

MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS AS  
PERCEIVED BY PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND DROPOUTS

by

RUTH McNEAL WOODARD

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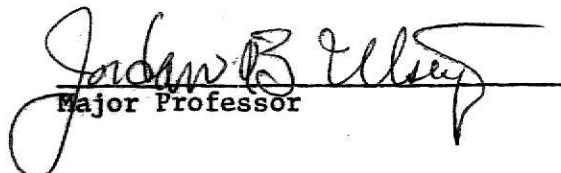
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Among the many problems confronting the public high schools of America is the very serious one of determining underlying causes of dropouts. It is not a new problem. Its solution will not be based on some magic formula. It will require continuous and vigorous study and adaptations to better ways of identifying potential dropouts.

Every incompetent citizen is a potential menace to the freedom of all, and the dropout, under present circumstances, may well become the "incompetent citizen." The student who drops out of school, for whatever reason, has little opportunity in a society that demands specialized skills for most of its jobs. It is evident that the dropout today is much more handicapped than the dropout a decade ago.

Our efforts to dramatize increased school enrollment and to take pride in the fact that education is being brought to many more millions of youth do not eliminate the dropout problem. The increase in enrollment is not great or significant enough to hide the fact that the holding power of the high school has not really changed. In fact, the picture is not encouraging.

There is a definite loss to society when a young person drops out of school, for whatever reason, and he fails to realize his highest potential. This is especially true of the academically gifted who drop out of school and thus deprive themselves and society of their possible

contributions. The savings in human resources, to say nothing of self-development and self-fulfillment on the part of the dropout, are sufficient rewards for attempting to solve the problem.

Too often teachers know very little about the youth who passes through school from one grade to another. Moreover, parents may also fail to really know or understand their child's aspirations and fears. Consequently, early trouble signs go unrecognized and maladjustment often becomes a cumulative process which manifest itself into dropping out of schools when the youth becomes 16 years of age. All youth do not exhibit maladjustment by "making trouble." There should be continuous efforts to identify those students who do not express their maladjustments in an overt manner.

It is only through continuous efforts to make positive identification of the underlying causes of the dropout problem that the schools can hope to apply adequate preventive and remedial techniques.

## THE PROBLEM

### Statement of the Problem

This investigation was designed to study the major factors causing high school dropouts in selected high schools in North Louisiana as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts. This study was also concerned with a comparison of what the dropout indicated to be his reason for leaving school with the reason stated on his school record. This investigation was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the major factors causing high school students to drop out as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts respectively?

2. Is there agreement between parents, teachers, and dropouts as to the major factors causing students to drop out of high school? If so, what is the extent of the agreement?
3. Is there agreement between what the dropout indicates to be his reasons for leaving school and the reason that is indicated on his school record?

### Importance of the Problem

The problem is important to education because there is general agreement in the literature on some specific or identified factors influencing the problem. However, since the problem of high school dropouts is steadily on the incline, it would appear that not only are improved preventive guidance services needed, but also a new approach to finding solutions for the problem. Any solutions that schools attempt to employ will be limited by the extent to which a proper identification of underlying causes has been made.

### Definition

A dropout is a student who leaves school before graduation.

### Methodology

The questionnaire method was utilized in obtaining data for this study. It was necessary to find out what factors could be considered as having a major influence on high school dropouts.

In order to arrive at a list of factors influencing high school dropouts, a review was made of studies that dealt with the problem. Also, some reasons were obtained through interviews. From this information, a questionnaire was constructed of the following factors:

1. Age (older than students in her grade)
2. Poor grades
3. Health problems
4. Lack of participation in extracurricular activities

5. Racial problems
6. Had to go to work
7. Unable to live up to expectations of parents
8. Family problems
9. Problems in social adjustment
10. Lack of interest in school
11. Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools
12. Pregnancy (girls only)
13. To get married

An identical questionnaire was constructed for male student subjects, with the substitution of "military service" representing factor number 12 on the questionnaire.

The sample was drawn from three North Louisiana high schools with an enrollment of 1350 students, which serves both Black and white population. The sample was limited to include only those students who left school for reasons within their control, including those who were expelled. Problems in social adjustment represents this category.

In order to carry out the plans for this study, it seemed advisable to make personal contact with principals and teachers of the schools included in the study. Permission was graciously granted. The investigator then visited each of the three selected high schools; and in each case, the necessary records were made available.

The sample included parents, teachers, and dropouts who live in communities with varying sizes. They represented small towns and rural areas. The total sample of 130 subjects were used in this study with the following distributions: (1) 39 parents, (2) 41 teachers, and (3) 50 dropouts.

Parents and teachers were asked to complete two questionnaires, one for boys and another for girls. The dropouts completed one questionnaire, in accordance with their sex.

All subjects were asked to select five major factors influencing dropouts in the order of importance.

With the aid of the computer, data was analyzed in terms of the percentages of parents, teachers, and dropouts who responded to the various factors, listed on the questionnaire.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In investigating various professional publications for materials related to this study, several studies were found which were thought to be representative of approaches to the dropout problem. These studies are summarized according to several categories.

Kline<sup>1</sup> reports on one of the earliest studies in the area of the school dropout which was made by Thorndike. Based on enrollment data from twenty-three cities, Thorndike found that in 1900 most of the elimination from school was among students with very little school learning during high school years. Of those pupils who started school during the year 1900-1904, 81.7 percent left school before or during the ninth grade. The greatest number of students left school in the fifth and sixth grades and in the sixth and seventh grades, respectively.

In 1918, Kline<sup>2</sup> repeated Thorndike's study using sixteen of the same cities that Thorndike used. He found some significant changes in the dropout pattern. Kline's objectives were to discover the nature of the change in the dropout pattern since 1900, and to determine what evidence there was that the junior high school was responsible for these

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<sup>1</sup>Elias J. Kline, "Significant Changes in the Curve of Elimination Since 1900." Journal of Education Research, IIVI (1933), 608-16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

changes. His findings showed a significant shift in the age of the dropout. It was found that the greatest number of school leavers left between ninth and tenth grades. Thus, in the short period of eighteen years, elimination from school was postponed an average of two or three years. Further findings of this study indicate that only 39.6 percent of the dropouts left before the ninth grade.

It is clear from this study that the significant shift in the dropout pattern from the elementary to the junior and senior high schools forced the secondary school to recognize the problem. However, this study and all succeeding studies, indicated that most of the dropouts left school during the secondary school years.

One of the most comprehensive studies of the dropout was made by Dillion<sup>3</sup> under the auspices of the National Child Labor Committee. The subjects for this study were 1300 youths in five midwestern communities. These youth were interviewed by teachers, counselors, principals, and attendance workers in order to obtain the data for the study.

Dillion summarized the following major conclusions concerning the characteristics of the dropout:

There was a fairly consistent regression in scholarship from elementary school to the junior and senior high schools.

There was marked regression in attendance from the elementary school to the junior and senior high schools.

There were frequent transfers from one school to another for the dropouts.

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<sup>3</sup>Harold J. Dillion, "Early School Leavers - A Major Educational Problem." National Child Labor Committee Pamphlet, No. 401. (New York: Moak Printing Co., 1949).

There was evidence of a feeling of insecurity or "lack of belonging."

There was a marked lack of interest in school work.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, Dillion found that a minority of early school leavers came from broken homes, but the proportion from such homes was somewhat larger than for the population in general. He also reported that there was no relationship between the size of the family and the probability of leaving school.

The primary reasons for leaving school prior to graduation as reported by Dillion were ones which specifically related to school. Some of the reasons given were: a preference for work rather than school, a lack of interest in school work, inability to learn and discouragement, failure, disliked a certain teacher, disliked a certain subject, and the feeling that more could be learned out of school than in school. Almost 70 percent of the dropouts fell into this category and gave dissatisfaction with school as the primary reason for leaving.

Thomas<sup>5</sup> conducted a study in one high school in an attempt to find factors related to leaving school before graduation. He found the factor most related to whether or not the student finished high school was participation in school activities.

In 1947, a study of youths out of school and in the labor market was undertaken under the auspices of the United States Department

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<sup>4</sup>Harold J. Dillion, "Early School Leavers - A Major Educational Problem." National Child Labor Committee Pamphlet, No. 401. (New York: Moak Printing Co., 1949).

<sup>5</sup>Robert J. Thomas, "An Empirical Study of High School Dropouts in Regard to Ten Possible Factors," The Journal of Educational Sociology, XXVIII (1954), 11-18.

of Labor.<sup>6</sup> The site for the research was Louisville, Kentucky. Of the 524 boys and girls in the sample, 440 of them did not graduate from high school. Findings from this study indicated that among 14-15 year old youths, progress beyond the eighth grades was the exception rather than the rule; only 17.7 percent of this age group completed a higher grade. In the 16-17 year old age group, only 47.5 percent advanced beyond the eighth grade, and only 18.9 percent advanced beyond the ninth grade. While the state law allowed for leaving school at the age of sixteen, youngsters could leave school at the age of fourteen with certain stipulations.

It appears that dissatisfaction with school was the major reason for leaving school prior to graduation. Of the 440 young people who were school dropouts, 209 (47.7 percent) gave this as the major reason. In addition, eighty-four youths mentioned dissatisfaction with school as a secondary reason for leaving. Thus, a total of 293 (67 percent) left school wholly or partly because of dissatisfaction with some phase of school life.

Dear<sup>7</sup> investigated occupations of fathers of children in eight Michigan schools. This study indicated that there was a greater proportion of children of the laboring class than children of the non-laboring class in grades nine through twelve. However, children of the non-laboring class persisted longer in school than did the children of the laboring class. This is one of the earliest studies to demonstrate the relationship between social class and dropout of school.

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<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth S. Johnson, "Why Young People Leave School," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, XXXII (1948), 14-25.

<sup>7</sup>Ernest Dear, "Distribution and Persistence According to Paternal Occupations Represented in the Secondary Schools in Michigan," Journal of Educational Research, XXVI (1953), 582-92.

A study designed to test the hypothesis that there are certain measurable difference between dropouts and non-dropouts which can be revealed by examination of school records was undertaken by Cook.<sup>8</sup> This study revealed that the percentages of dropouts in the ninth grade was higher than the percentages of non-dropouts in the same grade; that younger children who are between other siblings are more likely to drop out. Another finding was that dropouts exhibit greater educational retardation than non-dropouts. Cook concluded his study with the observation that there was no single factor or simple combination of factors which distinguished the dropout group from the non-dropout group. Dropping out of school results from a multiplicity of factors.

A study of Moore<sup>9</sup> notes the discrepancies between reasons for withdrawal found on school records and those obtained from the testimony of dropouts. He found that where the school record indicated only five students (1.6 percent) dropped out because of pregnancy, the interviews with the dropouts revealed that sixty-seven (20.9 percent) had left because of pregnancy.

Bowman and Matthews<sup>10</sup> made a study of all students in the sixth grade of the public schools of Quincy, Illinois in the school year 1951-52. Data were collected on the entire group for eight years

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Cook, Jr., "An Analysis of Factors Related to Withdrawal from High School Prior to Graduation," Journal of Educational Research, XL (November, 1956), 191-196.

<sup>9</sup> Parlett C. Moore, "Factors Determining Elimination in the Negro Secondary School," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, XXXVIII (1954), 42-48.

<sup>10</sup> Paul H. Bowman and Charles Matthews, "Motivations of Youth for Leaving School," Quincy Youth Development Project (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960).

following grade six. At the end of the tenth grade a list was compiled of all students who had dropped out of school up to that time. During the next two years each dropout was interviewed approximately six months after he left school. At the same time, the current or last employer of the dropout was interviewed about the student's work performance. The factors studied were: intelligence, social status, personal and social adjustments, school adjustment, and achievement values and aspirations.

Findings from this study indicate that the dropout rate for the potential graduating class was 21.9 percent and that the dropouts had more school absenteeism, were poor readers, and were found to be academically below average. It was also found that dropouts were significantly lower in social status than the students who stayed in school, and only one upper-middle class child left school before graduation.

The authors added that the dropout does not have the skill, responsibility, personal and social adjustment necessary to obtain and hold a part-time job while attending school; he does not obtain a good job for long; and he makes a relatively poor work record. The dropout obtains a poorer job initially than does the graduate and receives fewer advancements.

The authors also found that the dropout does not see the possibility of education as a means to vocational success and can find no suitable training in the schools as they are presently organized. Finally, the researchers indicated that the parents of the dropout were indifferent to school persistence on the part of their children. While they may not express negative feelings concerning school persistence, they do not act to intervene on the occasion of school leaving.

The dropout comes under close scrutiny of sociologists in some classical studies. Hollinshead,<sup>11</sup> in a sociological study of a community that he called "Elmtown," found that "out-so-school adolescents" are products of the impact of the social system. At the conclusion of his chapter on school withdrawal, he noted that the policies of the Board of Education are influenced by class interests. Hollinshead believed that the influence of social class is mirrored in the Board of Education policies as they pertain to the administration of the school attendance law, the awareness of the wishes of the upper class, and methods of discipline for children from the lower class. These actions, noted, are reflected in the large number of withdrawals among children in the lower socio-economic classes.

A number of sociologists who have made detailed studies in a variety of communities noted this relationship between socio-economic class and persistence in school.

According to Warner,<sup>12</sup> social class analysis can be used to predict the dropout. He indicated that when studying of equal intellect, ability, and interest in the social class of the student could be the factor determining if the student becomes a dropout.

Counts,<sup>13</sup> an educational sociologist, noted that even though we have established a free public high school in almost every community,

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<sup>11</sup>August B. Hollinshead, Elmtown's Youth (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1949).

<sup>12</sup>W. Lloyd Warner, "Social Class in America - A manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status" (Chicago: Science Research Associates).

<sup>13</sup>George S. Counts, "The Selective Character of American Secondary Educational Monographs," No. 19 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922).

the student population becomes more homogeneous as the students progress through school. By the time the senior year is reached, the student body exhibits a distinctly class character.

One of the most ambitious studies found that the completion of vocational courses by boys seemed to have little effect on the type of initial jobs they obtained.<sup>14</sup> This study was conducted on a sample of 12,887 youth who were out of school. The major single reason given by the students for dropping out of school before graduation was dissatisfaction with school.

From this brief review of the literature, the various studies have revealed the following factors as influencing dropouts:

- age
- sex
- grade reached at time of leaving
- course taken
- intelligence
- scholastic grades
- achievement test scores
- frequency of school transfer
- failures
- grade retardation
- health and physical handicaps
- personal appearance
- participation in extracurricular activities
- leadership
- emotional drive
- social ideals
- adjustment to opposite sex
- race
- socio-economic class
- attitudes towards classmates, teachers, and subjects.

There is no one factor that is responsible for all the dropouts; nor can any single group of factors account for each individual case. It appears that the dropout is a result of many disruptive forces.

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<sup>14</sup>United States Department of Labor, "School and Early Employment Experiences of Youth," A Report of Seven Communities 1953-57 (Washington, 1960).



### CHAPTER III

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The responses obtained from the parents, teachers, and dropouts were treated separately for each respective group. The analysis was made in reference to the questions that were stated in Chapter I.

The first question was: What are the major factors causing high school students to drop out as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts, respectively?

Table 1 presents the responses of parents as to why girls drop out of high school, given in percentages. It can be noted that the most important factor perceived by parents as affecting high school dropouts among girls was pregnancy, representing 67 percent of the responses; with the second in order of importance being the lack of interest in school, representing 45 percent of the responses. No parents felt that racial problems had any major influence on high school dropouts among girls. Twenty-seven percent of the parents checked poor grades as the third-order factor.

Table 2 presents the responses given by parents as to why boys drop out of high school. The responses were more widely distributed for the boys than for the girls. The factor that had the most agreement among parents as to why boys drop out of high school was poor graded, with 33 percent of the parents agreeing, although this was a second-order choice. The first order factor was "had to go to work,"

Table 1

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Girls as Perceived by  
Parents in the Order of Importance, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in her grade	10	5	9	14	10
Poor grades	0	10	27	14	10
Health problem	0	0	0	10	5
Lack of participation in ex- tracurricular activities	0	0	9	5	14
Racial problems	0	0	0	0	0
Had to go to work	5	0	0	10	14
Unable to live up to the ex- pectations of parents	0	5	9	0	14
Family problems	0	15	9	0	0
Problems in social adjustment	0	5	5	5	10
Lack of interest in school	10	45	14	14	5
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	5	0	9	19	14
Pregnancy	67	5	5	5	0
To get married	5	10	5	0	14

Table 2

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Boys as Perceived by  
Parents in the Order of Importance, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in his or her grade)	18	11	12	11	5
Poor grades	18	33	24	11	0
Health problem	6	0	0	0	5
Lack of participation in ex- tracurricular activities	0	0	0	0	5
Racial problems	0	0	0	0	5
Had to go to work	29	6	12	6	5
Unable to live up to the ex- pectations of parents	0	6	12	6	5
Family problems	6	6	6	11	11
Problems in social adjustment	21	22	18	17	5
Lack of interest in school	0	0	6	17	5
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	0	6	18	0	21
Military	0	0	0	11	0
To get married	0	11	0	0	5

with 29 percent agreement among parents. Whereas, there was agreement among parents that racial problems were not factors influencing high school drop outs among girls, 5 percent of the parents did agree that racial problems were factors influencing high school drop out among boys in the fifth order.

Table 3 indicates that 71 percent of the teachers considered pregnancy to be the major factor influencing high school dropouts among girls. The next highest level of agreement among teachers was the inability to live up to parental expectations, representing 50 percent of the responses. It should also be noted that 45 percent of the teachers agreed that family problems were the third major factor causing dropouts among girls, and 33 percent agreed in the fourth order that problems in social adjustment were a major factor.

Thirty-five percent of the teachers indicated poor grades as the major factor, in the first order, for high school dropouts among boys as shown in Table 4. It was also found that problems in social adjustment and family problems, respectively, revealed close agreement among teachers as to why boys dropped out of school. Family problems were considered by teachers to be the major factor in the second and third order, with 40 and 30 percent, respectively, agreeing. Thirty-five percent of the teachers agreed that problems in social adjustment were a major factor in the third order.

Table 5 shows the responses of girls as to why girls drop out of high school, given in percentages. It can be noted that the most important factor perceived by girls as affecting high school dropouts among girls was pregnancy, representing 70 percent of the responses. Forty-five percent of the girls agreed that a lack of interest in school

Table 3

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Girls as Perceived by Teachers in the Order of Importance, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in her grade)	5	0	0	0	0
Poor grades	0	5	10	10	38
Health problem	0	5	0	0	0
Lack of participation in extracurricular activities	0	0	0	0	0
Racial problems	0	5	0	0	0
Had to go to work	0	0	0	0	0
Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	14	50	0	19	5
Family problems	0	4	45	19	5
Problems in social adjustment	0	5	5	33	29
Lack of interest in school	5	6	15	29	29
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	5	5	0	0	0
Pregnancy	71	9	0	0	0
To get married	0	0	0	10	0

Table 4

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Boys as Perceived by Teachers in the Order of Importance, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in his grade)	15	10	5	5	16
Poor grades	35	15	5	14	21
Health problem	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of participation in extracurricular activities	0	0	5	14	11
Racial problems	5	5	20	5	16
Had to go to work	0	0	0	0	0
Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	10	0	5	19	5
Family problems	15	40	30	10	0
Problems in social adjustment	20	10	35	5	16
Lack of interest in school	0	5	5	19	5
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	0	0	0	0	0
Military	0	0	5	0	0
To get married	0	0	0	5	0

Table 5

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Girls as  
Perceived by Girls, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in her grade)	5	5	0	0	5
Poor grades	15	10	10	0	0
Health problem	0	0	0	0	10
Lack of participation in ex- tracurricular activities	0	0	0	0	15
Racial problems	0	0	0	0	0
Had to go to work	0	0	0	0	0
Unable to live up to the ex- pectations of parents	0	35	25	0	5
Family problems	5	15	45	25	15
Problems in social adjustment	0	5	5	0	10
Lack of interest in school	0	45	15	0	25
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	5	0	0	0	15
Pregnancy	70	5	0	0	0
To get married	0	10	0	0	0

was the second order of importance. Family problems assumed the third position for girls, with 45 percent agreeing.

An analysis of the responses of boys as to why boys dropped out of school is summarized in Table 6. Poor grades were considered by boys to be a major cause of dropouts among boys. This factor assumed both the first and second order, with 33 percent agreement in each case.

A comparison by percentages of the factors perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts provided answers to question two: Is there agreement between parents, teachers, and dropouts as to the major factors influencing high school dropout? If so, what is the extent of the agreement?

The greatest percentage of agreement is presented in Table 7, with 71 percent of teachers, 70 percent of the girls, and 67 percent of the parents agreeing that pregnancy is a major cause of dropouts among girls. It should also be pointed out that 50 percent of the teachers, and 35 percent of the girls considered the inability to live up to parental expectations as a major cause in the second order of importance; whereas, only 5 percent of the parents considered it to be a major factor. With the exception of 5 percent of the parents in the second order, all subjects agreed that racial problems were not a major factor as to why girls drop out of school.

Table 8 presents a comparison by percentages of the factors perceived by parents, teachers, and boys. The most significant point of agreement in the first order of importance among the subjects is poor grades as perceived by 35 percent of the teachers, 15 percent of the parents, 23 percent of the boys. However, problems in social adjustment revealed a significant agreement among parents and teachers



Table 6

Major Factors Influencing High School Dropouts Among Boys as Perceived by Boys, Expressed in Percentages

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER	FOURTH ORDER	FIFTH ORDER
Age (older than students in his grade)	13	11	5	0	7
Poor grades	33	33	6	0	17
Health problem	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of participation in extracurricular activities	0	0	5	0	20
Racial problems	0	0	0	0	0
Had to go to work	0	6	5	0	13
Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	7	6	30	0	3
Family problems	0	6	35	0	13
Problems in social adjustment	3	22	6	0	7
Lack of interest in school	10	0	5	0	10
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	27	6	0	0	10
Military	0	0	5	0	0
To get married	13	11	0	0	0

Table 7

A Comparison by Percentages of the Factors Perceived by Parents, Teachers, and Girls as Being the Major Causes of Dropouts Among Girls in the Order of Importance

FACTORS	FIRST ORDER			SECOND ORDER			THIRD ORDER			FOURTH ORDER			FIFTH ORDER		
	P	T	G	P	T	G	P	T	G	P	T	G	P	T	G
Age (older than students in her grade)	10	5	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	9	0	14	0	5
Poor grades	0	0	15	5	0	10	0	5	10	20	27	0	10	14	0
Health problem	0	0	5	5	0	10	0	5	10	0	0	0	10	0	10
Lack of participation in extracurricular activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	9	0	0	5	15
Racial problems	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Had to go to work	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	0	14	0	5	50	35	0	5	25	9	10	0	0	0	5
Family problems	0	0	5	5	0	5	20	0	45	8	9	25	5	19	15
Problems in social adjustment	0	0	0	9	0	5	0	10	5	0	5	0	5	33	10
Lack of interest in school	10	0	0	0	0	10	0	30	15	20	14	0	19	0	15
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	5	5	5	9	0	5	0	0	0	0	9	0	19	0	5
Pregnancy	67	71	70	0	0	10	0	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0
To get married	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	5	0	0	10	0

Table 8

A Comparison by Percentages of the Factors Perceived by Parents, Teachers, and Boys as Being the Major Causes of Dropouts Among Boys in the Order of Importance

FACTOR	FIRST ORDER			SECOND ORDER			THIRD ORDER			FOURTH ORDER			FIFTH ORDER		
	P	T	B	P	T	B	P	T	B	P	T	B	P	T	B
Age (older than students in his grade)	15	18	13	10	0	11	0	20	5	10	12	0	11	5	7
Poor grades	35	18	23	15	0	33	0	27	5	13	24	0	11	14	17
Health problems	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of participation in extracurricular activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	5	7	6	0	17	14	20
Racial problems	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	0	0
Had to go to work	29	5	0	0	0	6	0	10	0	3	12	0	6	0	13
Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	0	10	7	0	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	19	3
Family problems	6	15	3	0	40	6	0	20	30	7	6	0	11	10	13
Problems in social adjustment	24	20	10	0	0	22	0	0	5	7	6	0	17	5	7
Lack of interest in school	0	0	27	0	5	0	0	0	5	7	6	0	17	19	10
Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	0	0	0	10	0	6	3	0	0	3	18	0	0	0	10
Military	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	11	0
To get married	0	0	13	0	0	11	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	5	0

with 24 percent and 20 percent respectively. In the second order of importance, only parents considered family problems to be of major importance represented by 40 percent of the parents. In regards to military service, Table 8 revealed that a very small percentage of the subjects considered that factor to be of importance.

In addition to the formal questionnaires, the investigator conducted a number of informal interviews with selected parents, teachers, and dropouts. Although, the data obtained from the interviews was not analyzed in a quantitative fashion, there were certain impressions that are worth mentioning here.

It should be noted that the 5 percent agreement among teachers considering racial problems to be a factor influencing high school dropouts among boys were Black. It was their opinion that racial problems are the direct results of problems in social adjustment, which is also the factor representing expulsion from school.

Although financial need is sometimes a factor, the information obtained through the interviews with dropouts gave the investigator the impression that perhaps many had failed to distinguish the item on the questionnaire which read, "had to go to work" from "wanted to go to work," the latter not being mentioned. In the first instance, "had to go to work" could be a reason which caused a student to leave school; whereas, in the second, it is more of an excuse than a reason.

The third question was particularly difficult to assess because the school records very seldom indicate the specific reasons as to why students dropped out. The records generally indicated such terms as dropped, transferred and withdrew.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the major factors influencing high school dropouts in selected high schools in North Louisiana as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts. More specifically, this investigation was designed to find answers to the following questions: (1) What are the major factors causing high school students to drop out as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts, respectively? (2) Is there agreement among parents, teachers and dropouts as to the major factors causing students to drop out of high school? If so, what is the extent of the agreement? (3) Is there agreement between what the dropout indicates to be his reason for leaving school and the reason that is indicated on his school records?

Factors used in the study were obtained through informal interviews and from reviews that dealt with the problem. It was felt by the investigator that the questionnaire method was the most logical way to obtain independent responses as to how each factor was perceived by the subjects which included thirty-nine parents, forty-one teachers, and fifty dropouts.

The questionnaire was constructed of thirteen items, each with five alternatives. The subjects were asked to indicate their opinions as to the major factors influencing high school dropouts in the order of importance. With the aid of the computer, data was analyzed in terms

of the percentages of agreement of factors perceived by parents, teachers and dropouts.

It can, therefore, be concluded that:

1. Pregnancy was the most dominate factor indicated in causing girls to drop out of high school.
2. Seemingly, boys drop out because of poor grades.
3. Racial problems seemed to have had little, if any, influence in causing high school dropouts.
4. Living up to parental expectations seemed to have been a minor reason for dropouts.
5. The factor of social adjustment seemed to have been low on the totem pole.

Although each school system would need to determine, on the basis of what it is now doing, which recommendations are particularly pertinent and feasible for action and which should come first, it is highly desirable that some be selected as a starting point in initiating changes designed to increase the holding power of the schools. Bearing in mind this thought, the investigator highly recommends the following:

1. Counselor coordinated parent-teacher seminars designed to identify early potential dropouts.
2. Parent-teacher seminars designed to up-date sex education for students in the home and school.
3. Counselor coordinated seminars with students designed to encourage better human relations.

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## APPENDIX

Name \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade when withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONNAIRE  
(Girls)

Please give your frank opinion

There are many high school students who find it necessary to dropout of school before finishing. Various reasons have been given as to why girls dropout of high school.

Please read the list of reasons for high school dropouts given below, and indicate which five (5) you consider to be the most important reasons why girls drop out of school. You should circle (1) for the most important reason; (2) for the next in importance, and so forth.

REACT TO ONLY FIVE (5) OF THE REASONS GIVEN:

Example: a. Health problem (1) 2 3 4 5

If you consider health problems to be the most important reason for high school dropout, you would circle number 1. Notice that the number 1 above has been circled.

REASONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

- |                                                       |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Age (older than students in her grade)             | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Poor grades                                        | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Health problem                                     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Lack of participation in extracurricula activities | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Racial problems                                    | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Had to go to work                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |

7. Unable to live up to the expectation of parents	1	2	3	4	5
8. Family problems	1	2	3	4	5
9. Problems in social adjustment	1	2	3	4	5
10. Lack of interest in school	1	2	3	4	5
11. Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	1	2	3	4	5
12. Pregnancy	1	2	3	4	5
13. To get married	1	2	3	4	5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade when withdrew \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONNAIRE  
(Boys)

Please give your frank opinion

There are many high school students who find it necessary to dropout of school before finishing. Various reasons have been given as to why boys dropout of high school.

Please read the list of reasons for high school dropouts given below, and indicate which five (5) you consider to be the most important reasons why boys drop out of school. You should circle (1) for the most important reason; (2) for the next in importance, and so forth.

REACT TO ONLY FIVE (5) OF THE REASONS GIVEN:

Example: a. Health problem (1) 2 3 4 5

If you consider health problems to be the most important reason for high school dropout, you would circle number 1. Notice that the number 1 above has been circled.

REASONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

- |                                                        |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Age (older than students in his or her grade)       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Poor grades                                         | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Health problem                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Lack of participation in extracurricular activities | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Racial problems                                     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Had to go to work                                   | 1 2 3 4 5 |

7. Unable to live up to the expectations of parents	1	2	3	4	5
8. Family problems	1	2	3	4	5
9. Lack of interest in school	1	2	3	4	5
10. Problems in social adjustment	1	2	3	4	5
11. Dissatisfaction with subjects offered in schools	1	2	3	4	5
12. To enter military service	1	2	3	4	5
13. To get married	1	2	3	4	5

MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS AS  
PERCEIVED BY PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND DROPOUTS

by

RUTH McNEAL WOODARD

B. S., Grambling College, 1968

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate major factors influencing high school dropouts as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts. Evidence indicates that in the average public school system many students who enter high school drop out before graduation. It is also evident that the dropout today is much more handicapped than the dropout a decade ago.

There is a definite loss to society when a young person drops out of school for whatever reason; and he fails to realize his highest potential. The savings in human resource, to say nothing of self-development and self-fulfillment on the part of the dropout, are sufficient rewards for attempting to solve the problem.

The sample for this study was drawn from three North Louisiana high schools with an enrollment of 1350 students, which serves the Black and White populations. Questionnaires were returned by 39 parents, 41 teachers, and 50 dropouts.

The following questions were stated in order to give direction to the investigation:

1. What are the major factors causing high school students to drop out as perceived by parents, teachers, and dropouts, respectively?
2. Is there agreement among parents, teachers, and dropouts as to the major factors causing students to drop out of high school? If so, What is the extent of the agreement?
3. Is there agreement between what the dropout indicates to be his reason for leaving school and the reason that is indicated on his school records?

Factors used in the study were obtained through interviews and from reviews that dealt with the dropout problem. Of these factors, thirteen were used to construct the questionnaire to elicit the responses of parents, teachers and dropouts as to what they perceived as being the major causes of dropouts.

An analysis of the data revealed that the most important factors perceived by parents, teachers and girls as affecting high school dropouts among girls was pregnancy. The factor that had the highest level of agreement, based on percentages, as to why boys dropped out of school was "poor grades." There was less agreement among parents, teachers and dropouts as to the second-, third-, fourth- and fifth-order factors.

The administration of the questionnaire was supplemented by informal interviews with selected parents, teachers and dropouts. Although the data obtained from the interviews was not analyzed numerically, some definite impressions came forth that explained some of the reasons why certain factors were checked on the questionnaire.

The limited information entered on the school records concerning the reasons why students dropped out failed to permit an analysis of the third question given in the statement of the problem.

It can be concluded from this study that there is a high level of agreement among parents, teachers and girls as to the most important factor influencing high school dropouts among girls; whereas, there was only moderate agreement among parents, teachers and boys as to why boys dropped out.