IDENTIFYING CAUSES OF STUDENT END OF YEAR TRANSFERS AS
EXPERIENCED AT PRIVATE ALL-MALE MILITARY BOARDING SCHOOLS:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY
by
Frank Lake Martin III
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examined and helped identify causes for end-of-year transfers from private all-male military boarding schools to a non-military school. The purposes of this study were twofold. The first purpose was to identify the reasons why parents chose to transfer their sons from the all-male military private boarding school of their choice to another school from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year. A secondary purpose was to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study regarding why students returned to either their previous school or chose another school, whether public or private. The researcher used a researcher-developed, peer-evaluated exit survey with primarily Likert scale items and the option for open-ended written response. It was provided to those parents ($N = 230$) of students of four different all-male military boarding schools around the country who were eligible to return to their respective private all-male military boarding schools but chose not to return. Effective enrollment management is of paramount importance to private independent school success. There must be a clear understanding as to why parents have their sons attend a military school. It is just as important to understand why some parents choose not to return their sons to a military school. This multiple case study found that although finances did play a role in students not returning to their respective schools, the key factor or influencer was that the residential/barracks life did not meet expectations.

Keywords: retention, enrollment management, single-gender, single-sex, all-male, private schools, military private schools

DEDICATION

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

First and foremost to my beautiful wife, Jenna Kae, who cracked the whip on many a night to ensure I was in my "cave" finishing what I had started.

Secondly to my mother and father. Although my mother passed in 2009 before I got to this point. She recited Philippians 4:13 quite often and I recited it at her memorial service. It is the glue that holds everything together.

Thirdly to my Grandmother Martin. Louis Martin was a leader in education and a pioneer, being a teacher and principal during World War II.

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I would also like to acknowledge my dissertation committee Dr. Matthew Towles and Dr. Andrew Alexson, and especially my Chair, Dr. Ellen Black. They have provided the necessary feedback and guidance to get this done. Dr. Black kept leading me throughout the process, whether it was a broken ankle, a wedding, or a new boss.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

John F. Kennedy once compared progress as a nation to the progress in our education, and stated that the human mind is a fundamental resource for education. Parents and their children have a plethora of options today in the area of education. No longer are there just private or public school options available. Over the last 40 years, the public school option or school choice has seen several derivatives created, to include Magnet Schools and Charter Schools. Additionally, homeschooling has increased as a viable substitute to public school education. The public school option has also expanded to include the voucher school option. Courses at the high school level are also being administered online. For example, Virtual Virginia has courses such as Advanced Placement Chemistry, Latin III, and Advanced Placement Statistics, to name a few. Private schools too have much to offer students and their parents. There are various private school options including Christian and parochial schools as well as private day schools, private boarding schools, private military schools, and private military boarding schools.

Although non-military private schools offer viable educational resources to maximize a student's potential, the military private boarding school provides specific attributes that is, for some students, the ideal venue for maximization of student potential. The all-male military college preparatory boarding schools contribute significantly to the options available to students today. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are a number of students who either cannot or do not maximize their potential in the public school setting. There are also some students who do not do

well in a traditional private school environment. There are also students who may do well in a boarding school environment, and then there are those whose performance seems to be maximized in a military boarding school.

Through the researcher's personal observations as well as discussions with other military school admissions counselors, these particular students appear to perform better under structure, routine, and discipline found in the military boarding school educational model. This educational model provides the structure, routine, and discipline some students require to maximize their potential. To parents, maximizing a student's potential is important on the sports field as well as in the academic classroom. Parents value class offerings such as honors classes, advanced placement and college placement courses along with dual enrollment courses. The military school model is not designed necessarily to prepare students for the military but rather ensures there is uniformity of action, consistency in day-to-day routines, and reduced distractions for each student. Discipline is fundamental, ranging from student uniforms to personal accountability and responsibility in the learning process, with the intent of improved self-governance, self-reliance, and self-efficacy.

Each student, whether male or female, has a unique learning style. Males and females learn differently. There is a distinct need for single-gender (in the case of this study, all-male) military college preparatory boarding schools. According to Dr. Michael Thompson, the author of *It's a Boy! Understanding Your Son's Development From Birth to Age 18*, boys are easily distracted, disorganized, and dreamers, and this is most prevalent in the middle school years. These distractions include girls, as well as a disinterest in academics due to an inability to correlate "schoolwork and their

future" (Thompson, 2008, p. 266). In today's society, as discussed further in the literature review, it is important for a student to be able to maximize achievement in the best possible school learning environment. The military school model provides an important venue for educational learning maximization that meets the unique needs of some students.

Over the last 3 to 5 years, the enrollment in many all-male private military boarding schools has gradually declined. According to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), there are approximately 2,000 independent schools in the United States enrolling approximately 550,000 students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) states in its Digest of Educational Statistics (2010), that from 1985 through 2009, public school enrollment rose 26% while private school enrollment rose 5% over the same period of time, resulting in an actual decline of private school enrollment just under 2%. As the total number of students applying and accepted to military schools declines, it is even more important for the retention (i.e., proper enrollment management) of those eligible to return to be significantly higher than in past years due to the lower number of eligible students choosing to return.

Many military schools have been in existence for more than 100 years, transcending cultural change over time. There are some that closed during the 1970s due to the negative connotation of military schools after the Vietnam War, such as Staunton Military Academy (which closed in 1973) and Greenbrier Military Academy (which closed in 1972). Those schools that were able to keep their doors open slowly became the bastions of education, leadership, and character development the military

schools were once known for. As in the past, today the military private boarding school provides an additional educational choice for parents looking for a disciplined and structured learning environment.

For any private school, retention of returning students is very important. The school's long term viability as an educational institution improves as retention increases. All educational constituents to include parents, students, and educators, are looking for academic success. Long term viability of all-male private military boarding schools provides a needed for school choice, enabling young people to believe in and maximize their potential in the right environment for them. Thus effective enrollment management is especially necessary during a time of economic uncertainty and an observed decrease in new student enrollment. The retention of current students eligible to return is paramount to the sustainability of private military schools. Each student that does not return increases the need for new students to compensate for the loss of a previous student. Although recruiting new students is always healthy as well as necessary for private schools, just as returning customers are essential to any business, current returning students enable future operability of the school. These parents and students know and understand the culture of the school and often have a vested interest in the continued operability of the school.

Satisfied parents provide beneficial testimonials for their child's success as a student, thus improving a private school's reputation. Parents having their children return as students exhibit a form of loyalty to the school that they return to, a loyalty that enhances long term sustainability. "True customer loyalty is a bond that goes beyond retention and leads to customer advocacy" (James, 2005, p. 1). Knowing why

students are not returning reflects sound leadership practice and could impact

decision making and enrollment management, thus ensuring long term sustainability

of a military private boarding school. As stated in the book, *The NAIS Enrollment*

Management Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for Independent Schools, author

and editor, Christine Baker (2012) stated that enrollment management is the

following:

> an institutional response to the challenges that recruiting and retaining the right student body present to a school's financial health, image, and student quality. It's a research-based process that creates a synergy among recruitment, pricing and financial aid, academic affairs, student life, and constituent relations. (p. 5)

In order to provide the option of different learning environments, the long

term sustainability of private schools is very important to society. Long term

sustainability of any private school is dependent on the enrollment of students. The

private school requires effective enrollment management in order to ensure long term

sustainability in today's diverse academic environment. In order to maximize the

effectiveness and long term sustainability of the all-male college preparatory military

boarding school, it is imperative to know and understand reasons why parents and

their students do not return.

Researcher's Background

The researcher has been involved in private school education for over 13

years. The researcher has also taught in the public school system. The researcher has

intimate knowledge of the need for long term sustainability and effective enrollment

management. As the researcher is a senior member of the leadership team at one of

the schools involved in this study, there is a potential for researcher bias. This bias is

a result of a passion for promoting an educational model that has helped many young men throughout the years accomplish their dreams and goals when, in some cases, the road the student was on would not have enabled them to accomplish their goals and dreams. This bias, however, is minimized because of the researcher-developed, peer-evaluated exit survey used with all four schools within this multiple case study, along with institutional mission statement documentation and review as well as comments provided by parents on the returned surveys. The potential for researcher bias is offset by the benefit afforded the study by the researcher's in-depth knowledge of the field. Such knowledge can afford an advantage in correctly interpreting data and understanding utility of the findings to various stakeholders.

The committee chair along with committee members reviewed the study for possible researcher bias as well. In addressing any perceived conflict of interest, there is no personal benefit derived from this study other than institutional process improvement, which is paramount in long term sustainability of any organization.

Problem Statement

According to the Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States (AMCSUS), there are 30 secondary military schools currently operating in the United States. There are 23 military boarding schools, of which 12 are all-male military boarding schools. Retention and attrition are very important to any private school, but with such a small number of military schools available for students as a school choice, it is even more important to ensure their long-term sustainability. The retention percentage averages at the study's military schools are considerably lower than what the average private schools report to National Association of Independent

Schools (NAIS, n.d.). For example, one school's retention percentages over the previous 3-year period had been consistently between 75% to 79%. For the 2010-2011 school year, this school experienced a significant drop in the retention percentage, from 79% to 71%. There were only 152 students eligible to return, so when 44 of these students did not return, their reasons for not returning became extremely relevant to the school's long-term viability and survivability.

Another military school experienced a drop in retention to below 70%. From discussions with admissions directors at military private schools as well as other private schools, it is clear that the population pool of students who apply to military schools is consistently smaller than other private schools as a whole. Since there is a smaller prospective student pool than other private schools, year-to-year school retention provides for school organizational strength with consistency and continuity of the student body, thus ensuring long-term viability and operability of military private schools as a school choice well into the future. Consequently, in order to maintain this educational option, it is of paramount importance to understand why parents of students are transferring from their respective all-male private military boarding school to a different school, whether that is their prior school or another private school.

Table 1 provides a comparison between the retention at six all-male military boarding schools and two all-male boarding schools. The two all-male boarding schools were arbitrarily selected based on proximity and general knowledge. The comparison re-enforces the need in improving overall retention within the all-male military boarding school:

Table 1

Retention Rates of All-male military boarding schools vs. all-male boarding schools

School	2010-2011 Retention Rate	3-year average
A	70.4%	72.6%
B	66%	64.2%
C	58.5%	54%
D	61.6%	57.64%
E	67%	64%
F	69%	70.67%
AMB-1	90.9%	89.7%
AMB-2	81%	82.67%

These percentages were provided by the Admissions Officers of the respective schools. Names have been omitted to ensure anonymity. As indicated, there is a considerable difference between the retention rate for an all-male boarding school and the all-male military boarding school. This is a problem when discussing educational options for students and the long term sustainability of the military educational model.

Purpose Statement

The purposes of this case study were twofold. The first purpose was to identify the reasons why parents chose to transfer their sons from respective all-male military private boarding school of their choice to another school from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year. A secondary purpose was to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study regarding why

students returned to either their previous school or another non-military school, whether public or private. Constant process improvement has the potential to significantly change the retention concerns at each of the schools.

Significance of the Study

   Aids effective enrollment management. The significance of this study is to show the criticality for all-male private college preparatory military boarding schools to maintain long term retention efforts. An effective enrollment management program includes not only acquiring new students but also maximizes the retention of current students as well. An effective enrollment management program must be based on sound research, and "research-based decision making is fast becoming a requirement for 21st century school leadership" (Baker, 2012, p. 41). Long term sustainability is paramount for this particular school choice to maintain effectiveness and continue to offer another needed environment for student success. Although there is some literature regarding postsecondary retention, there is not any literature regarding retention at secondary private schools including the military private schools. The long term viability of additional educational venues for student success at the secondary level, and more specifically male student success is therefore difficult to quantify and quite frankly unknown.

   Most private schools are enrollment driven, and this is certainly the case with the military schools in this country. The study provides current information to administrators of all-male military boarding schools with both validated and identifiable reasons why parents, eligible to re-enroll their son, did not. Secondly, the understanding of both student and parental attitudes, once available, should enable the

leaders of the private military schools to enact changes that should ultimately have a more positive effect on the past environmental inconsistencies that negatively affected personal factors and beliefs, and thus improving overall retention. Institutional research and data analysis will help any school in providing strategic decision points as well as enable the school leaders to anticipate change, understand the past, and predict future trends (Baker, 2012, p. 41). The study identified parental reasons along with probable influencers for students not returning as well as helped identify some commonalities regarding parents not returning their children to their respective military school. The results should, and can, be used as a guide for organizational process improvement.

Theoretical significance. This study helps show the theoretical collaboration between triadic reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1989) discussed in Chapter Two, and the interconnectivity of parents' personal experiences at their son's previous school. The behavior of parents and their student, such as the decision to transfer or remain at the military school, is influenced by parental perceptions of reality relative to the school environment affecting their decision(s) to return or not. There are reasons for parents and their student to decide to transfer from their military school. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their book *Naturalistic Inquiry* stated:

> Everything influences everything else, in the here and now. Many elements are implicated in any given actions, and each element interacts with all of the others in ways that change them all, while simultaneously results in something that we, as outside observers, label as outcomes or effects. (p. 151)

Enrollment management is one of the two main revenue opportunities and sources of independent nonprofit private schools. It must be both systematic and analytic. The leadership of the school must always be aware of the reasons

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constituents do not want to return to their school in order to more effectively build customer loyalty. "Building customer loyalty is a continuous process requiring long-term commitment and effort" (James, 2005, p. 1). Maximized retention opportunities and decreased attrition benefit the school greatly in ensuring organizational longevity, viability and sustainability. This ensures proper budget development and enables the leadership to forecast and validate the vision of their school.

Research Questions

The research questions that influenced this study were as follows:

Research question 1. What are the top reasons for students to not return to the all-male military college preparatory boarding schools? Because with those reasons, the school leadership may be able to help improve subsequent retention at their schools through the formulation of an improvement plan to effectively make changes in the school environment that may positively influence future students to stay.

Research question 2. Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons for not returning? This is important because if there are commonalities amongst and between the schools in the study, then the school leadership from each of the schools may be able to utilize the new found information as each prepares for future students.

Research question 3. What are possible improvements that each school may be able to make to improve their retention? It is imperative for any organization to review and identify possible lessons to be learned through research, data collection, and thematic correlation. Case studies provide pragmatic approach to process

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improvement. Once the reasons for parental decision to not return are determined, it is imperative for each of the school's core leadership to review those reasons and identify possible process improvements to address not only each of the identifiable reasons for not returning, but also put in place an effective process improvement model to not only effect change but to maintain the training and education of the school administration to allow for continuous improvement. To not affect change would not only be poor leadership, but poor business and customer service. Again, these three questions will require the school's leadership to be honest and retrospective in their processes and procedures. If process improvements are implemented each school may see a substantial improvement in their retention of current students for each consecutive school year. This entire process is important to conduct each year and not only when the numbers are low. Process improvement should be continuous. Self-evaluation provides for a methodology for constant process improvement.

Research Plan

The research design for this study is a multiple case study. The research methodology is qualitative. "The qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human and social behavior, not from the *etic* or outsider's perspective, but from the *emic* or insider's perspective, that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 449). The purpose of qualitative research is to "gain an in-depth holistic perspective of groups of people, environments, programs, events, or any phenomenon one wishes to study interacting closely with the people of the study" (Farber, 2006, p. 3).

The qualitative study employed a multiple case study design in order to better understand social behavior as well as determine and understand reasons for students not returning to each one of the academies as well as to investigate any consistency of reasoning amongst them. Stake (1999) defined a case study as a bounded study or system, then stated each case is an integrated system (p. 2), and referred to more than one case study as collective case study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined the case study as "a detailed examination of one setting or a single subject" (p. 271), and they identify more than one case study as a multi-case study. This multiple case study for the present dissertation is concerned with the experiences of the parents of the sons who attended four specific all-male military college preparatory boarding schools and subsequently understanding their decisions made from those observed or personal experiences at their respective schools through an understanding of those experiences. The four all-male military college preparatory boarding schools in this multiple case study are schools that have a middle school (junior high) and high school component along with a post graduate opportunity. In essence, understanding the experiences of parents whose sons have actually lived in a private all-male military boarding school is critical to retention and thus long term sustainability.

Discovering and finally understanding the reasons why parents do not return, or re-enroll the student to the respective all-male military boarding school is extremely important to the wellbeing and long term sustainability of these types of schools. The discovery and understanding was accomplished through conducting a researcher-developed peer-evaluated exit survey of those parents who chose for their students to not return to their respective school. As a part of the enrollment

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management process, each school established a do-not-return list based on poor behavior or failure to adapt, as well as academic concerns. Subtracting from the initial list those students with poor behavior, academic concerns, or those who had failed to adapt, this researcher established that only parents whose students were eligible to return were invited to participate in the survey.

Additionally there was a (a) descriptive analysis of the survey through the identification and review of comments made by parents who returned the survey, along with (b) documentation of commonalities between school mission statements. Data analysis procedures included searching for thematic commonalities within school missions statements (Appendix A) as well as conducting a descriptive analysis of written amplifying statements by parents who made comments in the questionnaires they were provided (Appendix B). The student's grades and disciplinary reports for the school year were not required to help identify any commonalities between the student's failure to return. This information was obtained from schools, because during the enrollment management process, the Chief Enrollment Officer or in some cases the Director of Enrollment Management at each school met with key personnel within each of the four respective schools to identify those students eligible to return, from an academic perspective as well as a disciplinary one.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided as an essential aid to understanding this study:

- Enrollment management: Enrollment management is the ability to orchestrate and coordinate different aspects of enrollment. This includes monitoring retention (re-enrollment), attrition, and new student acquisitions to ensure budgetary requirements are met. This function is managed by the organizational leadership.

- Retention: Retention is the ability to retain a student, or the ability to have a student return from one year to the next year. A synonym for *retention* is *re-enrollment*. Re-enrollment is, however, not in the dictionary but is a common term used in the admissions as well as the advertising and marketing world of private schools.

- Retention rate: This is the total number of students that have returned divided by the total number of students eligible to return. Retention rate is calculated by determining the percentage of those students enrolled in a current year who were enrolled in the previous school year (Ehrenberg, 2011).

- Return rate: This is the percentage of students returning to the grades applicable for the particular school (Ehrenberg, 2011).

- Attrition rate: Attrition rate is defined as the number of students dismissed or withdrawn before the school year ends divided by the total number of students on campus for that specific school year.

Delimitations

The scope of this study was delimited to all-male military college preparatory boarding schools because of the unique educational environment provided by single-gender schools using a military educational model. These schools are found in the

Mid-Atlantic region along with the Southeastern region, Southwestern region and Midwestern region of the country. The researcher believed that there should be multiple military schools used for the study, and that these schools should also be in different states. This would ultimately increase study trustworthiness, help in the validation of the identification of any commonalities in parental reasons used for not returning, and minimize perceived researcher bias. Additionally, it would aid in data triangulation. The parents were chosen for survey completion because of the belief that parents, rather than the students, would be more analytical and truthful in how they felt and why they felt that way. In identifying the issues and concerns through discovery and understanding of parents' desire not to return their children to the school, both the school leadership and the reader will, from a leadership perspective, hopefully understand the dynamics involved in providing a private military academy education.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The educational learning environments available to parents today are many. From public schools to home schooling to virtual schools, there are more educational options available to parents than ever before. A private school education is available but as discussed in Chapter One, from 1985 through 2009, there has been a declination of just below 2% in their enrollment according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). This includes all private schools. All-male college preparatory military boarding schools are just one type of private school experiencing declination. In order for any private school to maintain long term sustainability, they must have an effective enrollment management and retention plan. In order to maintain an effective enrollment management plan, each school's leadership must understand why parents chose not to return.

In this chapter relevant research is provided to better understand the importance of retention in a private high school setting, and more specifically private all-male military boarding schools. The chapter will begin with an introduction followed by private school options, a public vs. private school comparison, and a private school vs. all-male military private boarding school comparison as well. Additionally, single-gender education will be discussed, along with discussions regarding military secondary and post-secondary institutions. There is a discussion regarding the boarding school option as well as a discussion regarding the impact of low retention for private schools.

The review of the literature will help validate the importance for parents to have educational school choices. From a parental perspective and more specifically

for their student, a military school may appear to be the final option regarding a student's education, but it is an important option that should be available to parents and students. Among those who try the military educational model, there are parents who have observed lackluster performance from their sons in their current educational setting and do not see the improvements they believe are possible. Additionally, parents see not only students not maximizing their true potential but also poor motivation or a total lack of motivation with their sons. There may also be minor discipline and referral issues in the student's current learning environment.

Gender-specific education needs for boys. According to *The Minds of Boys: Saving our Sons From Falling Behind in School and Life*, there is a "mismatch of contemporary school systems with boys' learning styles creating motivation and performance issues that can't be resolved with quick fixes…motivation of boys is accomplished through improving their self-efficacy" (Gurian & Stevens, 2005). For other parents and or students, they are looking for more challenging academics while experiencing the benefits of structure, routine, discipline, accountability, and leadership training. For these parents, the military boarding educational model is the choice that makes sense.

Dissatisfaction with standard public school option. As a family enters into the discussion and decision making process regarding attending a private school, either day or boarding, there are a number of reasons parents are looking for a private school. It could be smaller classroom sizes. Alternately, it could be a total dissatisfaction with the public school system: higher incidences of crime, bullying, poor or no academic rigor, low classroom expectations, and low graduation rates. For

example, in 2002 of the several million students who entered as freshman in high school, 1.2 million did not graduate 4 years later in 2006 (Edwards & Edwards, 2007). Depending on the source, graduation rates for 2006 vary: Brideland, Dilulio, and Morrison (2006) report a 68% graduation rate, while Cataldi, Laird, Kewal, Ramani, and Chapman (2009) report a 73.2% graduation rate.

Overview of School Types

Benefits of military schools. The military educational model has provided an environment for educational success for many students who may have not succeeded in their previous educational environment. Enabling students the academic opportunities to maximize their potential both within the classroom as well as in extracurricular pursuits can be accomplished through the long term sustainability of military boarding schools. This type of school environment has been available for young students for many years and in some cases over a century. These schools have enabled young men, and in some cases young women, to perform at levels they may not have attained in their previous school environment, academically as well as athletically.

Military schools provide structure, routine, discipline, accountability, and instill responsibility and leadership qualities not generally present in the public school system or in many private schools. The military-style school educational model enables its students to have experiences not observed at any other style or model of schooling. A *Journal of School Choice* article, "Military Boarding School Perspectives of Parental Choice" stated "not only do military-style boarding schools provide competition among a group of highly-selected aspirants, but the culture

fosters and supports competitive and successful social behaviors" (Shane et al., 2008, p. 186). Military schools have consistently realized the importance of a rigorous academic environment that enables young men to maximize their academic potential. This enables them to achieve college acceptance at highly ranked colleges and universities across the United States. Upon reviewing military school websites, the researcher found consistently high college acceptance rates (95%-100%).

Military schools concentrate on several specific areas of development. In reviewing the website of one of the four schools that participated in the complete study, four areas of development included the following: academic enhancement, athletic opportunity, leadership, and character or spiritual development. The researcher defines this as the whole-person development. The websites of the other schools within this study show similarity in their individual mission and vision statements. Parents consider private military boarding schools because of a desire for structure, routine, discipline, accountability, and instilling responsibility in their student. Another reason is, in some cases, because family dynamics requires male role models. Parents for the most part are tired of their student's lackluster performance in their current school setting. Many students who attend military schools have the ability to do well in school but lack the motivation and/or self-discipline to do what is necessary to maximize their full potential. The structure and routine help with student organization.

The military educational model and more specifically, the military all-male (single-gender) educational model thus provides a unique choice for parents that want to ensure their son is not lost in the cracks, so to speak, and is provided the

opportunity to excel through proper placement in the right developmental learning environment. The over-arching objective is student success, and according to Rumberger and Lim (2008,) a student's success is limited to or correlates with engagement in school, as a foundational piece of the whole-person development.

Private schools. There is not an extensive amount of literature for enrollment management or retention for secondary private schools. There is much more literature on post-secondary schools. Private schools acquire a small percentage of the overall student population, somewhere at or just below 1%, according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Private schools must be able to maintain high retention of current students eligible to return in order to maintain viability, operability, and sustainability. High attrition and low retention will negatively affect any private school. Overall, private school enrollment in prekindergarten through Grade 12 increased from 5.9 million in 1995-1996 to 6.3 million in 2001-2002, but then decreased to 5.9 million in 2007-2008 (Aud et al., 2010).

The opportunities available to parents regarding school choice enable some parents to bridge the gap in student achievement and enable their children to maximize their achievement in the proper environment for them as individuals. According to the National Association of Independent School (NAIS), "the reasons cited over and over again by the 400,000 families who send their children to our schools include individual attention, small classes, teacher excellence, and high academic standards" (p. 1).

Private boarding schools. Private boarding schools have more to offer a student according to the Association of Boarding Schools (TABS). Statistically, according to TABS, 35% of current boarding students spend 7 to 14 hours per week on non-athletic activities such as Boy Scouts, academic clubs, and service clubs compared to 27% of other students (TABS, 2005). According to TABS, a student will participate 12 hours per week on average in some form of exercise or organized sports compared to 9 hours in private day or public schools (TABS, 2005).

Interestingly, according to a study conducted by The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS), students who attend private schools receive more homework than their public school counterpart, watch less television, and are more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities. Those students in a boarding school environment experience an even higher percentage than day private schools. Overall the average student becomes a more well-rounded student with increased opportunities for success (TABS, 2005).

According to the Association of Boarding Schools, those in boarding schools report their schools are even more academically challenging by almost a 2 to 1 margin for boarding to public schools. This applies to homework as well. Private schools provide, generally speaking, a safer and more secure environment for learning, a more motivated student body, and better opportunities for college acceptances in comparison with their national student cohort (TABS, 2005).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT). SCT subscribes to a model of emergent interactive agency

(Bandura, 1986a). According to *Merriam-Webster*, *cognitive* is defined as "of, relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)" (para. 1). SCT evolved from Albert Bandura's behaviorist social learning theory (SLT). The early beginnings of this theory saw its foundations in the behavioral and social psychological umbrellas. Bandura's theory "focuses on how people operate cognitively in their social experiences and how these cognitions then influence behavior and development" (Stone, n.d., p. 3). In its infancy, SCT was known as social learning theory (SLT). Julian Rotter, another social learning theorist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Indiana University, espoused four main parts or components of his social learning theory. These components are behavior potential, expectancy, reinforcement values, and the psychological situation (Mearns, 2010). Although not the theoretical focus of this paper, it is relevant that conceptually Rotter sees "personality, and therefore behavior as always changeable. Change the way a person thinks, or change the environment the person is responding to, and behavior will change" (Mearns, 2010, p. 3). As a continuation of this idea, in 1972 Julian Rotter stated, "One difficulty with many learning theories is their almost exclusive emphasis on the process of acquisition of behavior and performance and their almost total neglect of the content of personality" (p. 4).

Bandura altered social learning theory to social cognitive theory for two distinct reasons: "first was to distance the theory from prevalent social learning theory of the day, and second to emphasize cognition plays a critical role in people's capability to construct reality, self regulate, to encode information, and perform behaviors" (Pajares, 2002, p. 1). At one time human behavior was thought to be

unidirectional relative to cause and effect. However, the SCT model establishes or favors "a model of causation involving triadic reciprocal determinism" (Pajares, 2002, p. 2). This form of determinism is bi-directional, a model of reciprocal causation, behavior, cognition, and other personal factors, and environmental influences that operate interactively, thereby influencing each other (Pajares, 2002, p. 2). Bandura's conceptual framework is a paradigm shift from bi-directional interaction to a triadic inter-relationship where a person's behavior is affected by both environmental factors as well as personal factors, and in turn the behavior affects those factors. The resultant is adaptive behavior modifications and decision making changes. What people think, believe, and feel will affect how they behave and why they behave in a particular manner (Bandura, 1986). This theory purports each of the three key areas are dependent upon each other. The SCT is important to lay the foundation in understanding individual behaviors in their decision making process as affected by cognitive (personal) aspects as well as realizing how the school environment creates that resultant behavior.

The interdependent nature of factors affecting retention decisions. The reasons parents are electing not to return to the respective schools in this study is very important to understand as well as address in order to influence and motivate positive change in future reenrollment percentages. More specifically, to modify or positively influence future behavior of parents and students regarding their decisions to remain at the military schools previously chosen, there must be a conclusive understanding through research and data interpretation as to why a change was made. Based on the data interpretation, plausible changes to the school environment may positively affect

the family and student decision to return or not. Figure 1 is provided for additional

clarification.

Behavior
(free will; self efficacy)

Personal Factors
(cognitive, affective, and biological events)

Environmental Factors
(physical and psychological)
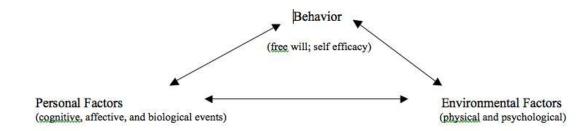
Figure 1. Triadic reciprocal determinism.

Bandura (1989b) stated the following:

any factor that influences choice behavior can profoundly affect the direction
of personal development because the social influences operating in the
environments that are selected continue to promote certain competencies,
values, and interests long after the decisional determinant has rendered its
inaugurating effect. (p. 1176)

In other words there are influencers in decision making processes. A person's

behavior resulting in a specific decision is affected by the subjective interpretation of

their environment. They are mutually inclusive and interdependent. Each influences

the other. Behavior is ever-changing, dynamically interwoven with each individual

or individuals, their current environment, past environment, and key influencers

within their past environment. Expectations also guide the behavior.

There are motivational factors that influence parents to return or not to any

private day or private boarding school, and more specifically to a private all-male

military boarding school. In some cases, these factors may be the same. These

motivational factors may be personal in nature or specifically arise from the school

environment. In either case, these factors will influence, positively or negatively, the

behavior of the parents. Again, they are inexplicably inclusive and interdependent.

In other words, these factors will influence parental decision whether or not to return to their respective schools.

Economics

The economy does play an important role in a family's ability to finance an independent private school education. During the economic down-turn (recession), many independent schools saw a decrease in enrollment. "To better understand the impact of the economy on individual families and on the general independent school landscape," the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conducted a survey with several different constituent bases including educational consultants, prospective independent school families along with current independent school families (NAIS, 2009). This market research survey was designed to help NAIS to identify "current enrollment trends and better understand how recent economic challenges are affecting" familial choices regarding an independent private school education (NAIS, 2009).

Even in its independent study NAIS found that although 80% of the parents would continue sending their students to their respective independent school, their return was conditional because of the current economic conditions. Said another way, 80% of parents would return to their schools of choice based on primarily economic factors and concerns and what financial aid and scholarship options were available (NAIS, 2010).

Comparison of Schooling Models

Public school options. Public schools have evolved over the last several decades. As a matter of fact, according to authors Goldring and Phillips (2008) in

their article "Parent Preferences and Parent Choices: The Public-Private Decision About School Choice," wrote, "within the past decade, more parents are able to exercise explicit school choice because of specific educational policies, such as magnet schools, charter schools, open enrollment, tax credits, and vouchers" (p. 209). Since the 1960s, school choice options have significantly increased to include "inter-district and intra-district choice opportunities as well as charter, magnet, and voucher academic opportunities" (Grady & Bielick, 2010, p. 1). School choice creates competition. School choice depends on academic reasons, classroom size, campus safety, and zoning dissatisfaction.

Magnet schools saw their rise in popularity starting in the 1970s and 1980s. This expansion in magnet schools fulfilled a twofold purpose: (a) to reduce racial and ethnic segregation, and (b) to provide an academic or theme based focus (Grady & Bielick, 2010), such as the arts, math, and science. Like other specialty schools, enrollment into magnet schools is highly competitive through both academic and admissions testing. Magnet schools normally have very high academic standards and are very selective.

Charter schools were begun in the 1990s, and the number of these schools has increased over the last several years as well. Charter schools, since their inception, have experienced an increase in popularity. They are independent public schools and serve about 2% of all public school students (Hoffman, 2008). There is also another venue of school choice in on-line educational opportunities, which has experienced interest and growth over the last few years.

The public school achievement gap. Public schools have been under fire for some time now because of poor performance and student preparation, perceived or real. In 1981 the National Commission on Excellence in Education was chartered and in 1983 came out with a report titled *A Nation at Risk*. This was also the beginning of an evolution in achievement testing and standards based education reform (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003).

In an attempt to improve public schools the *Improving America's Schools Act* of 1994 (IASA) was passed along with the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (ESEA), which brought to light the needs of all students, including regular students along with students at risk and disadvantaged children. These acts established assessment amendments, which was just the beginning of federal mandates and assessments found in the No Child Left Behind legislation. Performance standards became the assessments that were instituted in an attempt to provide the impetus and backbone for public school improvements.

In their *History of No Child Left Behind*, Jorgensen and Hoffman (2003) found "during the period from 1994 to 2000, most states had instituted content standards, performance standards, collection of longitudinal data, and use of secure test forms each year" (p. 5). The significance of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB), whether one agrees with its policies or not, is that there has been measureable improvements in math scores of both fourth graders and eighth graders. These improvements may not have any correlation, either direct or indirect to the enactment of NCLB, but measureable improvements were observed. However, as purported by the National Assessment of Education Programs (NAEP), 2011 fourth grade reading

scores have been rather flat since 2009, but there has been a gap reduction in the average reading scores between White and Black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a). The significance of these assessments is that there have been minimal changes in overall educational improvements, that which a parent is interested in seeing, especially over time, thus justifying the parental concerns regarding the public school education.

In a time when our public school educational system is in question regarding poor graduation rates, reduced amount of nightly homework, low accountability, lack of student responsibility in the learning process, and a total lack of confidence in its ability to produce college ready students, other educational models such as charter schools, private day schools and boarding schools, including military college preparatory schools may appear to better prepare their students for the next level of education. In an article in *The Economist* dated June 13, 2009, the author provided a brief discussion of our children and our public school's educational system relative to their success or lack thereof. In this article, the author states that California's state universities have to send over 33% of their freshman students to take remediation in both English and math courses, and about one third of Ph.D. candidates come from outside the United States. This says a lot for the overall effectiveness of our colleges and universities but also reaffirms that students may not be meeting expectations at the secondary level, and therefore to maintain and ensure a competitive edge. Students must be in the right environment to achieve their highest potential.

Public vs. private schools. Since there is a perceived difference in a student's achievement at a public school and what is possible at a private school, that

student may in fact apply and attend the private school. There is an argument regarding how private schools, charter schools, and voucher systems will create more competition and thus increase the quality of the public education. There are other arguments that question whether private schools really can or do "directly raise the quality of public education through these competitive pressures" (Sander, 1999, p. 705). The environment in which a student learns is critical for maximized student results and individual self-efficacy. This has a long term impact on the community and society at large.

School choices have increased in types and numbers over the last few decades. Whether or not the different choices have increased parental awareness to public school shortcomings is uncertain. However, the school choices that include charter schools and magnet schools along with home schooling options have placed a burden on private school enrollment, both private day student enrollment as well as boarding school enrollment. Customer retention is extremely important to their continuity and success. At private schools, parents of students must be considered a customer, stakeholder, or constituent.

In order for private schools to continue to maintain budget requirements during an economic downturn, the school needs to maximize retention. This applies to military schools just as much, if not more than, other private schools because (a) the population desirous of a military school education is smaller than for other private independent schools, and (b) there are so few military schools relative to the total number of independent private schools. In the article, *What do Parents Want from Schools,* the authors stated "education is a complex good with many dimensions, and

as parents evaluate schools they have to strike a balance between different attributes of education that schools represent" (Schneider & Buckley, 2002, p. 141). Parents need to ask themselves where their student will be a more effective and successful student and then decide what school environment is best for their son or daughter.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP), "the average reading score for fourth-graders attending public schools was 14 points lower than the overall score for students attending private schools, and 15 points lower than for students attending Catholic schools specifically" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b, p. 16) and "the average reading score for eighth-graders attending public schools was 19 points lower than the overall score for students attending private schools, and 20 points lower than for students attending Catholic schools specifically" (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b, p. 46).

There may be many reasons why private school students perform differently, on average, from public school students. Differences in demographic composition, availability of resources, admissions policies, parental involvement, and other factors not measured in NAEP may influence student achievement scores. However, the literature suggests private schools have several advantages over the public school. First and foremost, they consistently provide a safe learning environment. Secondly, parents are looking for a more disciplined environment, including factors such as a required dress code to classroom management. Smaller classroom sizes tend toward a more disciplined classroom. Although there are mixed indicators relative to the positive effect of smaller classroom sizes and student learning, smaller classrooms mathematically do provide more attention per student during a prescribed class time.

In the article *Comparing Private High Schools*, the author states "parents are looking for a safe, disciplined environment, the dress codes, and other strict policies that rarely pass muster in a public school" (Johnson, 2007, p. 1). Private schools offer a choice to parents of a religious or secular environment. College acceptance rates are higher at private schools than most public schools. Private schools have different opportunities as well, such as day schools or boarding schools. However, private schools are costly. Some day schools are as little as $6,000 or as much as $18,000 while boarding schools may cost upwards of $30,000 or more per school year. In fact, there are private schools in the northeast that charge over $50,000 due to their exclusivity.

Some private schools have a high acceptance rates and some have waiting lists. The simple fact that private schools are able to be selective causes some critics assert that private school students as a whole would be expected to come from more privileged backgrounds and thus would do better on the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) and Academic Aptitude Test (ACT) even in a public school environment. This is not the case for the military boarding school. As a matter of record, 100% of seniors at all-male military boarding schools take both the SAT and the ACT relative to only those students in the public school setting who have been identified as college bound. Compared to the national norm of these tests, for example, School A in the present study consistently scores at or above the national norm, while compared to the top 50% to 60% of public school students taking the exam(s) and considerably higher than public schools in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The Art and Science Group, LLC was commissioned by the Association of Boarding Schools to

conduct research regarding a boarding school education, associated differences between public and day schools, as well as boarding school experiences. The percent of graduates of the public school and private day schools who report being very well prepared academically for college were 39% and 71% respectively (TABS, 2005). A further comparison with boarding schools will be shown later.

From a secondary education perspective, college acceptance and successful completion of college is a viable goal of our secondary education in the United States. It is an achievable goal for many students. Both academic rigor and extra-curricular activities are extremely important for college acceptance. In a published article in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, "on average, students in private schools have higher standardized test scores and higher graduation rates according to a 1999 study published in the educational journal *Educational Researchers*" (Lynch, 2011, p. 1).

The boarding school. Boarding schools have been a part of the educational options for well over a century. Many boarding schools in the United States have been around since the late 19th century or early 20th century. There are some boarding schools that date back to the late 18th century in the United States as well. The boarding school today is quite different from the stereotype of schools for troubled teens or wealthy families. New research shows that contemporary boarding schools serve a diverse body of motivated and well-rounded students who "study and live in supportive, inclusive academic communities where they learn about independence and responsibility—traditional values that help them achieve success at higher rates than private day and public school students—in the classroom and beyond" (TABS, 2005, p. 2).

In order to gain more knowledge and understanding of the modern-era boarding school, the Association of Boarding School commissioned their Art & Science Group to conduct a study. This study was conducted through the interviewing of more than 2,700 high school students and adults over the course of a 16-month period. The interviews covered high school seniors, boarding school alumni, public school students and adults, along with private day school students and adults. Some key facts regarding the benefits of the boarding school as reported in the comparative study include the following:

1. An overwhelming majority of boarding school students and alumni are satisfied with their academic experiences; 91% report their boarding schools were academically challenging compared to 70% of the private day school students and 50% of the public school students.

2. Boarding school students have better time management skills.

3. Boarding schools encourage positive personal development. Opportunities for exhibiting leadership, as reported by boarding school students, was at a high of 77% while private day schools and public school students reported 60% and 52% respectively.

4. Boarding school students report they are better prepared for college and beyond; 50% of boarding school graduates earn advanced degrees compared to 36% of private day school graduates and 21% of public school graduates (TABS, 2005).

The boarding school has a proven track record in providing an educational learning environment that enables students a different learning venue to excel and maximize

their individual learning potentials. Education takes on a holistic approach. The boarding school is the student's community, and many life-long friendships are gained. Academically, boarding schools have smaller classroom sizes and student-to-teacher ratios, resulting in more academic support.

Military school educational model. There have been military schools and academies in the United States since 1802 when the United States Military Academy at West Point was established. The model continued through the 19th century with the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland established in 1845, Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia in 1839, and The Citadel in 1842 to name a few at the post-secondary level of education. The latter two were originally established to provide the respective states with citizen soldiers.

Both West Point and the Naval Academy were established for the development of the army and naval officers for their respective services that required specific educational modeling in the arts and sciences of war. These bastions of learning provided for the development of the whole person, that is, developing the army officer or naval officer intellectually, physically, and morally with a code of honor. John Milton, in his tractate on education, describes the complete education as one that prepares the student to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously in all offices, both public and private, as well as during both peace and war.

Although these schools or academies are post-secondary schools and the research applicable within this dissertation is for secondary schools, the concept and educational model of the whole person development exists at the secondary school level as well as at the post-secondary educational level. The model rests on the idea

that the military structure, accountability, and disciplined environment play key roles in each student's educational success. Mr. Bill Miller, Sr. in his article *Military Influence in Education* stated "the discipline that results from a military influence can turn a student's life around for the better" (Miller, 2011, p. 1).

The military educational model is also exhibited at the secondary level. According to the Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States (AMSCUS):

> [military college preparatory schools] understand how vital the formative years are for our youth. They recognize and understand that values and habits learned during this time will have a lifelong impact. Each student receives not only an excellent academic foundation but also essential life skills based on traditional values. (AMSCUS, 2012, p. 3)

Military schools are unique. They are built on traditional core values such as duty, honor, integrity, commitment, and fidelity, which are taught and exemplified daily. The student is offered an outstanding and exceptional learning experience: character development, leadership development, along with athletic competition and academic excellence.

Profile of military school applicants. From discussions with military school admissions officers and administrators, the student profile described is not one with behavior problems, a stereotype that has plagued military schools for several decades. The more typical student profile is that of a young man who lacks focus and needs structure, routine, discipline, and accountability in order to maximize his potential.

Students attending military boarding schools come from a myriad of academic backgrounds. Although a majority of students arrive from the public school sector, there are those that come from other private day schools, both independent and

Christian based, as well as some that have been homeschooled. Each student's educational background may be different, but the reasons for attending an all-male military boarding school consistently include reasons such as smaller classroom settings, minimal distractions, character development, principled leadership development, and a level playing field for each student.

Private schools vs. military private schools. There is not an abundance of literature regarding the parental choice of parents choosing the military boarding school educational option relative to other boarding or private schools. In an article published in the *Journal of School Choice* regarding a qualitative inquiry into military boarding school parental choices, the authors indicated "some sectors of American society have exercised their right to seek out an educational experience for their children to reflect values such as discipline, self-reliance, and college preparatory tracks" (Shane et al., 2008, p. 180). Military schools may be Christian-based, having a religious affiliation, and some may be secular in nature. Military school denotes structure, discipline, and routine. Either religious or secular, military schools have a very strong sense of character-based education, teaching students as well as emulating morals, ethics, and values. These are also reasons why some parents choose military schools.

There are students across the country requiring a military academy to provide them structure, routine, and discipline minimizing environmental distractions in order for them to maximize their potential. These students are frequently not self-motivated, and easily distracted; however, placed in the right academic environment they excel beyond their own expectations. "Each child is an individual that comes to

the classroom with a myriad of experiences, specific learning styles, educational deficits, and student needs" (Hill, 2011, p. 1).

Reasons for selecting an all-male military school vary, but consistently parents are looking for an opportunity for their sons to be "judged based on their own performance" (Shane et al., 2008, p. 186). Some parents believe that the military environment levels the playing field, so to speak, between the wealthy and the middle class. Said another way, the perception established regarding military schools is that the students wear the same uniform, they have the same haircuts, and attend the same classes – the playing field is normalized and their individual performance is based on their own individual successes. Smaller classroom sizes (student-to-teacher ratios) also have been identified as a viable reason for selecting a private military school. However, this is also a reason parents choose a private school instead of a public school. Small classes seem to provide an environment that enables students to be more effective in the classroom.

The researcher conducted a customer satisfaction survey at School A in December 2010. The first question asked in the survey requested three of the top reasons they had chosen School A as an educational option for their son. There were 51 respondents, and their top three reasons were, in order: (a) military structure and discipline; (b) character development with subsets of self-esteem, responsibility, and accountability; (c) academic advantages such as academic rigor, individualized attention, smaller class size, and college acceptances. Other reasons included location, school reputation, religious affiliation, and teacher dedication.

The military boarding schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, of which there are five, have consistently placed students into universities and colleges of higher education to include University of Virginia, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC State, United States Naval Academy, United States Military Academy, Renneselear Polytechnic Institute, The Citadel, Virginia Military Institute, Liberty University, and Virginia Tech to name just a few. The other military boarding schools that have been selected for this study have similar academic success and college acceptances to geographically represented colleges and universities, with 100% graduation rates and greater than 90% college acceptance rate.

Single-gender education. There are four elements of a learning profile: learning styles, intelligence preferences, culture, and gender (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011, p. 146). With the discussions of differences between private schools and military private schools, there needs to be a discussion regarding single-gender education, since this study is focused on all-male military boarding schools. A systematic review of both quantitative and qualitative research was conducted by RMC Research Corporation for the United States Department of Education in 2005 regarding single-sex education compared to a coeducational school environment within the elementary and secondary schools. In a study conducted in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Education, single-gender or single-sex education, generally speaking, is a referral to education whereby the students, both male and female, attend class with members of their own sex, at least for the majority of classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

From a quantitative perspective, in comparing all-subject achievement testing, the authors of a systematic review found that three of four studies for grade-school and secondary school students (75%) support single-sex schooling for boys and five out of eight (63%) support single-gender schooling for girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Not only were these findings validated for academics but also for areas such as career aspirations and goal setting, attitudes toward school, and self-efficacy. However, a similar study for postsecondary students reported no significant differences. A plausible reason for parents preferring a single-gender school is the fact that a co-educational environment increases the distractions for their sons. Even though these statistical facts provide support for single-gender education, the research support for all males and all females to be in a single-gender academic environment is minimal, but there is a place for single-gender education as an option for some students. There are many different educational options and opportunities available to each student, and a single-gender educational model is just one of those opportunities (Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

Brain theory research continues to determine differences, both physiological and developmental, between boys and girls, and how they are manifesting themselves in an educational setting (McNeil, 2008). Boys learn differently than girls and "to support excellence in both boys and girls, we must design experiences and curriculum that meets the need for both…by understanding their uniqueness" (Geist & King, 2008, p. 50). Male and female brains work differently, apply differently, and respond differently (Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Since boys learn differently than girls, "rather than changing the boys to fit our schools, schools might change to capitalize and

expand on the strengths of boys" (Neu & Weinfield, 2007, p. 2). Not every boy will be successful in the regular academic classroom setting, nor will every girl. There must be academic opportunities that provide for the best-fit scenario.

The successes at all-male military schools empirically show how placing boys in the right school environment provides them an opportunity to achieve; whereas in the wrong school environment they are failing, and in many cases developing disciplinary problems. Generally speaking, boys' attitudes toward education and their school environment are indicative of their performance. Poor grades may result in poor attitudes, and vice versa. Success, academic or otherwise begets success.

Males make up about 50% of the 16 to 25 year old population. However, they make up around 43% of the postsecondary educational population (Mortenson, 2005). Some literature suggests even lower, closer to 40%. There are two points to be made here: (a) females have made great strides over the last few decades in educational successes and equality, and (b) males have been unfocused. Because males make up nearly 50% of the population, the current academic trends of "unfulfilled male educational potential diminishes national economic, social, political, mental, and spiritual health" (Mortenson, 2005, p. 1). Dr. Leonard Sax, a renowned pediatric doctor, psychologist, and author of *Why Gender Matters*, provided two case studies in his newest book *Boys Adrift* that describe a young man who went from a miserable maladjusted student in a co-ed school to a thriving and well-adjusted student in a single-gender school. In both cases the student was medicated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Dr. Sax believes that society should not medicate boys to fit the current public school system, but rather we should change the school to

fit the boys' needs (Sax, 2007). Sax believes boys are over-medicated, and that if

they are placed in the right academic environment, the male student may not even

require medication. The military all-male private boarding college preparatory school

is one of those schools available to young men that fit their learning style. This type

of school provides an environment with more structure, routine, and discipline than

public schools and certainly many other private day schools.

Statistics show boys are at greater risk than girls for learning disabilities,

illiteracy, and dropping out of school, substance abuse problems, violence, juvenile

arrests, and early death caused by violent behavior. As boys grow older, risky

behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse become more prevalent, and potential for

gang involvement increases. Youth gangs, from 2002-2003 were present in 96% of

large cities with populations of 250,000 or more. In 2003, the suicide rates for

adolescent males were about four times the rate for adolescent females. Girls

performed better than boys at every grade level on the National Assessment of

Educational progress (NAEP) writing assessment in 2002.

Although males comprise one-half of the population, they make up 57% of the

dropouts in ages 16 to 24. When girls are present, boys tend to act out. When girls

are not present, the boys are less inclined to either boast or misbehave, or even

engage in attention-seeking behavior (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). Authors of the

book *Helping Boys Succeed* contends that "boys in all-boys schools are more than

twice as likely to study subjects such as foreign languages, art, music, and drama.

Girls in all-girls schools are more likely to study subjects such as advanced math,

computer science, and physics" (Neu & Weinfeld, 2007). Participation and high

achievement are noticeable in both single-gender environments.

Gurian (1999) has written several books on boys and how to ensure their

ultimate success in all facets of life. He confirms a number of the statistics noted

above and adds some as well:

1. Adolescent males drop out of high school at four times the rate of adolescent
   females (this includes females who drop out because of teen pregnancy).
2. Ninety percent of adolescent discipline problems in schools are male, as are
   most expulsions and suspensions.
3. Adolescent males are significantly more likely than female adolescents to be
   left back a grade.
4. Adolescent males on average get worse grades than adolescent females. The
   majority of valedictorians and salutatorians are female.
5. Adolescent females now dominate school clubs, yearbooks, and student
   government.
6. Adolescent males significantly outnumber females in diagnoses of most
   conduct disorders, thought disorders, and brain disorders.
7. More college students are female (55%) than male (45%).
8. Since 1981 more females have been enrolling in college. (Gurian, 1999, p.
   15)

An article in *Newsweek* stated, "30 years ago, men represented 58% of the

undergraduate body, and now they are a minority at 44%" (Tyre, 2006, p. 44). Dr.

Pollack in his book *Real Boys* validates these statistics, although his book was

published in 1999. Specifically, he states only 58% of male high school graduates

make it to college as compared with 67% females, and females were earning 55% of

all the bachelor degrees (Pollack, 1999). Gurian's book, *A Fine Young Man* also

states more graduate school students are female (59%) than male (41%). Another

compelling statistic is that according to the National Center for Education Statistics of

the U.S. Department of Education, there are fewer boys than girls that are now

studying advanced algebra and geometry, while about the same number study

trigonometry and calculus. In the area of science, more girls than boys study chemistry. This widening achievement gap may adversely affect us in ways we may not understand, from both an economic and societal perspective. This potential concern was reaffirmed by then Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings who specifically stated the widening achievement gap between boys and girls has "profound implications for the economy, society, families, and democracy" (Tyre, 2006, p. 46).

Retention for a private school. Although there is not a lot of literature regarding retention of current students for consecutive years at private independent schools, still retention, attrition, and subsequent retention are issues that admissions directors at private schools struggle and work through each year, especially during the current economic downturn. That, coupled with the cost of private school education rising, results in an imperative for private schools to maximize individual school retention. From a pure numbers perspective, the number of eligible students to return for the next school year can determine a school's retention program success or failure. Simply said, if the number of eligible-to-return students decreases over time, in order to achieve adequate enrollment, a larger number of eligible students must be retained for the next school year. There is a juggling act between ensuring the cost per student covers expenses, financial aid and scholarships offered, and external sources driving an increase in operation costs, and an optimal enrollment size for each academic year. Improving retention is directly proportional to identifying causes of student transfers at the end of each school year. Appendix C shows retention figures for the last 9 years at School A.

Student retention and yearly retention is extremely important to a private school's long term sustainability and viability. As authors Leone and Tian (2009) stated, "the roots of attrition lie not only in their students and the situations they face, but also in the very character of the educational settings" (p. 130). Although this article was specifically referring to higher education, its validity applies to any private secondary school. Retention is inversely proportional to attrition. The lower the attrition, the higher school retention is, thus resulting in higher retention opportunities, and by default more effective enrollment management. There must also be an understanding relative to each grade level and retention as well. There may be anomalies associated with a particular grade. As a reference point, School A provided returning percentages for each grade relating to the school years 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010 found in Appendix D.

To be able to retain eligible students from a current student population, the private schools must understand their area of market competition as well as their value added to their customers. More importantly, the private school must determine and understand the reason a family is not returning, having transferred to another school. Transference out of one school to another reflects an uncertainty relative to the value added and a level of customer dissatisfaction. Identifying the reasons for each family not returning is important in order to identify possible commonalities and subsequent influencers or qualifiers for process improvement. The reasons students transfer may also be different based on grade.

Summary

In a time when our public school educational system is in question regarding poor graduation rates, reduced amount of nightly homework, low accountability, lack of student responsibility in the learning process, and a total lack of confidence in its ability to produce college ready students, military college preparatory schools appear to better prepare their students for the next level. In an article in *The Economist* dated June 13, 2009, the author provided a brief discussion of the U.S. public school system relative to the success or lack thereof. In this article, the author states that California's state universities have to send over 33% of their freshman students to take remediation in both English and math courses, and about one third of Ph.D. candidates come from outside the United States. This says a lot for the overall effectiveness of our colleges and universities but also reaffirms that students may not be meeting expectations at the secondary level, and therefore to maintain and ensure a competitive edge, students must be in the right environment to achieve their true potential.

Private schools offer a needed choice for parents to school their children. Military private schools offer another needed choice for student achievement and opportunity. Whether a student attends private or public school is not the issue, but why parents and children choose a private school is a key determinant relative to his or her expectations regarding that private school education. If a private independent school can deliver on parental expectations, its retention can improve.

With smaller classroom sizes as experienced at private independent schools, there is observable increased student learning, a decrease in discipline problems, and

an increase in student participation in both academic and extra-curricular activities. An unmotivated male student has an opportunity without concern for reprisal or chastisement to find his niche. According to Dr. Gurian, this environment is much better for unmotivated boys (Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

Over the last 20 years, the school venues offered for the student population have increased to include many more charter and magnet schools as well as an increase in home-schooling and virtual learning. This, coupled with demographic shifts, will affect private school populations throughout the country. During this past decade there has been a significant shift of population centers from the north to areas such as Raleigh, North Carolina and Coral Cables, Florida (National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2010). This trend is expected to continue for the next 5 years according to National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS, 2010). Private schools have to contend with not only significant demographic shifts but also with serious differences in the approach to education and the available options open to the student population.

According to National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), "online learning, participatory social media, and open educational resources have increased access to education in a global scale" (NAIS, 2010, p. 102). With this accessibility, the increased educational options afforded young people today establish the foundational need for a highly effective retention and enrollment management plan to maintain viability of private schools, including military boarding schools. According to the NAIS Trend-book, authors Christensen, Horn, and Johnson, in *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, predict

that by the year 2019, "about 50% of the high school courses will be delivered online" (Christensen et al., 2008, p. 98). This additional factor in the education of future generations, coupled with the already decreasing population looking at private schools as an option for school choice, retention continues to be the key for long term viability and sustainability of the private military all-male boarding school. This has placed an important renewed focus on enrollment management for private schools in order to ensure their customer base is satisfied in order to continue to increase retention and decrease attrition. The all-male military private boarding school is looking at a significantly smaller cadre of interested parents, and, therefore, retention, attrition, and enrollment management become even more important.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design, the methodology, data collection, and the data analysis procedures of this study. First is a review of the problem, description of the design, and review of the research questions. The next section describes the participant selection. The procedures and data-collection methods section is followed by a description of the researcher's roles and personal connection to the study topic. Data analysis procedures are discussed next, along with addressing trustworthiness including dependability and credibility issues. Lastly this chapter addresses the ethical issues and concerns.

Review of the Study's Purpose

The purposes of this study were twofold. The first purpose was to identify the reasons why parents chose to transfer their sons from respective all-male military private boarding school of their choice to another school from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year. A secondary purpose was to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study regarding why students returned to either their previous school or another non-military school, whether public or private. The all-male military college preparatory school provides a rigorous academic environment along with the development of the whole person.

Retention information, however, is scarcely reported. In 2011, National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) published the 2011 Parent Motivations Survey. This survey addressed various aspects of the admissions process and marketing concerns in order to identify what messages were resonating with parents in their search for the best education environment for their children. Interestingly,

part of the Parent Motivations Survey also provided insight relative to the retention issue and concerns. According to the study, current parents' finance their student's education in an independent school through their current salary dollars (NAIS, 2009). Specifically, the percentage of parents who financed through current salary dollars was 69%.   An additional fact was that on average, 22% of the students received financial aid and scholarships to assist in the payments of independent school tuitions.

Determining real reasons why a parent withdraws a child from a particular school, whether an independent all-male military boarding school or a small independent school, will go a long way in long term retention as well as independent school sustainability. Finding the reasons may help a school administration determine how to retain parents' commitment and subsequently enable the school to make necessary process improvements.

In the preliminary identification of the participatory schools there were originally six all-male military boarding schools. All six schools reported their 3-year average retention rate as a part of the Pre-Survey Questionnaire found in Table 2 below. The following four questions were asked as a part of the pre-survey questionnaire:

1. What was the total number of eligible Cadets to return?

2. What was the total number of Cadets to return for the 2010-2011 school year?

3. What was the 3-year retention percentage average?

4. What were the top three reasons the parents indicated as their reasons for not returning?

Table 2

Pre-Survey Questionnaire

School/Region	Total # Students Returned 2010-2011 School Year	Total # Students Eligible to Return	Three Year Retention % Average	Written Reasons for Not Returning
A/Mid-Atlantic	112	149	76%	Financial concerns Academic success Residential life Student convinced parents
B/Southeast	169	256	64%	Financial concerns Academic success Single gender Limited social media access
C/Southwest	124	212	54%	Financial concerns Academic success Emotional decision
D/Midwest	117	190	58%	Financial concerns Facilities Location
E/Mid-Atlantic	62	99	65%	Financial concerns Student convinced parents Parental decision
F/West	171	249	71%	Financial concerns Parental issues Personal reasons

There appears to be no relational trends associated with these percentages other than a serious concern for schools with less than 60% retention. The industry standard for educational institutions must not be identifiable through comparing boarding and non-boarding schools but rather comparing boarding schools with boarding schools and day schools with day schools. That said, references to each educational venue become important in the data collection and correlation.

In professional conversations with admissions counselors from non-military day schools (specifically PK-12), their retention rates were much higher, 86% in one school located in the Southeast (GA) and 98% in another school located in the Mid-Atlantic (VA). These percentages were provided during professional workshops and discussions and were not published percentages. For the record names are omitted for the purpose of confidentiality. There is also an all-male military day school in the Commonwealth of Virginia (somewhat of a hybrid) that reported their 2008-2009 school year retention rates as 86% and their 2009-2010 school year retention as 90%. In talking with the admissions offices at two all-male boarding college preparatory non-military schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, their 3-year retention averages (2008-2009 school year; 2009-2010 school year; and 2010-2011 school year) were 82.67% and 89.7%. The 3-year retention averages comparing military and non-military schools, whether boarding or day, are lower.

Private schools must be able to maintain a high retention rate and low attrition in order to provide for higher probability of a higher retention rate on a yearly basis. By consistently increasing the numbers of eligible students and improving student retention, the organizations can thus be able to ensure their long term viability and

operability. This is even more important at private military college preparatory

schools since they represent an even smaller percentage of the private school sector.

The population base of students who apply to military schools is a much smaller

percentage than other private schools in the United States. Therefore it is imperative

that retention is maximized to ensure their future viability and operability of military

private schools.

Design

This study was a qualitative research study using the multiple case study

design approach. Qualitative research is "an umbrella term covering an array of

interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come

to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally

occurring phenomena in the social world" (VanMaanen, 1979, p. 520). From an

educational perspective, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) shared six advantages of

using qualitative research in schools:

1. It provides natural occurring information that furthers the understanding of a phenomenon" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 560).
2. The contextual setting is taken into consideration since the data collection methods are personal and up close (e.g., interviews, direct observations).
3. It reveals the complexity of the environment and addresses the phenomenon holistically.
4. Data collection occurs over a long duration of time, allowing for longitudinal analysis of processes.
5. It is often based upon the lived experiences of people, allowing researchers to interpret data with respect to the meanings people bring to those experiences.
   It takes into consideration the intercultural negotiating that occurs between individuals and groups as they seek solutions to problems. (p. 560)

The collective or multiple case study design enabled the researcher to, from

the perspective of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, understand the reasons

regarding parental behavior and decisional methodology regarding why parents chose not to return their sons back to their respective all-male college preparatory boarding military schools. Finding central tendencies, commonalities in philosophy and mission, and themes across each case will help each school make choices necessary for changes needed to create and implement their own process improvement plan and improve their overall retention.

As mentioned earlier, there were originally six schools that when initially contacted agreed to the study. However, two of the six had expressed concerns from their individual Boards regarding the mailing of surveys to their individual parent constituent base. The four schools that remained and involved in this study are *bounded units* as institutions of learning. According to Stake (1995), a case study "may be referred to as a 'bounded' study or system, and each case an integrated system" (p. 2). Merriam defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Merriam believes the phenomena studied must be "intrinsically bounded" (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). Again, each school is a bounded educational institutional unit or individual educational case study. The educational institutions are an individualized integrated system within their own boundaries – physical and geographical boundaries as well as institutional and educational. Each case has an individualized and identifiable mission statement as well as intrinsic value, albeit through their individual people, facilities, and constituencies.

Conducting individual case studies for each institution hits at the core of what a case study actually is - a real life scenario or phenomena that tells a story and can be

utilized for institutional change. Yin (2009) states that case studies have been done about decisions, programs, the implementation process, and organizational change. According to Bogdan and Bilken (2007), a case study is "a detailed examination of one setting or a simple subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event" (p. 271). According to Ary et al. (2006), case studies "attempt to describe the subject's entire range of behaviors and the relationship of these behaviors to the subject's history and environment" (p. 457). Each school in the multiple case study has its' own story with a particular setting or objective (mission and vision statements for example) and range of behaviors (comments provided by each family relative to their decision to not return or re-enroll) associated with each individual school.

An in-depth understanding of the real-life storied phenomena in each chosen institution may even produce some commonalities or thematic congruencies in the multiple stories as well. Using the case study design, according to Yin, should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" or why" questions; (b) behavior of those involved in the study cannot be manipulated; (c) the researcher would like to cover contextual conditions or issues; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the context and the phenomenon (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545).

Collective or multiple case studies occur when the same bounded study may be observed or are considered important to other similar units or institutional issues, concerns, or propositions. Yin (2009) considers the single case study design and the multi-case study design "variants within the same methodological framework." Understanding the "why" relative to attrition resulting in low attrition is extremely important for each of the individual schools in this study. Attrition and retention is

important with any and all private independent schools. Collective or multiple case studies provide more compelling data and therefore may be considered more robust. Yin (2009) discussed the further breakdown of multiple case studies into either *holistic* cases or *embedded* cases. Yin states that if surveys are a part of the multiple case study design then the embedded design approach is the best option. The "embedded design can serve as an important device for focus in a case study inquiry" (Yin, 209). Using a survey with each school in a multiple case study allows for individual school analysis as well as cross school comparisons to help identify school behavioral commonalities regarding the decision making processes.

In the research of the literature, there were limited discussions of the collective case study versus the multiple or multi-case study terminology. Merriam (2009) refers to these types of studies as multi-case, multisite, cross-case, or comparative case studies (p. 49). As a matter of record, Stake (1995) defined the collective case study as "studying several cases within the same project" (p. 169). Therefore the researcher decided to use the terminology *multiple case study design* instead of *collective case study*.

Understanding the meanings and reasons for specific interactions in specific situations may enable the researcher to compare each case study and subsequently identify commonalities with each specific case study. Additionally, there may be a relation between the behavior of students and their parents relative to specific personal and environmental factors. In other words the theoretical points of triadic reciprocal determinism may in fact help explain their decisions not to return. Appendix E provides comments made in response to the open ended questions

provided in the exit survey. Understanding parental experiences and influencers

through an effective and thorough multiple case study will enable the school

leadership to address shortcomings, make organizational process improvements, and

possibly improve overall retention.

Research Questions

The research questions used as the foundation of this study were:

- What are the primary reasons students do not return to all-male military
  college preparatory boarding schools?

- Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons
  for not returning?

- What are possible improvements that each school may be able to make to
  improve their retention?

Case Settings

The military academies for this study are four all-male secondary college

preparatory boarding schools located throughout the United States. Initially six

schools were contacted and provided answers to pre-screening questions but only four

agreed to mail out survey packages. They are located in four different states

(Virginia, Georgia, Texas, and Missouri). This de-conflicts each of the schools and

their specific spheres of influence (recruiting areas of interest) thus reducing possible

conflicts with student acquisitions. Additionally, it helps reduce researcher bias since

more than one school was used in the study.   All the schools are college preparatory

and are all-male military boarding schools serving the middle school (junior high) and

high school grades. According to their websites, all the all-male military college

preparatory boarding schools report greater than 90% college acceptance rates with acceptances to many of the premier universities and colleges throughout the United States. This correlates to The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) statistics indicating boarding school students report they are better prepared for college and that 50% of them earn advanced degrees (TABS, 2005). All but one school in the study have been educational bastions for over 100 years.

All four of the private all-male military boarding schools experienced lower retention rates over the last several years (see Table 2) and most recent drop in retention from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year. According to a study conducted by Dr. Rudy Ehrenberg, Executive Director of the Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States (AMCSUS), over the last 5 school years, the "total enrollment for 25 schools represented in the study declined by 8.3%" (p. 3). Some of this drop, and poor retention, may be attributable to the poor economy. It certainly may be a strong influencer for a parent to return or not to return. All four of the schools in this multiple case study are members of the association. Some schools experienced a more drastic negative change in their retention than others. School A experienced a drop from 78% to just over 71% while Schools B, C, and D have not seen retention percentages consistently above 70%. Schools C and D have been less than 60% or hovering right around 60% retention rates respectively.

The retention percentage averages at the study's military schools are considerably lower than what the average private schools report to National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS, n.d.). In viewing the STATS Online regarding private school members of NAIS, the current trend analysis shows a decline

in the size of each grade from 7th through a student's senior year. Those schools with a post graduate year experienced the only percentage increase in the student population. Additionally, in taking the 3-year average of retentions, Schools A and F appear to not have a retention problem or concern. However, in reviewing the individual yearly percentages, in both cases there was a severe drop in retention percentages from 2009-2010 school years and the 2010-2011 school years. This, coupled with the consistently low retention percentages at the other schools in the study, provided the foundation for this analysis. In order for these schools to maintain their long-term viability in a rapidly changing academic environment, it is imperative to differentiate between perception and reality regarding reasons for not returning to their school.

The specific educational traits for the participating schools included: (a) all-male single gender education; (b) begin their schooling during the middle school years (junior high); (c) military school environment (Junior Reserve Officer training [JROTC] was not a military prerequisite); and (d) a boarding school (although it could have a day student populace).

School leadership. The organizational chart (Figure 2) for this type of school is very similar to many boarding schools, with probably one major difference. Each of these schools has a school head commonly called the president or superintendent. Each also has an assistant known as the chief of staff or executive officer along with the academic dean, commandant (Dean of Students), and athletic director. The chief of staff may be considered the chief operating officer (COO) or provost in many organizations, ensuring that the day-to-day operations of the school run smoothly.

The COO reports directly to the head of school. The commandant is responsible to the president of the school for maintaining good order and discipline within the Corps of Cadets. The athletic director coordinates the sports program. These are the top five people in the organizational leadership of the schools. In all cases the president or superintendent is a retired military officer. In two instances the head is a retired O-6 or colonel in the U.S. Army or U.S. Marine Corps. The other two school heads are retired generals from the U.S. Army or U.S. Marine Corps.

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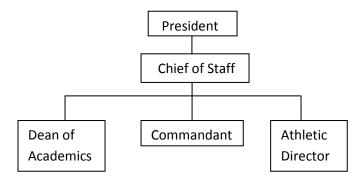
Figure 2. Organizational Chart

Student profile. The typical student profile for each of these schools is a male student who has the potential to do well academically but is not currently performing at his maximum potential. He may be reported as lazy and unmotivated by his parents and current teachers. He may be a young man who performed extremely well in elementary school but appeared to have lost motivation and interest starting as early as the middle school years. The military school identifies one of its key strengths as motivating unmotivated students to maximize their potential and enabling them to acquire college acceptances.

School performance. School A for example boasts 99.8% college acceptance and higher than the National Norm on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and

American College Test (ACT) with 100% junior and senior class participation. The other three schools participating in the study report high college acceptance rates of greater than 95% as well as improving students' SAT and ACT scores. Specific data regarding SAT/ACT performance was not readily available. In discussions with the admissions directors, many of those students who initially matriculated into the military school of their choice were reported as underachievers not maximizing their full potential academically or otherwise. They required more structure, discipline, and routine in their daily lives. In an analysis conducted by the researcher at School A in the Fall of 2009, 70% of those students who had been at the school for 3 or more years and graduated with the Class of 2008 had improved their overall GPA and had acknowledged that their success was directly attributable to the structure, routine, discipline, accountability, and responsibility learned at their alma mater. The military educational model used by these schools provides a long-standing and proven venue that enables students an opportunity to find success and maximize their full potential.

Survey Participants.

Although the schools are the analyzed cases in this multiple case study, survey studies were nested within the study of the four cases. Six all-male college-preparatory boarding schools were invited to participate in the study. All six participated in a series of pre-survey questions of which will be further discussed in Chapter Four. These questions were specifically regarding pre-enrollment motivations for attendance and another source of information and data to establish and identify a means of comparison. Four schools consented and fully participated in the process, culminating with the mailing of the researcher-developed and peer-

evaluated exit survey to all parents of students that were eligible to return. The initial

survey sample consisted of parents who decided not to return to their respective

military schools for the 2010-2011 school years ($N = 230$). The number of

researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit surveys mailed depended on the

number of students who did not return to each respective school.

Based on the initial retention percentages discussed with the admissions

personnel at each of the schools, initial estimates of surveys and survey packages to

be mailed were about 40 to 55 exit surveys from each school. As detailed in Chapter

Four, the number of actual surveys mailed to parents varied from 37 to 88.

The researcher expected that the number of actual surveys returned would be

between 15 to 25 per school based on anticipated attrition, changes in address, and the

general public opinion of surveys in general. However, the return rate was not as

high as anticipated, and this may be a concern relative to validity of quantitative

survey results.

This differential between the anticipated returned surveys and the actual could

be due to several reasons including an inability to locate due to a recent move, being

an international family, or a desire not to participate at all with the study. Why

parents chose not to participate in the survey is unknown. The survey participants

were the parent(s) of students who had chosen not to return. Since all the schools in

the study are all-male, all the students were male and ranged in age from 12 to 18

years of age. This constituted Grades 8 through 11, which are the grades one

considers for retention purposes. The survey respondents are described as families

because it is not known whether more than one parent contributed opinions or whether students also contributed opinions.

School A survey participants consisted of two families with students in the 8th grade, on family with a student in the 9th grade, two families with students in the 10th grade, and one family from the 11th grade. All respondents reported their ethnicity as Caucasian. Two families received financial aid and scholarships while the other four did not receive any scholarship funding. Five of the six survey participants reported this was the student's first year at the school.

School B had 10 respondents. Three of the family respondents were from the 8th grade, three additional respondents were from the 9th grade, and the remaining four family respondents were from the 10th grade. All 10 families who responded reported themselves as Caucasian. Eight of 10 reported this as the student's first year. One had been at School B for 3 years and another for 2 years.

School C had 18 respondents. Two were from the 8th grade, five from the 9th grade, seven from the 10th grade, and the remaining four from the 11th grade. Fourteen survey participants reported themselves Caucasian, two Asian, one Native American, and one Latino. Only 2 of the 18 reported receiving financial scholarships. Fourteen of the 18 respondents reported this as the student's first year, one reported 2 years, two reported 3 years, and one reported 4 years of enrollment.

School D had 12 respondents. Two respondents were from the 6th grade, one from the 7th grade, two from the 8th grade, one from the 9th grade, two from the 10th grade, and four from the 11th Grade. Eight reported as Caucasian while one reported

as Black, one Asian, one Hispanic (Other), and one Latino. Eight of 12 reported

having some financial aid or scholarships. Table 3 is provided as a summary:

Table 3

Likert Scale Survey Return Rate

School	Mailed Surveys	Returned Surveys	Return Rate %
A	37	6	16.2
B	62	10	16.67
C	88	18	20.4
D	43	12	25.6
Total	230	45	19.58

Procedures

There were six all-male military college preparatory schools that were invited

to participate. Initially, each of the six agreed to participate in this study. Of those

six, all completed a three-question preliminary screening. Four of the schools

consented to conduct the study. The initial identification of students by the four

military schools who did not return from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011

school year was based on those students eligible to return but did not. The total

number of potential participants varied with each of the four schools. Consequently,

the number of survey packages sent to each school and received completed for each

school varied as well. After submitting Institutional Review Board (IRB) application

and receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) authorization (Appendix G), the

researcher requested each school representative to provide the number of student

students who did not return for the 2010-2011 school year in order to determine how

many Survey Packages to provide each participating school. The researcher

requested each school to send out an email (Appendix F) to each student family in

order to provide them ample time before the survey packages were mailed to contact

the researcher with questions if necessary. This communication would also allow

them an opportunity to opt out of the survey. The Survey Package consisted of a

serialized exit survey (Appendix B), a cover letter (Appendix G), and a self-addressed

stamped envelope.

The researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit survey was designed with a

scale of 0-5 with 0 being *not applicable* and 5 being *very important* in their decision

not to return. The surveys also included questions regarding demographics such as

the student's grade, years in attendance, ethnicity, and whether they had received

financial aid the previous year. There was also question for the responders to provide

their initial reasons for selecting their respective military school. After rating nine

specific areas or influencers the respondents were provided additional space for open-

ended remarks based on their responses to the different influencers.

Data Collection Procedures

Identification of participants. The process of acquiring information to make

determinations of potential participants included the identification of schools that

were similar in specific educational traits for the participating schools. These

educational traits were discussed earlier.

Initially there was some thought that there may be additional document

analysis of the student's grades and disciplinary reports for the school year to help

identify any commonalities between the student's failure to return and academic and

disciplinary performance and/or non-performance respectively. However, those identified as eligible to return had already been vetted for academic and disciplinary acceptability by the respective school's enrollment management team.

The initial identification of students by the four different military schools who did not return from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year was based on those students eligible to return but chose not to do so.

Survey distribution. The total number of participants varied with each of the four schools. Consequently, the number of survey packages sent to each school varied as well. In order to determine how many survey packages to provide each participating school, the researcher requested each school representative to provide the number of students who did not return for the 2010-2011 school year, but were eligible to return. The researcher serialized the surveys relative to each school using the school's first letters of the name of the school in order to ensure the anonymity for all survey participants while enabling the researcher to link the completed surveys to their corresponding school.

The Researcher's Role and Personal Biography

As a member of the administrative senior leadership staff at one of the schools in the study, the researcher has served in three different roles. One of these roles was the director of admissions. When the researcher began his studies in educational leadership, as the director of admissions, he always was extremely aware of how an effective enrollment management program could and should provide for meeting and/or exceeding budget requirements through a strong retention process. The effective retention process is of paramount importance for all independent schools.

Each year, the researcher, as the admissions director, would verbally contact those students who did not return to identify possible trends that required assessment and correction. There were times when the written reasons provided for not returning seemed not truthful in nature but rather seemed to be provided to placate the admissions staff.

However, the researcher believed an impersonal survey submitted to multiple military schools as a multiple case study would provide effective appropriate metrics and systemic understanding for the school leadership to more effectively put in place the required changes to improve and sustain higher retention while simultaneously minimizing bias. Merriam (2009) stated qualitative researchers "are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13).

Being an integral human instrument as a part of the study, the researcher believes it was useful to combine the rigor of a multiple or collective case study with the aspects of triadic determinism espoused by Bandura's (1985) social cognitive theory, resulting in a more clear understanding of parental reasons for not returning. Having a vested interest in the outcomes of the survey would enable the researcher as well as his colleagues to more effectively implement any necessary changes in order to be more effective schools. The collected data and subsequent data analysis should not be tainted with bias, because accuracy is important for the practical aims of the study.

Data Sources

When each school was approached with the opportunity to participate in this study, representatives from each school were very concerned about the researcher's initial plan for contacting via phone or email those parents who did not return a survey. The concerns ranged from privacy concerns to their governing boards' disapproval. As a result, the development of the researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit survey included a question that enabled participants to provide their written comments, provided in Appendix E. Interviews were therefore not requested of survey participants.

Data sources consisted of the (a) Likert Scale Survey results for each site along with (b) parental comments, and (c) each school's mission and vision statement (Appendix B). Use of these three data sources enabled triangulation of data to occur within the multiple case study.

Survey Instrument

The basis of the survey was an instrument initially used in a paper written by Paige Geyser for her studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. There was no date provided for when the paper was written. The title of the paper was *Genesis or Exodus? Retention Strategies for Private Middle School.* In her paper, Geyser purported that the "responses were grouped into clusters according to their importance" (p. 6). Her 9-point survey was a ranking system and used for a private parochial day school for Grades 6 through 8. The Likert Scale Exit survey was used in Geyser's paper. There was no contact information for the author. Survey validation cannot be verified.

The survey was researcher-modified for use by military boarding schools based on their own unique attributes. The modifications were based on peer evaluation and researcher needs of the initial exit survey resulting in the researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit survey used in this study (Appendix B). Peers included a retired head of school, current head of school, academic dean, and middle school principal. All were intimately familiar with the private school environment, the importance of customer satisfaction, and the importance of descriptive research. Specifically included in the modified survey was a rating and not a ranking Likert scale. Additional points of interest were added including a section for demographic data and ethnic background information. There were both closed-ended questions as well as open-ended questions. The open-ended question responses are found in Appendix E.

The rating system was also modified where 0 indicates *not applicable* rather than *not important.* In order to establish a foundation for comparison, the researcher added a section requesting the parents to identify the top three reasons the military school in question was chosen. Peers provided their inputs and recommended changes. Recommended changes included changing the *ranking* of the nine influencers to *rating* along with adding whether *goals and objectives have been met* and splitting *residential/military* into two separate influencers, specifically *residential (barracks) life* and *military lifestyle*. With the inputs and recommended changes, coupled with the researcher's past experience in conducting surveys the researcher then integrated all of the recommended changes and additions into the survey resulting in the researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit survey.

The researcher-developed, peer-evaluated survey was not piloted. The researcher's experience in conducting past surveys of a similar nature reinforces the validity of the researcher-developed and peer-evaluated survey. Validity of the survey is extremely important. According to Ary (2006), the survey "should have *face validity*. It should appear valid for its intended purpose" (p. 439). Face validity was accomplished through the describing specific modifications mentioned in the previous paragraph and implementing the recommendations from the peer evaluations.

Data Analysis

The concept of triadic reciprocal determinism espoused by Albert Bandura (1985) and first discussed in Chapter Two is the foundational theory framing this study. Specifically, this approach yields the understanding that parental or familial behavior (i.e., the decision to remain at a school or not) is dependent upon both personal factors (i.e., positive and/or negative; likes and/or dislikes; personal financial situations) as well as with environmental factors (i.e., academic rigor, availability of athletic participation, dormitory life that includes the infrastructure as well as how well their sons are treated within the dorm setting). These elements are dependent on each other and directly influenced by the others. Understanding these mutual influences, as is necessary in a qualitative research multiple case study, is a very important step in the analysis of the data collected for this study through the exit survey and subsequent identification of important commonalities in each case in the multiple case study.

Qualitative data analysis is a process that entails (a) sensing themes, (b) constant comparison, (c) recursiveness, (d) inductive and deductive thinking, and (e) interpretation to generate meaning (Swanson & Holton, 2005). According to Ary et al., (2006),

All qualitative analysis involves attempts to comprehend the phenomenon under study, synthesize information and explain relationships, theorize about how and why the relationships appear as they do, and reconnect the new knowledge with what is already known. (p. 490)

In this multiple case study, all of the parents of the student who attended one of the four schools in this study chose not to return to their respective school. Theoretically as well as sound leadership practices as an organizational leader and educator establishes an inherent importance of understanding the parental views regarding the phenomena in order to identify and make the necessary changes in order to improve retention. Stake (2006) stated, "in multicase study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together" (pp. 5-6). All the cases in the present study are bound as individual all-male military college preparatory boarding schools, and they are bound together through a commonality of mission and vision for the education of young men (Appendix A).

In conducting data analysis, the researcher needed to identify specific meanings, patterns, and themes. This was conducted through the analysis of the researcher-developed, peer-evaluated exit survey results from all four schools along with the thematic correlations of the comments provided and school mission and

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vision review. Merriam (2009) indicated that "qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive and comparative" (p. 175). Data analysis can be conducted in four distinct phases, or stages: "(a) data preparation, (b) familiarization, (c) coding, and (d) generating meaning" (Swanson & Holton, 2005, p. 240).

For this study, the researcher engaged in data preparation through scanning the written responses for indications that the parent(s), and not the student, had completed the survey and that all items were marked with a response. Familiarization was accomplished through reviewing tallies of responses and reading through written responses several times. The generation of meaning occurred in the interpretation of quantitative data, the coding process for written responses, and comparing qualitative responses for similarities.

Data analysis enables the researcher to develop an understanding of the data as it relates to human behavior. Interpretation of the exit survey through central tendencies was helpful. Swanson and Holton (2005) stated, "qualitative data analysis is all about our quest to understand" (p. 261). The analysis of open-ended responses enabled the researcher to develop explanations for the quantitative results. Merriam (1998) indicates that inductive thinking or the inductive research process builds abstractions, concepts, and hypotheses from the data. Conceptually this allows for specific themes to be identified. The deductive process, through data collection and testing, enables the researcher to test a theory. Although qualitative data analysis uses both inductive and deductive research processes, a "large part of data analysis is inductive" (Swanson & Holton, 2005, p. 238).

Through accurate descriptions and targeted dissemination of the results, the researcher intended on ensuring the information from the data analysis be utilized to allow the academies to better serve the customer base. The findings of this multiple case study may assist the private military schools that participated in the study to better serve students' needs and accommodate parents' desires and thus ideally lead to better retention. This will be facilitated through a more effective understanding of why students and their families do not return to their respective schools and therefore ultimately allow for each organization's leadership to understand and improve their own enrollment management through measures to increase effectiveness. The study should also assist other private schools' organizational leadership in modifying their actions and attitudes, thus enabling the schools to maximize retention.

Each school, as a bounded individual case study, provided thematic analysis correlation along with meanings and patterns with each individual school response to the pre-screening questionnaire, the Likert Scale Exit Survey, and their individual mission and vision statement analysis. This allows for the review of specific trends and an understanding relative to: 1) Why parents look at all-male private military boarding schools; and 2) Why parents chose not to return as it pertains to customer satisfaction.

All four schools as specific case studies enabled the researcher to utilize individual sources of evidence and conduct cross case analysis providing portraits of each school establishing themes generated from a comparison for quantitative data, qualitative or textual data and each individual school's mission statement. This facilitated the triangulation of data. "The most important advantage presented by

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using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation and corroboration" (Yin, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study is of paramount importance to the usefulness of its conclusions. Trustworthiness is enhanced through internal validity (credibility), which establishes the congruence between researcher findings and reality; external validity (transferability) which results in relational causation; consistency (replication) which validates findings as dependable or reliable; and the maintenance of the confirmability or objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Swanson & Holton, 2005). Merriam (2009) states, "Internal validity deals with the questions of how research findings match reality" (p. 213).

In his text book, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach,* Maxwell states the following:

> Validity is a goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Validity is also relative: It has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods and conclusions. (Maxwell, 2005, p. 105)

The use of three data sources (pre-screening questionnaire, Likert Scale Exit Survey, and School Mission and Vision analysis and review) in the present study allow for data triangulation. The data triangulation was also accomplished through reviewing, analyzing, comparing and cross-checking the data received from the different participating schools using the central tendency of the mean relative to each school. In using peer evaluation for the exit survey, the researcher was able to avoid bias that may have been undetected otherwise. The inclusion of four different schools

in different areas of the nation allowed for more transferability and a greater number of survey responses, which also served to increase the credibility of the findings. This coupled with conducting a cross case thematic mission and vision analysis for commonalities, along with establishing themes based on comments provided from the open-ended questions in the exit survey provides for credibility, as these serve to help interpret the qualitative results.

Credibility is also established through reflexivity, which is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the human instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). By providing a description of his background and motivations, the researcher demonstrated an understanding of the importance of data collected and analyzed in order to provide the foundations necessary for process improvements, showing a motivation for accuracy and objectivity.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher is obligated to all the stakeholders taking part in the surveys and must, therefore, maintain and ensure confidentiality. There must be strict adherence to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Code of Ethics by maintaining the integrity of the research and the research community. All field notes, interviews, interview responses, and other associated data collection efforts will be maintained, stored, and locked at home to ensure security and confidentiality for 5 years. After this time, raw data will be shredded.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter reviewed and summarized the results of the exit survey provided the four all-male military private boarding college preparatory schools that agreed to participate in the study. The chapter is divided into three sections: (a) purpose of the study, (b) demographic and descriptive data collection, and (c) summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were twofold. The first purpose was to identify the reasons why parents chose to transfer their sons from respective all-male military private boarding school of their choice to another school from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year. A secondary purpose was to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study regarding why students returned to either their previous school or another non-military school, whether public or private.

Identifying any possible commonalities, or thematic congruencies, amongst the military schools involved in the study is extremely important. Indentifying reasons for not returning should assist school leadership in making appropriate changes is necessary in order to improve overall retention. Although the focus of many articles and papers regarding retention has been in regards to college retention (Tinto, 2006; Watson, 2004), why students depart from a private school and more specifically an all-male college preparatory private military boarding school, is extremely important. It is very important because this type of school provides another venue to enable young men to academically perform at a level they may not have been able to do at their previous school.

A secondary purpose was to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study regarding why students returned to either their previous public or private school and possibly establish some thematic congruencies among the written comments provided by parents on the exit survey. The researcher used a researcher-developed, peer-evaluated exit survey. The questions that drove this qualitative research study included the following:

- What are the top reasons for students to not return to the all-male military college preparatory boarding schools?

- Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons for not returning?

- What are possible improvements that each school may be able to make to improve their retention?

Demographic Data Findings

The initial identification of students by four of the six different military schools who did not return from the 2009-2010 school year to the 2010-2011 school year was based on those students eligible to return but chose not to do so. The total number of participants varied with each of the four schools. The total number of surveys mailed was 230. The actual number of total completed surveys was significantly less than originally anticipated by the researcher, approximately 19.58%. The researcher was anticipating around a 40% return rate. School A had a 16.2% return rate; School B had a 16.67% return rate; School C had a 20.4% return rate; and School D had a 25.6% return rate.

As initially mentioned in Chapter 3, a series of pre-survey questions were asked of each of the points of contact. These questions were in regards to pre-enrollment motivators for attendance, again to establish and identify a means of comparison of any possible correlation between written reasons for not returning and those identified on the returned exit survey. All four schools provided feedback as discussed in Chapter Three.

Descriptive Data Findings

The pre-survey questionnaire (Table 3) was initiated in order to first establish a means of comparison and, second, to compare the written information provided to the respective schools with the information provided as a part of the researcher-developed and peer-evaluated exit survey. The written responses that were provided across the spectrum were relatively consistent in regards to financial concerns of five schools. During these depressed economic times, the written responses do not appear to be far off from the perceptions gained through discussions with the researcher's points of contacts (usually the admissions offices) and respective parent's verbal responses to oral surveys gathered via admissions counselors. However, as will be shown later through the exit survey analysis, the written reasons provided by individual schools does not entirely match with the exit survey results. However, there are some commonalities.

All representatives in Schools A through D submitted the formatted email per Appendix D. Simultaneously the researcher mailed the survey packages to the participating schools. Within 2 weeks each of the four schools that agreed to continue with the study mailed the exit survey along with the cover letter (Appendix

B & E) and the self-addressed stamped envelope to the survey participants. Once the exit surveys were returned, the researcher collated the scaled surveys, providing the results as shown in Table 6. Initial demographic data was collected as part of the survey along with the request for each student family to provide the top three reasons they chose to attend their military school of choice. These specifics have been addressed individually by school.

Portrait of School A. These findings are the direct result of "within case" analysis procedures. School A, located in the Mid-Atlantic region, had 6 of 37 surveys returned. One survey package was returned as non-deliverable. Of those six, there was one 8th grade student, two 9th grade students, two 10th grade students, and one 11th grade student. Four of the six survey respondents did not receive any financial aid. The 2009-2010 school year was the first year for five of six respondents. The sixth student family had been there during the 2008-2009 school year as well as the 2009-2010 school year (2 years). The one 8th grader along with two 9th grade students, and one of the 10th grade students had grades that had not improved. All six students identified their ethnic background as Caucasian. The top three reasons these students attended School A were a desire for: (a) structure and discipline, (b) improvements in grades and study habits, and (c) instill a sense of responsibility. The top three reasons the parents indicated they did not have their son return were: (a) goals and objectives were met, (b) residential life (i.e., barracks life), and (c) parental decision. Numbers two and three were the same average on the exit survey.

Both parental surveys that indicated respondents had received financial aid also indicated financial concerns as very important. However, financial concerns were not in the top three and, therefore, did not coincide with the top three written reasons for not returning, as identified in Table 4 showing the written discussion points between the researcher and admissions personnel at each of the schools. Four of six respondents put barracks life as very important in their decision not to return; two of these four identified personality conflicts between staff and student as very important. Of note is that four of six respondents identified the student's decision not to attend as very important, with three of the four rating it a 5 and one rating it as a 4. The first two reasons, along with the student's decision, could be considered influencers on the final parental decision to not return. Goals and objectives being met can be considered a positive reason for not returning. The identifiable problem with the residential life aspect of the school (dorm or barracks living) is a very strong negative reason for not returning. A failure in seeing academic improvements in their students is also an influencer or qualifier. For School A, three respondents listed academic reasons for not returning. The other three respondents did not identify this as a reason for not returning, and thus the researcher did not identify it as a top reason for non-return.

School A Mission Statement. Specifically, the stated mission of A is to assist cadets in becoming knowledgeable, thinking and responsible citizens of their community, their nation, and world. Our educational program is based on rigorous instruction in basic skills and in preparation for further study in arts and sciences. To be effective,

the educational process must be reinforced by order, as well as structure and discipline. Integrity of the individual is promoted in every area of school life.

Thematic Congruencies. Conducting an internal comparison, the thematic congruencies found within school "A" include an education marked by character across the curriculum with a rigorous curriculum in the arts and sciences. Reasons for attending the school included structure and discipline. One of the reasons for not returning included frustrations or concerns regarding the barracks and residential life. Parents sought structure and discipline but also wanted a healthy community living scenario. Financial concerns were identified as an influencer which coincided with the oral survey conducted.

School B. These findings are the direct result of "within case" analysis procedures. School B, located in the Southeast region, mailed out 62 surveys and had 10 returned. Of those, three were 8th grade students, three were 9th grade students, and four were 10th grade students. Eight of the 10 had just completed their first year at the school. One of 10 had been there 2 years, and 1 of 10 had been there 3 years. Academically, 8 of 10 indicated their son's grades had improved. Three of 10 received some form of financial aid and/or scholarships. Nine of 10 identified their ethnic background as Caucasian, while one of 10 did not answer the demographic question. The top three reasons for the parents choosing this particular military school were: (a) educational focus and study skills, (b) structure and discipline, and (c) personal growth through accountability and leadership. The top three reasons students did not return to School B were (a) parental decision, (b) student's decision, and (c) goals and objectives were met.

Comments made were neither as thorough as expected nor were they consistent with the Likert scale exit survey responses. The one family who had been at School B from the 8th Grade through the 10th Grade indicated their objectives were not met from an academic perspective; and that coincided with the ratings of academic concerns being very important in their decision not to return. One response indicated the student would be returning to School B once familial issues were addressed, but for this school year in question his return had to wait. Written reasons provided, per the pre-survey questionnaire conducted by all six initial schools indicated financial concerns as an influencer for not returning, but as with School A, the exit survey did not support this contention. It was most likely not even an apparent influencer for the parental decision, whereas student's decision and goals and objectives not being met were most likely influencers.

School B Missions Statement. School B's stated mission, according to their website, is to prepare ethical young men of character for success in college and in life through the provision of a rigorous academic program, leadership opportunities, competitive athletics, extensive co-curricular activities, and the structure and discipline inherent in a military preparatory school environment.

Thematic Congruencies. School "B" stated in their mission statement providing structure and discipline along with a rigorous academic program.   Character based education appears to be a desired objective as evidenced by the mission statement and the pre-screening questionnaire.

School C. These findings are the direct result of "within case" analysis procedures. School C, located in the Southwest Region, had 18 of 88 surveys

returned and four survey packages returned to the researcher as non-deliverable. One was an 8th grader, six were 9th graders, seven were 10th graders, and four were 11th graders. Twelve of the 18 surveys were at School C for 1 year. Three had been there for more than 1 year and up to 2 years. Two had been there for 3 years and one for 4 years. Nine of 18 had seen improvement in their son's grades, while eight saw no improvement. One parent did not answer. Only 2 of 18 were provided financial aid and/or scholarships. Thirteen identified themselves as Caucasian, two as Latino, two identified as Asian descent, and one Native American. The top three reasons for parents to send their sons to school C were as follows: (a) more structured and disciplined environment, (b) academic improvement through smaller classroom sizes, and (c) separation from negative influences and distractions at home. The top three reasons for not returning were: (a) parental decision, (b) residential (barracks) life, and (c) academic concerns. Parental decisions ranged from distance from home to unmet customer expectations. Although only two survey respondents were provided financial aid and scholarships. Several surveys (9 of 18) indicated that financial concerns were *somewhat important* to *very important* (3 or above on the exit survey) and influenced the parent's decision to not return the student.

School C Mission Statement. School C's stated mission statement, according to their website, is that school C develops disciplined, morally strong, college-ready young men who are prepared for responsible leadership.

Thematic congruencies. Within this specific case of school "C," again a school of character is identified through a part of their mission statement and also was

identified as a desired element of this type of education – separation from negative influences and distractions at home.

School D. These findings are the direct result of "within case" analysis procedures. School D, located in the Midwest Region, had 43 surveys mailed out, 11 of which were completed and returned. Three of the 11 were 7th grade students, 2 of the 11 were 8th grade students, 1 was a 9th grade student, 2 were 10th grade students, and four were 11th grade students. Seven students had attended School D for only 1 year, two for 2 years, and 2 for 4 years. Eight of 11 purported their son's grades improving. The parents of one of the students who had attended for 4 years indicated his grades improved in the middle school years but not during the high school years. Eight of 11 had received financial aid and/or scholarships during their tenure at the school. The ethnic background of the sample included eight Caucasian, one Black, one Latino, one Asian, and one *other* (Hispanic). The top three reasons for choosing to attend this military school included: (a) structured and disciplined environment, (b) improved academics over public schools, and (c) increased self-esteem through responsibility and leadership. The top reasons for not returning according to the survey include: (a) financial reasons and military life-style, (b) parental decision, and (c) student's decision. Eight of 11 survey respondents had financial aid and scholarships (72.7%), which identifies with their top reason for not returning. There was a notable concern of the emphasis of the military lifestyle at School D.

School D Mission Statement. School D's structured environment empowers young men to succeed through a program of academic excellence, character development, and leadership training.

Thematic congruencies. Families identified a desire or need for structure and discipline as their reasoning for attending school "D." The school's mission statement specifically discusses a structured environment. Again, character development is a part of their mission and one of the reasons for attending the school.

Across Case Analysis

Findings for mission statements. The individual mission statements for each of the four schools that have fully participated in this case study are found in Appendix G. In the mission statements, there are some commonalities. Citations and direct quotes are not used for these mission statements in order to protect the confidentiality of the schools. Common elements establishing thematic congruencies across all mission statements of the four all-male military boarding school include mention of structure, discipline, character development, and leadership opportunities. These common thematic congruencies are not only within each case study but cross-over to each other as a multiple case methodological congruency.

Likert Scale Exit Survey. The exit survey (Appendix B) provided a dedicated section enabling the parents filling out the survey to provide amplifying information as to why they responded to the scaled items with either a 4 or 5. The Likert Scale ratings provided a solid synopsis of the key parental influencers. Financial concerns were evident and coincide with National Association of Independent Schools April 2009 report, *Parent Views on Independent Schools, Given the Current Economic Situation*. However, it was identified as the top reason for non-return in only one of four schools. The other three did not identify it as one of the top three. Residential/Barracks Life was a significant influencer being sighted as the

number 2 reason for non-return with two of four schools. Academic concerns were identified by only one school as a top three cause for non-return.

Financial Concerns. Financial concerns did come up in the individual comments. For example a parent from School A stated, "Three children with two in public school, and it was hard to finance a private education. Financial alternatives were few…." For School C a parent stated, "We did not have the financial means to continue at <u>any</u> private school." Finally, a parent from School D stated, "I am a single parent, and even with the financial aid, cost of attendance was very expensive. So it was my decision not to have my son return the following year." Finances were in fact identified as a concern even though their scaled importance (see Table 4) did not identify finances as one of the top three influencers. Clearly the economy has affected individual school enrollment at many of the independent school (NAIS, 2009).

Residential (Barracks) Life. Comments regarding *residential/barracks life*, which was one of the top three influencers, included comments such as "Barracks life was not as presented to us prior to enrollment" from School A; "Our student enjoyed the school but did not like living on campus…" from School B; "Too many opportunities to experiment in troublesome activities," "Lack of supervision," "The barracks (residential) life was not what either he or I expected. And I was an alumni" from School C; and "The military lifestyle seemed to involve conflicts between the boys" and "lack of supervision" from School D."

Maturity issues. In analyzing the surveys it should be pointed out that the majority of students who did not return were first year cadets: 5 of 6 for School A, 8

of 10 for School B, 14 of 18 for School C, and 8 of 12 for School D. This equates to 83% for School A, 80% for School B, 77.8% for School C, and 66.7% for School D. A large percentage of the first year student and their parents were negatively influenced, whether the influencer was perceived or real.

Academics. Comments regarding academics included "we were promised that his grades would improve…Grades dropped dramatically" from School A; "During the restructuring of the staff, academics did not ultimately meet my expectations" from School B; "Academically, School C failed to deliver" and "My son needed accommodations for reading and writing and [School D] was unwilling or unable to make those accommodations" from School D. Additional comments are provided in Appendix F.

On one side of the spectrum, the parents complained of too strict or too much emphasis on the military aspect of school and not enough emphasis on the academic aspect. However, their reasons for attending this military school are indicative of a desire for more structure and discipline, which is directly attributable to the military lifestyle of structure, discipline, and routine. That said it was a significant influence in the parent's decision not to return.

Table 4 is provided as a synopsis of what has been previously discussed. The exit survey responses were averaged within each school, and then an average was provided for each key decisional influencer.

Table 4

Survey Results

	School A	School B	School C	School D	Mean
Financial	2.66	1.7	2.28	3.45	2.52
School location	1.17	1.3	1.56	2.0	1.51
Academic concerns	1.67	1.4	2.5	1.82	1.85
Residential life (barracks)	3.83	1.9	2.56	3.00	2.82
Military life style	1.0	1.1	1.39	3.45	1.74
Personality conflicts	2.33	1.3	1.33	2.45	1.52
Student's decision	3.17	2.8	2.44	3.18	2.90
Parent's decision	3.83	3.7	3.67	3.27	3.62
Goals and objectives met	4.17	2.4	3.09	2.44	3.03

In reviewing the "within" case thematic congruencies, there are some thematic congruencies across all the cases. All schools purport that there is a parental desire for structure and discipline for their son. Additionally thematic discussions revolve around character education across each individual case and thus a major aspect of establishing the multiple case study thematic congruencies.

So what are the top reasons for students to not return to the all-male military college preparatory boarding schools? Although parental decisions appear to be the common theme amongst the four schools, the primary influencers for their decisions vary. In reviewing the pre-screening questionnaire the most consistent influencer is

"financial" concerns. This was not in the top three reasons identified by three of the four schools. However residential (barracks/dorm) life was identified by only one school in the pre-survey questionnaire whereas the survey it was a top three item for two of four schools.

Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons for not returning? The most common reason for not returning was of course parental decisions. Goals and objectives was also one of the identifiable influencer.

What are possible improvements that each school may be able to make to improve their retention? These were not identified either within each case study or as a part of the multiple case study. Possible improvements will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Summary

It is clear what parental expectations were as they entered into the school of their choice. In some cases their expectations were not met, which played an important role influencing their decisions to not return. Identifying the highest mean shows parental decision to not return a student as the primary reason for not returning; however, there were specific non-mentioned influencers that drove parents to make their individual decisions. Looking at the means in each category, goals and objectives being met played the most important role in the parental decision, followed by the student's decision and barracks life. Statistically, it appears the student plays a very important role in the decision making process. Their desires, wants, and perceived needs are being heard by their parents. Financial issues and concerns, although not identified as one of the top three, are most certainly strong influencers to

some of the parents who responded to the survey.   Knowing and understanding the

familial environments students come from may enable school leadership to better

understand and possibly anticipate future behaviors.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary discussion of the study through interpretation and ideas based on the findings of the study. This chapter has six sections: (a) a summary of the findings, (b) a discussion of the findings and implications regarding the findings in light of the relevant literature and theory, (c) identification of implications of the findings from either a methodological perspective and/or a practical perspective, (d) limitations of the study, (e) recommendations for future research, and (f) conclusions.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to identify the reasons why survey respondents chose to transfer from their respective all-male military private boarding school to another school, and (b) to identify any commonalities amongst the military schools involved in the study with regards to why students returned to either their previous public or private school. The questions that were the foundation of this qualitative research study were:

- What are the top reasons for students to not return to the all-male military college preparatory boarding schools?

- Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons for not returning?

- What are possible improvements that each school may be able to make to improve their retention?

The researcher used a researcher-developed, peer-evaluated exit survey. It was provided to the parents via mail. These were parents with a child identified as

eligible to return by the administration at one of the four all-male military college preparatory boarding schools that were a part of this study, but who chose not to return the student.

In order to best understand why a parent has chosen not to return a student, the organizational leadership needs to understand why the parent and student chose their school in the first place, which is why a pre-survey questionnaire was provided to each of the administration representatives from each of the schools. Again, all six initial schools contacted participated in a series of pre-survey questions. These questions were specifically regarding pre-enrollment motivations for attendance and another source of information and data to establish and identify a means of comparison. The objective was to enable the organizational leadership of each school to establish the foundation for comparison of their individual process improvement once the reasons were known as to why the students did not return.

Consistently, the top reasons for attending each of the military schools in this study included, in one form or another: (a) the identifiable need for structure and discipline for their sons; (b) the identifiable need for improved academic success, either through smaller classroom sizes or reduced social distractions such as cell phone or social media usage; or (c) more accountability through responsibility and leadership. Although there is not an identifiable frequency of these reasons available specifically for the survey respondents, these specific reasons have consistently been communicated by parents to the admissions offices of all the schools in the study as well as the two that chose not to fully participate. According to author Shane et al. (2008), in their study titled "Military Boarding School Perspectives of Parental

Choice: A Qualitative Inquiry," findings indicated that parents had desired outcomes for their sons including discipline, structure, responsibility, self-efficacy, and college preparation. Shane et al. further discuss why parents choose a military school. Specifically parents are looking for a "moral value system, character development, and an exposure to self-discipline and self governance" (p. 186).

In order for the all-male college preparatory military boarding school to continue well into the future, understanding of why the parents are looking for this type of environment is crucial to their sustainability. Boarding schools are very expensive, plus there can be a stigma related to the possible reasons for parents choosing a military school.

Students in the United States are afforded an opportunity for a public school education, but a public education may not be for everyone. As a society we must be able to provide students with the best possible opportunity for each of them to maximize their own success. There is a perception by some that many of our public schools are not providing everyone the best opportunities for academic success. Options must be available in order to ensure each future generation has opportunities that best fit their learning style while also providing a rigorous academic program. Rumberger wrote the following in his article "Solving Nation's Dropout Crisis:"

> The United States is facing a dropout crisis. Only 76% of public high school students earn a diploma in 4 years of entering the 9th grade, a rate lower than 40 years earlier. The United States ranks 21st among industrialized countries in the proportion of youths who complete high school. (Rumberger, 2011, p. 28)

The military college preparatory boarding school is just one of those options available to our young people today. There are both single-gender as well as co-ed

military schools. There are boarding and there are day schools. The research clearly

shows that for some young men, as well as young women, a single-gender

environment is a key to their individual successes (Gurian, 1999; Gurian & Stevens,

2005; Sax, 2006). In their article, *In Defense of Single-Sex Schools*, authors

Brueningsen and Benedict (2011) state succinctly that

> In single-gender schools, gender roles don't define participation in a particular
> club, sport, or hobby, and most importantly they don't limit or reinforce
> engagement in academic pursuits. Instead boys and girls are more likely to
> choose programs based on their intrinsic appeal. This naturally leads to the
> development of a full range of styles, interests, and abilities that are not driven
> by adolescent cultural imperatives. (Brueningsen & Benedict, 2011, p. 12)

The research also shows that a military educational model is a viable

educational model (Martin, 2010). Empirically there appears to be support for single-

gender educational models.

There are motivational factors that influenced both students and parents to

return to a private boarding school, and more specifically a private all-male military

college preparatory boarding school. In some cases, these factors were similar. Of

interest was the fact that the reasons provided by parents as pre-enrollment

motivations for attendance at these schools were not found to match those in the exit

survey.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is predicated on the research questions:

Research question 1. What are the top reasons for students to not return to the all-

male military college preparatory boarding schools? In looking at the exit survey

results as purported in Table 6, School A parents stated that their goals and objectives

had been met. The parent's decision to not return was clearly the top reason students

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did not return to School B and C. Another exception is School D. School D parents identified two primary factors for students to not return: (a) the military lifestyle, and (b) financial status or need.

The second reason varied from school to school as well. School A results shows the residential or dormitory life was a secondary reason and major influencer, along with parental decision, while School B results show a secondary reason was based on the student's decision. School C identified the secondary reason as residential (barracks) life. School D identified the secondary reason as a parental decision.

The tertiary reasons identified were for School A and School D the student's decision not to return. For School B, the goals and objectives had been met. For School C, academic concerns were mentioned as a third reason. The primary, secondary, and tertiary reasons for not returning were as different as each of the schools. However, when grouping the primary, secondary, and tertiary categories, the top reasons were: (a) parent's decision, (b) goals and objectives met, and (c) student's decision.

As one reviews the averages of each category and sees parental decision or choice as clearly the top reason, the next question that needs to be asked is what is influencing the parent's decision to not return? This was a limitation of the survey used. The parent's decision must have influencers. In order to possibly identify these influencers, it is important to understand thought processes and motivators driven by the triadic reciprocal determinism. The environmental factors such as the academic environment or barracks life as well as athletics interact with personal factors,

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resulting in specific exhibited behaviors. Decisions resulting in specific behavior are directly affected by the subjective interpretation of that person's environment. Certainly the feasibility of conducting parental interviews must be investigated in future studies.

In analyzing each of the schools, parental decision was ranked either number one or number two in all four schools participating in the study. For School A the number one reason was that parents believed their objectives had been met. According to admissions officers' responses about their general enrollment, pre-enrollment motivations for attendance. Their initial objectives included: (a) academic success, (b) increased self-efficacy, and (c) increased self-discipline. However, barracks life was an obvious negative influencer for parents to not have their students return. Life in a boarding school is very different from a private day school. The boarding school dynamic brings hundreds of students together from all over the country and world to live together. Some students are better than others at socialization. Their family backgrounds and their value systems tend to be different. Maturity issues are discussed later in this chapter.

Research question 2. Are there any commonalities amongst the military schools regarding reasons for not returning? The drivers or influencers that appear to guide parental decisions appear to be somewhat different from school to school, yet there are commonalities. Clearly the parental decision not to return is in the top three reasons of each of the schools participating in the study. Financial reasons are also identified as a top three reasons according to the exit survey in only one of the four schools whose parents were surveyed. Goals and objectives being met, along with

student's decisions and barracks life also were indicative of top reasons for not returning. It is not known whether there were other reasons causing the parental decision to either not to return, or other underlying reasons not identifiable with the survey provided. Another key commonality is the large percentage of 1-year attendees that decided not to return. Although this should not be considered a cause for a parental decision to not return, it clearly is important to realize that there are a large number of first year students (relative to the number of respondents per school) that chose not to return. The apparent large number of first year parents seems to suggest a possible lack of familial buy-in to the opportunities available relative to each school's mission and vision.

Research question 3. What are possible improvements that each school may make to improve their retention? Organizational improvement in any business is always paramount for organizational growth and perpetuation. Satisfaction within a given organization is directly proportional to turnover, or in this case positive retention management. As an organization, these schools participating wanted to strategically place themselves in a position to increase their student population. In order to ensure long-term viability, new student enrollment as well as retention must be increased. Many other schooling options are either at no cost or certainly less expensive than a military college preparatory boarding school. Each individual school's leadership must identify the value added of their school and be able to effectively market the value added as well as fulfill that which is identifiable value added. The organizational leadership must then engage in a process improvement method through introspection as well as inspection of the enrollment processes and

procedures. The leadership team must understand their current processes and procedures, and through an effective survey or other form of assessment, in order to properly assess those processes and procedures as well as identifying areas where improvements may be made. The next step would be to implement the new processes and procedures through educating and engaging the entire staff and faculty.

Next, administrators must provide the entire organization with measureable data collection and subsequent defined strategies to address the collected data and information, thus promoting improvement from within. This improvement enables the organization to experience ownership in the improvement process. It may even set the stage for continuous process improvement. This would also be a justification for including the anecdotal evidence below.

Private schools, and even a more finite sample, private military college preparatory boarding schools, are providing a value added from an educational perspective. The all-male military boarding school is selling a unique educational environment that provides (a) structure, routine, discipline; (b) team and leadership building; along with (c) a great academic program. This constitutes whole person development. In reviewing the reasons why parents chose a military school in the first place, the one word descriptors that come out are: structure, discipline, leadership, motivation, accountability, and responsibility. These are common reasons why parents look at the military structured environment. In order to improve, the school's leadership must be willing to admit there is a problem in assisting students in meeting these outcomes. In analyzing retention percentages, some military schools have more of a problem than others.

To help with the answer to the final research question, the following situational scenario is provided as anecdotal information. School A conducted an online satisfaction survey during the spring of 2010, realizing then that the retention for the 2010-2011 might not either be as high as desired or as high as previous years. Not surprisingly, barracks life came up as the primary concern. Secondarily, communication was an issue. This included (a) communication from the school to parents or guardians as well as (b) the lack of a consistent message to students in academics, on the barracks, and on the athletic fields.

As a result of the online survey, School A implemented a theme-based residential life program, providing thematic focus in every walk of life at the school. This program was implemented on barracks, on the athletic fields, and through student advisors. There was an emphasis on communication to parents to include good and bad outcomes regarding their students' progress or lack thereof. Additionally the Athletic Director implemented a Student Captain Program, which supplemented what the students, faculty, and staff did with the residential life program. This was conducted throughout the 2010-2011 school year. As School A entered the new 2011-2012 school year, retention was at 81%. This was a 10% increase in the retention percentage over the 2010-2011 school year. Retention percentages are indirectly proportional to the desire of a parent or student to transfer to another school. Identifying and understanding the reasons why parents bring their son to a military school is absolutely necessary as the educational organization assesses discrepancies among expectations, perceptions, and school reality. If the parents and students are satisfied, the students will not transfer.

Maturity issues. Maturity issues relate to the findings for all three research questions. For the most part, the younger the student, the less mature that student is and the harder it is for the new student to acclimate himself to a military boarding school environment. Maturity is not only an age issue but also relates to the length of time each student had attended his particular school. Experiencing a negative influencer may allow us to conclude that there may be a better need for new student orientation. It also could mean that the student today requires a longer time to acclimate himself to this type of learning environment.

Goals and objectives met. Certainly if, according to parents, their goals and objectives were met then that should be considered a positive aspect for the particular school, as long as the parents honestly believe that and the resultants with their son are tangible. There is a possibility that these responses are biased by social desirability. This is a response that sounds positive toward the school and toward the family. It may cover other reasons such as financial concerns or a student's struggle to fit in, reasons that would not be as positive sounding. The reason that the researcher suspects a bias in this response is that most parents who are satisfied with student progress wish to continue their sons in the school in order to ensure that the progress continues.

Student preference. With today's millennial student, their role in the decision making process cannot and should not be overestimated. This generation is known for having much influence in the decisions of parents (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). The truth is, parents are not being the leaders within the family unit. "Parents in many families today are not stepping up and paving a path of

purpose" (Young, 2004, p. 5). Familial decision making is being abdicated by parents to their children and subsequently giving more an dmore control to their children.

Implications for Practice

Although this study was designed to identify reasons for student end-of-year transfers, it also has aided in revealing the importance of enrollment management in any private school and most certainly the long term viability and sustainability of all-male college preparatory military boarding schools. This study may be considered unique since there is not much existing literature regarding qualitative studies for this particular topic.

Through this research, it is hoped not only all-male college preparatory military boarding schools but all private schools can learn what interests parents to continue their investment in students' private school education. The all-male college preparatory military boarding school provides an educational environment needed by certain student populations in order to believe in their abilities, achieve good grades, and find success in secondary education. With alarming statistics such as reported by Russell Rumberger in his recent article in *Education Week* that only 76% of students in the United States successfully complete high school in 4 years (Rumberger, 2011), having another educational model such as the military educational model provides that venue for students who perform better in a single-gender environment. Private school education helps those students that choose to attend private schools. All male military private boarding schools are just another venue to provide some adolescent males the opportunity for success, and in order to ensure their long term

sustainability, the organizational leadership of these types of schools need to know and understand why students transfer from their schools and to take the corrective action necessary to ensure their own long term viability and sustainability.

In looking at process improvement one may think of the Total Quality Management (TQM) processes of the 1980s or Six Sigma processes of the 1990s and into the new millennium. Six Sigma uses steps such as defining the problem, measuring data collections of critical issues or interests of the customer such as the parent and/or student looking for a new school, followed by analyzing of the data gathered. The final steps in the Six Sigma process are to (a) improve the process through implementation of suggested methodologies and then (b) control by continued statistical analysis of the established parameters specific to this discussion. This constitutes continuous process improvement (CPI) of the enrollment management process that is a quantitative research opportunity.

Another venue that may be used for process improvement is Lean Six Sigma. Individually Lean Six Sigma and Six Sigma are two entirely different processes of process improvements. Six Sigma targets quality and Lean Six Sigma targets efficiencies (Antony, n.d., p. 1). According to authors Ptacek and Motwani in their book *The Lean Six Sigma Pocket Guide XL: Combining the Best of Both Worlds to Eliminate Waste,* the Lean Sigma principles include: (a) continuous improvement in processes and results, (b) focus on customers and value streams, and (c) total employee involvement (Ptacek & Motwani, 2011, p. 8).

As an educational organization reviews these principles, they would see that all three of these principles are essential to positive enrollment management and

ultimately improved yearly retention. Lean Six Sigma process improvement has been

purported to have been used in the customer service and educational realms (Antony,

n.d., p. 1). The private school is a customer service related industry. Private military

college preparatory single gender schools have a value added to the educational

environment. As such, an effective process improvement model such as Lean Six

Sigma could be applicable.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the following:

1. Uncertainty as to whether or not the survey respondents from the different

    schools truthfully completed the survey.

2. International students were not able to be contacted. Consequently, the

    respondents were all from the continental United States.

3. The number of surveys returned was not what the researcher expected or

    anticipated. The data analysis may be skewed due to the low number of

    returned exit surveys.

4. Possible researcher bias due to recent specific school successes. The

    researcher bias within the study was mitigated, however, due to cross

    correlation of multiple data sources (Table 7).

Although researcher bias has been identified as a study limitation, researcher

reflexivity plays a very important role in the qualitative study. Reflexivity, as defined

by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in the Qualitative research Guidelines

Project is "an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge

construction, especially to the effect if the researcher, at every step of the research

process" (Cohen, 2006, p. 1). Additionally, there may be limitations regarding this study relative to the truthfulness of the responses received from the stakeholder. If stakeholders realized the benefit of such a study, their responses would be truthful. However, if the interviewees believed the survey to be a way to get back at the school, so to speak, then the survey validity may be suspect.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is not a lot of research conducted regarding enrollment management, retention, or transfer control at the private junior high or high school level. There is also a lack of qualitative or quantitative research regarding the direct benefits of an all-male college preparatory military boarding school. The article *Exploring the Advantages of Single-Gender Schools* reported that a "4-year study conducted by Stetson University in Florida found that 85% of boys in single-gender classrooms scored proficient on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, compared to 55% of boys in coed classes that taught the same curriculum" (Schulman, 2012, p. 35). Clearly there are benefits and statistical support for single-gender educational models. The benefits are certainly observed by the students themselves and their parents and family members who choose to send their sons to one of the four schools in this study. The success stories, although not quantifiable and in some cases not even tangible, are observable: college acceptance, increased self-esteem, development of a responsible and accountable attitude, team spirit, and leadership development. In an ever changing academic world with many schooling options, those students who need a structured and disciplined environment in a single-gender environment must have an opportunity to succeed. It is, therefore, of paramount importance for these schools

to identify their areas of improvement and put into place a process improvement plan that first listens to the customer and second makes changes as necessary to improve their long term viability and sustainability.

The conclusions and limitations of the study suggest some further areas of research and study:

1. Conduct a more comprehensive qualitative research study to assist in the research and literature enhancement for enrollment management. Developing a more robust and in-depth exit survey may help in this regard. It would also be helpful to improve upon a methodological process that would help in achieving a higher survey return rate. Acquiring requisite parental interviews would also benefit a more robust study. The correlation of the exit survey with the school mission statements and written parental feedback provided in the survey certainly represents a relationship but does not necessarily represent causation.

2. Conduct a quantitative analysis of an effective process improvement model for enrollment management in secondary private schools either using Six Sigma or Lean Six Sigma.

3. Conduct a comprehensive qualitative research study for each type of private school. There are regular boarding schools, military boarding schools, secular day schools, religious day schools, among others.

4. Conduct a qualitative research study comparing the retention in private all-male military boarding schools and private all-male non-military boarding schools.

5. Ascertain the feasibility of conducting parental interviews must be investigated in future studies.

Conclusions

The research conducted shows two specific implications regarding student transfers from all-male college preparatory military boarding schools:

1. Parents are very decisive regarding their expectations and the school's ability to fulfill those expectations. There is immediacy in meeting their expectations as well. The parents need to see measurable results as a validation of the value added they are paying for.

2. Barracks life plays a very important role in transfer rates. Today's adolescent males have a difficult time in acclimatizing to a community setting. A plausible solution is providing better education in the area of community living to the entire student body.

The reasons for students transferring vary from school to school, but the study shows that parents are in fact the decision makers. There are consistently influencers to parental decisions such as ensuring goals and objectives being met, unsatisfactory dorm life, or as indicated by one school, true financial concerns. Anecdotally, the research conducted shows the power of customer satisfaction. If a customer, in the case of private educational organizations, the parent and/or student, is not receiving the value added that is being purchased, he or she will not continue as a customer. In today's economic times, although financial reasons were not overwhelmingly nor consistently identified as causation for change, if the customer is not satisfied, moving to another school at a lower cost, or no cost, is made more attractive.

Combining the results of the survey and adding anecdotal change experienced and conducted at School A shows a possible recipe for effective change. The key, however, is consistent process improvement through various methodologies such as Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma, allowing for constant feedback, follow-up, and follow through. Johnson (2008), in her blog "Continuous Process Improvement in Higher Education," identifies tools that can be used to improve quality. Some of these tools include strategic planning, benchmarking, teamwork, and process improvement. Additionally, it is essential to acquire and receive feedback through exit surveys and follow-up with the inputs and comments from the surveys. This is a five-step continuous improvement process:

1. The organizational leadership team must discuss and ultimately identify improvements that can be made through the review of the customer surveys.

2. Ensure the entire leadership team understands the significance of the required change through communication and explanation.

3. Then communicate these changes to the constituent base (parents and students) showing the school is listening to their issues and concerns.

4. Implement the changes.

5. Reassess on a periodic basis.

This five-step process will aid schools in their process improvement model. It is imperative that each member of the organizational leadership team is onboard with the necessary changes and communicates these to each directorate and direct subordinates. There must be school-wide process improvement in order for the four-step process to work. It is also just as important to communicate the changes to the

customers and thereby manage the change. This may be done electronically or in person. It is recommended to use both and use every plausible means more than once. Communicating with the school's constituent base keeping them knowledgeable and engaged in "their school" is extremely important. This reinforces the value added. Military all-male college preparatory boarding schools are an important educational model to maintain long term viability and sustainability. Today's youth must be provided opportunities to maximize their educational potential. In order to do just that there must be options available. Military schools are not for everyone. Single-gender learning is not for everyone. Private schools are not for everyone. However, they are all viable options for student success.

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APPENDIX A: SCHOOL MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

School "A:"   The mission of A is to assist Cadets in becoming knowledgeable, thinking and responsible citizens of their community, nation and world. Our educational program is based on rigorous instruction in basic skills and in preparation for further study in arts and sciences. To be effective, the educational process must be reinforced by order, structure and discipline, and in an environment where the worth, potential and integrity of the individual is promoted in every area of school life.

We strive to develop our students spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically, as well as intellectually, within a healthy, wholesome environment in which the Christian faith and principles pervade all aspects of the school.

A's vision is to be the top military preparatory school instilling tradition, knowledge and leadership, enabling students to achieve their full potential.

School "B:"   The Mission of B is to prepare ethical young men of character for success in college and in life through the provision of a rigorous academic program, leadership opportunities, competitive athletics, extensive co-curricular activities, and the structure and discipline inherent in a military preparatory school environment.

B will be a premier college-preparatory school that provides its graduates with the personal and intellectual attributes necessary for success in college and in life. The foundation of the School B's experience will be an integrated educational experience that develops the whole person.

School "C:"   C develops disciplined, morally strong, college-ready young men who are prepared for <u>responsible leadership</u>.

C is globally recognized as a premier private school for adolescent men on course to achieve their post-secondary education and career goals. Marine Military Academy provides <u>sound academic preparation</u> so cadets may enter the university or service academy of their choice.

School "D:"   D's structured environment empowers young men to succeed through a program of academic excellence, character development and leadership training.

School "D" develops cadets who:

- ○ Are of sound moral character and self-disciplined to strive for and achieve their goals.
- ○ Are academically prepared to attend college; and
- ○ Are better prepared for life as a result of the Academy's mentoring and focus on academic, physical, and social development.

APPENDIX B: LIKERT SCALE EXIT SURVEY

Serialization:

Demographic Data

Grade of Student (2009/2010 SY): _____How long did your son attend? 1 yr / 2 yrs / 3 yrs

Age (2009/2010 SY): _____Did his Grade Point Average increase while attending? Yes   No

Did you receive any financial aid and/or scholarships?   Yes   No

Ethnic Background: Caucasian   Black   Latino Asian Native American
              Other

I.   Please provide your top three reasons you chose to attend the military high school in the first place:
   a.   _____
   b.   _____
   c.   _____

II.   Please rate the following as to their individual importance relative to you making a decision not to return to your military school.

	Not Applicable	Somewhat Important			Very Important	
1. Financial Concerns	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. School Location	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Academic Concerns	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Residential (Barracks) Life	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Military Life Style	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Personality Conflicts	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. Student's Decision	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Parent's Decision	0	1	2	3	4	5

9. Goals & Objectives Met   0   1   2   3   4   5

III.   If you responded to any of the above with a 4 or a 5, please provide amplifying information as to why below:

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APPENDIX C: SCHOOL "A" RETENTION NUMBERS FROM 2002 TO PRESENT

School Year	Re-enrolled	Eligible to Re-enroll	% Re-enrolled
2002	192	254	75.6
2003	186	259	71.8
2004	155	258	60.1
2005	174	235	74.0
2006	166	240	69.2
2007	176	228	77.2
2008	169	212	79.7
2009	139	179	77.7
2010	108	152	71

APPENDIX D: RISING GRADE LEVEL RETENTION DATA

Retention Data for the 2007–2008 School Year for School A

Rising Grade Level	Eligible		Actual Return		%	
	06/07	09/10	07/08	10/11	07/08	10/11
8	7	13	7	9	100	69.2
9	20	11	8	8	36.37	72.7
10	51	32	38	19	74.5	59.4
11	67	38	51	25	76.1	65.8
12	79	58	67	47	84.5	81.0
Total	224	152	171	108	76.34	70.5

Retention Data for the 2008-2009 School Year for School A

Rising Grade Level	Eligible		Actual Return		%	
	07/08	09/10	08/09	10/11	08/09	10/11
8	12	13	12	9	100	69.2
9	18	11	13	8	72.2	72.7
10	32	32	20	19	62.5	59.4
11	70	38	53	25	75.7	65.8

12	76	58	68	47	89.5	81.0
Total	208	152	166	108	79.8	70.5

Retention Data for the 2009-2010 School Year for School A

Rising Grade Level	Eligible		Actual Return		%	
	08/09	09/10	09/10	10/11	09/10	10/11
8	6	13	4	9	66.67	69.2
9	22	11	14	8	63.6	72.7
10	29	32	21	19	72.4	59.4
11	37	38	28	25	75.68	65.8
12	85	58	72	47	84.7	81.0
Total	177	152	137	108	77.4	70.5

APPENDIX E: COMMENTS FROM LIKERT SCALE EXIT SURVEY

School (Responses with Comments)	Comments to Section III
A (6 of 6)	1. "Three children w/2 in public school, and hard to finance private education. Financial alternatives were few…" 2. Our intentions were to have our son at school A for 4 years and we are a full tuition paying family. We left solely because of our belief that (name omitted) did not provide the proper leadership for our son. He did not lead by example. 3. "Barracks life was not as presented to us prior to enrollment." 4. "Financial concerns: Difficult to pay tuition due to employment change. Academic concerns: We felt that our son would perform better closer to home. Student decision: Our son wanted to return to a regular school. Parent's decision and goals and objectives met: Our son has grown up and learned more responsibility." 5. "We were promised that his grades would improve…Grades dropped dramatically." 6. "Student did not want to pursue a military career."
B (5 of 10)	1. "We were trying to get our son out of his current environment. We had hoped to bring him home after a semester and the five week summer school. We could not afford to keep sending him there for 2 more years." 2. "No issue with the school. School was good for my son." There was a custody change that required resolution. 3. "During the restructuring of the staff, academics did not ultimately meet my expectations." 4. "Our student enjoyed the school but did not like living on campus. If he were a Day Cadet he would have chosen to return, but we felt he

would not have the same end results. The ability to leave campus and have to do his studies on his own time would have been like the same as any other school so we chose not to re-enroll him."

5. We wanted a safe place for our student to enjoy his school year to learn free from the problems at home which were turning into problems for him. When the father left the home and the divorce was final, he wanted to return home and so did I. Enjoyed the school year except for the military part."

C (16 of 18)

1. "We hated the distance (7 hour driving time) – it was additional cost for gas, meals, hotel." If he flew home, there were additional costs incurred as well. Inappropriate language and a lack of supervision during free time over the weekends.

2. "My son lives in Mexico City. I always want to send him only two years, and then come back to study his senior high school. School C is excellent."

3. The barracks (residential) life was not what was expected or desired. "Our child responded quite well to the structure and discipline of the military-type atmosphere."

4. "Student refused to return."

5. "We had to weigh the cost of the school and the success of our child. Our son did not improve academically or in his ability to make good/positive decisions. With the cost of the school at $30,000, there were no noted improvements. There could have been more staff at night to monitor students activities.

6. "Too many opportunities to experiment in troublesome activities. Lack of supervision. Son returned home with a temper."

7. "The barracks (residential) life was not what either he or I expected. And I was an alumni."

8. " My son had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and he still did not acquire good study habits. He did not like being away from home for an extended period of time. The cost relative to grade improvement did not occur."

9. "Our son reached a point where he had gained all he was willing to from the military discipline. We were very pleased with the academics except for a conflict with one teacher. Others were excellent."

10. "We sent our son to get himself back on track. He left as an entitled, self-destructive, angry adolescent, and returned as a kind, more motivated, appreciative young man. Our goals were met. If the school had been close to our home, we would have left him there."

11. "We did not have the financial means to continue at any private school. It was a one shot attempt to change our son. It worked some. We were also not happy that there were no Christian values stressed, only military values."

12. "There is no financial aid available plus other expenses such as travel expenses made it difficult. Student achievement was worse – GPA was worse here than at the public school."

13. "Academically, School C failed to deliver. My son's discipline and physical well-being improved dramatically. This included his self-worth."

14. "Mother was miserable without her son in close proximity. Student and mother wanted to be at home. The barracks (residential) life kept Mom upset."

15. "Our youngest son had brain cancer the whole time our oldest was at military school. We did not send him back when his brother's cancer relapsed so that we could be together as a family."

16. "The only reason we pulled him was because we could afford it."

D (10 of 12)

1. "I am a single parent and even with the financial aid, cost of attendance was very expensive. So it was my decision not to have my son return the following year."

2. "My son needed accommodations for reading and writing and School D was unwilling or unable to make those accommodations. The adult to student supervision ratio on the barracks was not acceptable. Student leaders should not be considered adults."

3. "Distance from home required extensive additional funding – 11 trips back and forth to school. Barracks (Residential) life was not acceptable. Neither we or he wanted to be away from each other."

4. "Two years of military boarding school cost more than my college degree from the late 1970's and early 1980's. Although we saw substantial improvements in our son, we could not afford another year. Our son was anxious to see if he could apply the lessons to the outside world."

5. "He learned that discipline will get him further than he thought and that HE himself is ultimately responsible for his life decisions. He learned to follow good advice and ignore bad, and trust his instincts and morals. His work ethic grew immensely. Things are only as tough as you make them and a good positive attitude will raise your perseverance level quite a bit. He is now thriving in regular school. The positive peer pressure was wonderful and he is now much better at choosing friends. He may go back – he actually likes it, but he missed his friends at home and his family missed him."

6. "He would probably have done well, but he got himself into trouble and had become a part of the juvenile system."

7. "The military lifestyle seemed to involve conflicts between the boys. He wanted to be able to make his own decisions about returning and as his parents, we supported him."

8. "He chose not to do any work at all. He preferred exercise (laps, push-ups, etc.) as a consequence. He was non-compliant and it was too expensive to risk another year with his attitude."

9. This individual parent provided her name and phone number if there were any questions from her four-page discussion regarding the following salient points:

      a. Lack of supervision - excessive unsupervised free time. Her son was able to get off campus.

      b. Social media concerns including the internet and face-book.

        c. The Cadet leadership must be properly trained.

        d. Our son had "a lot of honor from being at school and did not want to leave."

        e. Goals and objectives were academically met during the Junior High years but not when he reached high school.

"When the Cadets were properly supervised by adults the school was more effective."

10. "The student was tired of the military lifestyle." There appeared to be unequal treatment of Cadets. Appeared to be more emphasis on academics than the military when the new president arrived – "very little military tradition."

11. "It is very difficult to pay for private schooling on a fixed income. I felt the military lifestyle would help him to grow and flourish in this world. He did not being told when to get up, study, and go to bed, etc. I felt it was good for him and feel my goals and objectives."

APPENDIX F: EMAIL NOTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION

From: Each Military School
To: Each Military School Participants
CC: flmartin@liberty.edu

Subject: Exit Survey for Educational Research

Mr. and Mrs. Name of Parents,

I hope this e-mail finds you and your family doing well this year. You are being e-mailed because you chose not to return to "name of school" for the 2010/2011 school year.

"Name of the school" has agreed to participate in a study being done by Frank L. Martin III, a Doctoral Student at Liberty University located in Lynchburg, VA. His study is titled *"Exploring Causes of Student Transfer/Dropout Rates as Experienced at Private All-Male Military Boarding Schools."*

The purpose of this study is to identify reasons families do not return to their respective military school. A secondary purpose is to identify any commonalities in the familial reasons from all six participating military schools. Specifically, Frank L. Martin III, hopes to better understand reasons for decreased retention/re-enrollment; and possibly be able to identify ways to enhance future student retention and thus improve overall enrollment management.

In about 2 weeks you will receive a cover letter, an exit survey, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Filling out the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. If you choose to fill out the survey, please return your completed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Mr. Martin will then collate the data received and analyze in an attempt to better understand your reasons for not returning. Again, filling out the survey is completely voluntary and for academic purposes only.

If you have any questions, you may contact Frank Martin or his Chairperson for his dissertation at:

Frank L. Martin III   Dr. Ellen Lowrie Black
flmartin@liberty.edu   elblack@liberty.edu

APPENDIX G: PARENT/GUARDIAN COVER LETTER

Frank L. Martin III
224 Forestroad Drive
Danville, VA 24540
434-432-2585 (W)
434-334-6684 (C)
flmartin@liberty.edu

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am Frank Martin, a Doctoral Student at Liberty University located in Lynchburg, Virginia in the final phases of earning an Educational Doctorate (Ed.D.). Thanks to your school's willingness to facilitate educational research, they have agreed to enable me to conduct this research through a survey to be conducted by families who did not return to their respective military school. A couple of weeks ago you should have received an e-mail providing a brief introduction to myself and my study. You may contact me at any time with any questions you may have. My contact information is noted above. You may also contact Dr. Ellen Black, my Chairperson for my dissertation at (phone number removed). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and your responses to me are for *academic research only* and will remain confidential. In order to ensure confidentiality, no individual names or family names will be used in the study: Nor will any individual school's names be used in the research. Your participation is completely voluntary.

In today's educational environment, there are a number of options available for parents to choose from in order for your son to maximize his full potential. Military school is one option. At some point in your search for the best possible learning environment, you chose [name of school]. However, for reasons unknown, you chose not to return to your respective school.

I have enclosed a survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope for you to fill out and return back to me for my study, entitled IDENTIFYING CAUSES OF STUDENT END OF YEAR TRANSFERS *AS EXPERIENCED AT PRIVATE ALL-MALE MILITARY BOARDING SCHOOLS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY.* The purpose of this study is to identify reasons families do not return to their respective school as well as possibly identify any commonalities in their reasoning. Specifically, I hope to better understand reasons for decreased retention/re-enrollment, and possibly be able to identify ways to enhance student retention and thus improve overall enrollment management.

There are many educational options, including magnet schools, charter schools, public and private independent schools as well as homeschooling and in some rare cases on-line learning. Military private schools are just another educational option. Please take the opportunity now to fill out the enclosed survey. Again, participation in this study is completely voluntary. Sending back the survey indicates your agreement to be a part of this study.

I thank you in advance for taking time to complete the survey. For your information, the research does not pose greater than minimal risk to you as a participant. No activities or requests would require any form of signed consent, even in a non-research context. In order to ensure anonymity, please do not provide any other information other than what is requested on the survey. For your information, a copy of my dissertation will be provided to each of the participating schools. You too may request a copy of the dissertation.

Sincerely,

Frank L. Martin III

Doctor of Education Student

APPENDIX H: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL NOTIFICATION AND AUTHORIZATION

IRB Approval 1066.051711: Exploring Causes of Student Transfer/Dropout Rates as Experienced at Private All-Male Military Boarding Schools

Tuesday, May 17, 2011 11:37 AM

To: M
       Martin, Frank Lake

Cc: M
       Black, Ellen L; IRB, IRB; Garzon, Fernando

Attachments: 📄Annual Review Form.doc (31 KB)[Open as We

Good Morning Frank,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. Attached you'll find the forms for those cases.

One item that needs to be added to your informed consent letters is contact information for the Liberty IRB (irb@liberty.edu). This would be placed with your and your chair's information on the letters. While this did not hold your approval up, please send your revised letters to us once this change has been made.
Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project. We will be glad to send you a written memo from the Liberty IRB, as needed, upon request.

Sincerely,
Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
IRB Chair, Associate Professor
Center for Counseling & Family Studies

(434) 592-5054

40 Years of Training Champions for Christ: 1971-2011