years (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Ptochnick, 2007).

Importance of K-8. There are several reasons why the younger years of a student's education are important to his/her attainment of a high school diploma. For example, if a student has to repeat a grade, whether it is due to excessive absences or failure in acquiring passing

grades, then that student has a better chance of dropping out of high school. Social promotion is seen as a better method to keep students on track to graduate (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Ptochnick, 2007). However, social promotion may lead to other reasons for a student to drop out of high school. For example, the student may not be prepared for the rigor of classes that will be required in high school. Sparks, Johnson, & Akos (2010) found that there was a direct correlation between an eighth grade standardized math test and dropping out in the ninth grade – approximately one third of the ninth grade dropouts scored below grade level as opposed to only 15.4% of those that did not dropout.

Effects of NCLB. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act drastically changed many things about education in the United States. Two of the act's major goals were to raise the rigor of public education, and to close the achievement gap of minority students and white students (Meir & Wood, 2004). Hahnel (2009) explained that the NCLB act had some success in raising achievement of all students, but it did not lessen the gap between minorities and white students. Since there is a high percentage of minorities who fall into low SES families, these concepts can be related to reveal that low SES students have a lower level of achievement. This low level of achievement coupled with increasingly difficult standards can explain why students who fall into the low SES category are more likely to drop out. For some, it may be that the rigor of the coursework is simply too difficult. This theory would also align with Ingrum's (2006) assertions that the increased quality of life due to having a high school diploma is simply not enough reason to struggle through four seemingly difficult years of high school. Contrary to this theory, it should also be noted that not all research supports the idea that low SES status affects academic achievement. According to White (1982), there is a very weak correlation between the variable

of SES and academic achievement. This study can be somewhat negated due to the increase in rigor of education over the past 30 years.

Graduation exams. One other thing worth noting about academic achievement and high school dropout rates is that cumulative exit exams do not have a negative effect on graduation rates (Warren & Jenkins, 2005). The lack of academic achievement that results in dropping out of school is not based on a single test (or series of tests). It is instead based on a lack of completing and receiving the appropriate credits needed to graduate high school.

Support from home. Aside from low income, absences from school, learning disabilities, and falling behind academically, students may also drop out because of an overall lack of support from home. This lack of support does not simply stem from parents showing little concern over the education of their children; it is more likely that this lack of support is due to parents' insufficient education to help the student(s) with their assignments. This relationship can be seen in comparing parental education level and the likelihood of a student going to college. Logically, if a student is a high school dropout, then the student will more than likely not attend college. According to Dubow, Boxer, and Huessmann (2009), parental education can be a great predictor to the level of education that a child will attain.

School characteristics. A student's learning environment holds many variables that can influence his or her decision to drop out of high school. Alspaugh (1998) conducted a study to determine what school characteristics can be linked to high school dropouts, and considered school size, high school grade span, units of high school credit, and extracurricular activities as the main influencers. Alspaugh found that the larger a high school is, the higher the dropout rate. This higher dropout rate can be attributed "to a deterioration in school climate associated with school size" (Alspaugh, 1998, p. 184).

A school's grade span, which is simply the number of grades that a school offers, was shown to have an inverse effect on the dropout rate (Alspaugh, 1998). The more grades contained in a school, the less likely a student is to drop out. Alspaugh explained that this is due to the relationship between changing schools and losing student achievement. The more a student changes schools, the more student achievement is lost. For example, in a school system in which students go to grades K-6 in one school and grades 7-12 in their other school, the students only have one chance to lose this academic achievement. In a more common setup with grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12, there are more school changes and thus the students will have more opportunities for academic achievement loss. Alderman (2001) confirmed Alspaugh's (1998) conclusion that the more transitions a school system places its students through, the higher the dropout rate. However, this higher dropout rate may not be due to a lack of academic achievement since Dove, Pearson, and Hooper (2010) showed that grade span configuration did not have a significant effect on sixth graders' academic achievement. Even though grade-span may not have an effect on academic achievement, Gasper, DeLuca, and Estacion (2012) showed that "youth who switch schools are more likely to demonstrate a wide array of negative behavioral and educational outcomes, including dropping out of high school" (p. 487).

When considering what classes are offered at schools, Alspaugh (1998) theorized that, even though the intended outcome was to increase student ability to relate to schoolwork, an increase in number of vocational classes had a negative effect on school climate, and thus had a negative effect on graduation rates. The concept of trying to peak the interests of students in classes offered at high school has been suggested by many before. Often, students who drop out feel that they have very little to gain from being in school; they do not relate to what is being taught, and that their education is of little, if any, use to them (Griffin, 2002; Lowe, 2010).

Extracurricular activities. Another aspect that many researches have related to high school dropouts is the availability of and participation in extracurricular activities. There are two main types of extracurricular activities at the high school level: academic-related and nonacademic-related. Nonacademic extracurricular activities had a positive influence on at-risk students' chances of becoming high school graduates while academic-related extracurricular activities, such as language clubs, academic teams, and student committees, had no real effect on students' likelihood of graduation (Ralph & McNeal, 1995). Peguero (2011) concluded that eighth grade students that were involved with extra-curricular activities were more likely to graduate high school than students who were not involved in these after-school activities. Mahoney (2014) further indicated that if an "individual and his or her social network participate in extracurricular activities the risk of early school dropout is diminished significantly" (p. 143).

Employment. Another concept to consider when looking at commonalities among high school dropouts is their employment status. Although it may be hard to find problems with working students, when work causes them to drop out, a reason for concern exists. There are two main issues with high school students who become members of the work force. The first issue is that working does not allow them time to focus on their studies and can thus cause them to fall behind academically (which is already linked to dropping out). When students work less than 15 hours a week, there is no significant effect on their schoolwork; however, when they work more than this, their classwork receives a negative influence (Montmarquette, Viennot-Briot, & Dagenais, 2007).

Another aspect of working high school students is the appeal of the work force (having a steady income) over gaining an education. For low-income families, having another breadwinner can be very important. Some minorities, specifically Hispanics, are more likely to drop out of

high school because of increased minimum wages, but this was not the case for white or African American students (Crofton, Anderson, & Rawe, 2009).

Minority Race Psychological Implications

Joining the workforce may explain the Hispanic population's high rate of dropouts, but what reason(s) exist for nearly 10% of African American students not graduating from high school? One theory supported by research has to do with a distinct cultural behavior (Griffin, 2002). It claims that doing well in school is a predominantly "white" activity; therefore, African American people, in order to be opposite of white people, feel they must do poorly in school. As controversial as this theory may seem, there is evidence to support it. This seemingly odd thought process is known as "cultural inversion" (Griffin, 2002).

Voluntary vs. involuntary minorities. There are two categories of minority—voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary minorities include those who have come to America by choice, typically for a chance at a better life. Involuntary minorities include those who were brought to the US, or were descended from a race that is not representative of the majority of the population. Many of these two groups' societal decisions are affected based on this identification (Griffin, 2002).

Voluntary minorities desire to join the majority race culturally and socially, while involuntary minorities tend to distance themselves from the majority (Griffin, 2002). They feel the need to do the opposite of the majority as a defense mechanism to keep their own identities as a people. The reasoning is that since they were forced to become the minority, they should not do what the majority does to preserve their culture and heritage (Griffin, 2002). In this light, a certain percentage of African Americans view success in school as a "white" activity; therefore, performing poorly is a way of not assimilating to the majority.

Griffin (2002) also described this phenomenon as a "stereotype threat." If a stereotype describes a group of people as good at something, for example, Asian students in mathematics, and they do poorly at math, then they may develop negative feelings about themselves. Stereotypes exist due to repeated behaviors; therefore, if Asians are supposed to be good at math and they are not, then they are considered a failure. The same logic works for African American students, but in reverse. Since they are supposed to do poorly in school, then by doing well they are going against the stereotype so they must be wrong -in their own mind (Griffin, 2002).

Self-esteem among minorities. Self-esteem issues are another race-related concept that should be considered when trying to justify why African American students do so poorly in school since both Hispanic and African American students tend to disidentify with formal education (Griffin, 2002). If students cannot identify with education, then they will not do well at it. In many cases, this process of disidentification is a defense mechanism to counter low self-esteem among minorities. Instead of feeling bad about doing poorly at school (as their stereotype tells them to do), minorities tend to convince themselves that school, and education in general, does not matter. Griffin (2002) stated, "Academic disidentification occurs when students attempt to devalue the perceived importance of academic performance in an effort to protect their perceptions of self" (p. 72). The researcher suggested that both African American and Hispanic cultures have developed sub-cultures in which there is "cultural opposition toward academics" (p. 74).

Because school is not a priority for some members of minority races, these individuals tend to become what Woo and Sakamoto (2010) described as "idle." This refers to those who spend their time simply by loitering about. The reason that this becomes an issue is that since these individuals have less to lose, then they are more likely to be involved with high-risk activities,

such as misbehaving in school or crime. The crime aspect of this argument is discussed in the next section. The behavior issue is relevant to dropping out because of the consequences of misbehaving, commonly resulting in suspension from school.

Violence among minorities may be another indicator as to why they tend to have higher dropout rates. Minorities, such as African American and Latino American, "who are victimized at school are at higher risk of dropping out" (Peguero, 2011, p. 3753). This association with violence may be an additional reason to why minorities have higher dropout rates than white students.

School suspension and academic problems. Minority students, specifically African American students, are much more likely to be suspended from school than white students, and obvious negative academic consequences are part of the suspensions (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011). This academic consequence can very well be part of the reason that if a student was suspended from school, he/she has a 78% greater chance of dropping out (Suh, & Suh, 2007). As shown in their research, Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) determined that there is a direct link between a school's dropout rate and suspension rate. If there is a high percentage of suspensions, then there is a high percentage of dropouts. Theoretically, if African American students are more likely to be suspended from school, then they are more likely to drop out (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2007). Sparks, Johnson, and Akos (2010) also found that one-third of students with long suspensions (more than 10 days) in either the eighth or ninth grades dropped out. There is a strong correlation between these variables (suspension and dropouts), but it does not necessarily imply causation.

Suspension from school has not been verified as a causation to why students choose to drop out (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011). It is possible that suspension causes a student to fall

behind academically, and this is why they drop out—or it could be just the opposite. The student may already have disidentified with academics and become idle, resulting in their bad behavior and subsequent suspension. These students may have already been on a path to dropping out prior to their first suspension. Considering these ideas, it becomes a "which came first…." argument.

Personality Traits of Dropouts and Links to Prison Populations

Students who come from low SES families have a higher chance of exhibiting underdeveloped cognitive skills (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). This is not the only aspect of child development that can be related to high school dropouts. Personality traits, which are related to a child's home life, can have a great influence on their ability to do well in school or on their chances of becoming a dropout. These same underdeveloped personalities can also be linked to prison populations (Cassel, 2003).

U.S. prisons. The percentage of US crimes committed by a high school dropout is 75% (Education Week, 2014). With a prison population of 2,239,751 inmates (Walmsley, 2014), the reasons for dropping out high school need to be determined. One of the reasons for such a large number of high school dropouts entering prison may be the "idleness" factor mentioned earlier. Simply put, if a student drops out of high school due to lack of academic identification—which has developed into idleness—then this person is more likely to have the free time to commit crime and much less to lose if they are caught than a person who is educated, employed, and a productive member of society. High school dropouts are more likely to be involved with crime and are hence a burden to communities in which they live (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007).

Personality traits among prison inmates. Cassel (2003) determined that personality was a large common factor in both the incarceration and non-completion of high school for many of

the inmates and students studied. This conclusion emerged after administering The Personality Development Test to 1005 juvenile and adult inmates. The research found that there was “a statistically significant lack of personal development” for inmates (Cassel, 2003, p. 650). This lack of development is what Cassel attributed to students’ decisions to drop out of high school.

Individuals with an underdeveloped personality can still be jovial and outgoing; their lack of development actually has to do with their sense of responsibility. As Cassel (2003) explained, this underdevelopment has to do with the construction of an ego-ideal:

> Typically, the activity begins with a very careful analysis of where he/she presently is in relation to the problem at hand-their own ego-status. This is followed by just as careful an analysis of the full range of alternatives in relation to same problem of where they would like to be or go-their "ego-ideal." It involves a continuous process of personal decision making, and where there is a testing of one alternative after another to formulate an acceptable and functional ego-ideal. When one or more ego-ideals has been established, then the problem becomes one of planning the best way to achieve that ego-ideal, and the building of a bridge from the ego-status to the ego-ideal. (p. 650)

Cassel (2003) also explained that this personality underdevelopment is formed because such people never go through this process of establishing an ego-ideal. In nonprofessional terms, an ego-ideal is the realization of what a person’s best potential is and the subsequent emergence of a self-goal to strive towards it. In other words, it is seeing self-potential and determining the best way to reach this potential.

Actions are driven by goals that are developed by individuals. Personal goals have been shown to “guide behavior through attention, and this guidance can occur outside of a person’s awareness” (Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010, p. 467). People who do not make it to this level of

personal development of the ego-ideal may not have the types of goals that would allow them to reach their potential (Cassel, 2003). Since goals guide behavior, if students cannot see the reason for completing high school due to their lack of the ego-ideal, then they will likely not graduate (Cassel, 2003; Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010). Instead, these individuals may become idle (Woo & Sakamoto, 2010) and commit crimes that may eventually land them in prison.

Consequences of Dropping out of High School

Potential Income

For whatever reason a student decides to drop out of high school, there are consequences of this action that affect not only the student, but also the community in which the student resides (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). The lack of formal education has a drastic effect on the potential income that an individual can make. As stated by Peguero (2011), "a successful educational process is essential toward establishing socioeconomic success later in life" (p. 3753). According to researchers at the University of Memphis (Center for Research in Education Policy, 2011), the average median annual income of an individual who drops out of high school, on a national level, is only 56.5% of the income of an individual who has only a high school diploma. This University of Memphis research also had the statistics for two major cities in Tennessee—Nashville and Memphis. In Nashville, a high school graduate will have an average median income of $25,420 while the high school dropout's income will average to $14,235, 56.0% of the high school graduate (Center for Research in Education Policy, 2011). In Memphis, similar numbers exist for this comparison with high school graduates earning $20,336, high school dropouts earning $11,185, an amount only 55.0% of the high school graduates (Center for Research in Education Policy, 2011).

Tennessee Poverty Levels

When considering income levels, it is important to understand the poverty level(s) in Tennessee to identify the significance of these dollar amounts and the sustainability of an individual with this level of income. To put this in perspective, consider the following data, which were also provided by the researchers at the University of Memphis (Center for Research in Education Policy, 2011). In Nashville, 10.3% of persons with just a high school diploma were under the poverty level, and 22.2% of high school dropouts were under this level. In Memphis, the statistics were 19.5% of high school graduates and 34.1% of dropouts. The percent of individuals who have a bachelor's degree and are under the poverty level in both Nashville and Memphis, respectively, is 3.3% and 3.4%.

Fiscal Value of Education

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Office of Statistics and Employment Projections (2011) published data that show exactly how much education is worth on a weekly income comparison. A high school dropout will have a weekly median income level of $451. This number is only 71% of the weekly median income earned by a person with only a high school degree, which is $719 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Office of Statistics and Employment Projections, 2011). In addition to median weekly income, this study also looked at unemployment rates, and found that those who do not have at least a high school diploma are much more likely to be unemployed than those with just a high school diploma. For high school dropouts, the unemployment rate is 14.1% versus the 9.4% associated with high school graduates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Office of Statistics and Employment Projections, 2011). From these statistics, it is easy to see that not only is the income of a high school graduate better than a

dropout, but the likelihood of getting and keeping a job is better for those who complete high school.

It may be viewed that these lower economic standards are chosen by those who drop out of high school, and should not be a concern to others. However, the dropouts are not the only ones affected by their decision to discontinue their education. There is a direct link between prison populations and high school dropouts. As stated by Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007), students who drop out of high school are more likely to go to prison than those who graduate. As well, these dropouts cause an economic burden to the community and to their families (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007).

Fiscal Effect on Others

In an interview with Claudio Sanchez by Linda Wertheimer on National Public Radio (NPR), it was revealed that high school dropouts cost taxpayers an estimated "320 to 350 billion dollars … in lost wages, taxable income, health, welfare, [and] incarceration costs" (Sanchez & Wertheimer, 2011, para. 10). Such a significant cost can be an argument against the notion that dropping out of school only affects the individual. With high school dropouts being a problem for not only the individual (preventing higher income levels) and for communities and the country as a whole (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007), it may be important to take a closer look at why students choose to drop out of high school.

Dropout Prevention Programs

For several decades, the country has been concerned with high school dropouts. Due to this concern, some school systems in America have implemented dropout prevention programs. Some of these programs have been successful; others have not (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). For nearly all of the programs that have been implemented, the first step in

designing the program was to identify and label students as “at-risk” (Bowers, Sprott, & Taff, 2012; Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). Some of these identifying methods were used in middle schools, others did not begin until high school, and some programs wait until students’ junior year in high school to determine who is likely to leave school before graduation.

Student Relocation

One of the methods for preventing high school dropouts was to relocate students to a completely different environment; specifically, states created middle college high schools (Viadero, 2009). These alternative environments were designed for students who are academically at-risk for dropping out of high school. These new schools were created on college campuses to expose these at-risk students to an environment where education was obviously important. As part of this new environment, students would be involved with “interdisciplinary coursework, project-based learning, and special counseling” (Viadero, 2009, para. 3). This environment could have made a world of difference for at-risk students; unfortunately, this was not the case. Viadero (2009) explained that these students were no more likely to graduate from high school than similar students who were left in their regular school environment. This intervention program was, statistically speaking, a failure.

Using the Personality Development Test

Another suggested dropout prevention program utilizes trained counselors and/or psychologist. Cassel (2003) authored this program, suggesting that all freshmen take the Personality Development Test (PDT). Prison inmates and students who drop out of high school tend to have the same lack of personality development. Cassel (2003) suggested that if all freshmen were given this test, regardless of other factors, then a true assessment of at-risk

students could be identified and thus the first step to solving the problem of high school dropouts would be completed.

Cassel (2003) wanted each of these at-risk students to attend a class (in which they received appropriate high school credit) that not only explained why they were considered at-risk, but also provided appropriate counseling to keep them in school. The theory was that if these students recognized their shortcomings as freshmen, they would have a better chance to correct these issues and become successful at school. Giving the students high aspirations is an important goal of this class. Concepts such as self-efficacy and positive assertiveness are also important to stress to these at-risk students. Instead of simply helping kids think that they can succeed and encouraging them to do so, Cassel (2003) stated that students also need to learn how to make scientific decisions. These decisions tend to be self-serving in a positive manner, and could improve their chances of graduating. Reasoning through real-life problems and understanding that people are responsible for their actions and the associated consequences can help students develop their personalities to the point that they are no longer idle. Since the lack of personal development leads to dropping out of high school, students must be encouraged to develop past this stage of personal development.

Effective Learning Program

In agreement with Cassel's (2003) assertion that students who are at-risk need help with personal development, the Effective Learning Program (ELP) was developed and implemented to students in the Louisville, Kentucky, school district (Nowicki, Duke, Sisney, Strickler, & Tyler, 2004). In the ELP program, at-risk students were exposed to intervention methods that focused not on the external activities of the students' education (such as tutoring), but instead on internal individual development. Specifically, the focus was to get students who were in this

program to develop positive relationships with peers and adults and to have increased self-esteem and sense of responsibility.

The increase in self-esteem, sense of responsibility, and improved relationships is based on the concept that students should "become more aware that they have significant control over many important aspects of their life, especially relationships" (Nowicki et al., 2004, p. 228). Since relationships are such an important aspect of this program, students were taught relationship language and an understanding of types of relationships. As part of this training, students were also taught non-verbal (facial) means of expression. The theory was that a better understanding of a relationship would allow the students more control over social situations and give them a better understanding of them. Having these new skills would allow students to feel that they have a better internal control and understand that they can determine the outcome of their actions and have more control over their futures. According to the researchers (Nowicki et al., 2004), as compared to other at-risk students who were not in this program, the students who participated in ELP had a much high graduation rate. Nowicki et al. showed that it is the individual student's decision to apply themselves and graduate high school, or to not try and just drop out. It is not because they are at-risk that makes students drop out, it is their choosing to not graduate.

Community Effects on Dropouts

Bowen (2009) stated that in order for a school system to help at-risk students graduate, the community in which the students live must be taken into consideration. Bowen developed the Eco-Interactional Development (EID) Model of School Success, which "draws attention to the reciprocal process between students and their social environments over time, including the neighborhood, the school, the family, and the peer group" (p. 5). The overall idea is that a school

must provide an appropriate level of engagement for students to enable their success (Bowen, 2009). Students should be encouraged to engage in activities that they like; however, the level of engagement must not be such that it takes away from their academic achievements. The overall conclusion of the EID model is simply that, even though much of the responsibility of graduation falls on the individual student, the school system and community must also provide the appropriate atmosphere for students to want to succeed and graduate from high school (Bowen, 2009).

Tennessee Schools and Dropout Rates

As of the spring of 2012, Tennessee has opted out of No Child Left Behind (Resmovits, 2012). In order to do this, the state had to show the federal government its plan to track and improve education. Another big change that is undergoing the educational system in Tennessee is that, as of the fall of 2012, the state will be using Common Core Standards instead of the Tennessee standards that were developed in years past (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). Through these new standards, the state is showing that they remain dedicated to increasing graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates.

Tennessee-Specific Concerns

According to US Census data, there are over 750,000 high school dropouts living in Tennessee (D'Andrea, 2010). As already established, high school dropouts earn less money and hence depend on more government financial involvement (whether it is via welfare or the cost of imprisoning inmates). For each student who drops out of high school, the state loses approximately $750 every year in tax income (D'Andrea, 2010). Since Tennessee does not have a state income tax, this lost revenue is from other taxes, such as sales tax. In addition to a loss of revenue, the state does spend about $1100 a year on health care for high school dropouts, and the

average cost per dropout for incarceration is $950 (D'Andrea, 2010). The total estimated cost to the state for high school dropouts is in the range of two billion dollars a year -based on the 750,000 high school dropouts that live in the state (D'Andrea, 2010).

Tennessee School Statistics

According to the Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card (2013), the state's public schools serve nearly 100,000 students. The graduation rate for 2010 was 85.5%; 88.7% of white students graduated, while less than 80% of African American and Hispanic students graduated. These numbers very much resemble the national averages in which white students tend to graduate at a higher rate than do either African American or Hispanic students. The overall racial makeup of the students in Tennessee public schools is 67.4% white, 24.2% African American, and 6.2% Hispanic (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). With a 1:2 ratio of African Americans and Hispanics to white students, the term "minority" applies to the African American and Hispanic students in Tennessee.

There is much variance throughout the state as far as race is concerned. Some school districts, such as Memphis, are just the opposite of the state averages, with a racial makeup of 83% African American and 7.5% Hispanic (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Memphis's student population is just over 10% of the total student population in the entire state, and the graduation rate for this school system is 70% as of 2010 (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Of the minority group of white students in Memphis, their graduation rate is less than 80%, just like the state-wide graduation rates for minority African Americans and Hispanics (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013).

East Tennessee County Statistics

On the other end of the racial spectrum is the East Tennessee county under study, in which 91.1% of students are white, and only 1.7% and 5.6% are African American and Hispanic, respectively (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). The literature suggests that African American and Hispanic students have "higher levels of academic disidentification relative to Asian and white students" (Griffin, 2002, p. 71). This disidentification has been shown to be a reason that some students do not complete high school. The graduation rate of a school system that is predominantly white is expected be higher than the state average in which only two-thirds of the students are white; this is not the case in the researched county. The graduation rate for this county for 2011 was only 80.3%, while the state reported a graduation rate of 85.5% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Considering the economic and social implications of dropping out, even 5% can be an important difference. Those who did not graduate are considered high school dropouts. 19.7% of the researched county's students became dropouts as compared to the state average of 14.5% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). When considering the dropout numbers, the researched county had a 36% larger dropout rate than the State of Tennessee. Another major reason attributed to students dropping out is that they are listed as low on the socioeconomic scale. Another term that the State of Tennessee uses to describe these students is "Economically Disadvantaged" (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Table 2.1 shows a selection of six school districts in Tennessee and their graduation rates as compared to the percentage of students classified as Economically Disadvantaged (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Of these six districts, four of them are in East Tennessee.

Table 2.1
Tennessee Graduation Rates vs Economically Disadvantaged for Six Districts, Listed from Low to High Economically Disadvantaged

District	Graduation Rate 2011	% of Econ. Disadvantaged	% White	% African American	% Hispanic
Davidson	76.2	72.0	33.3	5.8	6.6
Hamilton	81.7	75.4	60.2	31.1	6.2
Knox	86.6	77.6	77.7	14.8	4.7
Researched	80.3	78.1	91.1	1.7	5.6
Blount	90.0	85.0	94.5	2.2	2.5
Cocke	89.5	87.4	93.8	3.2	2.4

As indicated in Table 2.1, the researched county has an economically disadvantaged student percentage of 78.1. This percentage is lower than both Blount and Cocke counties, yet both of these counties have a much higher graduation rate than the researched county. Hamilton and Knox have a much lower percentage of white students as compared to the researched county, but they still have higher graduation rates. Davidson has more than eight times the percentage of African Americans and Hispanics (collectively) than the researched county, and yet the graduation rate for the researched county is only 4.1% higher than Davidson County. These numbers indicate that factors other than race and socioeconomic status may contribute to high school dropouts.

Gaps in the Literature

Current Information in the Literature

Much of the research about high school dropouts relies on identifying what commonalities exist among high school students who drop out before graduation while other major research projects determined the effectiveness of high school dropout intervention programs (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). What is missing is a deeper look into why students choose to drop out of high school. Several indicators exist in the literature that have shown that a lack of personal motivation, lack of cultural and community support, and a lack of goal-oriented thinking can lead to students dropping out of high school (Bowen, 2009; Cassel, 2003; Griffin,

2002). Knowing that these concepts have an effect on high school dropouts is not enough, however.

Suh, Suh, and Houston (2007) discovered 130 different variables affecting at-risk students' decisions to drop out of high school; of these variables, they found 20 to have the strongest effect on why students drop out. Of these 20 important variables, only "low grade point average in the 8th grade"(p. 197) and "optimistic about the future" (p. 197) seem to correspond to the idea that grades, education, and graduation are important. Researchers have shown that 40% of all students fall into these pre-determined at-risk categories, but typically more than half of these still graduate (Lessard et al., 2009). Is the reason to this simply that the at-risk category is too broad of a term?

The Gap

The gap in the literature concerning high school dropouts fails to explain the extent to which some of these indicators affect students' decisions to drop out or to graduate. Often, studies are clouded with the issue of race, and it becomes easy to blame race and culture for why students drop out. Therefore, eliminating race as a significant variable by looking at a school district that is nearly 92% white, it is possible to study other variables that may be significant as well.

Another basic concept that seems to be missing from the literature is students' desire to graduate. Studies often look at graduation rates of at-risk students, but they fail to ask the questions, "Do you want to graduate?" and "Why do you (not) want to graduate?" As Lowe (2010) indicated in a study, there was a gap concerning specific perspectives of African American students concerning their decisions to drop out. The researcher showed that a detailed understanding of how these students viewed the value their education was important to finding a resolution to the problem of African American students dropping out in Virginia.

Consequently, this specific study focused on the relationship between students' opinions on education and their desire to graduate.

Values, Beliefs, and Human Behavior

In order to fill this gap of why students drop out of school, a correlation among values, beliefs, and human behavior may need to be identified. From a psychological view, the manner in which an individual perceives reality will have a drastic effect on their interaction with it (Krueger, 1996). Personal values can have a direct influence on the actions of people (Veisson, 2009). These values, along with environmental influences can have an effect on attitude and education (Candeias, Revelo, & Oliveira, 2011). Attitude and values can also be linked to personal goals and the actions needed to reach them (Baumeister & Finkel, 2010).

Personality Types

Type A personalities are typically those with a competitive nature and who easily assume leadership positions. (Scott, 2012). When it comes to school, this competitive nature is related to what Lee, Jameison, and Earley (1996) described as achievement striving in academics. Type A personalities do not want to be seen as a failure; therefore, they will work hard to prove to others that they can and will be successful. This hard work is seen not only in academics, but in the workplace as well. However, there are downsides to being a Type A personality. Even though working hard and being successful comes with the territory, so do high levels of stress and anxiety (Lee, Jameison, & Earley, 1996).

Type B personalities will not necessarily drop out of school, but they simply do not have the same drive to succeed as Type As. According to Changingminds.org (2012), a person with Type B personality will enjoy achievements (i.e., graduation from high school) but "do not [become] stressed when they are not achieved" (para. 3). If people have a Type B personality, they may

still desire to graduate from high school, but they lack the personal drive, and higher stress levels, of people who exhibit a Type A personality.

Self-Interpretation

The way in which people interpret their reality will have a direct impact on the way they react to situations. We all think that our reality is the correct one. Krueger (1996) explained that "people tend to believe that others feel, think, and act as they themselves do. Supporters of a certain policy (e.g., to legalize marijuana) tend to believe that support is more common in the population than opponents do" (pp. 536–537).

This assumption of knowing the "correct" reality can be related to high school dropouts in the sense that, since they do not want to be in school, then no one wants to be in school. This reasoning may lead potential dropouts to feel that they are not wrong in wanting to drop out. Whereas, many students see that graduation is the only option, those who choose to drop out may believe that even those who are determined to graduate may actually want to drop out. No one likes to think that their opinion is incorrect; hence, an individual tends to think that more people agree with him or her than may actually be the case. People with a Type A personality would, therefore, think that everyone wants to do well in school, even though they might be doing poorly.

Effect on Graduation

Having these negative opinions about education may have an effect on students' ability to stay in school and graduate. Conversely, having a positive outlook can keep a child in school. Low self-esteem, underdeveloped personalities, and cultural implications have been shown to lead to decisions to drop out. Lessard, Fortin, Marcotte, and Royer (2009) looked at what reasons kept some at-risk students in school.

In their study, Lessard, Fortin, Marcotte, and Royer indicated that nearly 40% of the students in high school could be considered at-risk (based on many of the characteristics listed earlier) yet the dropout rates are nowhere near 40%. If nearly half of the students in high school have common characteristics that should cause them to drop out, then why do they stay and graduate? Most at-risk students do not have any support from home. This lack of support can be either caused by an actual lack of moral support or because their parents simply do not possess the appropriate knowledge to help their children with their studies. Overcoming this deficit was a factor that Lessard et al. (2009) determined was an important step for students to stay in school.

Overcoming the Odds

In order to overcome the lack of support from home, students must be able to find the needed help and support from peers, teachers, or other adults (Lessard et al., 2009). Being able to seek out this help is related to the personality of these students and their beliefs in education. Human behavior, with its infinite possibilities, does not give all people the insight or the motivation to seek help when needed. The students in Lessard et al.'s study who found the help they needed outside of their family unit had a value system which gave them high self-esteem and self-efficacy. Lessard et al. described these individuals as having a positive inner discourse and acknowledgement that graduation was a goal to achieve. These students saw value in the education associated with earning a high school diploma. They knew that they were not going to be simply given a diploma, but instead they would have to put effort into achieving this goal.

Personal Value

Personal values can have a major influence on the actions and behaviors of an individual. One of the most widely accepted definitions of term values was described by Veisson (2009) as "concepts or ideas which are connected to certain cultures," such as race, which "influence the

array of possible actions" (p. 67). Criminal codes are typically written based on values. For example, stealing is wrong; therefore, a law was enacted to provide a just punishment for those who commit this injustice.

People's actions are directly linked to their personal values. According to Bachrach (1994), "the most effective way to influence human behavior is through core values" (p. 22). Actions are also directly linked to achieving goals, which are linked to personal values (Baumeister & Finkel, 2010). As far as education, if a person believes that citizens should be productive, law-abiding members of society, then they will act accordingly, which means they will more likely receive an education and become working taxpayers. On the other hand, a person who does not feel that they should have to work to be successful in life is more likely to choose not to graduate high school. This logic does not regard all high school dropouts as lazy, non-taxpaying individuals, but simply that there is a relationship between graduating high school and working. Remember from earlier in this chapter that high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed (The US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Attitude

Also in conjunction with the concept of personal values is the idea of attitude. Attitudes can be both positive and negative. Candeias, Rebelo, and Oliveira (2011) explained that the attitudes that students have about education might stem from previous success or failure in school. As well, the amount of involvement and excitement that a student's family has about his or her education has a direct impact on the attitude that the student has about school. A student's attitude towards school and learning can also be influenced by the school itself by providing activities that are considered interesting to the student (Candeias, Revelo, & Oliveira, 2011).

The more positive an individual's attitude is towards education and school, the more successful the student typically is (Candeias, Revelo, & Oliveira, 2011).

Summary

High school dropouts are a problem for all involved stakeholders, including the student, the school, and the community in which the student lives (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; D'Andrea, 2010). For this reason, there has been a strong push in recent years to study and develop potential solutions to reduce the high rate of dropouts. Before creating a real solution to the problem of high school dropouts, a better understanding of why this problem exists may need to be determined. Identifying a student as at-risk for dropping out seems to be a common starting point for many dropout prevention programs (Bowen, 2009; Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011; Lessard, Fortin, Marcotte, &Royer, 2009). Some of these programs focus on changing the way a student views the world (Nowicki et al., 2004). Although this has shown some success, a better understanding of the relationship between student opinions about education and the desire to graduate may still require further research.

By using a school system with a low number of minorities to study how student opinions affect school performance should provide a strong indication as to the relationship between these variables without needing to account for other racial and/or cultural differences. The results may not only help fill the gap in the literature, but may also be helpful in the development of dropout prevention programs. Such research may be important for the betterment of not only the at-risk students, but for the community in which they live.

Chapter III

Methodology

The focus of this study was the relationship between students' perceived value of education and their desire to graduate from high school. A mixed methods research was used that combined a quantitative data collection survey and qualitative follow-up questions. The educational context for the study was an East Tennessee school district with the sample population coming from students at this county's adult high school. The adult high school was used in order to address the restriction about surveying minors. The data gathered consisted of a statistical survey, a questionnaire, and interviews. The data were then analyzed using the Microsoft Excel and CRAN (R statistical programming language). Descriptive analysis and a Chi-squared test of the Likert-type questions were calculated. Pearson correspondence correlations between the Likert-type questions were also calculated, and the open-ended questions of the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed for emerging themes based on grounded theory.

This chapter is organized in the following order: purpose and problem statement, research question, hypothesis, research design, population, sample, procedure, instruments, resource requirements, data collection, data analysis, validity, and finally a summary. Within the procedure section, there is a discussion on informed consent, an explanation of the pilot study that was conducted, the specific procedure for the researched county, and a timeline for data collection. The instruments section includes information about the pilot study, the statistical survey, the questionnaire, the interviews, and the Tennessee Department of Education Report Card.

Purpose and Problem Statement

The main purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the issue of high school dropouts in an East Tennessee county by determining if students' perceived value of education had a direct effect on their desire to graduate. This purpose was derived from a specific problem that the county has faced concerning their above-average high school dropout rates in the state. Since this school district is nearly 92% white (Tennessee Department of Education - Report Card, 2013) the issue of high dropout rates among minorities was not a factor in this research. This situation created a reason for the researcher to look for the existence of a relationship between students' perceived values of education and their decision to drop out of high school.

High school dropouts, as a whole, are less productive members of society than those who graduate high school (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Ingrum, 2006). For this reason, a student's successful completion of high school may be an important task since it affects all members the student's community (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Hoffman, 2011; Ingrum, 2006). In order to alleviate the burden on society caused by these dropouts, a better understanding of why students drop out may be important so that appropriate preventative measures can be undertaken to increase high school graduation.

Much research has been conducted in an effort to determine the common factors among students who drop out (Bowers, Sprott, & Traff, 2012), but there is a need for more research that shows the relationship, if there is one, between a student's opinion on the value of education and his or her likelihood to graduate high school. The purpose of this study was to establish, if it exists, the relationship between students' perceived value of education and their desire to graduate from high school in an East Tennessee school district.

Research Question

In a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do students' perceptions on the value of education relate to their desire to graduate from high school?

Hypothesis

Hypothesis: Students who place a higher value on formal education are more likely to want to graduate from high school.

Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between students' opinions on the value of formal education and their likelihood of wanting to graduate from high school.

The directional hypothesis was derived from research conducted by Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009). These researchers' findings were that the higher the education attained by parents, the more education will be obtained by their children by age 19. Logically, if a parent has more education, then the parent has an understanding of the value of education, and this value can be passed onto their children. If students have a desire for post-secondary education, then they could graduate from high school first.

Research Design

In order to determine a viable answer to the research question listed above, two things must be true: 1) The research county school district has a problem with high school dropouts similar to both state and national statistics, and 2) there is a relationship between student opinions about education and the desire to stay in or drop out of school. In order to properly collect data and analyze it appropriately, a mixed methods research approach was used in which the first phase was quantitative, and the second was qualitative (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Therefore, the

specific design was explanatory design. It was important to collect quantitative data, which was used to show statistical relationships within the population of the students, including income level, race, and gender, as well as qualitative data about the student opinions.

The use of surveys to collect data about high school students has become common practice in research about high school students and dropout rates. Ingrum (2006) used surveys of students, faculty, and community members in order to examine why students were dropping out of school. Since this study focused on the relationship between student opinions about education and decisions to drop out, there was no reason to include faculty or community members in the sample from which the data were collected. Lowe (2010) identified at-risk students and conducted interviews with them in a qualitative manner. This method was appropriate as it allowed the students a limitless number of ways to answer the questions. This same logic is why this study had some questions that were qualitative in nature. For this study, the instruments used were a survey, a questionnaire, and an interview form. The first part of the survey consisted of quantitative questions; the questionnaire used Likert-type questions that were analyzed quantitatively and open-ended questions that were analyzed in a qualitative manner; and the interview questions (given to only a portion of the overall participants after the initial surveys) were all qualitative.

The participation of the sample was voluntary. It was important to make sure the participants did not feel that they were required to complete the survey. If participation were not voluntary, then it would be possible that the information provided by the students would not be valid. Getting enough volunteers to satisfy the numbers needed for the sample to be of a valid size was not considered a problem when designing the research.

The research was conducted via the use of qualitative questionnaires and quantitative surveys given to a sample of the population. Even though the basics of the survey was to gather identifying information, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and parental education level, the more in-depth questions were designed to find out students' opinions on the value of education. These opinions were identified via both Likert-type questions and open-ended questions. For the purpose of this study, students' perceived values of education were the independent variable, and their desire to graduate high school was the dependent. Prior to performing the research in the East Tennessee county school district, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study is discussed in the procedures and instruments sections of this chapter.

Population

The research county is located in the mountains of East Tennessee and, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), had a population of just over 86,000. At the time this research was conducted, approximately 14,000 students were enrolled in the public schools in this county (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Of these 14,000 students, 63.8% were considered economically disadvantaged. This level of low-income students is greater than the statewide statistic of 58.6% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). As far as minorities, the research county had much lower numbers when compared to the state. African American students and Hispanic students, on the state level, represented 24.1% and 7.3% of the population, respectively (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). In this East Tennessee county, African American students made up only 2.0% and Hispanics made up 7.5% . The percentage of white students in this county was 88.8% as compared to the state's 66.3% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013).

In 2013, the graduation rate for Tennessee was 86.3%. The research county schools had a graduation rate of 83.9% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). According to these numbers, there is a problem with high school graduation in both the State of Tennessee as a whole, and even more so in this East Tennessee school district. These low graduation rates made this county an ideal location to study high school students in order to determine possible reasons for these high dropout rates. For the purpose of this study, high school students were chosen as participants to determine if there was a relationship between student-perceived values of education and the desire to graduate. For reasons explained later in this chapter, traditional high school students were replaced with students at an adult high school.

When considering the population of this rural East Tennessee county, statistically such high dropout rates (and low graduation rates) are not expected (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Griffin, 2002; Ingrum, 2006; Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Typically, large cities tend to have a population more aligned with the statistical students who drop out of high school. Even though this usually is the case, understanding the economy of the researched county can help to explain why there is such a problem with high school dropouts. Like many counties in this part of East Tennessee, the economy of the researched county is based on tourism. Even though the county has a population of less than 100,000 people, the number of tourists who visit each year ranges anywhere from 10–15 million people. Many people benefit from the hundreds of millions of dollars brought in by tourism; however, the average resident of the county does not (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Families do rely on tourism for income; however, the majority of these jobs created by tourism are low paying, many at or very close to minimum wage. The median household income (average household size of 2) was $42099 in 2009, which is approximately $10.12 per hour for

two full time employees (City-Data, 2014). There are usually numerous jobs available to students when they turn 16 (15 in some cases) and earning money, as little as it may be, becomes an important part of growing up in this East Tennessee county. Not to say that having a job is necessarily a bad thing, but it sometimes becomes more important than doing well in school. Before becoming a tourist destination, this county was a low-income farming community, and many of the residents still fall into this category. Outsiders from the county may assume that there is much more wealth being shared due to the sheer amount of money that comes into the county, but this is simply not the case. With a better understanding of the economy of the county as a whole, the statistics concerning the students are more easily understood.

Sample

Although collecting the opinions of students in high school might appear to be the best way to determine what they think of the value of education, gaining access to these students presented an issue because the majority of students in grades 9-12 are minors and cannot be surveyed. To circumvent this problem, students at the research county's adult high school were surveyed. The vast majority of these students were former students of the researched county's K-12 schools that failed to graduate high school in the traditional sense. By collecting opinions from the younger persons at the adult high school (ages 18-20), the participants' opinions on education while they were still in their traditional high school could be obtained. These opinions may reveal common themes that may better define why these students decided to drop out of high school.

This adult high school is the only adult high school in the researched county's school district. There are two programs offered at the adult high school: a GED, and a high school diploma. For this study, the participants came from those enrolled in the high school diploma program. The questions in the survey were designed to elicit the current opinions of these students, as well as

the opinions they had while they were still enrolled in traditional high school (prior to dropping out). The number of students in this program varies greatly throughout the year. The largest number of students enrolled is typically in the fall of each year. Approximately 75–100 students between the ages of 18-20 were enrolled in this program in the fall each year. In order to gain the amount of data desired so as to draw appropriate conclusions, all of the students enrolled were asked to participate with the hopes that at least half would volunteer.

Procedure

Informed Consent

Since participation was 100% voluntary, a consent form was given to each participant to make them aware of the purpose of the study and that they had the option to participate or not. Participants were not required to provide any identifying information such as name, SSN, or student ID number. However, participants who were willing to take part of the post-survey interviews were asked to provide their first name, last initial, and the name of a teacher at the adult high school that would be able to locate them. This information was only used for arranging the interviews and did not become part of the recorded information reported in this study. The consent form can be found in Appendix A.

Pilot Study

To establish clarity in the surveys and questionnaires, and to ensure that there was no bias in the wording of the questions, two tasks were implemented. First, several professors at Maryville College were asked to review these instruments to determine that they were not biased in any way. The professors who made this determination were from several different departments,

including math, science, and education. Gaining a consensus from the professors that the questions were indeed unbiased was important prior to using these instruments on a sample.

With the approval of the Maryville College professors, the surveys and questionnaires were then given to 10 adult high school students from a different East Tennessee county. Following each section of questions was an additional section that allowed these participants to provide feedback on the questions they just answered. These instruments can be found in Appendices B-D. Once these surveys were collected, they were analyzed to determine if the questions were easily understood and that appropriate answers (for multiple choice type questions) were available. If some of the questions did not gain the approval of these participants, then the instrument(s) were adapted to fit the suggestions made. No additional changes needed to be made after the pilot study was conducted.

East Tennessee School District Procedures

Once the instruments were shown to be valid via the pilot study, the focus turned to the researched county's adult high school. In order to get a good sample of the population, all of the approximately 75-100 students in the 18-20 year-old range would have been asked to participate. Actual participation is discussed in Chapter IV. Since many of the students attended class at different times, several days were dedicated to spending time at the adult high school and waiting on students to come to work on their classwork. Since credit recovery is a large part of the adult high school program, students often come and go at different times. With the assistance of the faculty at the adult high school, identifying students who are in the appropriate age range was the first priority.

As students entered the school, if they were in the desired age range, the researcher approached them individually, explained the research, and asked for their participation. If the

student agreed to participate, then the researcher explained the consent form and answered any questions the participant may have had. Upon reading and signing the consent form, the participant was given the questionnaire and answered it accordingly.

Once completed, if the participant desired to be part of the interview process, a time was scheduled (approximately two weeks from the time of first encounter) to conduct the interview. If the participant did not want to be involved with the interview questions, then his or her participation in the research was considered complete.

After conducting the initial analysis of the data, the researcher decided which volunteers to interview. Not all of the participants who agreed to the interviews were needed, since the purpose of these interviews was to get more in-depth answers to some questions from individuals with certain answers. If more than one student answered questions very similarly, then only one of these students needed to be interviewed. This interview process was scheduled to take about one week.

Timeline for Data Collection

In order to collect the data from the pilot study and analyze it appropriately, one week was allotted for this portion of the research. After verification of the validity of the instruments, participants at the adult high school were given a week to answer the surveys. After collecting the data, they were analyzed to determine which participants needed to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled to take place towards the end of the week (Thursday and Friday) following the data collection from the adult high school. The total time to complete the pilot study, collect initial data from the sample population, and conduct interviews was approximately three weeks. If needed, the interviews could have been delayed until the following week, making the total time for data collection four weeks.

Instruments

Pilot Study

The pilot study, as described above, was used to determine the validity of the rest of the instruments. The pilot study consisted of the actual study's survey and questionnaire, with the addition of some extra questions used for validation (see Appendix A).

Statistical Survey

The survey for this study can be found in Appendix B. This survey gathered statistical data from the students, such as race, income level, socioeconomic status (determined by free/reduced/regular lunch), age, gender, grade level, parental education level, and household size. These questions were multiple choice or fill in the blank. Additionally, each question had an "I don't know" option in order to avoid students from guessing and providing inaccurate information unintentionally. The basis of these questions was to provide statistical background information. As well, this data was related to characteristics that have frequently been linked to high school dropouts (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011; Ingrum, 2006).

Questionnaire

The second portion of the data collection was a questionnaire in two parts (See Appendix C). The first part consisted of Likert-type questions, aimed at gaining quantitative data on student opinions. The latter part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that allowed students to better express and/or explain their opinions about education. The opinions that the questions attempted to gather pertained to student attitudes towards school and the value that they placed on education. These questions were worded both for and against school to not create a bias one way or the other.

Several questions pertained to math and science classes, since these typically are trouble areas for many students. Sarwan, Naz, and Noreen (2011) showed that the attitudes towards math and sciences in developed countries, such as the U.S., are more negative than those in developing countries. Thus, these negative attitudes logically play into a student's overall opinions and attitudes towards school. Other questions focused on individual student motivation. Motivation has been shown to be a direct influence on learning outcomes (Burrow, 2010). If a relationship between students' opinions on the value of education and dropout rates is to be determined, then attitude towards academics and school in general may need to be analyzed.

Interviews

The post questionnaire interviews were designed based on the results from the initial instruments. The questions created were opinion-oriented to gain a better understanding of students' reasoning behind their responses. The statistical analysis of the Likert-type questions of the questionnaire and the grounded theory analysis of the open-ended questions of the questionnaire determined the interview questions' content. For example, if a large majority of students said they would like school better if there were less math requirements, then a question would be worded to see if the interviewee agreed with this statement's sentiment and why he or she thought that others may or may not agree.

Provided there were enough participants who wished to be part of the interviews, six were to be conducted (see Chapter IV for actual number of participants). In order to analyze the results of the interviews, which were recorded digitally with a laptop, the researcher transcribed the interviews and made note of keywords that were repeated within both a specific interview and all the interviews, as this process established merging trends. In order to distinguish amongst the different interviewees, each participant was assigned a letter of the alphabet based on the order in

which they participated in the initial surveys. This letter served both as an identifier when referring to the interviewees, and as a way to protect the identity of the participants.

Tennessee Department of Education Report Card

In order to compare the dropout statistics of this East Tennessee county to other school districts in the area and to the state as a whole, a report published by the Tennessee Department of Education was used (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). This report is produced on an annual basis at the close of each school year and is made public. This report card includes information pertaining to all schools in Tennessee. The topics covered include student population, faculty population, dropout and graduation rates, and much more statistical information. The Tennessee Report Card is published by the Tennessee Department of Education Website.

Resource Requirements

In order to collect the data for this research, the following resources were acquired: 1) appropriate number of copies of the consent form and surveys, 2) cooperation of the administration and staff of local high schools, and 3) time to meet with and explain the data collection process to those who will be aiding in it. For the purpose of data analysis, a computer installed with CRAN (R statistical programming language) and Microsoft Excel was required. As well, programs such as Microsoft Word were needed to help with analyzing and recording appropriate conclusions.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data, the researcher intended to spend as much time (within the 2–3 week window) at the adult high school to interact with as many 18-20 year-old students as

possible. The desired number of participants in the initial survey process was to be no less than 37 (assuming a minimum of 75 students were enrolled at the school who were in the appropriate age range). The time needed for each participant was less than 15 minutes. The surveys were printed and the participants filled out the Likert-type questions and answered the open-ended questions while the researcher waited.

Data Analysis

The quantified data were analyzed using CRAN (R statistical programming language) and Microsoft Excel. Statistical analysis compared the responses of each Likert-type question to determine which responses were statistically similar. A chi-squared test determined if there was a statistical significance within each of these questions, or if the responses could be considered random. As has been previously discussed, the national trend is for students with lower levels of income to be more likely to drop out of school; this trend was analyzed with the data collected. Determining whether this trend was the same with the sample population was important. This same comparison was made using all of the variables, including gender, race, socioeconomic status, parental education level, and household size. The comparison of these statistics to the state and national statistics showed that many of the already recognized commonalities among high school dropouts were part of the contributing factors in the researched school district.

The second part of the survey (Likert-type questions) was also analyzed using the CRAN statistical programming language and Microsoft Excel. Each of the answers (Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, and Strongly Agree) was given a value of -2 through + 2. The Mean, median, and modes of each were calculated. As explained by Robertson (2012), most Likert-type scales are not true interval data, which means that the data can be considered ordinal, but the distance between the values is different. For example, there may be a different distance in

opinion between the terms Somewhat Agree / Disagree, and Strongly Agree / Disagree. There is no way to determine how close an individual's interpretation of each of these is to an evenly distributed ordinal concept. Through the results of both types of statistical comparison, the relationship between student opinion on education and desire to graduate can be made via an established correlation.

The open-ended questions were examined on a qualitative level. The purpose of these questions was to determine if there was a relationship between the students' opinions and their desire to stay in school. The responses to these questions were categorized, and keywords became part of the study. As the responses were read, common words and themes were identified, and the frequency of these words and themes was recorded to compare the most common responses. As explained by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), organizing the data in this manner can allow for the identification of patterns, and can help to establish relationships among the responses.

The interview questions were created after analyzing the surveys. These questions were used in creating a more in-depth view of the answers given by these participants in the original survey. Using grounded theory, keywords in the answers were compared in order to determine common themes (see Chapters IV and V).

Validity

According to Trochim (2006), validity can be defined as "approximate truth propositions, inferences, or conclusions" (para 1). Two types of validity, internal and external, were considered for ensuring the appropriateness of this research and the results. As described by Trochim (2006), internal validity is relevant when a causal relationship is trying to be established. Huitt, Hummel, and Kaeck (1999) explained that when a correlation is trying to be

established, internal validity merely describes how accurate the methods of the study are and the quality of the study as a whole. In this research, the determination of whether a student's perception of the value of education was related to his or her desire to graduate can be considered a correlation study to determine the viability of the relationship between these two ideas. When considering internal validity, "how well the study was run (research design, operational definitions used, how variables were measured, what was/wasn't measured, etc.)" (Huitt, Hummel, & Kaeck, 1999, para 1) is important.

External validity refers to the applicability of a study's conclusions found to other populations (Trochim, 2006). This assumption can be made based on the similarities that the population of the study has with other populations. The students of this East Tennessee county have many statistical commonalities with other communities around them (such as economic and racial composition), as well as throughout the state and nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). For this reason, the use of an individual school system should be a valid way to, on a small scale, look at the relationship between students' perceived value of education and dropout rates. Even though this study was designed for one specific school system, the instruments and methods used could be applied in other school systems. As well, this study could be repeated and similar results would be expected.

Summary

High school dropout rates are a growing concern for communities throughout the United States (Hoffman, 2011; Ingrum, 2006). Despite the numerous programs that have been implemented to keep students in school, the problem of dropouts continues to linger (Burzichelli, Mazckey, & Bausmith, 2011). Much research has been conducted that has shown common characteristics of students who drop out. Race, gender, special education, and socioeconomic

status have been identified as some of the key indicators in determining at-risk students (Bowers, Sprott, & Taff, 2012; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Griffin, 2002; Ingrum, 2006). One area that has not been studied enough is if a relationship exists between how a student values education and whether he or she will want to stay in school until graduation. This study's purpose was to expound upon the current research of this area.

The population of this study included adult high school students in an East Tennessee school district. The desired sample population was about half of the 75–100 18-20 year-olds enrolled in the adult high school program. Upon receiving the consent forms, the participants answered questions on a printed survey and questionnaire.

The Likert-type questions were analyzed to discover any correlations in student responses. The open-ended questions were analyzed on a qualitative level to discover keywords. Upon selecting some willing participants, additional interviews were conducted to gain further insight into the opinions of some of the participants.

Chapter IV

Findings

Students who choose to drop out of high school have been shown to be a problem for the community in which they live, and for the nation as a whole (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Hoffman, 2011). For this research, the specific problem to address was whether there was a relationship between students' perceived value of education and their decision to drop out of school. In order to guide this research, the research question was, *In a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do students' perceptions on the value of education relate to the desire to graduate from high school?* The null hypothesis relating to this research was that there is no relationship between students' opinions on the value of formal education and their likelihood of wanting to graduate from high school. The directional hypothesis was: Students who place a higher value on formal education are more likely to want to graduate from high school.

Research Process

The initial goal of this research was to survey students at an adult high school in East Tennessee. As part of this goal, of the estimated 75 students enrolled at this school between the ages of 18 and 20, the hope was to at least acquire 50%. Although the estimate of 75 students in this age range was determined in good faith, the reality was that enrollment at the adult high school was continuously changing. During the timeframe that the data collection process took place, there were only 22 students in the age range of 18-20. Of these 22 students, 21 were voluntarily involved with the surveys, resulting in a 95.5% participation rate. The one student who did not participate was never given the opportunity to participate because this student was

not in attendance during the data collection timeframe. This is a common occurrence in this county. As per conversations with the principals at the adult high school and a traditional high school in the county, several students at the traditional high school turn 18 each year, and, instead of completely dropping out of high school, transfer to the adult high school only to never show up to complete their education

Data

The data collected and discussed within this chapter fall into four different categories. The first category was basic information, which included factors such as race, gender, income, parental education, and other items that are commonly used in comparing high school dropouts in the United States (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). The second category of data was the Likert-type questions, in which the participants responded to statements about their opinions on school and education in general. The third category of data was a set of open-ended questions that the participants answered after the Likert-type questions, so that a deeper look into the opinions of these students could be obtained. The fourth and final category included the interviews that were conducted after an initial analysis of categories 1–3. An explanation of each category of data, including how it was coded and what the results were, is found in the following sections.

Data Category 1 – Basic Information

Coding for Questions 1-10. These questions are from the first page of the survey given to the students. Each of these questions was either multiple choice or a basic fill-in-the-blank question, such as age. The following tables (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) display how each of these

questions was coded so that the statistical analysis could be more easily run. The numbers signify a numerical assignment, not the number of responses for each.

Table 4.1
Question 1: Coding – Race

Response	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Coding	1	2	3	4	5

Table 4.2
Question 2: Coding – Household Income

Response	I don't Know	< 20K	20K – 30K	30K-40K	40K – 50K
Coding	0	1	2	3	4

Question 2 (See Appendix B) had more options than listed above; however, no one selected an income level higher than fifty thousand dollars. For this reason, these additional income levels were not involved with the statistical analysis.

Table 4.3
Question 3: Coding – Public School Lunch Program

Response	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch	Neither	Did Not Answer
Coding	1	2	3	0

Question 4 was simply a blank for participants to enter their age; no coding was needed for this response. Question 5 was about gender. Males were coded with the number 1, females with 2. Question 6 was not coded, as it was a numerical answer about the number of people living in the student's household.

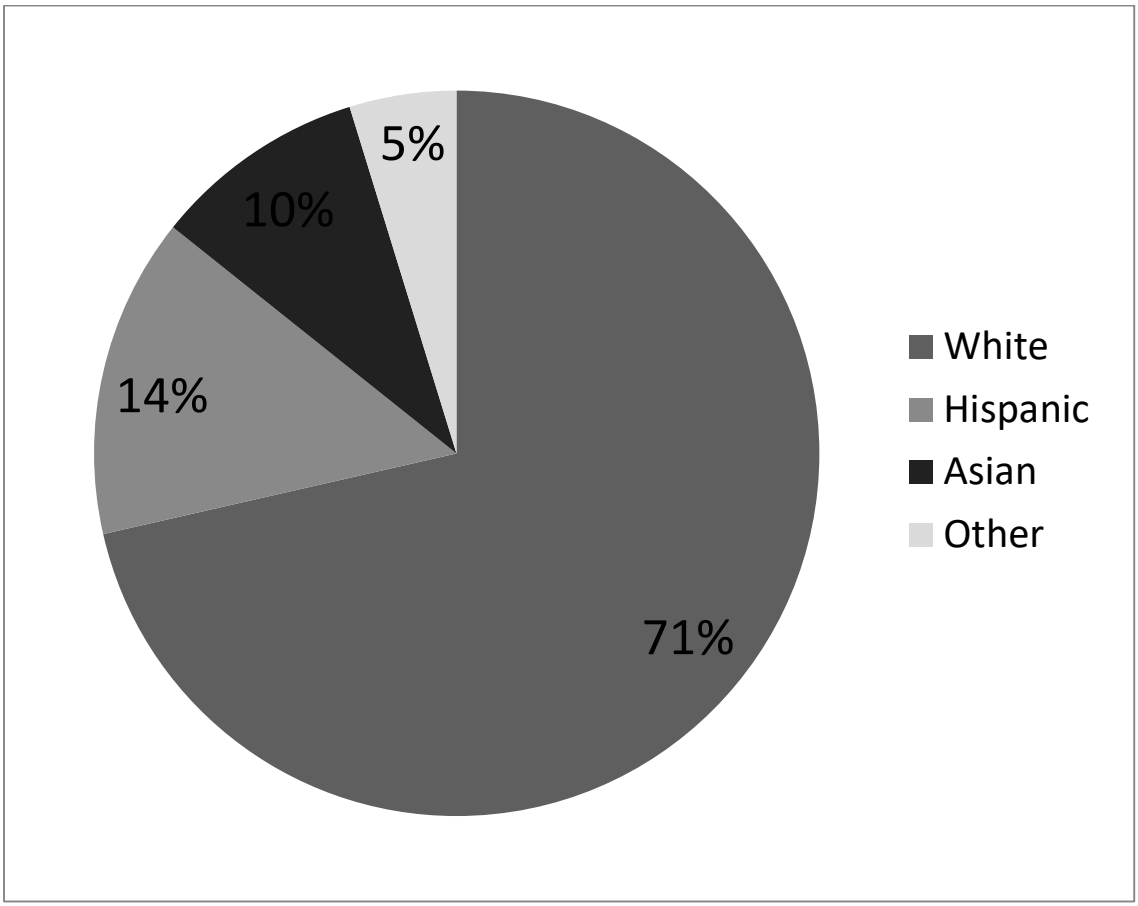
Table 4.4
Question 7 and 8: Coding – Parental Education Level

Response	Did not complete high school	High school Graduate	GED	Military	Technical / Trade school
Coding	1	2	3	4	5
Response	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Masters / Professional	Doctorate	I don't know
Coding	6	7	8	9	10

Questions 9 and 10 were yes or no questions, in which "yes" was given a 1 and "no" was given a 2 for coding purposes.

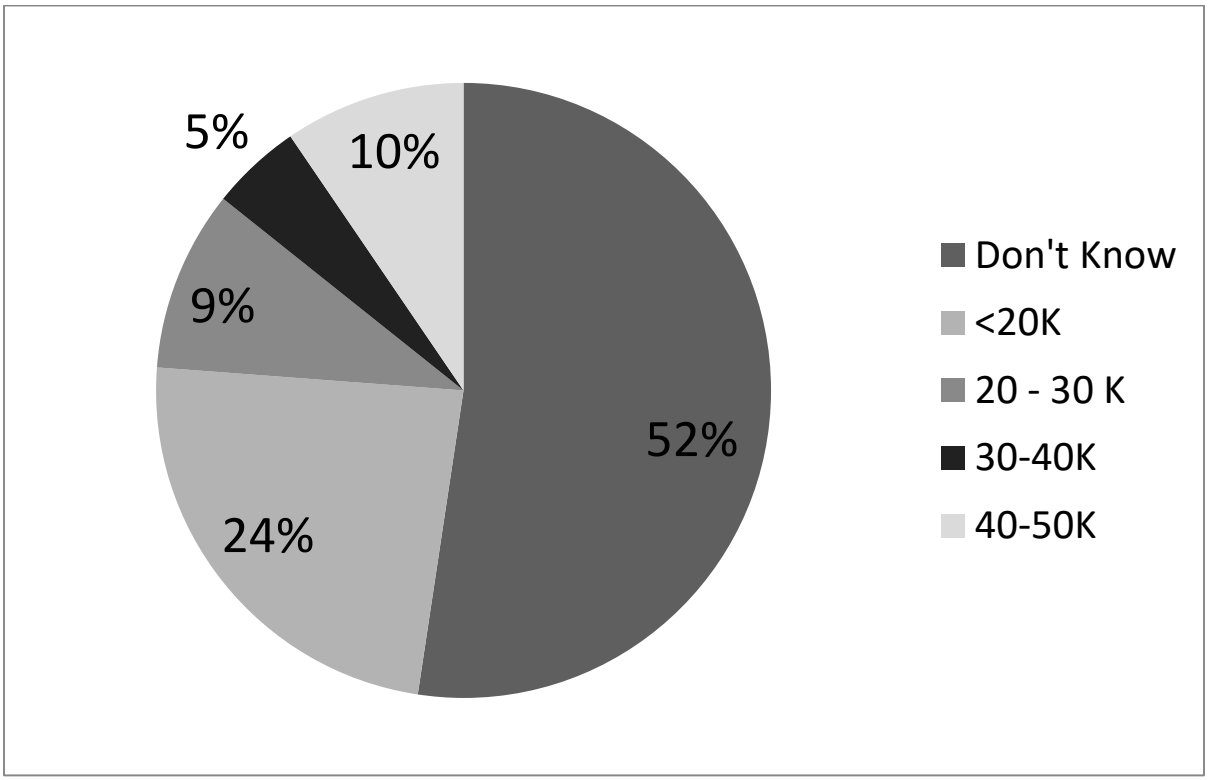
Question 1. As indicated by Figure 4.1, the overwhelming majority of the students in the survey were white. However, this is in contradiction to the national averages of high school dropouts by race. The two largest races that tend to dropout on a national level are Hispanic and African American (Ingrum, 2006). Of the participants in this study, 71.4% were white, 14.3% were Hispanic, and not a single person listed African American as their race.

Figure 4.1. Racial Makeup of Participants



Question 2. As seen in Figure 4.2, the majority of participants did not know the level of income of their household. Considering the ten who did indicate that they knew their income level, 70% of them selected an income of less than $30,000. Since the majority did not indicate an income level, a sound statistical conclusion from this question cannot be made.

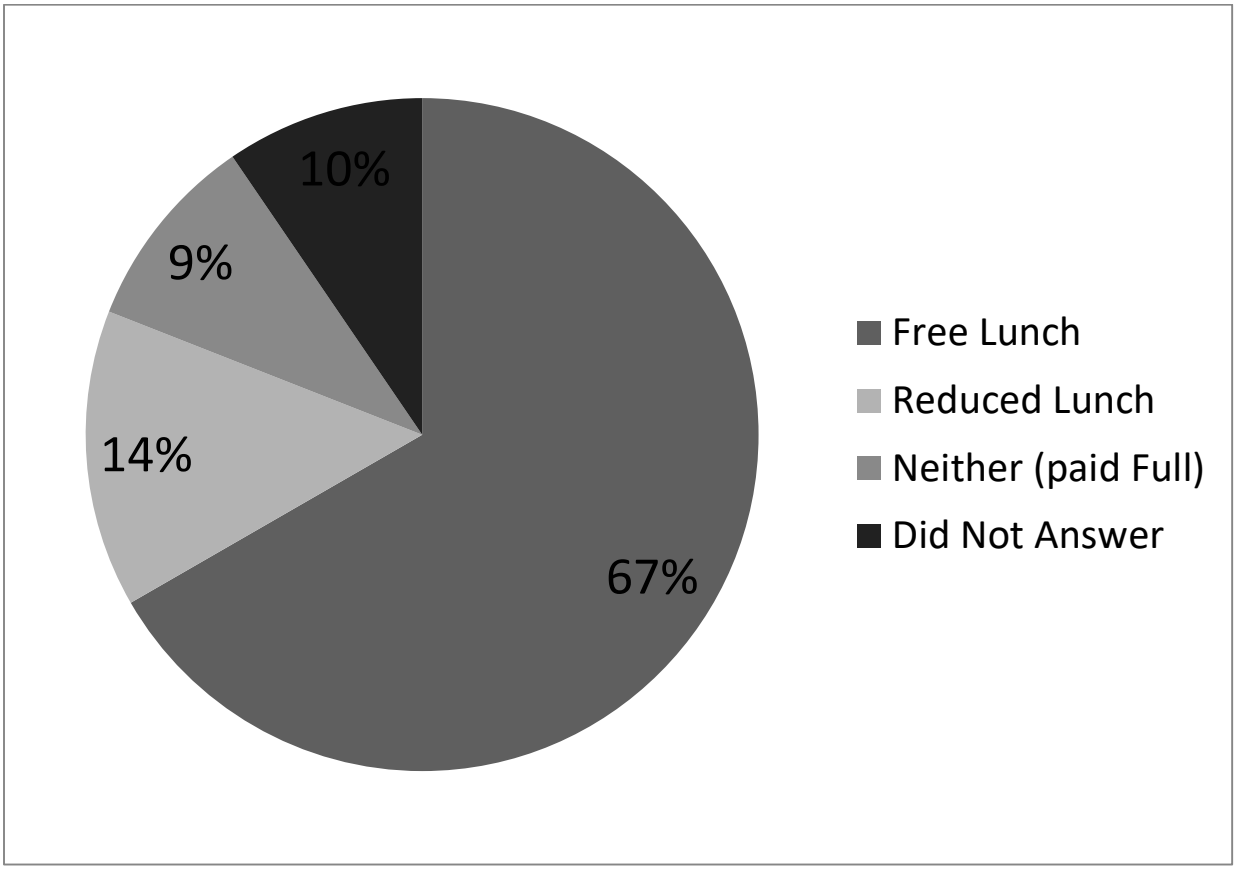
Figure 4.2 Household Income Level



Question 3. The third question, which asked about the students' qualification for free or reduced school meals, was a better indicator of the socioeconomic status of the participants than Question 2. Although income level can be an important part of determining socioeconomic status, it is only one of many factors to consider. Other factors that influence this determination include household size, geographic location, and government subsidies. In addition, a student should be much more likely to provide an answer to this question as opposed to the overall income level of their household. Since low SES is associated with free and/or reduced meals at school, and has been linked to high school dropouts (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Montmarquette, Wiennot-Briot, & Dagenais, 2007), SES should be a reliable way to compare these students to those on a state and national level. Figure 4.3 displays the results of this question. 9.5% did not respond to the question, but the vast majority responded

with either Free Lunch (66.7%) or Reduced Lunch (14.3%), indicating that at least 81% of these students come from a low SES family.

Figure 4.3 Free/ Reduced Lunch



Questions 4 and 5. National statistics were that males are more likely to dropout than females (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). This trend does not seem to be the same in students enrolled in the adult high school. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 display the gender and ages of the participants. Males had a slight majority at 52.4%. When considering age, 18 year-olds had the majority at 61.9%.

Figure 4.4. Gender

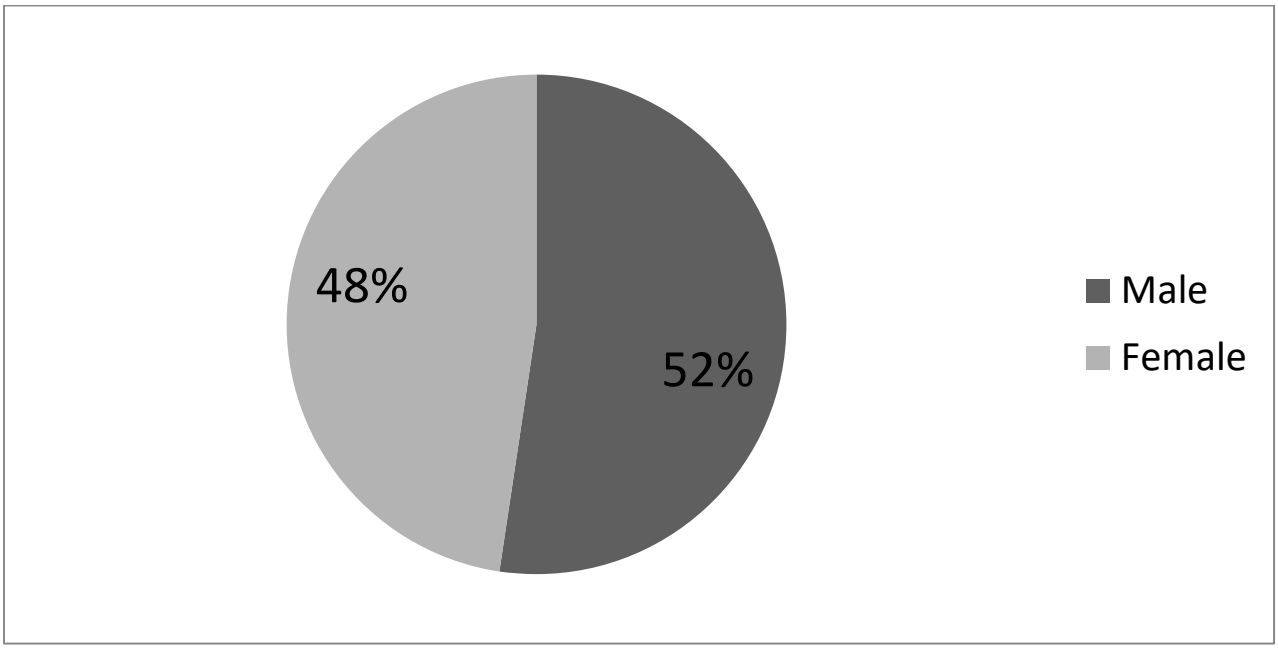
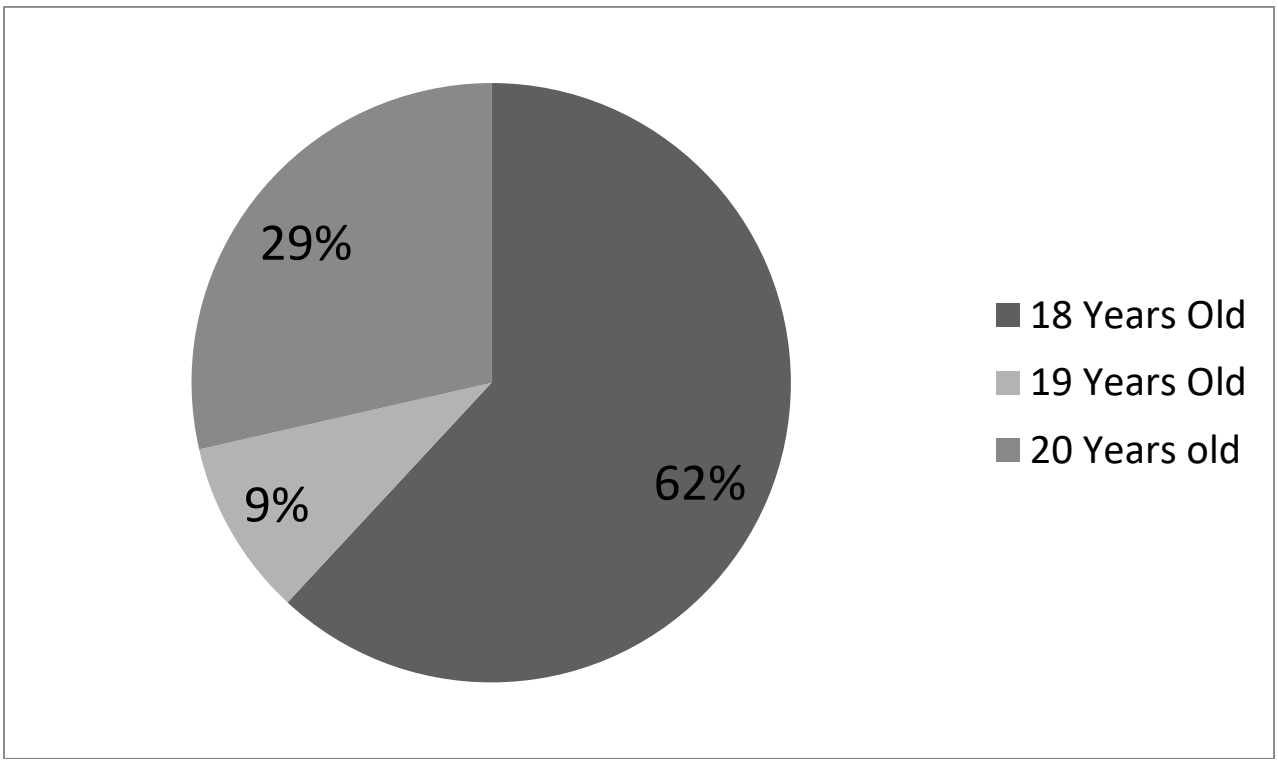
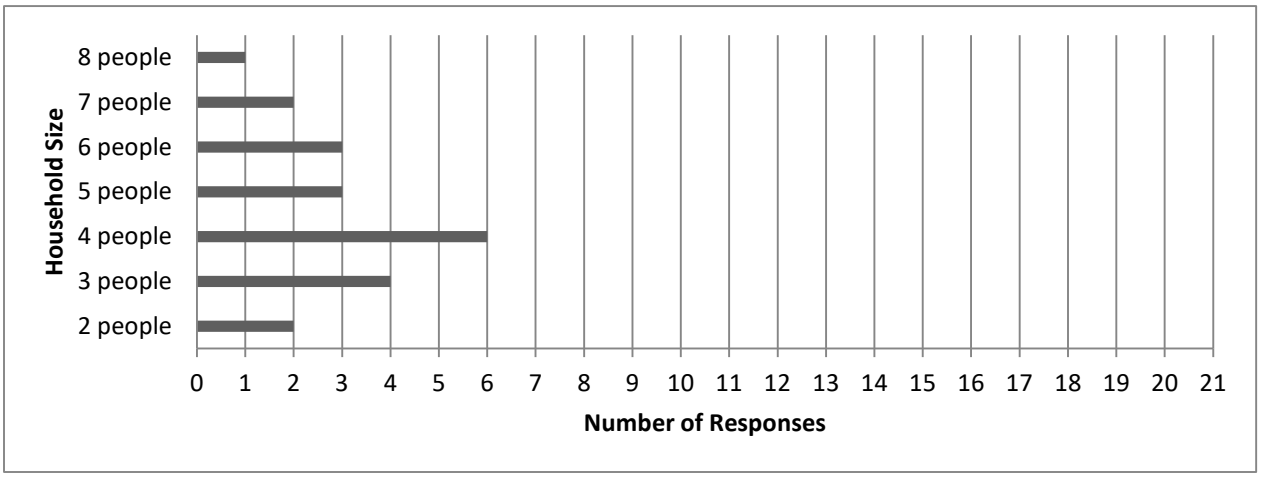


Figure 4.5. Age



Question 6. As discussed previously, SES depends upon several factors, including household size. Typically, the larger a family unit is, the more income they must have in order to not be considered low on the socioeconomic scale. In Figure 4.6, a breakdown of the number of people living in each of the participants' households is shown. The average American home houses 2.61 people, according to the US Census (2012). Of the students surveyed, 71.4% have at least four people in their home and 42.9% have at least five.

Figure 4.6. Household Size



Questions 7 and 8. Ingrum (2006) showed that the higher level of education obtained by a student's biological mother, the more likely that student will graduate from high school. Other research has also shown that parental education can be an important factor in whether or not a student graduates from high school (Parental education attainment and higher education opportunities, 1999). Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show the breakdown of the responses to Questions 7 and 8 of the survey. The responses show that 42.8% of mothers and 19.0% of fathers failed to complete high school in the traditional manner. 4.8% of mothers and 4.8% of fathers completed post-secondary education. 14.3% of those surveyed did not know their mother's educational level and 38.1% of those surveyed did not know their father's educational level.

Figure 4.7. Mother's Education

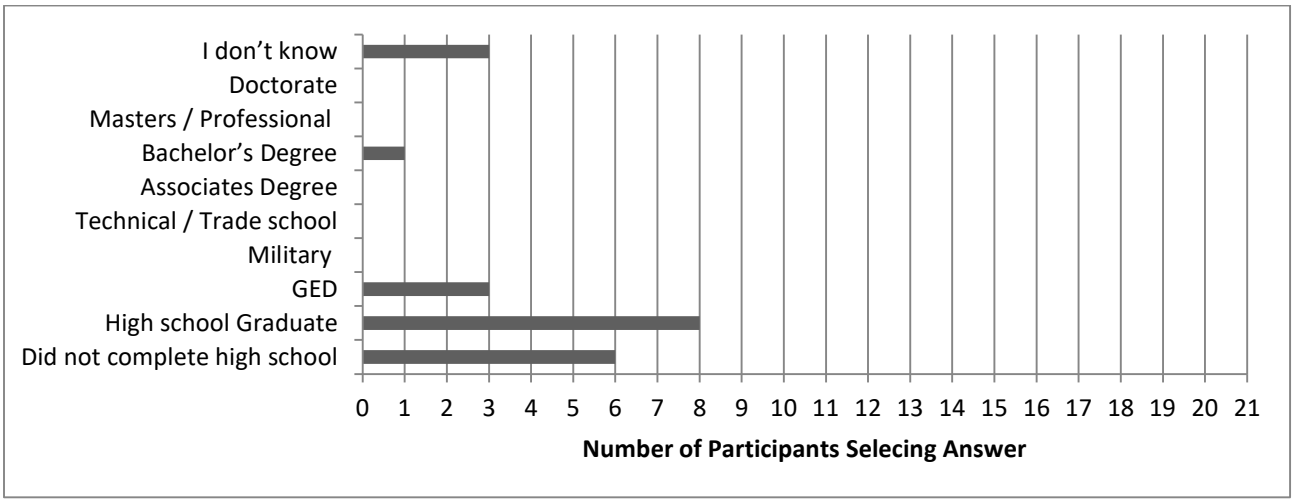
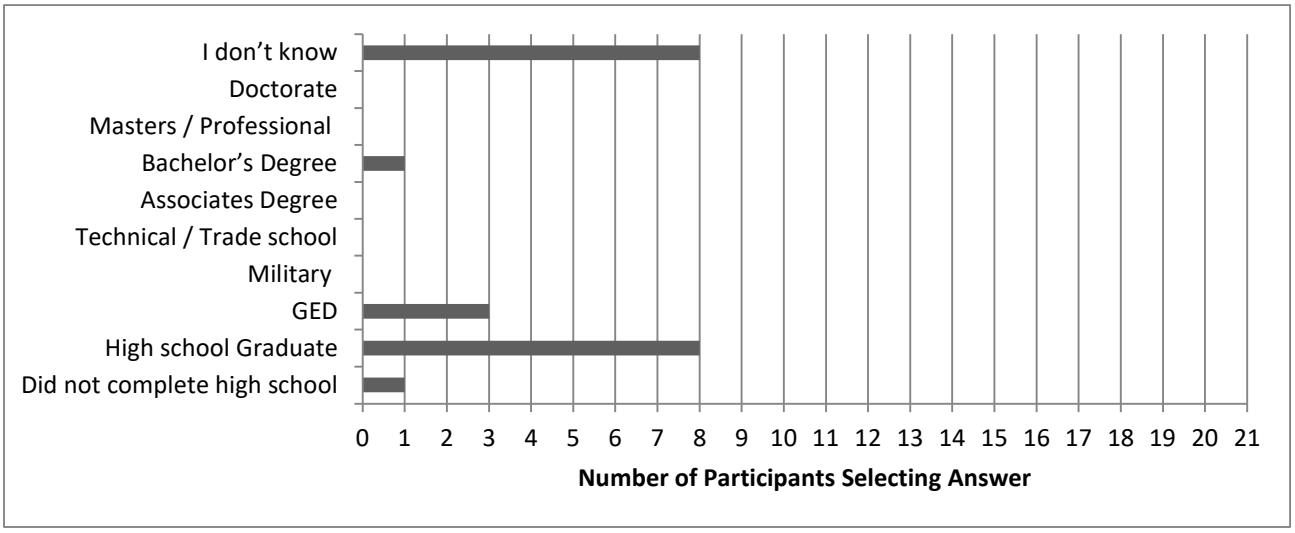
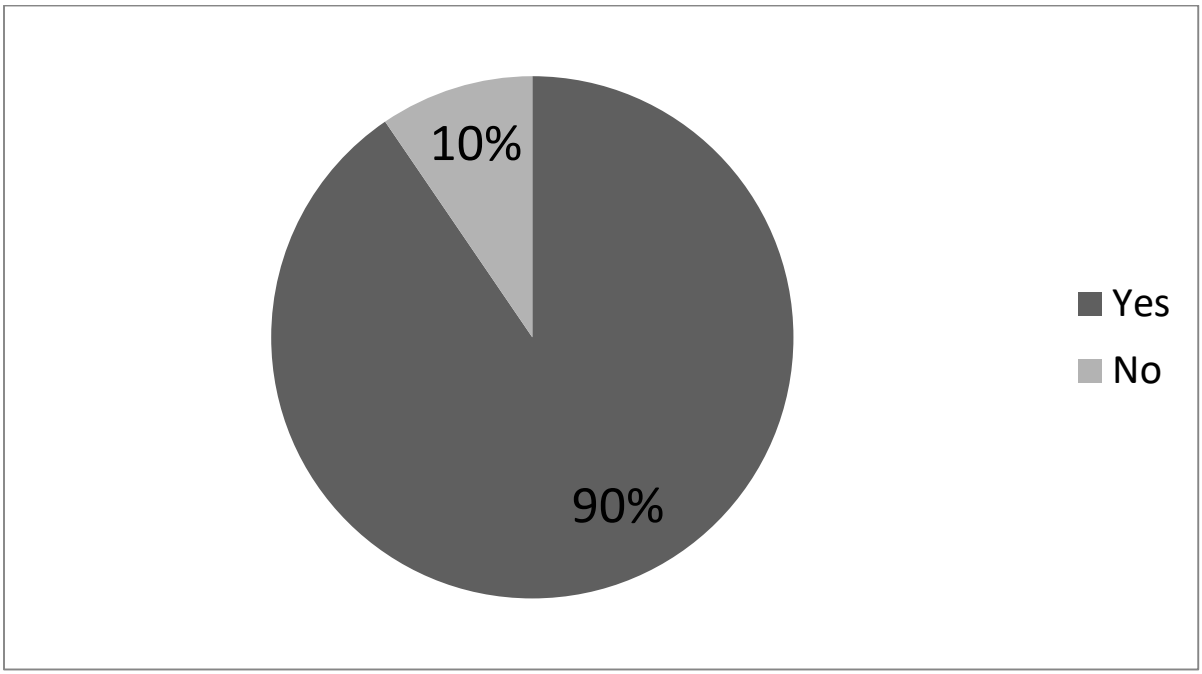


Figure 4.8. Father's Education



Question 9. Question 9 asked if a student was planning on going to college. Since these students were attending an adult high school, then it may be reasonable to assume that the results could be positive. Figure 4.9 shows that only 9.5% (2 out of 21) of students involved in this research do not plan on going to college.

Figure 4.9. Do You Plan on Going to College



Question 10. Question 10 asked if the student thought that education was important. No figure is needed for Question 10 because all (100%) participants indicated that education was important to them personally.

Data Category 2 – Likert-Type Questions

This section of the survey was designed to determine students' ideas about school, about education in general, about academics, and about how they value education. Each question was coded, and a Chi-squared analysis was completed to determine statistical significance in the responses.

Coding for Questions 11–33. Each of Questions 11–33 asked students to indicate whether they Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, or Strongly Agree with a given statement. The coding assigned to each response was either a -2, -1, 1, or 2 from left to right (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

Responses for Questions 11 - 33. The results of each of these questions are shown in the following figures. A more in depth analysis and statistical calculations are in the sections that follow.

Figure 4.10. Participant Responses to "I enjoyed going to school"

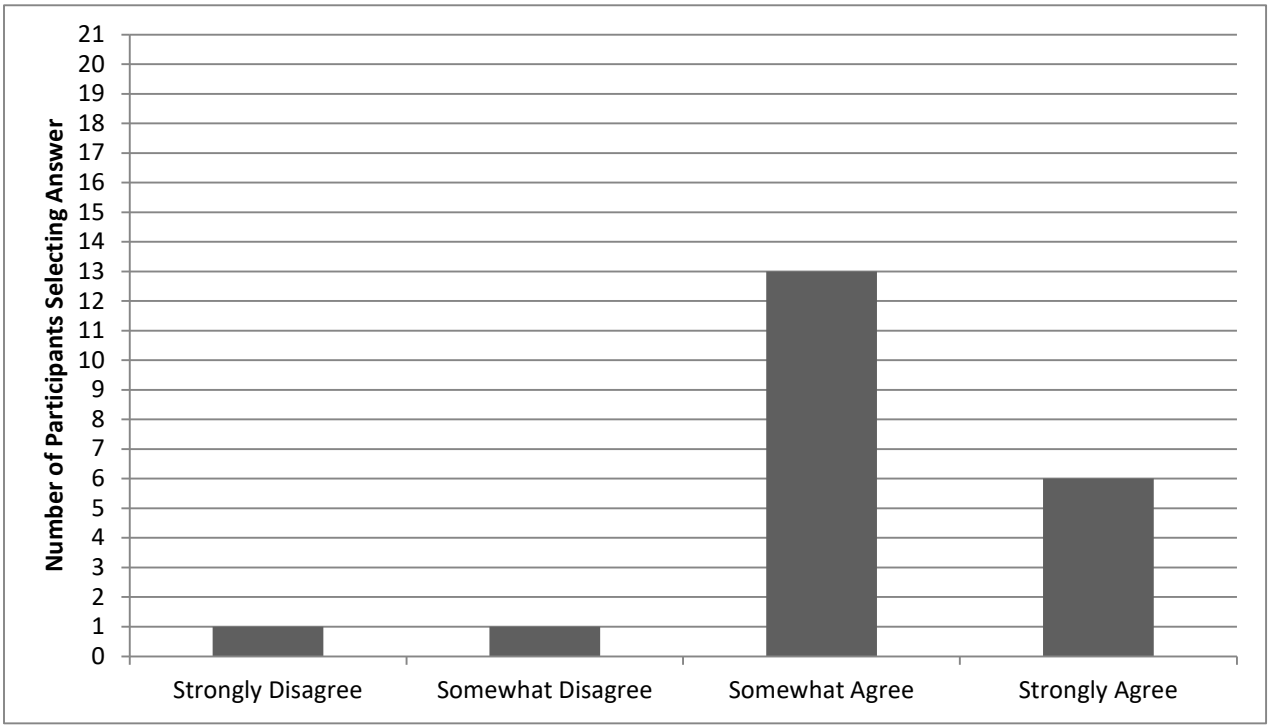
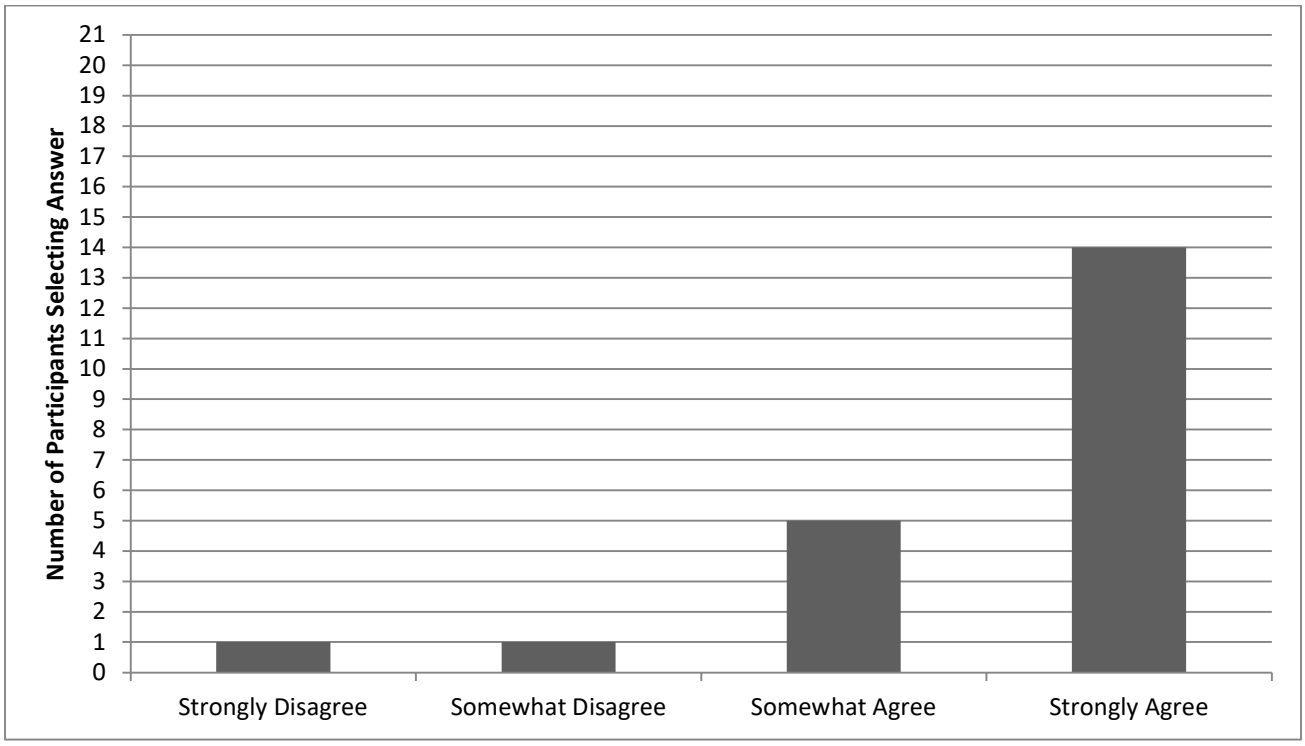


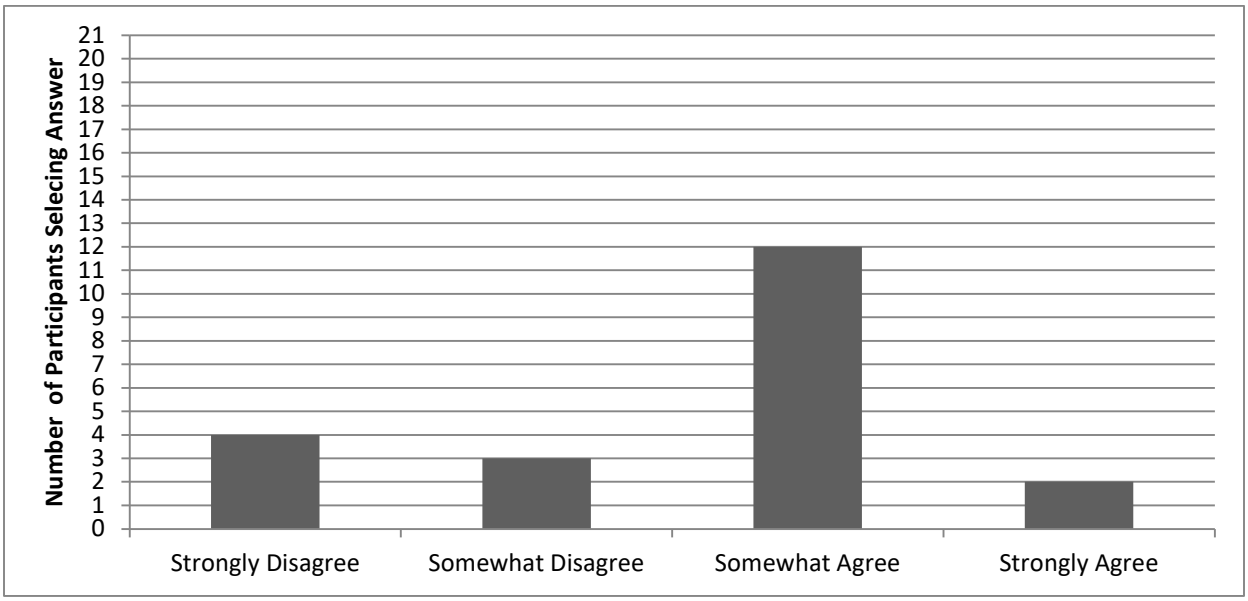
Figure 4.10 shows that the majority of students (19 out of 21) chose that they either Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement, "I enjoyed going to school." As to why students did or did not like going to school is unclear. Two selected the response of either Strongly Disagree or Somewhat Disagree, consisting of a total percentage of only 9.5%.

Figure 4.11. Participant Responses to “My parents encouraged me to do well in school”



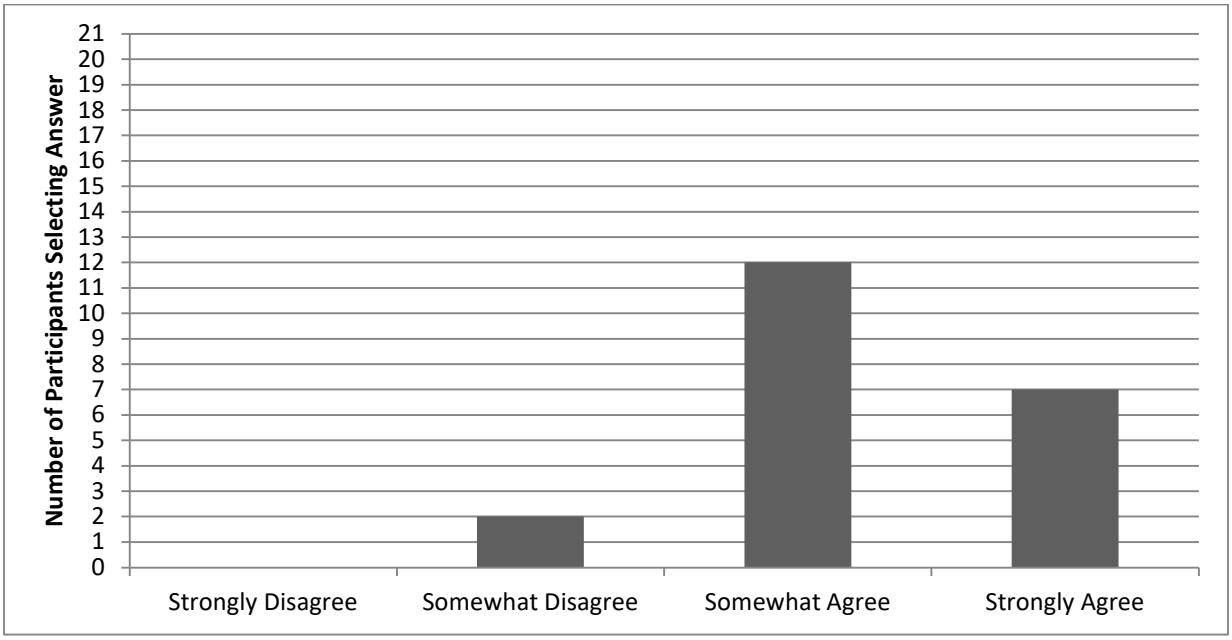
Similar to Figure 4.10, Figure 4.11 shows that most students (90.5%) chose to either Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement, “My parents encouraged me to do well in school.” Only two participants marked that their parents did not encourage them.

Figure 4.12. Participant Responses to “I was a motivated student and did not require much encouragement to want to do well in school.”



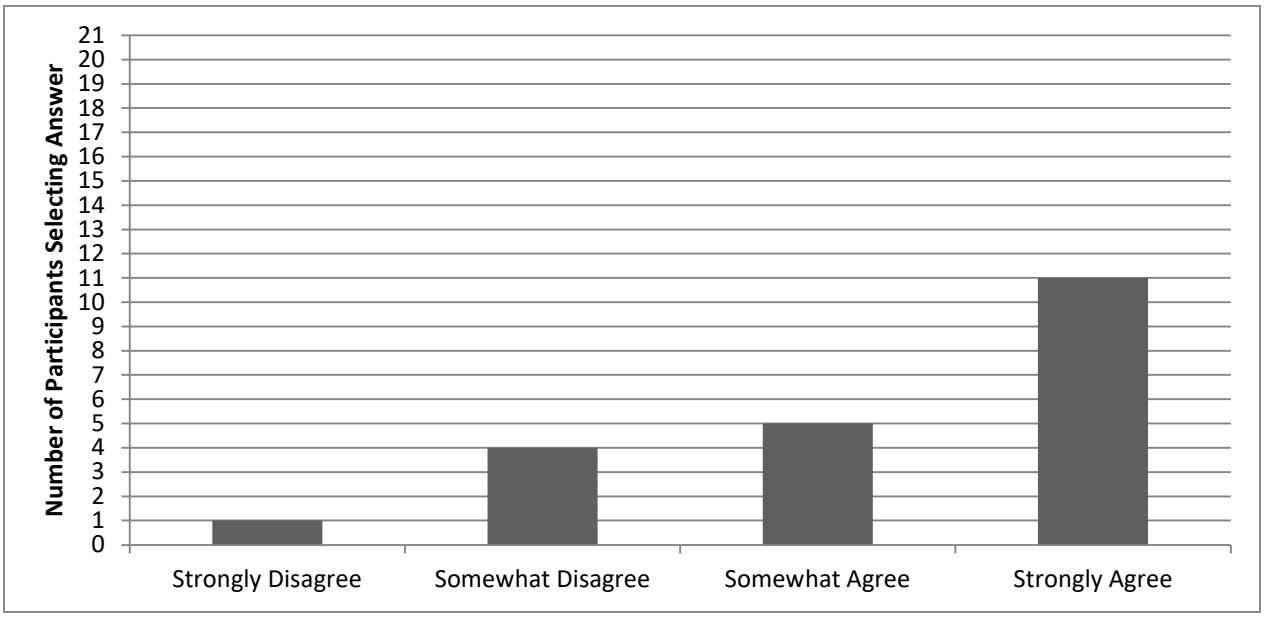
12 out of the 21 (57.1%) participants said that they Somewhat Agree with the statement “I was a motivated student and did not require much encouragement to want to do well in school.” Seven (33.3%) participants disagreed with this statement. When compared to the results of the previous question, at least 5 of these 7 must have received encouragement from their parents to do well in school.

Figure 4.13. Participant Responses to “I enjoyed learning new things even when they were challenging.”



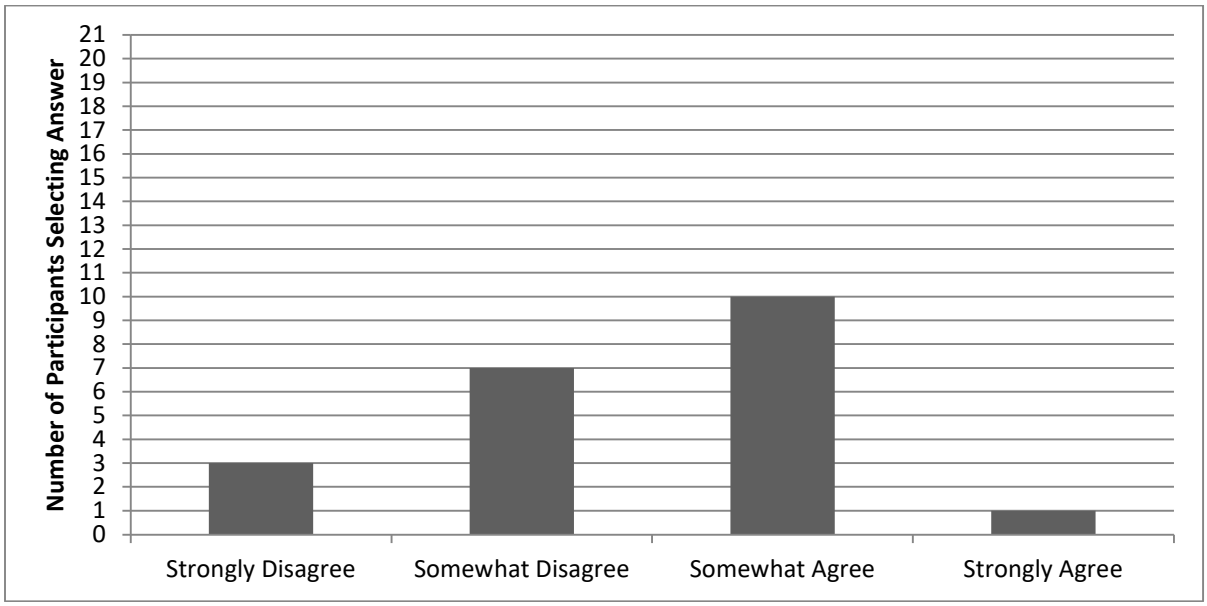
It is revealed in Figure 4.13 that no one selected the answer Strongly Disagree concerning the statement, “I enjoy learning new things, even when they are challenging.” With only 2 responding (10.5%) Somewhat Disagree, 19 (90.5%) selected either Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree.

Figure 4.14. Participant Responses to "I would go to school even if my parents didn't care and I wasn't required by law"



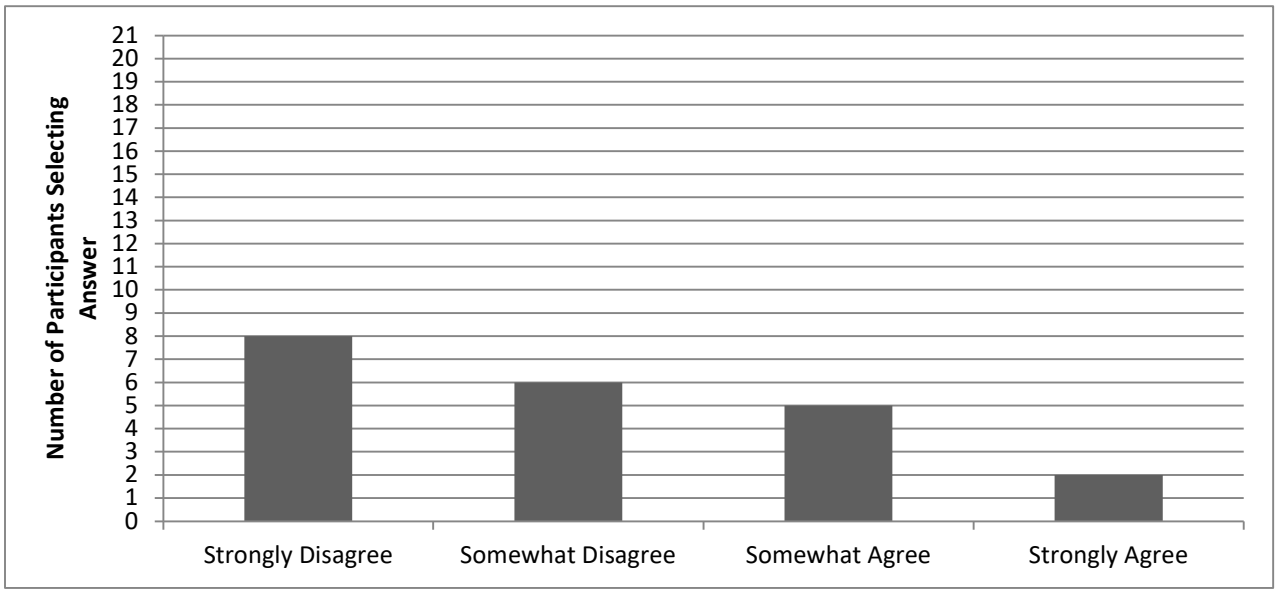
Students must attend high school in Tennessee until they are 18 years old or become emancipated in some manner -marriage for example (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). As shown in Figure 4.14, 76.2% (the combined total of Somewhat Agree and Strongly Agree responses out of 19 participants), would have attended school without there being a legal requirement or their parents forcing them to attend. Since each of these students has already dropped out of a regular high school, a desire to go to school does not indicate success in school.

Figure 4.15. Participant Responses to “I disagree with what I was required to learn in school.”



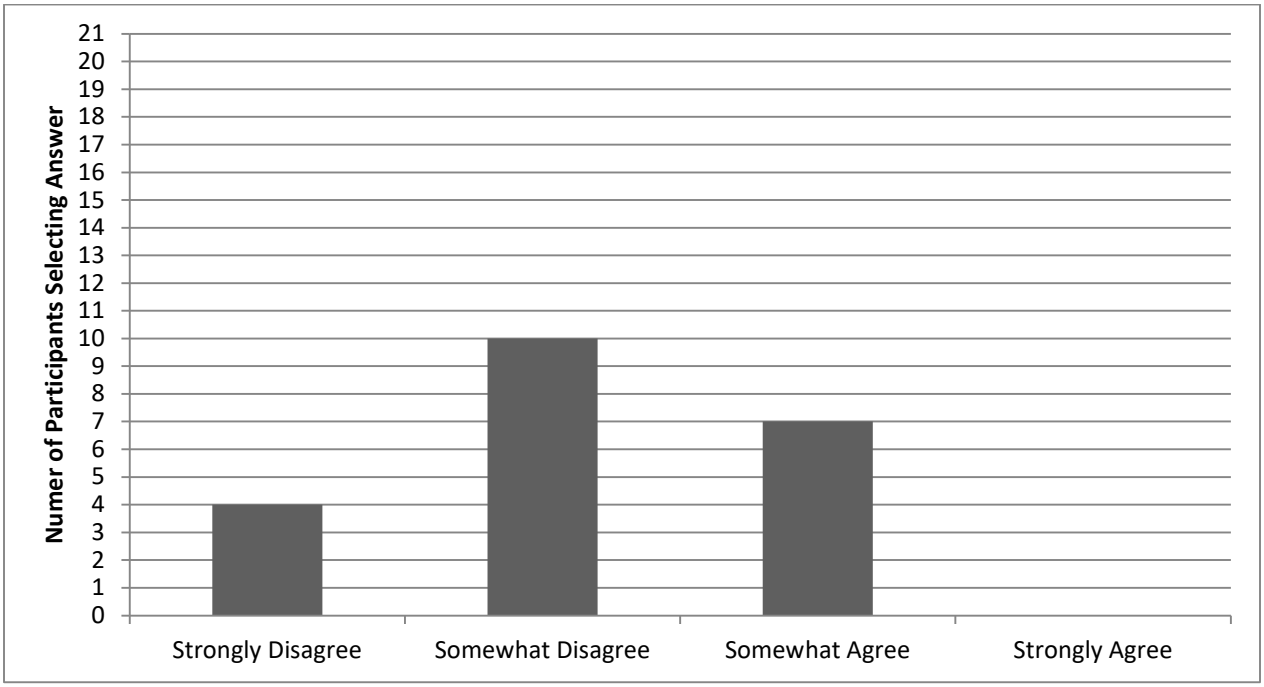
The most selected answer to Question 16 (Figure 4.15) was Somewhat Agree. Ten of the 21 students, which are 47.6%, selected the answer Somewhat Agree. Three chose Strongly Disagree and 7 chose Somewhat Disagree. The combined Disagree results are slightly less than the combined results of the Agrees (10 as compared to 11 respectively).

Figure 4.16. Participant Responses to “I did not understand why it is important to learn math and science”



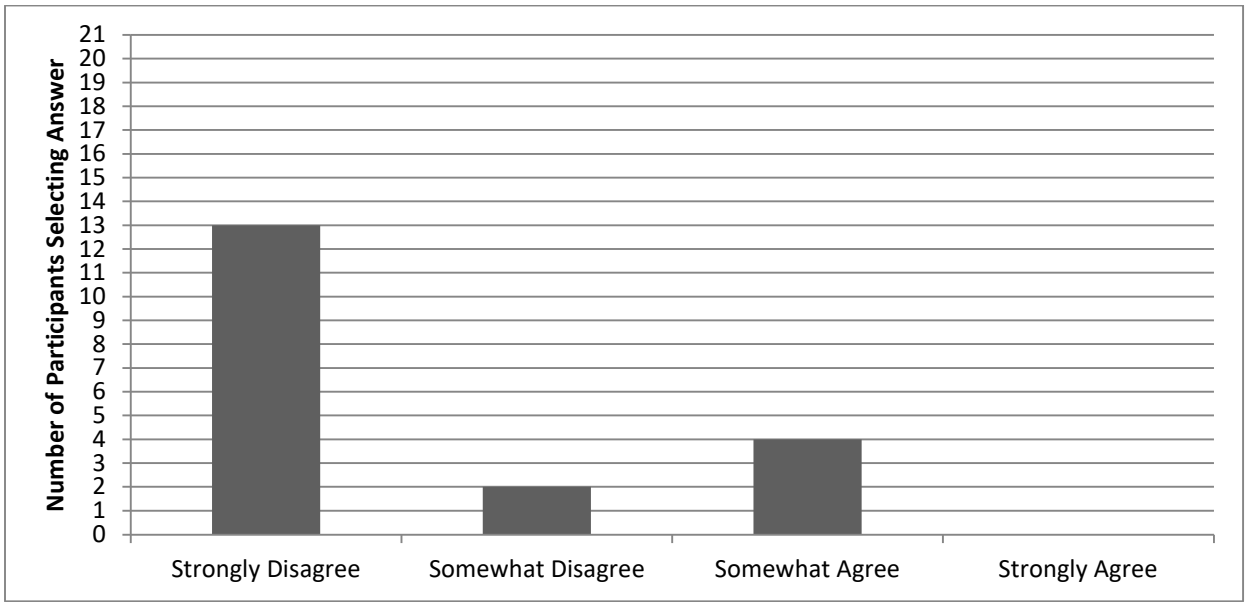
Math and science tend to be areas that students struggle with in high school. Even though students may find these subjects challenging, the majority of participants felt as if they understood the importance of learning these topics. Only 5 students chose Somewhat Agree with Question 17, and 2 strongly agreed. Whether the participants enjoyed math and science is unclear, but there is a strong indication that they appreciate the importance of these subjects.

Figure 4.17. Participant Responses to "I found school easy and not very challenging"



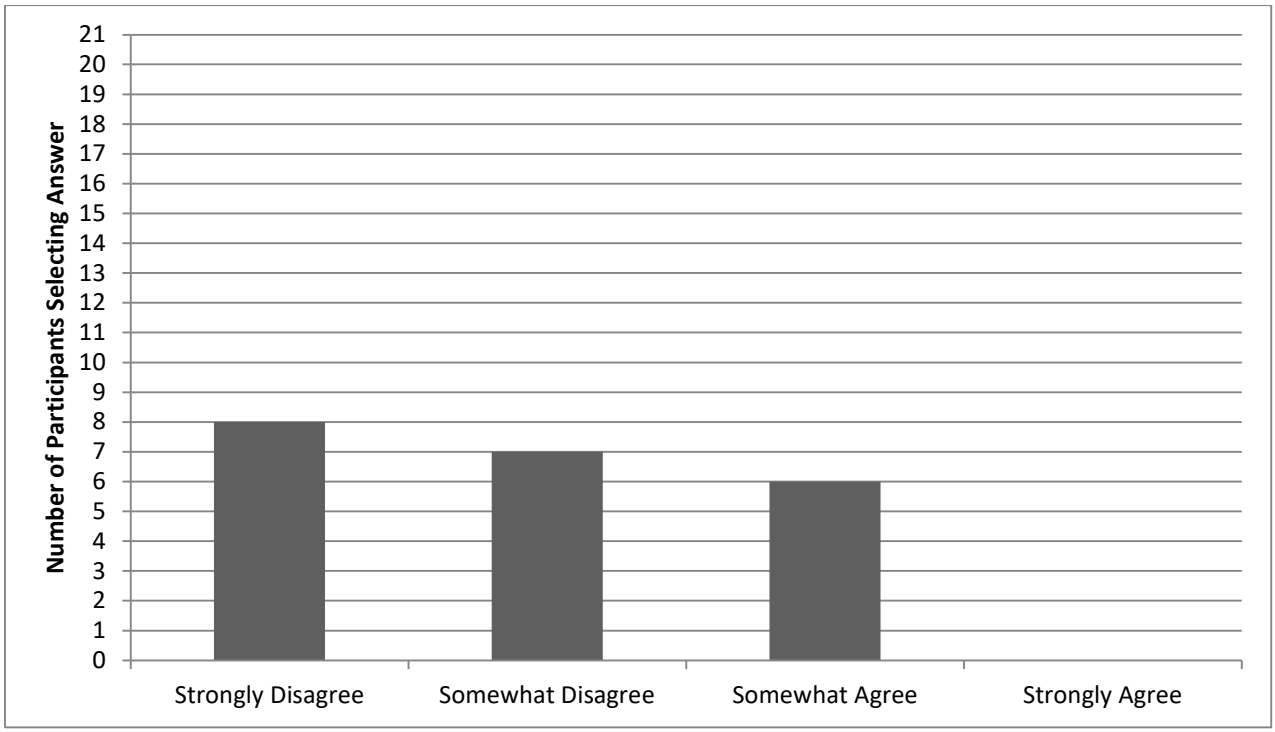
As seen in Figure 4.17, only a third (7 out of 21) of the participants found school easy. Not a single person strongly agreed with the idea that school was not challenging. Four of the 21 participants strongly disagreed with the idea that school was easy, and 10 somewhat disagreed.

Figure 4.18. Participant Responses to "If I could have, I would have dropped out of school sooner."



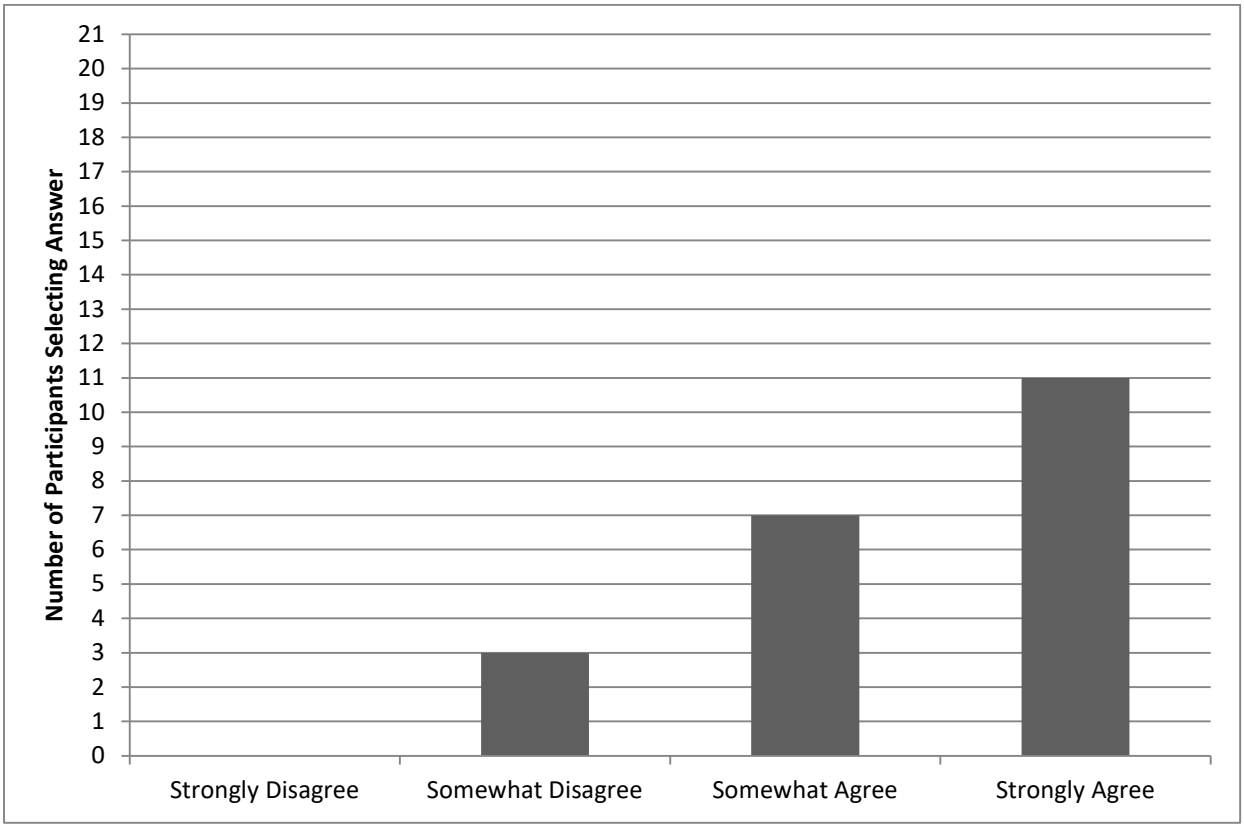
For whatever reason these students had for dropping out of the traditional high school, all but 4 would not have dropped out sooner.

Figure 4.19. Participant Responses to "I do not need to know what is being taught in school in order to be successful."



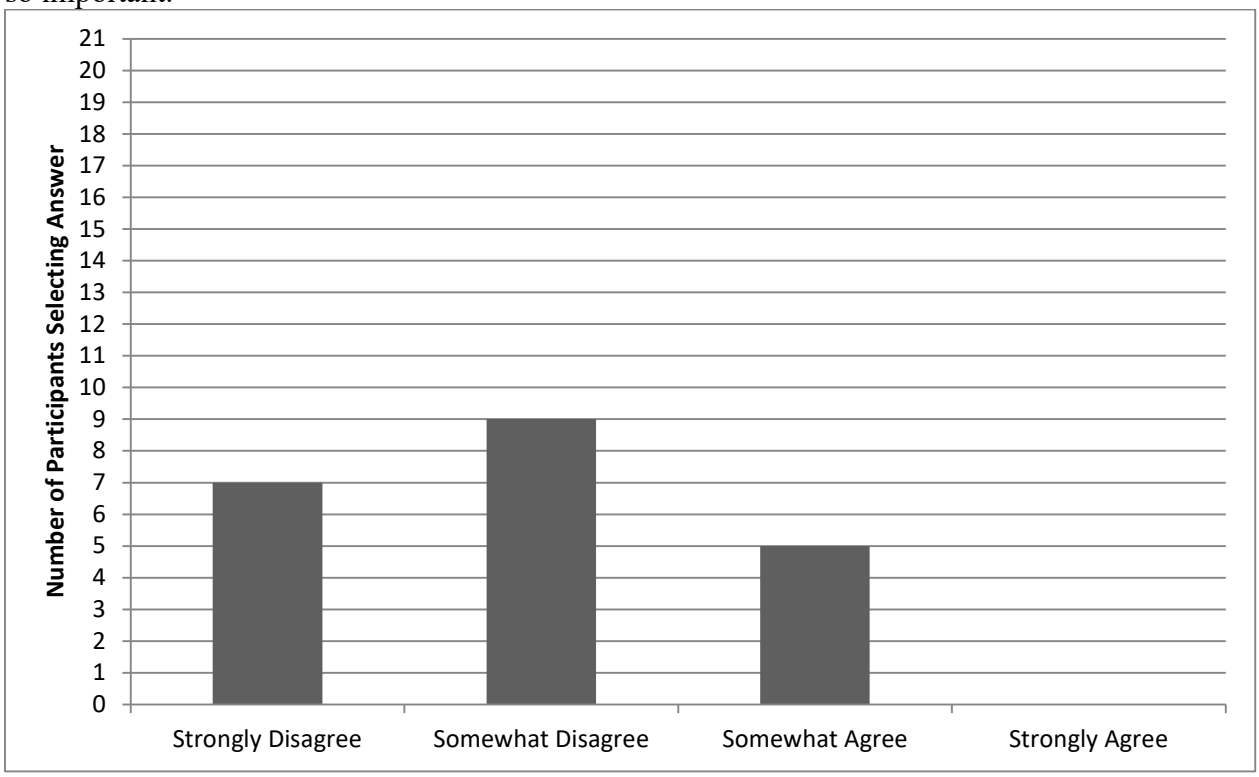
When asked about the importance of school and being successful, none of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement, “I do not need to know what is being taught in school in order to be successful.” Fifteen of the 21 participants (71.4%) disagreed with the idea that school was not important in order to be successful.

Figure 4.20. Participant Responses to “I intend to go to college”



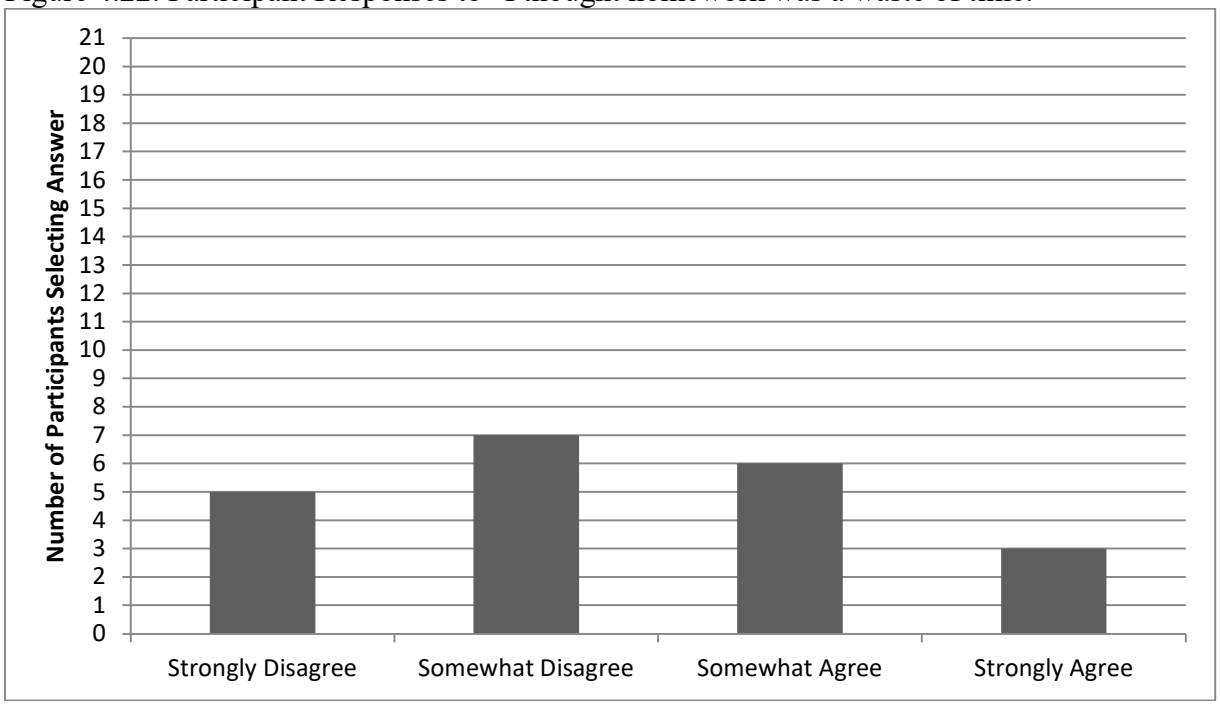
Three of the participants do not plan on going to college. Since these students have essentially returned to school by their own choice, it is logical that they intend to continue their education beyond their high school diploma. This logic is evident in Figure 4.20: the percentage of participants who either Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement “I intend to go to college” is 85.7%.

Figure 4.21. Participant Responses to "I did not understand why things like math and science are so important."



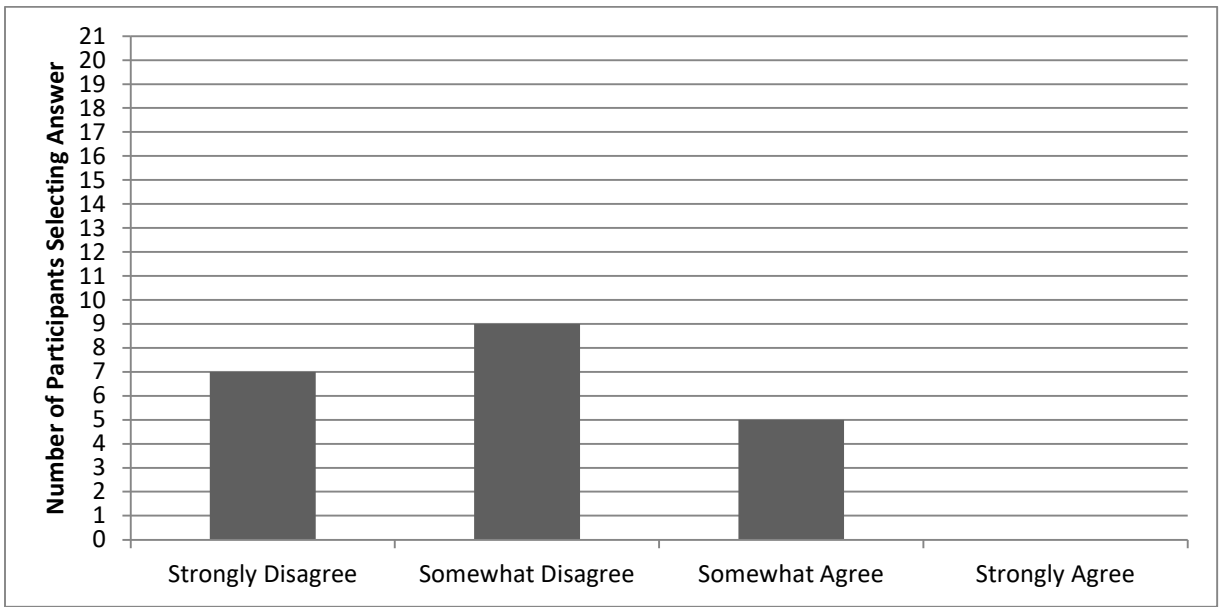
Question 22 (Figure 4.21) is very similar to Question 17 (Figure 4.16). This question was restated to determine if participants were thoughtfully reading and answering the questions. Although there is some variation in the answers, the overall results are similar, and show that the students involved in this research were consistent in their thinking throughout the data collection process. Comparing Questions 17 and 22, 8 and 7 participants chose Strongly Disagree respectively, 6 and 9 participants chose Somewhat Disagree respectively, 5 and 5 chose Somewhat Agree respectively, and 2 and 0 chose Strongly Agree respectively. The wording difference in the two questions (17 and 22) is whether learning math and science is important as opposed to the overall importance of math and science in general.

Figure 4.22. Participant Responses to “I thought homework was a waste of time.”



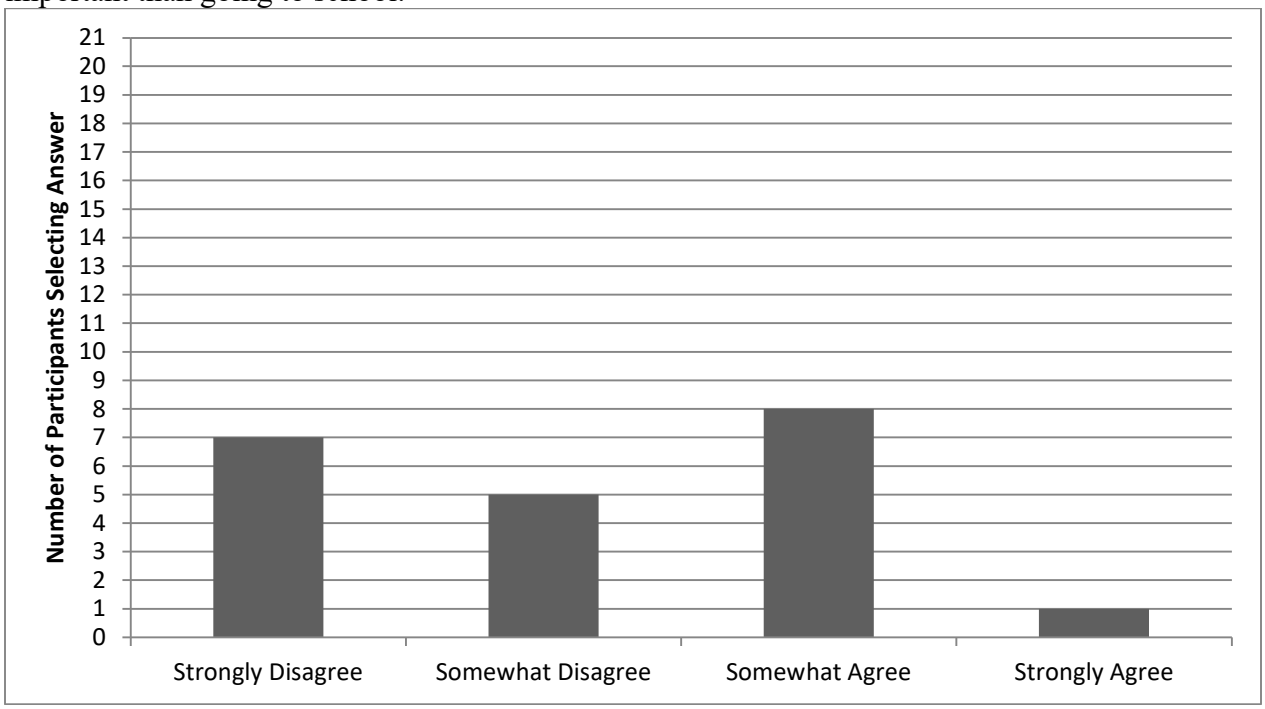
Considering homework, there was no statistical consensus among the participants. The majority of responses were Somewhat Disagree (7 out of 21) and Somewhat Agree (6 out of 21). Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree were selected 5 and 3 times respectively.

Figure 4.23. Participant Responses to “I had better things to do with my time than to go to school.”



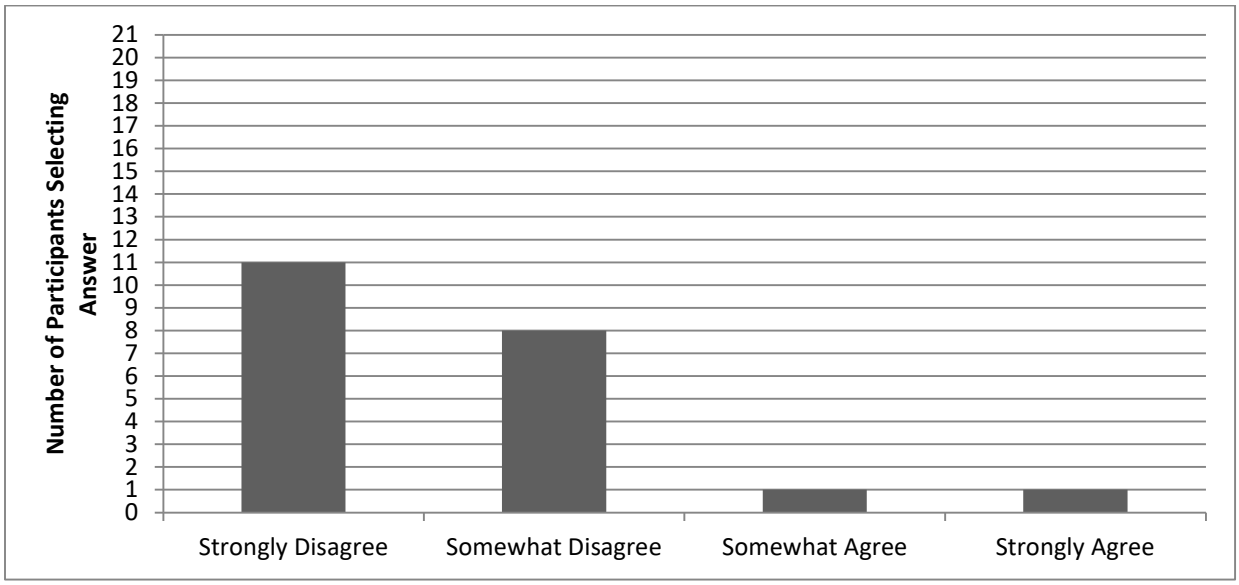
Five of the students thought that they had something more important to do than school (Figure 4.23). However, most students, 76.2% (16 out of 21), did not agree with the statement.

Figure 4.24. Participant Responses to "I thought getting a job and earning money was more important than going to school."



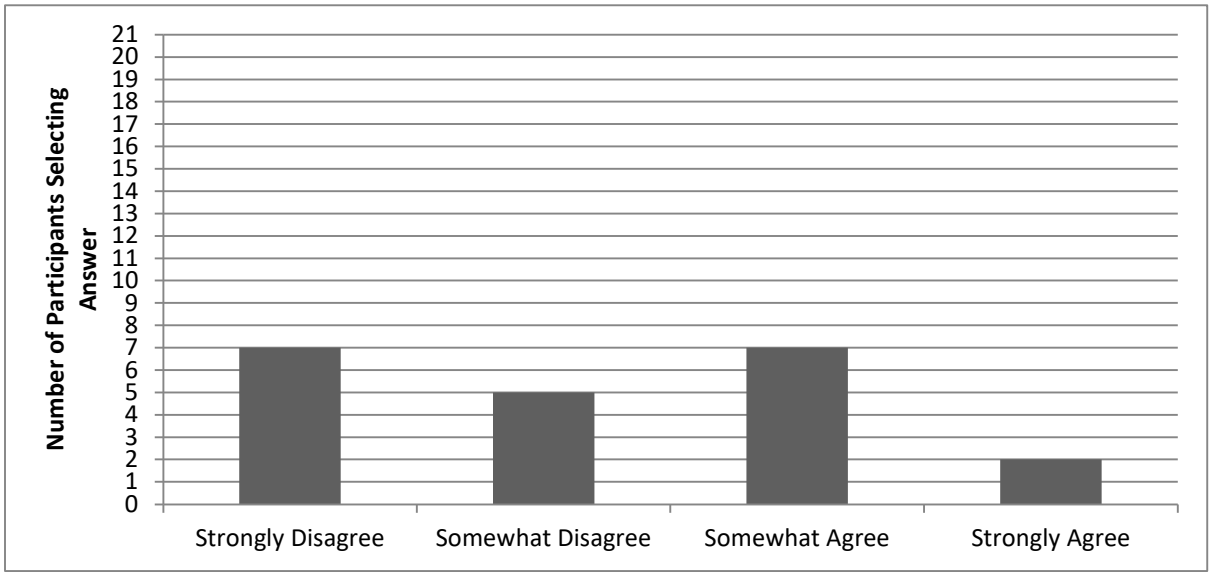
Nearly half of the 21 participants (8 Somewhat Agree and 1 Strongly Agree, which represent 42.8%) thought that employment was more important than school. Even though Figure 4.23 showed that only 5 out of 21 (23.8%) thought that something was more important than attending school, when presented with a statement about the importance of work versus school, there was a shift in the responses.

Figure 4.25. Participant Responses to “I am never going to use the information I learned in school.”



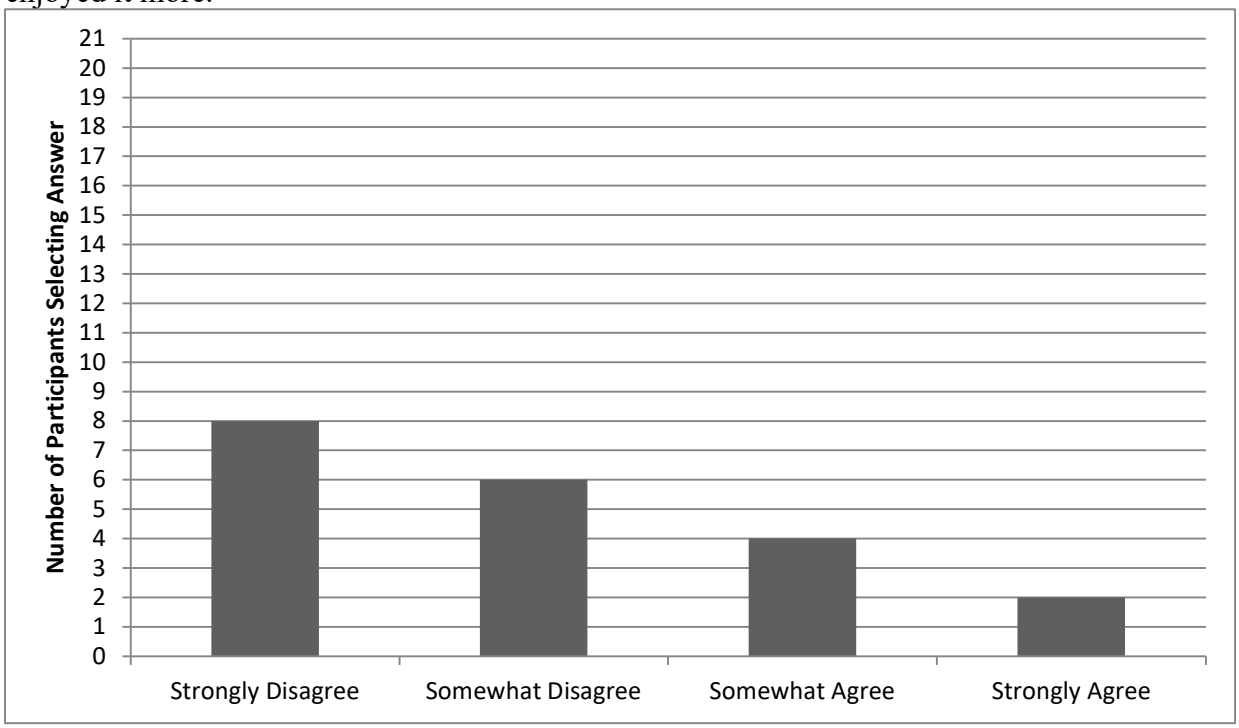
All but 2 participants disagreed with the statement that they would never use the information learned in school. Strongly Disagree, the majority response, was chosen by 11 of the 21 students. The second most popular answer was Somewhat Disagree (8 participants). Together, the Disagree responses consisted of 90.5%.

Figure 4.26 .Participant Responses to “Most of what I need to be successful in life I can learn from my peers.”



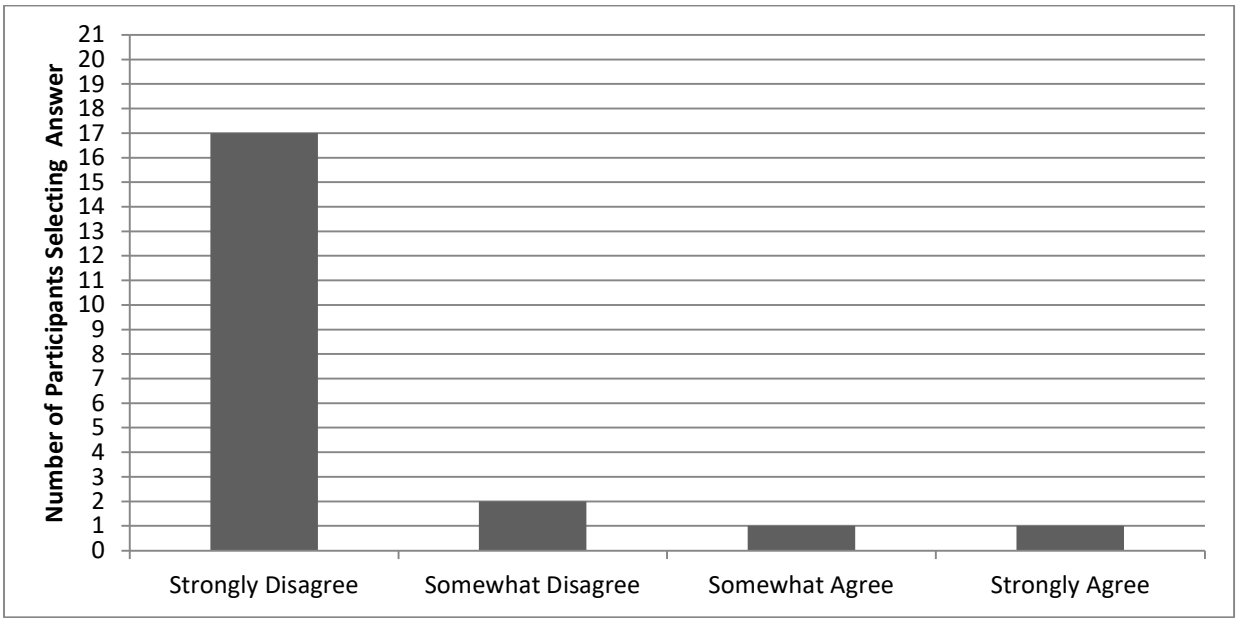
Even though only 6 students stated that they did not need school to be successful (Figure 4.19), 9 felt that they can learn most of what they need from their peers (Figure 4.26). The variance in the response to these questions is discussed in Chapter V.

Figure 4.27. Participant Responses to "If school had less academic requirements I would have enjoyed it more."



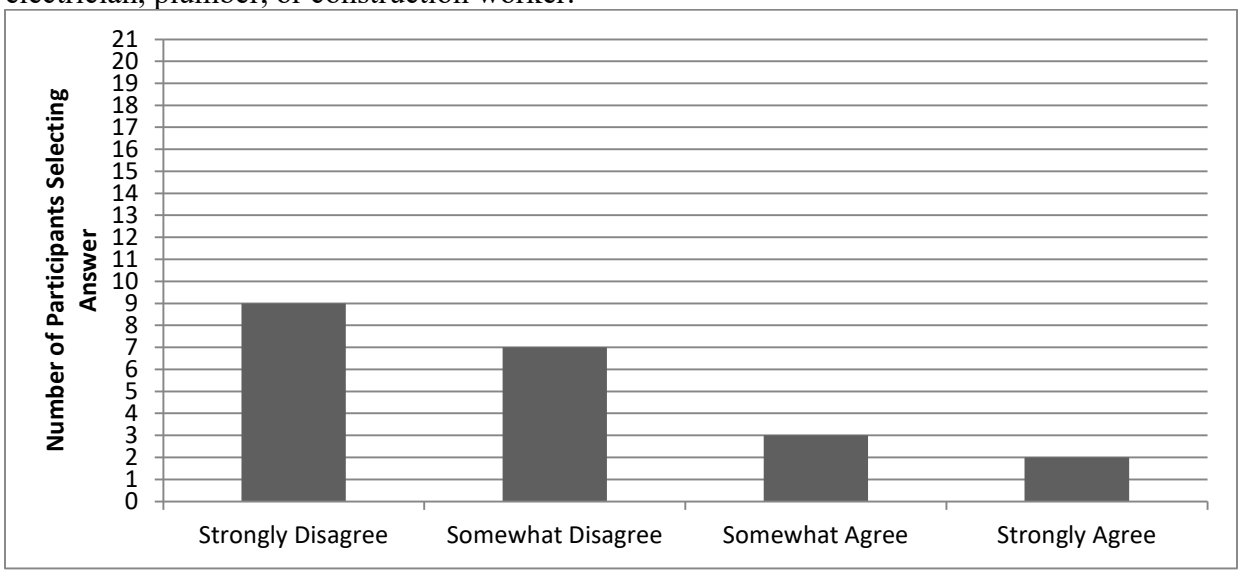
The strongest responses concerning lowering academic requirements to make school more enjoyable (Figure 4.27) were Strongly Disagree (8) and Somewhat Disagree (6). The least popular response was Strongly Agree, with only 2 participants choosing it. Somewhat Agree was selected by 4 of the 21 students. Combining the Agree answers, only 28.6% felt that school would be more enjoyable if there were fewer academic classes.

Figure 4.28. Participant Responses to “School was a waste of time”



When asked if school was a waste of time, 81% (17 out of 21) chose Strongly Disagree. As stated earlier, these participants made the decision on their own to continue their education after dropping out of traditional high school.

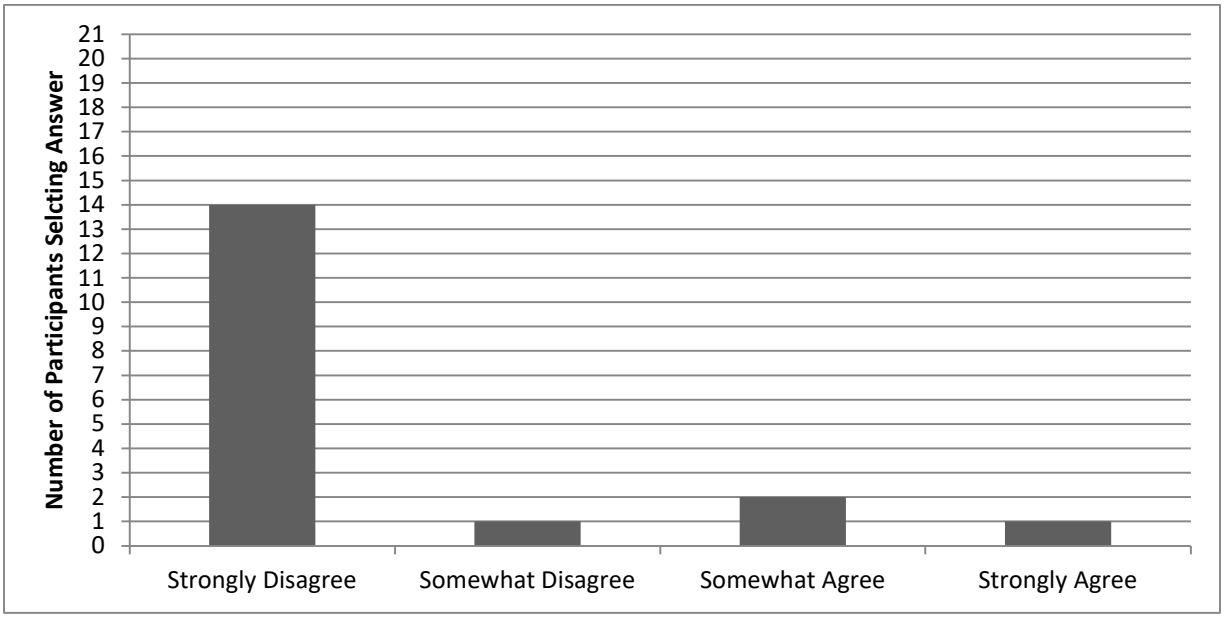
Figure 4.29. Participant Responses to “A better use of my time would be to learn a skill such as electrician, plumber, or construction worker.”



The majority of the participants did not agree with the statement presented in Figure 4.29. Only 23.8% (5 out of 21) agreed with the idea that learning a skill was a better use of their time

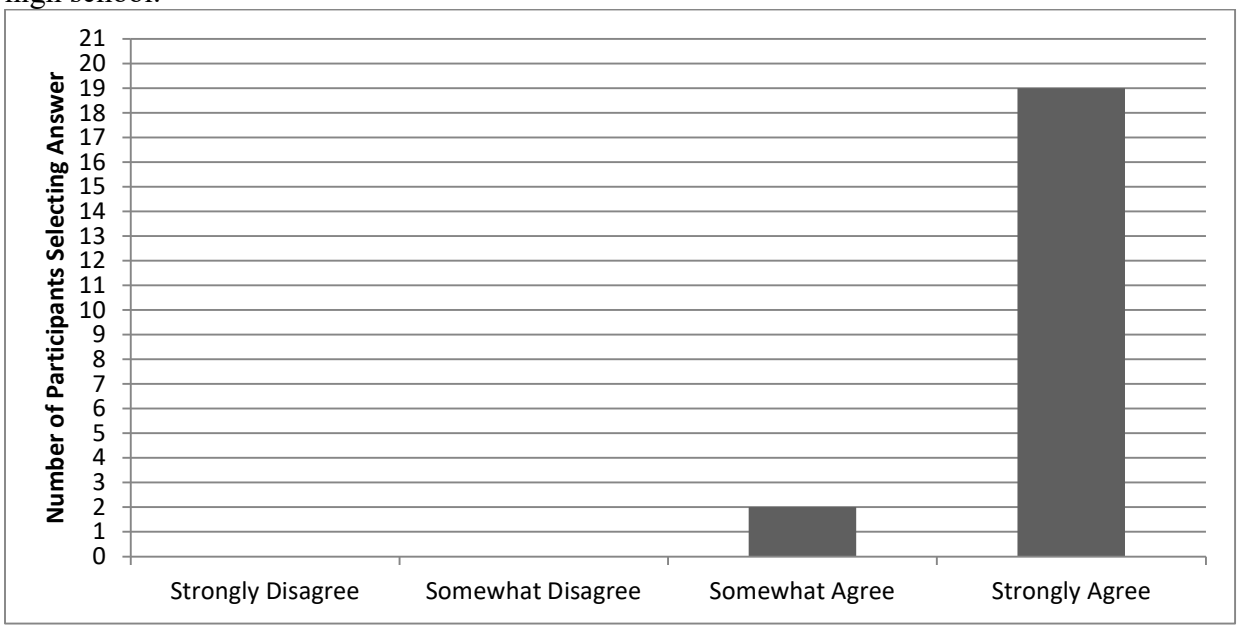
than attending school. With almost all of these students indicating that they want to attend college (90% from Figure 4.9), it makes sense that they would see going to school as an important step in their future. If the population changed to dropouts that did not return to a high school environment, then this question could have had very different results.

Figure 4.30. Dropping out of high school was a good idea.



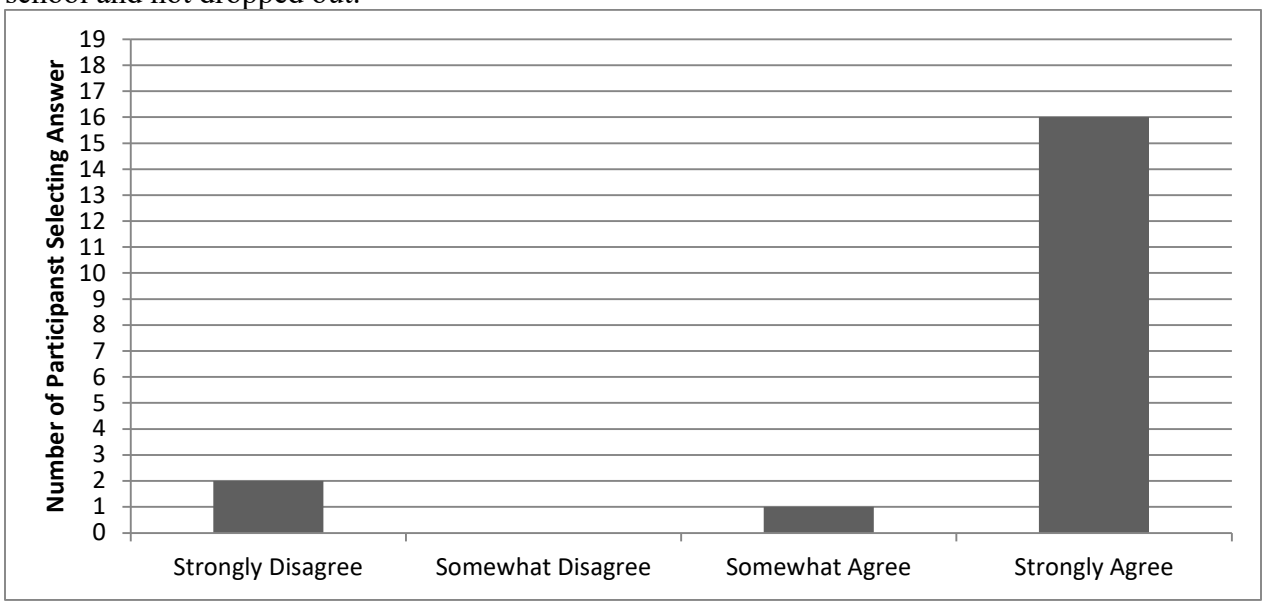
When responding to the statement that dropping out of school was a good idea, 14 strongly disagreed, while only 3 either agreed or strongly agreed. Out of the 21 students involved with this survey, 3 did not respond. The reason that they chose not to answer this question is unclear. By disregarding the non-responses, 83.3% who did respond did not think dropping out of school was a good idea. A high percentage seems logical since this population has returned to school.

Figure 4.31. Participant Responses to "I would advise current students to stay in and graduate high school."



Not a single participant disagreed with the idea of advising current students to stay in school (Figure 4.31). Many implications of why this is and how this idea can be used to keep students in school are discussed in Chapter V.

Figure 4.32. Participant Responses to "If I could do it all over, I would have stayed in high school and not dropped out."



Two of the 21 participants did not answer the question displayed in Figure 4.32. As seen in Figure 4.23, only 2 students disagreed with the statement, "If I could do it all over, I would have

stayed in high school." Sixteen selected Strongly Agree and one selected Somewhat Agree. The combined total (16 and 1) who agreed with this statement was 89.5%

Descriptive analysis of questions 11–33. Using the same coding as described earlier in this chapter, in which -2, -1, 1, and 2 were assigned to Strongly Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, and Strongly Agree respectively, the mean, median, and mode of each of the Likert-type questions has been calculated. The results of these calculations are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Mean, Median, and Mode for Likert-type Questions

Question	Mean	Median	Mode	Question	Mean	Median	Mode
11	1.047619	1	1	**23**	-0.2381	-1	-1
12	1.428571	2	2	**24**	-0.85714	-1	-1
13	0.238095	1	1	**25**	-0.42857	-1	1
14	1.142857	1	1	**26**	-1.28571	-2	-2
15	1	2	2	**27**	-0.38095	-1	1
16	-0.04762	1	1	**28**	-0.66667	-1	-2
17	-0.61905	-1	-2	**29**	-1.57143	-2	-2
18	-0.52381	-1	-1	**30**	-0.85714	-1	-2
19	-1.14286	-2	-2	**31**	-1.19048	-2	-2
20	-0.80952	-1	-2	**32**	1.904762	2	2
21	1.238095	2	2	**33**	1.380952	2	2
22	-0.85714	-1	-1				

Statistical correlations of responses for questions 11–33. In order to compare the Likert-type questions to look for any statistical similarities, a statistical analysis program entitled CRAN was used. The responses of each question were compared. Figures 4.33 and 4.34 show the results of this comparison, in which only statistically significant correlations are shown with an $\alpha = 0.05$ and df = 27 - 2 = 25, and the critical ρ value (Pearson's corr. Coefficient) is 0.381. In other words, pair-wise correlations with $|r| > 0.381$ are significant. Note that the questions are numbered 11–33, corresponding to the 23 Likert-type questions.

Figure 4.33. Likert-Type Questions Correlations 11 – 22

Question	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
11		NA	NA	***0.622518***	0.43005	NA	-0.44735	0.486897	NA	NA	NA	***-0.54985***
12			NA	NA	NA	NA	-0.48238	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13				NA	NA	-0.5237	NA	0.455372	NA	NA	NA	NA
14					***0.575672***	NA	-0.42461	0.403423	NA	NA	NA	NA
15						NA	-0.47349	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16							0.471058	-0.47468	NA	NA	-0.40464	0.408981
17								-0.40992	NA	NA	NA	0.517591
18									NA	NA	NA	NA
19										NA	-0.50359	NA
20											NA	NA
21												NA
22												
23												
24												
25												
26												
27												
28												
29												
30												
31												
32												
33												

Note – the ten strongest correlations are bolded, italicized, and boxed. Only statistically significant correlations are shown here at α=0.05 and df = 27 - 2 = 25, the critical ρ value (Pearson's corr. Coefficient) is 0.38, in other words, pair-wise correlations with $|r| > 0.381$ are significant

Figure 4.34. Likert-Type Questions Correlations 23 - 33

Question	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
11	-0.44251	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.491219	NA
14	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.456605
15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
16	NA	0.431152	0.381585	NA	NA	0.492006	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	NA	0.42796	0.462996	0.478581	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	0.534308	***0.643268***	0.501506	NA	NA	0.445679	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.412882	0.406441	0.405684	NA	0.465637	-0.49546	NA
21	NA	-0.41144	-0.39019	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
22	0.499684	0.408248	0.459318	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
23		***0.724502***	0.425069	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
24			***0.753759***	0.449561	NA	0.453928	0.451848	NA	NA	NA	NA
25				***0.557293***	0.458564	0.391939	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
26					***0.535303***	0.496745	0.493324	NA	NA	NA	NA
27						0.507178	0.447989	0.410256	NA	NA	NA
28							***0.564428***	0.504177	NA	-0.47987	NA
29								0.459138	NA	-0.44272	NA
30									NA	NA	NA
31										***-0.70022***	NA
32											NA
33											

Note – the ten strongest correlations are bolded, italicized, and boxed. Only statistically significant correlations are shown here at α=0.05 and df = 27 - 2 = 25, the critical ρ value (Pearson's corr. Coefficient) is 0.38, in other words, pair-wise correlations with $|r| > 0.381$ are significant

Top ten correlations between Likert-type questions. The ten highest pair-correlations are described in this section. Statistically, these questions have the most similar answers, and, therefore, can be linked to one another. These ten correlations are listed from most statistically significant to least statistically significant. Implications of these correlations will be discussed in Chapter V.

The highest three correlations (in descending order) are Questions 24 and 25, 24 and 23, and 31 and 32. These questions are restated in the following table.

Table 4.6
Restating Likert-type Questions

No.	Question from Survey
23	I thought homework was a waste of time.
24	I had better things to do with my time than to go to school.
25	I thought getting a job and earning money was more important than going to school.
31	Dropping out of high school was a good idea.
32	I would advise current students to stay in and graduate high school.

The answers to Questions 23, 24, and 25 do not show a strong response to either the positive side or the negative side of the Likert-scale. These questions have a strong correlation; however, a consensus for each answer is not clear.

The next three strongest correlations are between Questions 24 and 19, 14 and 11, and 15 and 14. These correlations range between 0.64 and 0.57 as shown in Figures 4.33 and 4.34. The last four of the top ten correlations are between the Questions 11 and 22, 25 and 26, 26 and 27, and 28 and 29. Each of these correlations is discussed in Chapter V.

Chi-Squared test for Likert-type questions. In order to determine if the answers to the questions in this data category are significant by themselves, a Chi-squared test was calculated for each set of responses using Microsoft Excel. The expected value used for each answer was set to 5.25, which is 25% of the total number of participants. For each calculation, in order for the responses to be statistically significant, p must be less than 0.05. The p for each question is as follows:

Table 4.7
Chi-squared Test Values for Likert-type Questions Based on 25% Distribution

Question #	p-value	Shows significance (p is less than 0.05)
11	0.000358810596	Yes
12	0.000083828453	Yes
13	0.007548076156	Yes
14	0.000885370774	Yes
15	0.018165662961	Yes
16	0.025723740959	Yes
17	0.311615552369	
18	0.015253349832	Yes
19	0.000273398887	Yes
20	0.060697500214	
21	0.004435109440	Yes
22	0.036340162721	Yes
23	0.644369805637	
24	0.036340162721	Yes
25	0.140069646270	
26	0.002172910378	Yes
27	0.363179497786	
28	0.277309056900	
29	0.000000111043	Yes
30	0.100583814936	
31	0.000032129522	Yes
32	0.000000000165	Yes
33	0.000000370004	Yes

As indicated above, all of the responses were statistically significant, except for Questions 17, 20, 23, 25, 27, 28, and 30. Another way to look at the data is to only look at responses as either Agree or Disagree. In this view, the expected outcome would have a value of 10.5 for both Agree and Disagree. When this is the case, the following Chi-squared test results are produced:

Table 4.8
Chi-squared Test Values for Likert-type Questions Based on 50% Distribution

Question #	p-value	Shows significance (p is less than 0.05)
11	0.0002075016	Yes
12	0.0002075016	Yes
13	0.1266304579	
14	0.0002075016	Yes
15	0.0163773083	Yes
16	0.8272593466	
17	0.1266304579	
18	0.1266304579	
19	0.0146974218	Yes
20	0.0495346134	Yes
21	0.0010631149	Yes
22	0.0163773083	Yes
23	0.5126907603	
24	0.0163773083	Yes
25	0.5126907603	
26	0.0002075016	Yes
27	0.5126907603	
28	0.0785216646	
29	0.0002075016	Yes
30	0.0163773083	
31	0.0069505089	Yes
32	0.0000045928	Yes
33	0.0009591737	Yes

Comparing the Chi-squared test results when using all four responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) as individual choices with only two choices (Agree and Disagree) only slight differences are observed. When only Agree and Disagree are considered, Questions 13, 16, and 18 are no longer significant and Questions 20 and 30 shift from being not

significant to significant. The questions that were statistically significant with both methods of analysis included: 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32, and 33.

Trends among statistically significant responses. Since 13 out of the 23 Likert-type questions are statistically significant, these responses can be analyzed for trends that can be used to answer the research question. These trends are expressed in the following paragraphs.

Trend 1. The majority of students surveyed enjoyed going to school, and they received encouragement from their parents to do well in school. Despite the challenges that new material may have presented, the students enjoyed learning. Even without parental involvement, the majority of students would attend school without being required to do so. Most of the participants would not have dropped out of school at a younger age, even if they legally could have. Almost all of the students surveyed intended on going to college. Only a few did not perceive the importance of math and science as part of their curriculum.

Trend 2. Nearly one-quarter of the participants thought that they had something better to do than go to school, and less than 10% thought that they would never use the information they were being taught in school. The vast majority strongly felt that school was not a waste of time. Only 14% thought that dropping out of school was a good idea. Not a single participant would suggest the idea of dropping out of high school to current high school students, and 90%, decided that if they were able to enter traditional high school again, they would have stayed and completed their education.

Data Category 3 – Open Ended Questions

The third and final sections of the surveys included seven questions that were not multiple choice; they had to instead answer the questions by writing a response. These questions were analyzed from a qualitative comparison in which keywords were identified, and the frequency of

these words was recorded for each. Each of the 21 participants' responses to the questions is listed below. From these responses, keywords and/or categories were established and the frequency in which each one occurred was identified.

Responses given to open-ended questions. The following figures reveal the actual responses given to each question. The only changes made were some spelling and grammatical errors to make the responses clearer. Each participant, for the sake of anonymity, was given a letter (or letters) of the alphabet in the order in which the surveys were collected. Some letters are missing (such as P and S), because some of the participants did not fall into the appropriate age range for this study (18–20 years old). The color-code for each question is to show which responses are considered the same. For example, in Question 1, the responses of "Paul Mitchell" and "Police Academy" are both classified as "Trade School," since these job-training environments are for a specific job. Following the actual responses to each question is a list of categories and the frequency of these categories.

Figure 4. 35. “Post high school plans” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
College	Any good job	Driving for coke or other company	College	College	Get a job, go to vocational school	Paul Mitchel (trade school, hair)

H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Needed better job	Military	Barber (trade school)	Police Academy (trade school)	College	NO ANSWER	No sure

O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
College	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	College	College	Military	College

Frequencies

Military = 2	College = 8	Employment = 3	Trade School = 4	No Answer = 4

Figure 4.36. “Why school is important” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Need education for future	Learn and get smarter	Important, but disagree with how things are taught	Get a good job and go to college	NO ANSWER	Need education for job	So you can have knowledge and be sucessful
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Because no one will hire you without education	Employment opportunities	Gives you skills for life	Yes because it helps with future employment (better than a GED)	It prepares you for your future	Employment requrires HS or GED	Need education to be successful
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
Education is important for employment	Yes	NO ANSWER	Important to be more successful in life	Good education leads to better employment	Yes, better employment (raises your hirability)	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Employment = 9	Successful Future = 6	Other Yes = 3	No Answer = 3

Figure 4.37. “Is what you are learning in school important” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	Yes, helps get better jobs	yes, it helps in life	Yes because of use in later life	yes, because you have something of value	I guess it's useful	Yes to be able to work
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
You use much of what is taught on a daily basis	Yes, life would be difficult without what was learned in school	Yes, prepares you for the real world	Yes, helps you when older and prepares for college	Yes, it prepares you for college	Yes, it helps you in the long run	Some is important, some is not
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
NO ANSWER	Yes	Yes, it will help in your whole life	Yes, even if you won't use it	Yes	Yes, it helps you get a job	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Yes Employment = 3	Yes Helps in Life = 7	Yes, College = 2	Yes - other = 7	No Answer = 2

Figure 4.38. “What changes would you make in school” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Make it easier	Lower requirements to graduate	change time to 10 AM - 5 PM	Time you go to school	Time, create a flexible schedule if you have to work	Time, start school later	Time, later start
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Nothing, it is hard, but life is hard after school	Get rid of foreign language requirement	More breaks so students stress less	Nothing	Nothing	Time, start later in the day	Require no math as it is not important
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	Nothing	Time, start later	Time, start later	Nothing	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Later Start Time = 8	Make it easier = 4	Nothing = 5	More Breaks = 1	No Answer = 3

Figure 4.39. “Should the number of academic classes be reduced” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
yes	yes, it would lower stress	yes, lower stress, but keep classes for those who want them	No, need info later in life	Reduce history	yes	Yes, less work
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
No	No	Yes so you can finish school earlier and begin career	No because it wouldn't help your education	No	Reduce the number of Maths	Reduce numb of Maths
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
No	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	No, it's already easy	No	Reduce number of Math classes	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Yes to lower stress = 2	No = 8	Reduce Math = 3	Reduce History = 1	Yes - other = 4	No Answer =

Figure 4.40. “Should the legal dropout age be changed” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
19	Do not lower, people should stay in school	do not lower	16 so you could graduate early and get a job	16 if you have a job	NO ANSWER	No
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
No because students need school	No	No	No	No	No	No
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
Raise it to 21	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	No	NO ANSWER	No	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Raise it = 2	No = 12	Lower to 16 = 2	No Answer = 5

Figure 4.41.“Why did you return to high school” frequencies

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
probation	better options for future	NO ANSWER	College	NO ANSWER	probation	Graduate and have a stable l
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Provide for family	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	NO ANSWER	To have a better life than my parents and to be successful	Family was disappointed in me	Friends and w
O	Q	R	W	X	Y	AA
My Children	NO ANSWER	Parents and Friends	To have a better life	Go to college	Father	NO ANSWER

Frequencies

Probation = 2	College = 2	Better Future = 5	Family Encouragement = 5	No Answer 7

Notable dominant responses. Although the implications of the responses to the above questions will be discussed in Chapter V, it is important to note that several of these questions had strong responses in specific categories. Question 1 had a 57% response of obtaining future education of either college or trade school. Sixty-eight percent stated that education was important for either employment or a successful future. With Question 3, 90% stated that the content they were learning in school was important.

The most common response (with 38%) to Question 4 was that school should start at a later time. Over half of the participants (57%) stated that the legal age for dropping out of high school should not be lowered from 18, while 10% stated that the legal age to drop out of high school should be raised. The overall results of these questions indicate that participants think that school is important, but some changes may be needed to make it a better fit for some.

Data Category 4 – Interviews

From the participants who agreed to participate in the interviews, three were selected based upon their responses to the survey. The primary criterion used to determine which participants were selected for interviews was the level of participation in the surveys, as indicated by the completeness of the surveys and the thoroughness of participants' answers. Students who used short, one-word responses were not chosen for the interviews. Of the three that were selected, two interviews were conducted. The third participant was not available for the interviews and was thus excluded from the data collection.

Information about the interviewees. Participants K and M were selected for the interview process. K is a white male, 18 years old, and from a low socioeconomic family, as indicated by his free lunch voucher while in school. Additionally, K's parents were both high school graduates, but neither of them had any post-secondary education. M is a white female, 18 years

old, and is also from a low SES family. M's parents, as well, are high school graduates with no additional education. Both K and M indicated that education was important, but where K responded that he wanted to attend college, M did not.

Interview questions and responses. The actual interview questions and responses can be found in Appendix E. The interviews were conducted orally, and the audio was recorded with the permission of each interviewee. Post interview, the recordings were played back and the responses are transcribed.

Notable responses to interview questions. Both interviewees stated that math was difficult. Concerning their responses to whether learning needs to be challenging, K and M both said it was important; however, M stated that math should be easier. When asked directly about math, K saw the importance in high school level math and gave several examples, while M thought only basic math skills were important. Both agreed that science was not a helpful subject and that history was important. When considering electives, both gave examples of an elective and what skills it contributed to their education. These results and other implications about these responses are discussed in Chapter V.

Summary

After an analysis of the data collected for this research, an answer to the research question can be formed. As indicated by the responses to the questions in categories 2, 3, and 4, there is seen that although the consensus from the respondents is that some changes should be made to school to make it more applicable, students decided to drop out of high school for other reasons than their perceived values of education. The study's hypothesis, "Students who place a higher value on formal education are more likely to want to graduate from high school," has not been proven. This result does not indicate that the opposite is true, but simply that students who drop

out of high school still see the inherent value of formal education. The null hypothesis, that there is no relationship between students' opinions on the value of formal education and their likelihood of wanting to graduate from high school, appears to be prevalent in the data collected.

Chapter V

Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

High school dropouts have been a problem for the United States since the decline of graduation rates starting in the 1960s (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010). In order to determine a solution to this national problem, research should be conducted to understand not only why students drop out of high school, but also what can be done to resolve this issue. This study examined one aspect of high school dropouts, the relationship between students' perceived value of education and their decision to drop out, in an East Tennessee school district. The conclusions, a discussion about the findings, and the study's implications are contained in this chapter.

Importance of High School Dropout Research

When a student makes the decision to drop out of high school, much more than just the student is affected (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Ingrum, 2006). This problematic effect is one that is not limited to specific communities, but is instead a national problem (Hoffman, 2011). When students fail to complete high school they become fiscal burdens to themselves and to society as a whole (D´Andrea, 2010; Sanchez & Werthmeier, 2011). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Office of Statistics and Employment Projections (2011), there is a direct link between education and income; therefore, a student who has dropped out of school will statistically make significantly less money than someone who has graduated. With a median income of only $451 a week, a high school dropout makes far less than a person does with only a high school diploma -median of $719 per week (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

It may be possible to alleviate the fiscal burden on both individual communities and the country as a whole if a solution to the problem of high school dropouts can be developed. Dropout prevention programs have already been created, implemented, and studied (Burzichelli,

Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). One of the commonalities among dropout prevention programs is to first identify students as being "at-risk" of dropping out (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011; Cassel, 2003).

When identifying students as at-risk for dropping out, common traits among students who have previously dropped out are considered. The common traits that are considered good indicators of identifying at-risk students include minority race (Hispanic and African American), low socioeconomic status, learning disabilities, and gender (male) (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Griffin, 2002; Ingrum, 2006). In addition to these more commonly associated characteristics, the less studied factor of student-perceived value of education was addressed in this study. Previous research has listed student-perceived value of education as a contributing factor to dropout rates (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Suh, & Suh, 2007), but the extent to which it affects the student's decision to drop out of high school has not previously been studied.

Research Problem and Question

The specific research problem for this study asked whether there is a relationship between students' perceived value of education and their decision to drop out of high school. The main purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the issue of high school dropouts in an East Tennessee county by establishing if student-perceived values of education have a direct effect on the student's desire to graduate. The research question that was answered was, *in a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do student perceptions on the value of education relate to the desire to graduate from high school?*

Research Design

Population

In this study, students at an adult high school in an East Tennessee School District were asked to be voluntary participants in completing surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Ideally, in order to gain insight on how high school students view education, students in grades 9–12 would be studied. However, due to the legal nature of involving minors in research, an alternative method of gathering data had to be constructed. The solution to this dilemma was to conduct surveys and interviews at an adult high school in an East Tennessee school district. Since the minimum age to attend an adult high school in Tennessee is 17 (Department of Education, 2013), this environment made it much easier to obtain participants who would meet the IRB age requirements. Although there is no maximum age for someone to attend an adult high school, only 18–20 year-olds were involved in this study. This age range was selected in the hopes that these participants would be young enough to accurately recall their opinions on education when they were still enrolled in a traditional K-12 school.

The East Tennessee school district studied was chosen for a couple of specific reasons. Firstly, this district had a problem with high school dropouts. The graduation rate for this district in 2011 was only 80.3%, while the state reported a graduation rate of 85.5% (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). Secondly, one of the major common associated factors to high school dropouts—minority race—does not exist in this district. The two races most associated with high school dropouts—African American and Hispanic—only consist of 1.7% and 5.6% (respectively) of the student population (Tennessee Department of Education – Report Card, 2013). By virtually eliminating race as a reason for dropping out of high school,

this school district provided a unique environment to study the reason(s) for students to decide to drop out.

Sample. The sample was 18–20 year olds at an adult high school in the researched school district. During the timeframe of the research, 21 of the 22 students at the adult high school voluntarily participated. The one student who did not participate, although enolled, was not present during the research. Even though the sample size was small (21), the voluntary participation of the 18-20 year olds enrolled at the adult high school was over 95%.

Research

Participants were asked to volunteer their time and to answer questions via the use of surveys and questionnaires. After agreeing to and signing a consent form (See Appendix A), participants answered questions on a survey (See Appendix B), and a questionnaire (See Appendix C). The initial survey questions were to gather information such as age, gender, race, and income level. The questionnaire was in two parts: the first part consisted of 23 Likert-type questions pertaining to the participants' opinions on school. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that further examined their opinions on education and school.

As part of the initial survey, participants were asked if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview at a later date. From those who agreed to be involved with the interviews, three were selected. Two of the three selected were available at the time the interviews were scheduled. The interview questions are in Appendix E. The actual responses to the interview questions are located in Chapter IV

Discussion of Findings

The actual results of this study can be found in Chapter IV. This section includes a discussion on the trends and conclusions drawn from the data, a comparison to national statistics, and new information compiled from the data.

Conclusions from the Statistical Data

Race. The majority of the surveyed students enrolled at the adult high school in the researched county were white. This fact is similar to the county as a whole, which lacks minorities. However, there are a higher percentage of non-white students enrolled at the adult high school as compared to the number of minorities in the K-12 school district. The researched county is over 91% white, but the sample population of this research is only 71% white. The 29% who listed themselves as non-white represent more than three times the school district's total population of non-whites (9%).

After considering this increased percentage of non-white students, one may think that it indicates a larger proportion of minorities dropping out as compared to whites. However, since the study sample is not pulled from mere dropouts, but instead from students who chose to return to school after dropping out, this conclusion cannot be made. In 2012, 75% of African American students in their senior year of high school in the research county graduated (Tennessee Department of Education - Report Card, 2013). This means that 25% either dropped out or transferred to the adult high school (which is still defined as a high school dropout). The only conclusion that can be drawn about race is that a proportionally larger number of minority students decided to return to education after dropping out.

Household income and free or reduced lunch. 52% of the participants did not know what their household income level was. Nearly 69% of the participants who knew their household

income said that it was less than $30,000. This indicates that the majority of these students fall in the low socioeconomic status. This is further suggested by the results of the question pertaining to free or reduced lunch.

When asked if they paid for lunch while in high school, 81% responded that they did not pay full price (67% free and 14% reduced). In order to qualify for free or reduced meals, the student must fall into the low socioeconomic status. As reported by the State of Tennessee in 2013 (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013), 63.8% of the students in the researched county were considered economically disadvantaged. A higher percentage of low SES students at the adult high school, as compared to the regular K-12 students, show that there is a link between SES status and high school dropouts in this school district. This reiterates the existence of a link between low income and high school dropouts, as discussed by Ingrum (2006), Bradley and Corwin (2002), and Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007).

Parental education. 14.1% of the participants stated that they did not know their mother's level of education, and 38% did not know their father's level of education. With such a significant difference in these two percentages, it can be assumed that the participants, as a whole, have a better relationship with their mothers than their fathers. The reason for this is unknown, since questions concerning the marital status of parents were not asked.

The total number of mothers and fathers of the participants who had any education beyond high school was 2 (one mother and one father). Disregarding the unknown parental education responses, only 6.5% (2 out of 31) mentioned that their mother or father obtained a bachelor's degree. Seven of the 31 responses (22.5%) mentioned that their mother or father did not complete high school. These statistics confirm the idea that the less education the parents have,

the less likely a student is to graduate from high school (Parental education attainment and higher education opportunities, 1999).

Post-secondary education. Even though the adult high school students involved in this research failed to complete the traditional K-12 education and became high school dropouts, when asked if they planned on going to college, 90% said, "Yes." The assumption may be made that, when these students originally dropped out of high school they did not intend on going to college. Since they have returned to school to complete their education, it can be reasoned that attitudes towards education have changed with these students. If these students had the desire to go to college when they were in their traditional high school, then they could have made a different decision about dropping out of school. Whatever reason they had for changing their minds about education could very well be an important aspect in determining ways to increase graduation rates.

Conclusions from Likert-type Questions

The second part of the quantitative portion of the survey included Likert-type questions that covered many topics, including opinions of education, requirements for graduation, and support from home. There were 23 of these questions, of which 13 were statistically significant (see Chapter IV). The results of these 13 questions are discussed in this section.

Question 11 – I enjoyed going to school. A total of 19 (13 somewhat agree and 6 strongly agree) of the 21 persons surveyed said they did enjoy going to school. This was a surprising answer since all of these students dropped out of high school. The implication is that enjoyment alone is not enough reason to stay in school. The aspects of school that made it enjoyable are not clear. It is possible that friendship and social aspects of school made it enjoyable, but whatever the reason for this level of enjoyment, it simply was not enough to keep these students in school

originally. The subject of student enjoyment of school has been studied internationally and has several different ways of determining if and why students enjoy school. There is no universal method of determining student enjoyment of school, but as explained by Libbey (2004), it is an important concept in determining student success.

Question 12 – My parents encouraged me to do well in school. 90.5% agreed to this statement. With such a high percentage that said they received encouragement to excel in school, it can be ruled out that the students dropped out because they were not encouraged. It is possible that the parents encouraged their children because they themselves were uneducated (only 2 out of 31 having gone to college) and lack the financial levels to adequately provide for their children without government help (81% received either free or reduced meals). The idea that parents want a better life for their children is seen in this situation. Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, and Bowman-Perrott (2011) showed that parental "engagement at home [had] a positive impact on student achievement" (p. 28). However, despite such a high percentage of parents encouraging their children, all of these participants still dropped out. Lack of encouragement was not a factor in why they chose to quit school.

Question 14 – I enjoyed learning new things even when they were challenging. 10.5% of the participants said that they did not like learning new things. The rest of the students said that they did enjoy learning. Since nearly 90% of the students indicated that they did enjoy learning, it can be concluded that a lack of enjoyment is not why these students dropped out of school. Grence-Leggett (2005) suggested involving student input in what educational methodologies are used to increase the potential of the learning environment. Despite the high percentage that stated they enjoyed learning, this number could be increased if students were more involved with decisions about education.

Question 15 – I would go to school even if my parents didn't care and I wasn't required by law. 76.2% of respondents agreed with this statement. These numbers, along with the 90.5% who said their parents encouraged them to do well in school, indicate that positive parental encouragement does not have much, if any, effect on whether students go to school. A lack of parental encouragement may cause students to not see the value in school. Gonzalez (2002) explained that when parents are not involved with high school students, then the student is more likely to be influenced negatively by peers. In the case of this research, there was not a lack of parental encouragement, and therefore the reason these students dropped out is not due to this lack of parental involvement and encouragement.

Question 19 – If I could have, I would have dropped out of school sooner. Four of the 21 participants said that they would have dropped out of school sooner if they could have. The law in Tennessee is that students must be enrolled in school until they are 18 years old (or graduate). Since the majority of students disagreed with the concept of dropping out of school sooner, then determining why they eventually dropped out is important. Whatever the individual reason(s) that the participants had for dropping out of school, it must not have been valid earlier in their lives. For example, if a student dropped out because of pregnancy, this reason obviously did not exist the entire time. It can be gathered that the reason(s) these students dropped out when they did was a time sensitive issue and that, without the development of this specific circumstance, the student may have instead finished high school in the traditional manner. Research has indicated that the longer a student waits to drop out of school (18 years old versus 16 years old, for example), the more potential they have for higher income; thus, compelling students to stay in school is important for their futures (Oreopoulos, 2007).

Question 21 – I intend to go to college. Question 21 created a discrepancy in the data. When this question was asked in the previous section of the survey, 90% of participants agreed to it. On question 21, only 85% either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Only one person changed their response from agree to disagree. No one selected Strongly Disagree, so it is possible that the one who seemingly changed his/her mind is still unsure of his/her future plans. Since all of these students have decided to return to formal education after dropping out, it is logical to assume that they are doing so with the intention of continuing beyond just a high school diploma. This result is contrary to the conclusions made by Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009), which indicated that parental education was a good predictor of the educational expectancies of the children. The contradiction to these conclusions may be because this group of students did not originally intend to go to college, but after deciding to return to formal education, they have decided that college is important for their futures.

Question 22 – I did not understand why things like math and science are so important. The United States has been shown to have low scores in math and science when compared to other industrialized nations (OECD, 2013). Despite the level of academic achievement in the areas of math and science, the results of this study show that students do indeed understand the importance of learning math and science. With Question 22, only 5 of the 21 somewhat agreed. The other 76% (9 somewhat disagree and 7 strongly disagree) indicated that they understood the importance of math and science. Seemingly, the reason that these students dropped out of high school was not that they did not understand why math and science were important. However, it is important to realize that the general attitudes towards math and science in the United States are more negative than other industrialized countries (Sarwan, Naz, & Noreen, 2011). Even though

these participants emphasized that they understood the importance of math and science, their opinions still may be less positive than other countries.

Question 24 – I had better things to do with my time than to go to school. As explained by Stevenson and Ellsworth (1991), some students need to work to provide income for their families; consequently, they might find school less important. Question 24 did not specifically say that working was the reason that students in low SES status may think they had something better to do with their time, but it was one option. Regardless of what the student would have been doing instead of going to school, only 23.4% agreed with Question 24. For this 23.4%, the reason they dropped out of school may have been that they felt they had something better to do than attend school. If this is the case, then something in their lives must have changed because they are now back in school.

Question 26 – I am never going to use the information I learned in school. Only one participant somewhat agreed with this statement, and one person strongly agreed. This is an important question because it shows that these students do not feel like the curriculum in school is unimportant. This links directly to the research question (discussed later in this chapter). This is contrary to some research's results that students (and parents) who do not value education are more likely to drop out (Bertrand, 1962; Ingrum, 2006). The reason for this contradiction may be that the students participating in this study have returned to school by choice since dropping out of the traditional high school.

Questions 31, 32, and 33. The last three questions of the Likert-type section were meant to be answered with the participants' current opinions as adult high school students. Question 31 was if they thought dropping out of high school was a good idea. Three of the participants chose not to respond to this question. A possible reason for this may be that some students transferred

to the adult high school from their traditional high school and were always enrolled in school. In their opinion, they did not drop out; however, since they did not graduate from a traditional high school, the State of Tennessee still considers them a dropout. Of those who did respond to this question, two somewhat agreed and one strongly agreed with the idea that dropping out was a good idea. Even though these three obviously felt their reason(s) for dropping out were good, they still found themselves back in school, trying to earn a diploma. It is possible that the motivation for returning to school was a financial one, since there is a direct link between education attainment and income (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Every participant either somewhat or strongly agreed that they would advise current students to stay in school and graduate. Even the few students who felt dropping out was still a good idea for themselves—they thought that dropping out, in general, should not be advised. If given the opportunity to go back and make the decision about dropping out of high school again, only two students felt that they would still make this choice. Despite whatever reason(s) these young adults had for dropping out of high school, they obviously regret doing so and are trying to correct this action.

Correlations between Likert-type Questions

The answers to each of the Likert-type questions were compared to determine if any of the overall results were statistically significant. This was calculated so that questions could be paired with each other to look for similarities in how the questions were answered. The top ten correlation pairs are discussed in this section. To see all of the correlations, see Figures 4.33 and 4.34.

Correlated pair 1. Questions 24 and 25 produced the highest correlation of 0.754. Question 24 stated that the student had better things to do with their time than school, and Question 25

stated that the student felt that getting a job was more important than going to school. With these two questions having the highest correlation, the conclusion must be drawn that the "better thing" that the student had to do was to make money. This lack of money and need for more corresponds to the idea that low socioeconomic status has a drastic effect on high school dropout rates (Bertrand, 1962, Coleman, 1966; Ingrum, 2006). This correlation indicates that students did not think of frivolous reasons to stay out of school, such as hanging out with friends. This may mean that finding a way to allow for financial support could keep some students from dropping out of high school.

Correlation pair 2. The next highest correlation was found in Questions 23 and 24. The participants' opinions about homework being a waste of time (Question 23) and having better things to do with their time instead of school (Question 24) indicate that students feel like homework was just as important (or unimportant) as going to school itself. Logically, a student's opinion on the time spent in school should be similar to the time it takes them to finish their homework. If a student thinks school is a good use of their time, then homework should be as well. The reverse is also true—if school is not a good use of their time, then neither is homework. Reddick and Peach (1993) determined that, in rural East Tennessee schools, less than 21% of students felt that the time and effort required for their homework was reasonable. This information can be very helpful for an educator because identifying which students do not complete their homework may be an easy way to determine which students do not feel like school is a good use of their time.

Correlation pair 3. The third highest correlation was a negative correlation of 0.700, between Questions 31 and 32. Question 31 stated that dropping out of high school was a good idea, and Question 32 asked whether participants would advise current students to stay in school.

With essentially opposite statements (one for school, one against school), it makes sense that the correlation would be negative. These responses show that the participants not only saw dropping out of school as a mistake, but they would see it as a mistake for others as well. Educators desire for students to stay in school; as indicated by these questions, high school dropouts also want students to remain in the education system. One reason that these dropouts may encourage students to remain in school is because they are remorseful about dropping out. Lewis (2006) concluded that 75% of high school dropouts, if given the opportunity again, would have stayed in school instead of dropping out.

Correlation pair 4. The fourth highest correlation was found between Questions 19 and 24. Question 19 asked whether students would have dropped out sooner if they could have. Question 24 asked whether students had things better to do with their time than attend school. If a student felt that they had better things to do with their time, then they would have dropped out sooner. Those who did not feel like they had something better to do would not have dropped out sooner. Determining what these "better things to do with their time" are could lead to ways to keep students in school.

Correlation pair 5. The answers to Questions 11 and 14 were the next highest correlation. Both of these questions were about enjoying school. Question 11 asked if the student enjoyed school; Question 14 asked if the student enjoyed learning new things. Since these two questions have statistically similar responses, then it can be concluded that at least some of the enjoyment included the learning itself. It was not asked if students enjoyed school because of education or because of social aspects, but since these two questions produced similar responses, then it could be reasoned that education itself made school enjoyable. Finding ways to increase this

enjoyment, such as involving students in determining how they are taught, may be a way to increase this desire to learn (Grence-Leggett, 2005).

Correlation pair 6. Questions 14 and 15 produced the sixth most statistically similar responses, and implied that students attended school not because they had to (Question 15), but because they enjoyed learning new things (Questions 14). Attendance has been linked to success in high school (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Ptochnick, 2007; Weitzeman et al., 1982) and a desire to learn new things, as shown by this correlation, may be one of the reasons to attend school.

Correlation pair 7. With a correlation of 0.564, the responses to Questions 28 and 29 do not give any insight into the issue of student opinions on high school because neither of these questions was statistically significant when using a Chi-squared test for randomness (See Tables 4.7 and 4.8).

Correlation pair 8. Question 25 (jobs are more important than school) and Question 26 (I am never going to use what I learned in school) is the next significant correlation pair. The conclusion drawn by linking these two questions is that individuals who think that getting a job is more important do not think they need the knowledge they received in school. Conversely, those who did not think a job was more important recognized that they would need what was being taught in school later in life. This reasoning aligns with Lewis's (2006) findings, which found that high school dropouts felt that "graduating from high school was important to success in life" (p. 31).

Correlation pair 9. The ninth correlation pair (Questions 11 and 22) may conflict somewhat with the fifth most correlated questions (Questions 11 and 14). Question 11 asked if the student enjoyed going to school and Question 22 stated that students did not understand the importance of math and science. As discussed in Correlation pair 5, enjoying going to school and enjoying

learning were similar. In Correlation pair 9, enjoying going to school and not seeing the reason for learning math and science are similar. This may indicate that, although students enjoy school because of learning and even being challenged educationally, they still do not understand the reason for learning math and science. This relates to the findings of Sarwan, Naz, and Noreen (2011), that the attitudes towards math and sciences in developed countries, such as the US, are more negative than those in developing countries. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that students prefer learning other things (History, English, electives) than math and science.

Correlation pair 10. The final pair of questions that showed correlation is between Questions 26 and 27. Question 26 stated that students will never use what they learn in school; Question 27 stated that the student could be successful in life with what they learn from their peers. This correlation shows that students who do not see the value of what school teaches them feel that they can simply learn what they need from their peers. As well, students who do see the importance of what they are taught in school realize that they cannot get this information from their peers.

Conclusion drawn from Questions 1 – 33

The first ten questions of the survey were designed to collect statistical information about the participants, such as race, SES status, and parental education level. These results have shown that the majority of these adult high school students are white, come from a low SES background, and their parents do not have a post-secondary education. These results are similar to the statistics of the K-12 schools in this district. Low SES status and lack of parental education level have been commonly linked to high school dropouts (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Ingrum, 2006).

With similar statistics as other students who tend to drop out of high school (with the exception of race), the opinions of these 18–20 year-olds can be used to find additional reasons

for why some students drop out of high school. When considering the amount of support a student receives from their parents, there seems to be very little effect on the student's desire to go to school. The participants indicated that even if they had a lack of support from home, their decision to go to school would remain unchanged.

Even though the consensus was that school was enjoyable, and that learning (even when challenging) was enjoyable, these students still dropped out of high school. When asked if this decision to drop out was a good one, the answer was a resounding "No." The students said that if they were to advise current high school students, their advice would be for them to stay in school. This is not surprising since the sample population was a group of adult high school students who apparently changed their minds about getting a high school diploma.

The surveys also showed that students felt like they needed what was being taught in school and that they could not learn what they needed to be successful from their peers. However, there is also an indication that students do not understand why math and science classes are needed. Despite the fact that students enjoy school and enjoy learning, math and science do not seem to be the reason for this enjoyment.

Most agreed that dropping out was a bad idea and given the chance to do it again, they would have stayed in school. However, not all participants shared this opinion. Some felt that, given the chance, they would still have chosen to drop out of school. This is a powerful statement coming from students who are now enrolled in an adult high school, because it signifies that, although they want to earn their high school diploma, they feel that the traditional high school was not the place to do it. This could indicate that there were issues in the school, or in the home life, of the student that made staying in school an impossibility (as they saw it).

Conclusions Drawn from Qualitative Questions

The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed by looking for key terms or concepts. A breakdown of each of the questions' responses can be found in Chapter IV. All seven of these questions had dominant responses that are discussed in this section.

Open-ended question 1. The first question was used to determine what post high school plans the participants had. Fifty-seven percent stated that they wanted to go to college or a trade school. This response implies that the majority of these adult high school students see education as important. They may not have felt this way while they were in high school, but once they were out in the real world, they may have realized that in order to be successful they needed to continue into some sort of higher education. Only 14% stated that they planned to join the workforce directly after they complete their high school education. Nineteen percent were undecided on what to do after receiving their high school diploma. The implication of these responses is that, despite the fact that these students dropped out of school, they now know that education, both high school and beyond, is important. This realization of the importance of education is one that seems to be a trend among many students who return to education after dropping out of school (Thomas, 2008).

Open-ended question 2. When asked why school was important, the majority (68%) stated that it was because of employment or a successful future. No one mentioned that school was an important predecessor to college. Instead, there was an acknowledgement that school was needed for future opportunities and for a better future. In open-ended Question 1, 71% stated that they were planning on either continuing their education or getting a job. Compared to the 68% who said that school was important for employment and future, this shows that these students realize

that employment, education, and a successful future all go hand in hand. The U.S. Department of Labor (2011) supports this reasoning of these adult high school students.

Open-ended question 3. Question 3 asked if students felt that what they were learning in school was important. Over 90% stated that what they were learning was important. The most dominant reason given was that the things learned in school help in life. This reasoning agrees with two of the recurring themes discussed by Thomas (2008). The themes were that dropping out of high school had a "detrimental impact . . . on quality of life and self-esteem" and that returning to school was related to "employment-related motivators" (p. 3). Since the majority of responses were positive for this question, it can be concluded that students who return to formal education after dropping out of the traditional high school, have an understanding of why certain content is taught.

Open-ended question 4. This question asked respondents what changes should be made to school, and the most common response was that it should start later in the day (38%). The adult high school environment in which this study was conducted allows students to come in at hours that are more flexible. Both day and evening classes are available, and students who are working on credit recovery software are able to come and go as they need. This type of scheduling can be very helpful for someone who is employed or has other obligations that keep him from the traditional 8:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. timeframe.

In addition to accommodating one's work schedule, a later start time may provide for a positive mood. Owens, Belon, and Moss (2010) showed that by starting the school day at a later time (8:30 instead of 8:00), students had "significant improvements in measures of adolescent alertness, mood, and health" (p. 608). Delaying the school day by half an hour may not have a

large effect on students considering dropping out, but an overall improvement of student behavior and moods can only have a positive effect on the school environment.

Open-ended question 5. This question asked if the number of academic classes should be reduced. Thirty-eight percent of respondents answered against it. Some students stated that the number of academic classes should be reduced in order to lower stress. Other responses indicated that the number of math or history classes should be reduced. The desire for deduction in math and science classes may be due to the notion, as described by Sarwan, Naz, and Noreen (2011), that attitudes are more negative towards math and science in developed countries than developing countries. With common core initiatives changing education in many states, the idea of reducing academic classes is not one that should be considered, regardless of its effect on graduation rates.

Open-ended question 6. The legal age to drop out of school in Tennessee is 18. When asked if this age should be lowered, 24% did not answer, but those who did respond, 87.5% said that it should not be lowered, while the other 12.5% said that it should. Legally requiring students to stay in school until a certain age only works if the student still has the desire to stay in school past that age. The participants in this survey have expressed that they wish they had not dropped out of school. Logically, their opinion on lowering the age at which one can drop out of high school is that it should not be lowered. One possible reason for this opinion is that these students may be remorseful about dropping out of school, as were those involved in Lewis's study (2006).

Open-ended question 7. The final qualitative question asked why the participants chose to return to school. The largest response was no response: 33% left this question blank, possibly because some felt like they had not dropped out of high school, since they have been enrolled consistently since failing their traditional high school. Their exact reasoning is not certain, but

despite their personal opinions, since they are not enrolled in a regular K-12 school, they are still defined as high school dropouts by the State of Tennessee. Surprisingly, less than 10% listed college as a reason for returning to school, despite the fact that 38% listed college as their post-secondary plans. One possible reason for this discrepancy in the data is that these students, once back in school and considering their options, decided that college could be a viable choice. As indicated by the U.S. Department of Labor (2011), and the fact that the majority of these students returned to school to improve their futures, post-secondary education is the right choice for these individuals.

Conclusions from Interviews

The major conclusions drawn from the interviews were that students felt that school should be challenging; however, some changes may be needed. Math was considered the most difficult subject and there was no consensus on what level of mathematics was important. Neither of the participants interviewed thought that science was important, but they both agreed that history was. Electives were thought to be important since these courses could teach life skills.

K (designation of one of the interviewees, see Chapter IV) stated that "not all students need all classes." This statement best summarizes the interview responses. For the interviewees, the one-size-fits-all philosophy about education simply does not work. These students acknowledged that some classes are important for those intending to go to college, but not everyone is going to college. The importance of formal education was clear; however, the level of education that was important differed for individuals.

The term "differentiation" has become a common word heard in education. This term typically refers to adapting educational techniques to account for the different levels of learners and different learning styles in a classroom (Bearne, 2013). Although classroom differentiation

may be an appropriate approach to specific high school classes, the consensus of the interviewees was that there should also be differentiation about which classes are required for graduation.

Implications

The surveys implied that, although these participants dropped out of high school, they regretted doing so and are now on a path to correct this mistake. The consensus is that education is important and that dropping out of school is a bad idea. These adult high school students come from low SES families whose parents have a low level of education. Although race has been essentially removed as a factor in this school district, low income remains a problem for education. With the opportunity to return to school and better themselves, these participants have chosen to earn their high school diploma, and, for the most part, continue onward to better education and employment opportunities.

The advice that these adult high school students would give to current students is to stay in school and graduate in order to have a better future. This idea is one that educators articulate to students, but perhaps current students should hear it from someone who has walked in their shoes. It was also determined that some changes to academics and school policies may need to be changed. It is possible that, if given a different path to graduate high school (such as less upper level academic classes), some of these high school dropouts may have stayed in a traditional school.

Linking the Data to the Research Question

Research Question

In a school system that has a large percentage of students who drop out, to what extent do student perceptions on the value of education relate to the desire to graduate from high school?

Hypothesis and Null Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was: Students who place a higher value on formal education are more likely to want to graduate from high school. The null hypothesis was that there is no relationship between students' opinions on the value of formal education and their likelihood of wanting to graduate from high school.

Research Question Answer

As indicated by the research, there is a very weak relationship between students' lack of value on education and the likelihood of them dropping out of high school. This conclusion has been drawn based on the fact that all of the students surveyed did drop out of high school, but they still have high opinions on the value of education. There was some disagreement among responses as to what classes were valuable and what level of difficulty was appropriate, but the overall outcome was that formal education was important.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Sample Size

The sample for this study was smaller than originally planned. When this study was initially designed, the information provided was that there would be between 75 and 100 people enrolled at the adult high school between the ages of 18 and 20. When the research was conducted, there were only 22 people in this age range. Since the original goal was to have a 50% participation of expected enrollment (about 37 students), this number was not reached. However, of the 22 students between the ages of 18 and 20, 21 participated. The one student who did not participate was never afforded the opportunity because he did not attend school during the data collection timeframe. Having such a high percentage of participation (95.5%) was a definite strength of this

research. The overall availability of participants was a weakness. Conducting similar research on a larger scale could resolve the issue of sample size.

Sample Population

In order to gain IRB approval, only students who were 18 years of age or older were part of this study. Permission to access the students at the adult high school was granted, but access to K-12 students was not. Ideally, obtaining the opinions of students in grades 9–12 would be more insightful in determining if student opinions on the value of education effect a student's desire to graduate. Having access to students who may or may not drop out of high school would allow for a comparison of opinions on the value of education.

Not having access to K-12 students was not the only problem with the sample population. Participants were all adult high school students and their opinions only represent those who dropped out and decided to return to school. The opinions of those who dropped out and did not return to school are not part of this sample. If the opinions of those who dropped out and returned to the adult high school and those who dropped out and did not return to education could be compared, then broader and possible more informative conclusion could be drawn.

Time Restraints

The time allotted for data collection was very limited. This study had to be designed for a timeframe within two months. If the timeframe had been longer, then the size of the sample population would have changed. The adult high school has an open enrollment and high school dropouts can enroll at any time throughout the calendar year. Given more time, the sample population would have grown significantly.

Implications for K-12 Leadership

Principals are constantly facing educational and administrative challenges. One challenge that has remained constant since the mid-1960s is finding ways to keep kids in school and facilitate their graduation. In order for an administrator to find ways to increase high school graduation rates, he or she must have an understanding of why students drop out of school. Only with an understanding of the causes of high school dropouts can a principal attempt to create a solution to this problem at the local level.

With access to student records at his or her school, and with access to faculty, staff, and the students themselves, an administrator can design programs to increase graduation rates. One of the first steps in keeping students in school is to identify which students are at-risk for dropping out. Using previous research that has revealed factors such as low SES, attendance, special education, and behavior (suspensions) to identify students who may be at-risk for dropping out, a principal should generate and maintain a list of students to be monitored for success and failure in school (Bertrand, 1962; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011; Ingrum, 2006; Suh, & Suh, 2007; Weitzeman et al., 1982).

One of the greatest resources an administrator has is to include the teachers in his or her programs. Classroom teachers are more likely to have insight on their students than the administrator. Through the concept of collaboration, identifying and determining a way to keep students in school may be developed.

Future Research

Removing the limitations discussed in this chapter (sample size, population, sample type, and time) may allow for more insightful conclusions about the relationship between student-perceived values of education and the decision to drop out of high school. Since the research

instruments used in this study have been validated, they may be used on a larger scale to include more adult high school students as well as those who dropped out and did not return to school. Being able to compare the opinions of those who chose to return to formal education and those who did not could lead to a solution to curb high school dropouts.

Without the restrictions of the IRB (which restricts minors from engaging in research), and the permission to conduct research in a 9–12 setting, this research could be furthered significantly by collecting information and opinions from students who are still in the traditional high school and may or may not have made the decision to drop out or graduate. With this information, a comparison could be made between students still in high school and those who have dropped out. With the ability to compare opinions of current and past students (both graduates and dropouts), finding a link between each may lead to a better way to influence students to remain in school. The more information that can gather about student opinions, the better understanding of why students drop out may be determined. It is only with a better understanding of why students drop out that a viable solution to this problem will be created.

The majority of the participants stated that college was a goal for them. Determining why these students returned to get not only their high school diploma, but also to pursue a collegiate education may lead to ways to keep students from dropping out of the traditional K-12 school. There may be a link between societal changes, such as women staying home to raise their children, that can be accredited to why students have the desire to go to college even though their parents did not. Research into family structure and responsibilities could be conducted to determine if this link exists.

Recommendations

In order to increase graduation rates in this East Tennessee school district, the following recommendations are advised. First, students should be identified as at-risk for dropping out at a younger age. Many of the factors linked to high school dropouts (low SES status, special education, school attendance, and behavior) exist long before a student drops out of school. Collaboration between high schools and middle schools to identify at-risk students prior to the ninth grade may be one way to create a list of at-risk students. If such collaboration is not possible, then this list should be created prior to the second year of high school.

Second, students who have been identified as at-risk for dropping out should be monitored throughout their high school career. If a student starts to fall behind academically (failing classes, barely passing classes), then appropriate interventions should be initiated. The interventions must be individualized for each student as determined by the educators and administrators of each school. Dropout prevention programs that have been used in other schools should be analyzed for the appropriateness for schools in this district. Burzichelli, Mackey, and Bausmith, (2011) compared some dropout prevention programs that may be used with the at-risk students in this school district.

Third, it is recommended that at-risk students have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of students who have already dropped out of high school. The findings of this research were that the students enrolled at this East Tennessee adult high school not only regret dropping out of school, but also would advise current high school students to stay in and graduate. Arranging an opportunity for at-risk students to hear from people closer to their age (18-20 year olds) about the difficulties of being a high school dropout and why education is important may be more effective than if this information were presented to them by teachers.

Finally, offering classes that are more aligned with the student's future plans should be considered. The consensus among the participants of this research was that education was important; however, the one-size-fits-all concept does not work for them. Pulling away from the concept that every student is college bound may be the most difficult change that the school can make. This difficulty lies in the fact that many of the decisions on what to teach are mandated by the state and not by individual school districts. Instead of offering fewer classes, additional, more applicable academic classes could be offered.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to determine if there was a relationship between students' perceived value of education and their decision to drop out of high school in an East Tennessee school district. In order to determine if this relationship existed, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were conducted at an adult high school in this district. By gathering data from students who had previously dropped out of school, comparisons were made between these students and what has been identified as common factors among high school dropouts.

The participants in this research were on the low end of the SES scale, and their parents had little, if any, post-secondary education. These two factors show the similarity in high school dropouts in this district and the nation as a whole (Burzichelli, Mackey, & Bausmith, 2011). The one major factor that has been linked to high school dropouts that was not present in this school district was the presence of minority races (Ingrum, 2006). By eliminating the factor of race, this research was able to consider students' perceived value of education without having to deal with stereotypical implications of minorities (Griffin, 2008).

The statistical comparisons of the responses to the surveys allowed for several valid conclusions to be drawn. The major conclusion about student-perceived value of education was

that education was important. Despite the fact that the participants were all high school dropouts, the vast majority stated that it was important to at least complete a high school diploma. There was, however, no consensus on exactly what should be taught in school. Some felt that school should be easier; others thought that it should be challenging, but the courses offered should be changed. Math and Science, two areas that the United States does not do well in at the international level (OECD, 2013), were the two subjects that the participants suggested should be made easier.

In order for this East Tennessee school district to increase the graduation rates of its high schools, identifying students as at-risk for dropping out should be done at an earlier age (either pre-high school or early high school). Once students have been identified as at-risk, then appropriate measures can be taken by the administration to intervene and possibly keep these students in school. Early intervention may be the key to lowering the dropout rate and, thus, increasing the graduation rate.

Since the participants in this research all agreed that education is important, it might be valuable to determine whether or not this high regard for education exists among current at-risk students. If at-risk students see the value in education similarly to the adult high school students, then it is very likely that these current students could benefit from understanding what brought the adult high school students back to finish their diploma. If the at-risk students do not have the same opinion on the value of education as the adult high school students, then finding a way to change this opinion may keep students in school.

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Appendix A – Consent Form

Consent Form for Participants of Dissertation Research

as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education at Jones International University

Candidate for Ed.D. – James Christian Edgar, teacher at Hardin Academy, Sevier County, TN

Topic - High School Dropout Rates in an East TN County

Purpose of Research

To determine if there is a relationship between a student's perceived value of education and a student's desire to graduate high school.

I, the undersigned, have read and understand the following information concerning my involvement in the research described above:

1) Participation in this research is completely voluntary and any participant may quite being an active participant and request that his/her information not be included in the study at any given time.

2) All identifying information, such as name, address, phone number, will be used for statistical information only and will not be reported in a manner in which will acknowledge the individual's participation in the research.

3) All information will be kept confidential so as to not intrude upon the privacy of the participant so long as all local, state, and national laws are followed.

4) I am of legal age (18 years old) to participate as indicated by my signature.

5) Although there may not be any benefit for me personally, the information I provide will be helpful in determining a solution to the problem of high school dropouts and can potentially have a positive effect on the community in which I live.

Participant Name _____ Participant Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix B – Statistical Survey

1) If selected, do you wish to participate in follow up interviews concerning the information you provide below (yes / no)

   a. If you selected yes, please provide your first name and last initial and your teacher's name.

   Name _____ Teacher _____

2) Which of the following best describes your race?

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other

3) Which of the following best describes the annual income level in your home. If you are unsure, you may choose the two that closest fit or you may choose I don't Know.

< 20K	20K – 30K	30K-40K	40K – 50K	50K – 60K	60K – 80K	>80K	I don't Know

4) Select one of the following that applied to you while you were in high school.

Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch	Neither (you pay full price)

5) Age: ____

6) Gender: Male ____ Female ____

7) How many people (including yourself) live in your home? _____

8) What is your mother's highest level of education?

Did not complete high school	High school Graduate	GED	Military	Technical / Trade school
Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Masters / Professional	Doctorate	I don't know

9) What is your father's highest level of education?

Did not complete high school	High school Graduate	GED	Military	Technical / Trade school
Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Masters / Professional Degree	Doctorate	I don't know

10) Do you plan on going to college? (yes / no)

11) Do you think education is important for you personally? (yes / no)

Appendix C - Questionnaire

Value of Education Questionnaire

For each of the following statements, remember back to before you dropped out of high school and select the most appropriate box to the right.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoyed going to school.				
My parents encouraged me to do well in school.				
I was a motivated student and did not require much encouragement to want to do well in school.				
I enjoyed learning new things even when they were challenging.				
I would go to school even if my parents didn't care and I wasn't required by law to go.				
I disagree with what I was required to learn in school.				
I did not understand why it is important to learn math and science.				
I found school easy and not very challenging.				
If I could have, I would have dropped out of school sooner.				
I do not need to know what was being taught in school in order to be successful.				
I intend to go to college.				
I did not understand why things like math and science are so important.				
I thought homework was a waste of time.				
I had better things to do with my time than to go to school.				
I thought getting a job and				

earning money was more important than going to school.				
Statement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I am never going to use the information I learned in school.				
Most of what I need to be successful in life I can learn from my peers.				
If school had less academic requirements I would have enjoy it more.				
School was a waste of time.				
A better use of my time would be to learn a skill such as electrician, plumber, or construction worker.				

Answer these questions with your current opinions (not what you thought while in high school)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Dropping out of high school was a good idea.				
I would advise current students to stay in and graduate high school.				
If I could do it all over, I would have stayed in high school and not dropped out.				

Answer the following questions in the space provided

1) What are your educational or employment plans for post-high school?

2) In your opinion, explain why or why not formal education is important (i.e. is school important)?

3) Do you think what you are learning in school is important and why?

4) If you could change something about school (time, what was taught, requirements to graduate), what would it be and why?

5) If the number of academic classes (Math, Science, English, History) was reduced by one in each subject, do you think this would improve your opinion on school and why?

6) If you could lower the age to drop out of school (it's currently 18 years old in TN), what would you lower it to and why?

7) What was your motivation for returning to high school?

Appendix D – Validation Questions for Pilot Study

Think back to when you were in high school and respond to these statements as if you were still in high school. For each of the following statements, select the most appropriate box to the right.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Have no opinion	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I really do not like attending school.					
I do not receive encouragement about school from home.					
Where school is concerned, I am a motivated student.					
I only like learning new things when it is easy.					
If I could, I would choose to not come to school.					
I think that what is being taught in school is important.					
I know that learning math and science are important for my future.					
School is very challenging for me.					
I would attend school even if I was not required to.					
The classes I take are important for me to be successful in life.					

Appendix E – Interview Responses

Interview Question 1: You indicated that you somewhat agree on Question 4; would you rather be taught something that you can learn quickly or do you like more difficult concepts that may take much longer to grasp?

K: I enjoy the challenge. If it is too easy then it is boring.

M: I'd prefer math to be easier, but other areas should be challenging.

Interview Question 2: What parts about school did you find difficult? Any classes in particular that were harder than others?

K: Math is difficult.

M: Math is hard.

Interview Question 3: You indicated that what was being taught in school was important to be successful. Considering math, English, science, history, and electives, what is it about the classes that you took and/or are taking that you think are important to your future?

Math

K: Carpentry, building things, etc. require high school math

M: Basic math is important, but what is taught in high school is not.

English

K: Important for communication and writing.

M: Important to be able to follow directions and in communication.

Science

K: Science has no use beyond school.

M: Science is no help to my future.

History

K: History is interesting and having knowledge about the past is helpful in the future.

M: It is important to learn about the past to know where we came from.

Electives

K: Athletics are important because they show dedication and a healthy lifestyle.

M: Band helps teach basic coordination and increases brain activities.

Interview Question 4: You indicated that decreasing the number of academic classes wouldn't make school more enjoyable. If some of the core classes were replaced with electives, do you think school would be more enjoyable then?

K: It's just not a good idea.

M: School would be more enjoyable, but it would not be beneficial.

Interview Question 5: Do you think your school would have been better if you were able to, in addition to academic classes, take classes that lead to career options such as electrician, plumber, etc.? Basically, instead of high school being focused on preparing you for college, do you think that it would have been better if it had prepared you for an entry level position straight out of high school?

K: Not all students need all classes. One-size-fits-all education doesn't work. People drop out because the GED is easier and needs less time and classes to obtain. If someone is not going to college, then why should they have a college bound high school diploma?

M: Not for me, but the option should be available if someone knows what they want to do.

Appendix F – IRB Approval

June 10, 2013

James Edgar
1654 Wolverine Lane
Knoxville, TX 37831

Dear Mr. Edgar,

Congratulations! The JIU Instituitional Review Board has approved through an **Exempt** review, your research, entitled **"Determination of the Relationship between Students' Perceived Values of Education and High School Dropout Rates in an East Tennessee School District."** You may now defend your research proposal and begin to collect data.

You must notify the IRB of any changes you make to your current research project, including the addition/revision of survey or interview questions.

Please contact the IRB with any questions regarding this approval. Again, congratulations! Keep up the hard work! You are almost there!

Thank you,

Barb Donner
Academic Coordinator
Jones International University
Tel: 303.784.8458
Fax: 303.784.8426
Email: bdonner@international.edu

CC: Dr. Roy Sutton
Dr. Danette Lance
Dr. William Loendorf

Appendix G - CITI Certification

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

EdD K-12 Students & Faculty- Basic/Refresher Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 12/12/2012

Learner: James Edgar (username: christianedgar)
Institution: Jones International University
Contact Information Department: Education
Email: christian@christianedgar.com

EdD K-12 Students & Faculty - Basic/Refresher: Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in DBA and EdD Adult Ed Students & Faculty research with human subjects.

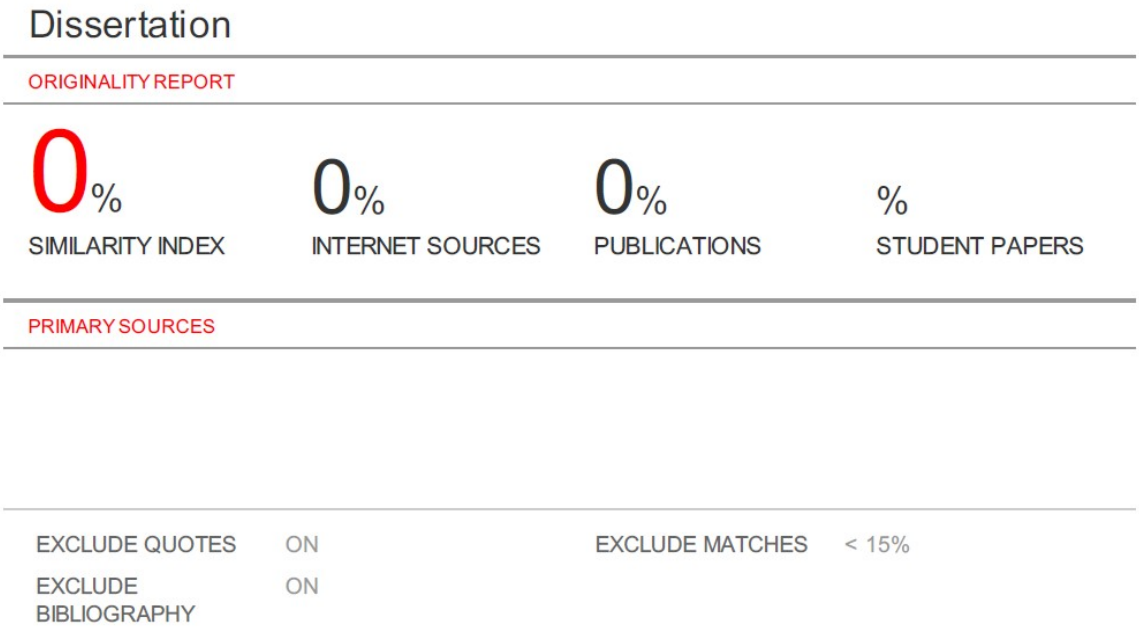
Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 12/12/12 (Ref # 9319157)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Students in Research	12/12/12	9/10 (90%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	12/12/12	3/5 (60%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	12/12/12	4/5 (80%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	12/12/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	12/12/12	3/5 (60%)
Research with Children - SBR	12/12/12	3/4 (75%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	12/12/12	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	12/12/12	4/5 (80%)
Jones International University	12/12/12	no quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

Appendix H – Turn It In Similarity Report



Dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

0%	0%	0%	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

EXCLUDE QUOTES	ON	EXCLUDE MATCHES	< 15%
EXCLUDE BIBLIOGRAPHY	ON		