

A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHY SUPERIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES DO NOT  
CONTINUE INTO COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

by

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## INTRODUCTION

### Significance and Purpose of the Study

While educational guidance should be a continuous process, its service is greatest at the important transitional points. One point of choice occurs when a child leaves elementary school. A second period of choice occurs at the beginning of or during the high school career of the individual. Another important time of decision occurs at the conclusion of high school. A senior graduating from high school can enter college, find employment, enter some noncollegiate school such as a business or trade school, begin nurses' training, enter military service, or undertake some other course of activity. It is this third choice point, occurring immediately after high school, that is the main concern of this study.

No general figures are available reporting what high school graduates in the United States do after graduation. Figures are available over the past several years for certain samples of high school graduates, however, and these provide a general picture, although not a complete one. Probably one of the most ambitious studies in this area was made in Minnesota and reported by Berdie (4) in After High School—What?

Berdie (4, p. 57) surveyed the Minnesota high school seniors during the 1949-50 school year, asking for information on their plans following graduation. He found that 35 percent of all high school seniors in Minnesota planned to attend college. A follow-up study in the fall, on the basis of a sample of the graduating group, revealed that the number of students who actually attended college was almost exactly equal to the number who planned to attend.

However, Berdie found that for every two exceptionally well-qualified students who were planning to attend Minnesota colleges, there was one high school graduate equally well-qualified who was not planning to continue his education.

There is great concern of many educators with young people who have demonstrated superior ability in high school but who do not continue their education beyond that level. As reported in a study by Daughtry ( 8, p. 29 ) the educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association concluded recently:

There is a rich reservoir of ability in youth which has not been adequately utilized at the college level. As has been said, virtually all persons who now go beyond the twelfth grade are qualified for post-high school study, although not always for the extended professional programs to which they aspire. Yet a striking loss of talent occurs before and at the point of high school graduation; significant numbers of youth who are fully able to meet present standards of admission do not enroll in college.

A recent study which emphasized the fact that many high school graduates who seem to be superior in ability are not going to college was made in 1954-55 by Charles C. Cole Jr. (6), for the National Science Foundation. Cole found considerable loss of talent between high school graduation and enrollment in college. He reported:

It would appear that in 1955 there are between 60,000 and 100,000 high school graduates of college ability who failed to enroll in college for financial reasons. There appears to be another group of approximately 100,000 in number who have high ability but who lack any interest in a higher degree.

Daughtry (7, p. 11) has indicated the need for identifying superior high school graduates. He states:

One reason for identifying superior high school graduates, and encouraging them to go to college, is the current and anticipated demand for trained manpower. A second reason for the deep interest in this whole area is the possibility that there will be a need to establish criteria for selection of students, should higher education in general find it necessary to adopt selective admission.

This is a course which has been suggested by some educators, and one which is in practice in some institutions already. Generally speaking, however, any high school graduate who wants to attend college or university can gain admittance somewhere. Whether or not this will continue to be true is a question yet to be answered.

The question of why, why do some high school students go on to college while others, equally qualified, drop out? And what factors determine who goes to college is of course much more complex than determining how many of a given group go to college and how many get a job!

Hollinshead, in Who Should Go To College In America, as reported by Berdie (4, p. 13), presented reasons for attending college:

But this one-third who went to college is by no means a random group who just happened to go. We can identify the group in several ways. Those of high ability and good academic record were more apt to go than their less able classmates. Those whose parents had high incomes or were in the professional classes were more apt to go than those who had lower incomes or lower social status. Girls went less frequently than boys, even though their abilities were as high or higher. Urban young people were more apt to go than rural young people. Those who were near a college were more apt to go than those farther away. And those with a strong drive for a vocation which required college training were more apt to go than those of equal status and no strong vocational interest.

Berdie (4, p.13) in reference to Hollinshead's statement above, states:

This does not imply that these are the only or even the most important problems. But it cannot be denied that college attendance is extremely important, both from the standpoint of society and from the standpoint of many millions of individual students.

Behind all efforts to encourage seemingly superior students to go to college is the implication that they will profit individually from college attendance and that they will become more productive and useful citizens. This implication raises questions not within the scope of this study, which assumes that young people who seem to be superior in ability should be encouraged to continue their education. It is further assumed that a situation wherein a large percentage of able young people are found to be going to college is a desirable one .

It was a purpose of this study to gather information about the post-graduation activities of those individuals who graduated from Riley and Jackson counties in Kansas in 1959 and who seemed to be superior in ability, but did not go to college. A further purpose was to answer the question why, why the graduates who seemed to be superior in ability did not go on to college?

#### Procedures

The first phase of the study consisted of surveying the more recent studies which have been made concerning the reasons why capable high school graduates do not go to college. This procedure was carried out by investigating the following literature:

1. Education Index
2. Encyclopedia of Educational Research
3. Personnel and Guidance Journal
4. Psychological Abstracts
5. Reader's Guide
6. Review of Educational Research, April 1960
7. Vocational Guidance Quarterly



The literature which is acknowledged in the references seemed to be of most help in relation to this study.

The second phase of the study consisted of gathering information from the principals and guidance workers of the 14 high schools in Riley and Jackson counties which were in operation during the 1958-59 school year. Detailed information on Riley and Jackson county high schools and their graduates is contained in Tables 1 and 2.

The third phase of the study consisted of gathering information directly from graduates from Riley and Jackson counties who ranked in the upper one-fourth of their graduating class scholastically, but did not go to college.

Throughout the remainder of this report, the word "college" will be used in a general sense to include universities, four-year colleges and two-year colleges.

The phrases "the upper one-fourth" and "superior" refer to the group which as nearly as possible represents the upper quarter of academic talent, from the point of view of rank in class based upon the student's grades in courses taken while in high school.

The questionnaire could hardly be a sufficiently reliable or exact instrument for such an investigation. The better chance to obtain the truth seemed to lie in the study of individual cases through face-to-face interviews; information concerning the family, home, and job situations in each case; and study of high school records and other pertinent evidence.

During the period between April and June, 1960, the writer interviewed all except three of the 1959 graduates of Riley and Jackson counties who ranked in the upper one-fourth of their graduating class scholastically. Most of them were visited in their homes, but a few were met at their places of work.

The interviewer introduced himself by name and identified himself with Kansas State University. A letter of introduction was shown to most principals and a few of the graduates.

The interviewer introducing himself said: "I have been working on a survey of the 1959 graduating classes of Riley and Jackson counties to determine why some of you with good records have not gone to college. Would you be willing to answer a few questions about your reasons for not going?"

Consent was readily given in every instance. The writer felt that the conversations were friendly and that his questions were answered frankly and without reservations.

The main purpose of the interview was to attempt to find the reasons why the graduate had not gone to college. The interview was built around a schedule consisting of such questions as: What is your present occupation? What is your parent's occupation? Do you have older brothers or sisters who attended college? What course of study did you take while in high school? What was your attitude toward attending college, while in high school? What were your parent's attitudes toward your attending college and toward your present occupation? What were your reasons for not attending college? These questions were asked of the graduates for the purpose of drawing from the graduate the "true" reasons for not attending college.

An interview lasted an estimated ten to fifteen minutes. Each of the responses, together with all other information concerning the graduate, was taken into consideration in the compilation of the summary, which was written shortly after the interview had ended. That the making of such a summary was a somewhat subjective process cannot be denied. It involved the thoughtful weighing of the evidence in each case and the establishment of suitable categories.



Some of the factors considered to affect the high school student's decision which will be presented in this study are these: the student's achievement and ability, financial resources, family background and father's occupation, the student's occupation, geographic location of high schools and institutions of higher learning and motivation.

## FINDINGS AND A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Riley and Jackson County Graduates

During the 1958-59 school year there were five high schools in Riley County and nine high schools in Jackson County accredited by the State Department of Public Instruction. These fourteen high schools were visited by the writer during the months of March and April, 1960. Information for one phase of the study was obtained from the principal or guidance worker at the school, the results of which will be found in Tables 1 and 2.

### Achievement and Ability

There seems to be little doubt concerning the importance of ability as a factor in determining whether or not high school graduates go to college. Whether "ability" is measured by academic achievement or by test results, many studies have shown that the superior graduates go to college in larger numbers than do their classmates, according to Daughtry (7, p. 14). Wolfle (27, p. 149) found that 53 percent of the high school graduates who rank in the upper one-fifth of their classes continue their education, while only 17 percent of those who rank in the lower one-fifth continue.

Berdie (4, p. 15) found that high school achievement, as shown by grades in high school, is significantly related to college aptitude. Correlations

between high school grades and college aptitude test scores are in the range of about .50 . As one would expect, grades in high school bear a strong relationship to college attendance; in fact, a survey of the available data indicates that high school grades are perhaps more closely related to college attendance than are college aptitude test scores.

The American Council on Education publication On Getting Into College (21) reported that high school achievement is the second most important factor in determining college attendance, family background having been found to be the most important factor. Of high school graduates in the upper quintile of their class, 59 percent applied for admission to college, whereas of the students in the lowest quintile, only 17 percent applied for admission.

Keller (15), in his study of Minnesota high school graduates of 1945, found that of students in the upper ten percent of their high school class, 52 percent were in college, of students in the upper thirty percent of their high school class, 41 percent were in college, and of students in the lower seventy percent, 16 percent were in college.

Morehead (20), in his study of Arkansas high school graduates of 1949, found that 54 percent of the students who were in the upper one quarter of their high school classes on the basis of college aptitude test scores were in college, 57 percent of the upper one-tenth were in college, and 14 percent of the lower one quarter were in college.

There were 345 graduates in Riley and Jackson counties in 1959. Sixty-five or 75 percent of the top one-fourth went to college the first year. The remaining 22 or 25 percent did not go to college the first year; of these 22, nineteen were girls and three were boys.

There was a total of 223 graduates in the five schools of Riley county, with an average graduating class of 44.6. Forty-seven or 84 percent of the top one-fourth went to college the first year. Nine or 16 percent of the top one-fourth did not go to college the first year. It is interesting to note that by omitting Manhattan with a total of 160 graduates, the average graduating class of Riley county would be only 15.6.

There was a total of 122 graduates in the nine schools of Jackson county, with an average graduating class of 13.5. Nineteen or 59 percent of the top one-fourth went to college the first year.

Table 1. Summary of the number of Riley county high school graduates of 1959.

High School	No. of Graduates	No. in top one-fourth	No. of top one- fourth in college	No. of top one- fourth not in college
Manhattan	160	40	39	1
Luckey High	22	5	5	0
Blue Valley	22	6	3	3
Riley & Keets	12	3	0	3
Leonardville	7	2	0	2
Totals:	223	56	47 (84%)	9 (16%)

Table 2. Summary of the number of Jackson county high school graduates of 1959.

High School	No. of Graduates	No. in top one-fourth	No. of top one-fourth in college	No. of top one-fourth not in college
Holton	45	11	4	7
Netawaka	14	4	4	0
Whiting	11	3	2	1
Hoyt	10	3	3	0
Mayetta	10	3	3	0
Delia	9	2	0	2
Denison	9	2	1	1
Soldier	7	2	2	0
Circleville	7	2	0	2
Totals:	122	32	19 (59%)	13 (41%)

Thirteen or 41 percent of the graduates in the top one-fourth of their graduating class did not go to college the first year after graduation. By omitting Holton with a total of 45 graduates, the average graduating class of Jackson county would be only 9.6.

Berdie (4, p. 15) states, "In general it is quite evident that the student who is a good student in high school is much more likely to attend college than is the student who has not achieved well in high school."

The figures presented in Tables 1 and 2 make it evident that in some high schools all graduates in the top one-fourth of the graduating class go on to college while in other high schools none of the graduates in the top one-fourth go on to college.

### Financial Resources

According to Berdie (4, p.16) lack of money has been regarded by many people as the primary reason for young people of high ability failing to attend colleges. The studies that have been reported indicate that students with money more frequently attend college than students without money. Many students without financial resources enter college, but most college students tend to come from economically relatively stable homes.

Typical of the studies which stress the viewpoint that the most important barrier to higher education for more American youth is a financial one is that of Helen E. Goetsch in 1937 and 1938. Goetsch (10, p.27) found: "The most common reasons reported for not being a regular college student were economic." Goetsch (12, p. 32) concluded that "college attendance for bright boys and girls in Milwaukee is largely dependent on the economic status of their parents."

Barber (2, p.95) in a study of high-ability high school graduates in Pennsylvania in 1949, found that 34 percent of the 111 not in college gave as the reason lack of money.

Keller (15), in his study of Minnesota high school graduates of 1945, reported: "In spite of the improved economic condition of 1945, lack of family finances was the reason given most often for the failure of these high-ability students to go to college—accounting for almost three-tenths of this group." Commissioner of Education McGrath (18), in 1950 wrote:

Since low parental income is the principal deterrent to college attendance, the key to the matter, as far as potential students are concerned, is some plan of providing financial assistance adequate to remove this handicap.

According to Little (16, p. 68) lack of financial means is a significant and deciding factor among graduates who wanted to but did not attend college; however,

sizable numbers who reported being able to finance a college education were not making plans to attend. This was true even among those who had superior high school achievement records.

Gallagher (10) estimated in 1950 that probably one half of youths with ability and ambition for college are blocked because of low parental income and inadequate existing money aids to students.

Goetsch (11) found that of the high-ability students she studied who were not in college 64 percent said they were not in college because of lack of money. She found that of the students coming from families in the top financial brackets, 100 percent were in college, whereas of the students coming from the lowest financial brackets, only 20 percent were in college.

Thus, according to Berdie (4, p. 18) and others ample evidence exists that many students fail to go to college because they lack funds, but additional evidence suggests that lack of funds in and of itself is not a sufficient reason for not going to college and that the relationship between financial resources and college attendance is not a complete one.

The superior graduates of Riley and Jackson counties were asked: What are your reasons for not attending college? The responses to this question were as follows: Financial or economic difficulties; interest in their chosen occupation; marriage; government service. Financial or economic factors were mentioned most frequently by the graduates of Riley and Jackson counties as being the most important reason for not attending college. Interest in their chosen occupation was the second most frequently mentioned reason for not attending college.



### Family Background and Father's Occupation

Closely allied to the economic factor, and perhaps inseparable from it, is the factor which may be described as parental occupation or family background. The question, "What is your parent's occupation?" was asked the 1959 graduates of Riley and Jackson counties who seemed to be superior in ability and did not go to college. It was found that farming and managerial or professional were the principal occupations mentioned.

When asked their reasons for not attending college, more Riley and Jackson county graduates whose parents were farmers indicated financial difficulties than did graduates whose parents were in managerial or professional occupations.

Daughtry (7, p. 17) states:

Many studies show that children whose parents are in professional or managerial occupations tend to go to college in greater number than do children whose parents are farmers, laborers, and so on. Is this because of family background, or is it because the parents in the former group usually are in a higher income bracket?

According to Berdie (4, p. 18) the probability that a farmer's child with high scholastic ability will attend college was quite low in comparison with the probability for able graduates in other occupational groups. The farmer's child in the upper thirty percent of his class had one chance in four of attending college; the chances were only one in three for those in the highest tenth.

Keller (15) in his study of 1945 Minnesota high school graduates found:

Almost two women in every three whose fathers were professional men had enrolled in a college or university upon graduation from high school. At the lower end of the occupational scale, on the other hand, for ever daughter of an unskilled laborer who was in college during 1945-46, fifteen had not enrolled.

Berdie (4, p.19) states, "Thus, there is a marked tendency for children of fathers high on the occupational ladder to attend college to a far greater extent than do the children of fathers in other occupations."

Following is a table indicating the number of parents of the superior graduates engaged in each occupation:

Table 3. Summary of the occupations engaged in by parents of the superior 1959 Riley and Jackson county graduates who did not go on to college.

Parent's Occupation	Number of Parents in each occupation
Farmer	9
Professional or Managerial	6
Other	1
Not Known	6
Total:	22

#### Occupation of Graduates

Most of the Riley and Jackson county graduates were visited at their place of employment or their living quarters away from home and therefore the writer was unable to observe the home surroundings of the individuals.

Most graduates found employment in the larger towns of Kansas which were near their homes. There seemed to be little opportunity or holding power in the towns from which they were graduated.

The superior graduates were asked: "What is your occupation?" Although the graduate's occupation was known or observed by the writer, the question concerning the occupation was asked more for the purpose of establishing rapport and

getting the graduate to talk about himself. Following is a table indicating the number of graduates engaged in each occupation:

Table 4. Summary of the occupations engaged in by the superior 1959 Riley and Jackson county graduates who did not go on to college.

Graduate's Occupation	Number of Graduates in each occupation
Nurse	6
Business school or clerical	10
Labor	1
Armed Service	2
Housewife	2
Unknown	1
Total:	22

Business school and clerical work gained the largest number of 1959 graduates from Riley and Jackson counties who seemed to be "superior" in ability. In general, the graduates indicated they had interest in clerical work and when asked why they did not attend college, they reported that business school seemed to be a faster means of being placed on the job. The graduates in business school or clerical work reported taking a more general course with an emphasis on business while in high school.

The second largest number of graduates chose the field of nursing. When asked their reasons for not going to college, they indicated an interest in nursing. However, another important reason seemed to be financial difficulties. The course of study in high school may indicate the interest in nursing being formed, because most of the nurses had taken science courses while in high school.

The superior graduates of Riley and Jackson counties were asked: "What course of study did you take in high school?" The writer thought there may be some relation between the graduates' course of study in high school and his choice of occupation. It was found that most graduates followed a general course of study while in high school. The course of study most frequently mentioned was a general course. The second most frequently mentioned course was business.

It may be suggested that of the graduates interviewed, fourteen or 64 percent attended small high schools with an average graduating class of 14.5. Therefore, it is highly probable that the graduate had little choice as to the course of study he might pursue.

#### Geographic Location of Institutions of Higher Education

To what extent do geographic barriers stand in the way of college attendance? Reeves (23) stated: "The distance that a youth lives from college was found to be an important factor in determining whether or not he will continue his education beyond the high school." According to Reeves (23) the percentage of youth of college age attending college is between two and three times as large in communities where colleges are located as in communities without colleges. It does not appear to be possible to completely separate the effects of economic and geographic barriers to higher education on the basis of data now available. However, generally speaking, the answer is that geographic barriers do prevent large numbers of students from securing higher education.

Anderson and Berning (1) in 1938 found:

A significantly higher percentage...of graduates who lived within a radius of ten miles from a college were in school and fewer were at work. It seemed to make a difference whether a college was located in a graduate's backyard, but otherwise the location of a college was of little significance in affecting college attendance.

Little (16) found that small high schools yielded smaller percentages of college-going graduates than large high schools, but when occupational and educational backgrounds of the parents, and the location of colleges were considered, the difference in size of school did not appear to be significant.

Berdie (4, p.59) found that "where a person lives has...a direct relationship to his chances for attending college."

According to Wolfe (27, p. 243) geographic factors are sometimes handicaps. Farm children are less likely to get to college than are city children. Those to whom college is something remote and far away are less likely than those who grow up in the shadow of a college to be financially able to attend and to have the wish to do so.

Eighty-four percent of the top one-fourth of the 1959 Riley county graduates attended college the first year after graduation. The writer found that ninety-eight percent of the superior 1959 graduates of the Manhattan high schools attended college the first year after their graduation. Only fifty-nine percent of the top one-fourth of the 1959 Jackson county graduates attended college the first year after graduation.

Concerning the 1959 superior graduates, the writer found that a greater percent of graduates from Riley county go to college the first year after graduation than do superior Jackson county graduates. The high percentage of the superior college-going graduates from Riley county and the Manhattan high schools may be partially explained by the fact that Kansas State University is located in Manhattan.

### Motivation and Future Plans

Little (16, p. 68) concluded:

Parents were credited by the graduates with stronger influence than teachers or counselors on their plans beyond high school. Teachers were credited with stronger influence by college-going graduates than by those getting jobs or attending other types of schools. Graduates who were not going to college reported much less frequently than college-going graduates that their parents wanted them to attend college. Many reported an attitude of "don't care." Practically all parents of college-going youth wanted them to go. Very few parents were reported as opposing college attendance.

The superior graduates of Riley and Jackson counties were asked: "What were your parent's attitudes toward your attending college?" It was found that in 100 percent of the instances the parent's feelings were positive toward college but the parents seemed to have been saying: "We want you to follow the vocation with which you will be most satisfied."

Berdie (4, pp.143-44) concluded that lack of money was not the only important factor in determining whether or not high-ability students planned on attending college. He referred to a "substantial number of high-ability youngsters who, as they perceived their situations, could afford to go to college and yet decided not to attend."

Havinghurst (13, p. 161) stated that financial barriers are the principal reasons for not going on to college in the case of about a third of superior youth who do not go, while the other two-thirds lack sufficient motivation to go.

There are other factors which enter into each individual decision reached by a high school graduate concerning further education. Wolfile (27, p. 156) has said that "desire for college training" is perhaps the most important of all, since it "has no effective substitute."



Little (16) found that the great majority of the graduates were planning to do what their friends were doing. He found this influence was strong regardless of the graduate, but strongest among the college-going graduates.

It seemed evident from information gathered that there was no trend for the 1959 Riley and Jackson county graduates who seemed to be superior in ability to be influenced by older brothers or sisters or close friends in their choice of vocation.

Hollinshead (14, p.42) stated that "motivation, or lack of it, has more to do with college attendance or non-attendance than any other single factor."

McGuire (19) suggested that these factors are important in considering the motivation of high school pupils for college: aspiration level, personal attributes, social techniques, value attitudes, status anxiety, emotional approach to problems, and compensatory behavior.

It was the writer's impression from the interviews that interest in attending college was high while the graduates were in high school. The decision, as to which vocation to follow, seemed to have been reached at the last of the senior year in high school.

It is interesting to note that about forty percent of the superior Riley and Jackson county graduates who did not go on to college mentioned they were planning to go to college while in high school but decided against it because of financial reasons.

Several girls who were either enrolled in business school or completed the business course indicated they would have liked to go to college but their interests were in business and clerical work. Their feeling was that business school could "offer so much more in a shorter length of time" than could college.

Future plans of the superior Riley and Jackson county graduates were indicated as follows: Three graduates indicated they planned to continue their education; four graduates planned to continue their present occupation. The other graduates were uncertain as to their future plans.

Keller (15), in his study of 1946 Minnesota graduates, found that lack of interest in school was given as a reason by one out of sixteen high-ability students who were not in college.

In no instance did the Riley and Jackson county graduates seem disappointed with their choice of occupation.

Barber (2) reported that of 111 high-ability high school pupils not in college (students in Pennsylvania) twenty percent were not in college because they lacked a serious purpose, and thirteen percent were not in college because they preferred to go to work.

Goetsch (11) found that plans for marriage and related attitudes interfered with college to a slight extent, preventing one percent of the boys and five percent of the girls from seriously considering college.

In a study of the Kansas high school graduates of 1955, Daughtry (7, p. 47) asked principals to state a reason for each valedictorian and salutatorian who did not continue his education. It was found that almost one-third of the valedictorians and salutatorians did not go to college because they married soon after graduation from high school, or planned to be married in the near future.

Two superior graduates from Riley and Jackson county high schools were married, when interviewed, and only one graduate indicated plans for marriage in the near future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The basic value of this study is to be found in the descriptive reporting of what actually happened to the 1959 graduates of Riley and Jackson counties and in the comparison of these activities with other studies reported. In order to reveal trends which may result in definite conclusions concerning what is happening and what will happen to graduates of the counties of Kansas as well as graduates of the United States, continuing study over a period of several years and covering a more representative area will be necessary.

Following are the conclusions of this report:

1. There is a lack of data concerning what happens to young people after their graduation from the high schools of Kansas, and in the United States in general. Objective studies to determine what happens to secondary school graduates have been relatively few and, for the most part, localized.
2. In general it is evident that the student who is a good student in high school is much more likely to attend college than is the student who has not achieved well in high school.
3. More 1959 graduates of Riley and Jackson counties who seemed to be superior in ability went to college than entered any other activity in the months following their graduation. About 75 percent of the "superior" graduates went to college in 1959.
4. A greater percent of 1959 Riley county graduates who were in the top one-fourth of their class went to college than did similar Jackson county graduates in the months following their graduation.
5. Family background and occupation of fathers are closely related factors determining which graduates go to college. Graduates of parents in managerial or professional occupations attend college to a greater extent than do graduates

of parents in other occupations. More Riley and Jackson county graduates whose parents were farmers indicated financial difficulties than did graduates whose parents were in managerial or professional occupations.

6. Lack of financial backing is a major barrier to college attendance for Riley and Jackson county graduates who seemed to be superior in ability. Lack of finances was the reason given for more "superior" graduates not attending college than any other factor.

7. More graduates attended business school or were employed in clerical work than any other activity in the months following graduation from high school.

8. The course of study taken in high school did not seem to be significant as to evidence of the graduate's vocational planning.

9. Most graduates indicated interest in college while in high school but because of financial factors or change of interest, decided upon other vocations. In general, the parents of the graduate were in favor of the graduate's decision as to his choice of vocation.

10. There seemed to be no indication that the graduate's choice of a certain vocation was influenced by older siblings or close friends.

11. The geographic location of the units of higher learning seemed to make a significant difference as to the number of superior graduates attending college. Nearly 100 percent of the superior 1959 graduates of the Manhattan high schools attended college the first year after graduation.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The forces influencing the decisions of the high school graduates are complex and present a puzzle of causal relationships. Whether or not a high school graduate attends college depends in large part upon the home from which he comes. Children learn from their parent's attitudes which may be determining factors as to whether they want to attend college. If more qualified high school graduates are to attend college, any program of action must take into consideration the influence exerted by the family.

Superior students should be identified early in school so that each student may become more aware of his own potentials and may become better able to make mature choices and adjustments in the light of the best evidence that can be made available to him. The specific guidance services, especially those which are educational and vocational in nature, may then be used to the greatest advantage so that the individual may bring a maximum of satisfaction to himself in terms of his own goals and be of service to society.

As a result of the findings of this study and the related literature, the following recommendations are made:

1. A continuing study of the post-graduation activities of the high school seniors of Riley and Jackson counties should be carried on. Information gathered over a period of years would establish trends which should be more meaningful than the data from a single study.

2. If one is dealing with pupils in the eighth or ninth grade, the most important task is to identify those who should be encouraged to go to college. With pupils in the middle of their high school years, indoctrination to increase their motivation for going to college becomes a second important factor. Financial assistance is probably the most important factor in dealing with high

school graduates or pupils in their last year of high school. If informed of their child's high ability and of his potential opportunities in the fields which require higher education, some parents would add their encouragement to that of the teacher and thus increase the likelihood that the pupil would enter college.

3. Colleges and universities should develop better programs to aid the high schools in presenting objectively to their students the nature, functions, and especially the benefits of higher education so that a larger percentage of the graduates might be better informed and more motivated toward attending college.

4. Financial aid for superior students should be expanded. Studies should be made to determine the best means of supplying funds for financial aid to college students and to determine the type of aid for which these funds can be best used to stimulate college attendance among high school graduates who have ability to do college work, but who lack financial backing.

5. College admission officers, high school principals, teachers, and guidance counselors should develop and utilize improved techniques to stimulate college enrollment among high school graduates.

6. Contact should be maintained with the many capable high school graduates who do not enroll in college the first year after their graduation from high school. Many of them have tentative plans to continue their education, but they may need encouragement in carrying out those plans.

It is not to be expected that every young person who demonstrates superior ability should or will go to college, but it is evident that in Riley and Jackson counties, at least, the potential supply of college-caliber students is not being exhausted.



Who will go to college in the future depends upon the interest and the efforts of the colleges and universities, the secondary schools, the parents, and all who work with youth, in stimulating prospective high school graduates with college ability to develop their potential and better themselves and society by continuing their education in colleges and universities.

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHY SUPERIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES DO NOT  
CONTINUE INTO COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

by

ROBERT CHARLES DOWNING

B. S., Kansas State University, 1956

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1961



The purpose of this study was to gather information about the postgraduation activities of those individuals who were graduated in the top fourth of their 1959 high school classes in Riley and Jackson counties in Kansas, but did not go to college. A further purpose was to answer the question why, why these superior graduates did not go on to college?

The first phase of the study consisted of surveying the more recent studies which had been made concerning the reasons why capable high school graduates did not go to college.

The second phase of the study consisted of gathering information concerning their 1959 graduates from the principals and guidance workers of the fourteen high schools in Riley and Jackson counties.

The third phase of the study consisted of gathering information directly from graduates from Riley and Jackson counties who ranked in the upper one-fourth of their graduating class scholastically, but did not go to college.

During the 1958-59 school year there were five high schools in Riley county and nine high schools in Jackson county accredited by the State Department of Public Instruction.

There were 345 graduates in Riley and Jackson counties in 1959. Sixty-five or 75 percent of the top one-fourth went to college the first year. The remaining 22, 25 percent, did not go to college the first year; of these 22, nineteen were girls and three were boys.

Eighty-four percent of the top one-fourth of the 1959 Riley county graduates attended college the first year after graduation. Only fifty-nine percent of the top one-fourth of the 1959 Jackson county graduates attended college the first year after graduation.

Financial or economic factors was mentioned most frequently by the superior graduates of Riley and Jackson counties as being the most important reason for not attending college.

It was found that farming and managerial or professional were the principal occupations engaged in by parents of the superior 1959 Riley and Jackson county graduates.

More Riley and Jackson county graduates whose parents were farmers indicated financial difficulties than did graduates whose parents were in managerial or professional occupations.

Most graduates found employment in the larger towns of Kansas which were near their homes.

Business school and clerical work gained the largest number of 1959 superior graduates from Riley and Jackson counties. The second largest number of graduates chose the field of nursing.

It was found that most graduates followed a general course of study while in high school.

The superior graduates of Riley and Jackson counties indicated their parent's attitudes as being positive toward their children's choice of attending college.

It seemed evident that there was no trend for the superior 1959 Riley and Jackson county graduates to be influenced by older brothers or sisters or close friends in their choice of vocation.

About forty percent of the superior Riley and Jackson county graduates, who did not go to college, mentioned they were planning to go to college while in high school but decided against it because of financial reasons.

The basic value of this study is to be found in the descriptive reporting of what actually happened to the 1959 graduates of Riley and Jackson counties and in the comparison of these activities with other studies reported.

It is not to be expected that every young person who demonstrates superior ability should or will go to college, but it is evident that in Riley and Jackson counties, at least, the potential supply of college-caliber students is not being exhausted.

As a result of the findings of this study and the related literature, the following outstanding recommendations seem significant:

1. The superior student should be identified in the early years of school.
2. The superior student should be motivated toward education past high school.
3. Financial aid for superior students should be expanded.

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