

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DROPOUT PROBLEM  
IN THE McCOMB, MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by *4589*

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## INTRODUCTION

The education of youth has always been a primary concern of Americans. It has already been determined that education is essential to responsible citizenship and that maximum educational opportunities must be offered to all children. In an increasingly complex society the need for education has become even more necessary. Educational opportunities in America are good, yet we find that an alarming number of students are still poorly prepared to meet the complicated world of today. Developments in technology are raising the need for more education. It has been estimated that by 1970 only five percent of all available jobs will be of the unskilled type. Consequently, American educators have had increasing concern over the problem of the dropouts.

The dropout problem has reached such staggering proportions that one out of every three youths in the ninth grade today will leave school before high school graduation. This means that approximately 7.5 million youth will have dropped out of school by the end of 1970. This becomes more alarming when the fact is considered that more than 40 percent of boys and girls in the fifth grade today will not stay in school through high school graduation.

The dropout constitutes one of the major educational problems in the nation. The school dropout is no different from any other teenager who is surrounded by a world of challenge. The immediate problem to be answered is the universal question asked by many teenagers, "Who am I?" "What does life hold for me?" It is a time for students' questions to be answered. (1)



In McComb, as in other cities, some attention is being focused on dropouts in an effort to determine the reason for students leaving school before graduation and to suggest steps that might be taken to encourage them to stay in school.

Hopefully, this study will provide information which should be valuable to school officials of McComb, Mississippi in an effort to improve the holding power of the elementary and secondary schools.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The task of helping youngsters become more effective and productive citizens has been one of the objectives of the McComb Public Schools. Although this has been a difficult task, much progress has been made in the education of all children.

McComb educators have been trying to alleviate the dropout problem. To the writer's knowledge, no formal studies have been made toward seeking to find the major causes for pupil dropping out of school. The writer believes that until these causes are determined remedies of any sort are far from focus.

The purpose of this study is to determine through interviews with parents, children, principals, counselors, and homeroom teachers:

1. The major factors associated with the dropout problem in McComb, Mississippi.
2. What high school counselors and other educators have done to help alleviate the dropout problem.
3. What may be done at the elementary level to motivate and encourage the boys and girls to stay in school.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

A dropout is a pupil who leaves school for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school for a period of one academic year.

A dropout problem, as stated by John H. Rohrer, occurs when an adolescent grows to mistrust other individuals; one who has no significant adult figure to offer emotional support; one who has been inculcated with the most primitive kinds of social values; one who has to turn to peer groups in order to find someone to relate to emotionally; one who has developed feelings of isolation that lead to sporadic "acting out" in attempts to obtain those relationships; one who, because of frustrations, strikes back at the perceived sources of frustration--authority figures who have failed him or peer groups that have snubbed and enraged him; one who has been forced to grow overly dependent upon overcontrolling maternal figures who have not permitted him to develop a sense of self-reliance; and finally one who most of all is seeking out, albeit in an inadequate manner, ways of gratifying his need for affection and emotional warmth. (1)

The holding power of a school or school system is indicated by the proportion of its pupils who do not drop out of school.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of the dropout is as old as schooling itself. However, this phenomenon is more serious today than it has ever been. No town, suburb, or large city--as a matter of fact no school in the United States--is entirely free of this perplexity.

The late president John F. Kennedy in his State of the Union message on January 14, 1963, stated that:

"The future of any country is damaged, and irreparably damaged whenever any of its children is not educated to the fullest extent of his capacity...and that is a waste we cannot afford." (1)

President Lyndon B. Johnson in his message on education to Congress of January 12, 1965, stated:

"Almost a million young people each year will continue to quit school, if our schools fail to stimulate their desire to learn...the cost of this neglect runs high both for the youth and for the nation." (2)

No solution can be reached until the factors which influence early school withdrawals are known. Probably the best description of the characteristics of dropouts was reported by the Research Division of the N.E.A., which pointed out that "to keep youth in school, attention must be focused on meaningful curriculum, enlightened guidance efforts and a program of financial aid." (3)

The design of school holding-power studies typically neglects to include an analysis of primary school children, because it is commonly assumed that the dropout crisis is a secondary school phenomenon. The results of the study reported by Frerichs (4) indicated the strong possibility of predicting with a high degree of accuracy those lower elementary school children who will terminate their education before high school graduation. The findings of the study suggested to primary school teachers and administrators what actions, if accomplished, would improve the holding power of the schools. Furthermore, this study developed a concern and an interest in both the school and the community about the important role of the lower grades in reducing the dropout rates.

Dr. Larry Hughes, (5) Superintendent of the Crestline Public Schools, Ohio, suggested that common practices in many elementary school programs tend to impede the intellectual growth of children and cause some to become dropouts at an early age. These practices cited by Hughes are:

1. Rigid grade standards which, where they still exist, discourage youngsters from ever "learning anything important." The practice of many teachers of expecting all first grade children to be ready for certain kinds of formal school experiences give some children the feeling that they cannot succeed in school.
2. Promotion practices followed in some schools which lead to overage, maladjusted, or uninterested children in school. One or two failures for a healthy, adequately-developing child can considerably lower the child's self-image. Children who think they cannot learn are not apt to try and will seek the earliest out to protect themselves from future indignities.
3. Failure to recognize the importance of the home environment, is another way which children can be lead down the dropout path. If the teacher's only contact with the home is through the report card, there is little opportunity for them to know children in respect to home environment.
4. Learning experiences that do not take under consideration the needs, interests, and abilities of children and which lead some to question the value of school.
5. Over-dependence on paper and pencil tests. Learning takes place in many ways other than those measured by paper and

pencil. Facts are useful if applied, but many times there are students who can, for example, define a sentence, but cannot write one. Children learn quite early that learning is for a grade measured by a test rather than for usefulness.

Hughes also suggested that dropouts can be said to be created when the school forgets that the obligation is to the total child, and that total development of children is what to strive for.

August B. Hollingshead (6) reported an intensive study of one mid-western community which showed that withdrawing from school is related to the class structure, with those in the lower classes withdrawing in much higher proportion. The adolescents gave economic needs, peer isolation, and discrimination by teacher as important reasons for withdrawing.

Joseph Bledsoe (7) reported findings of a detailed survey of 247 students who withdrew during the three school years from September 1953 through May 1956. Dropouts occurred in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades of a high school in a small Georgia city with a population of approximately 20,000. The city serves both as the seat of county government and as trade center for an agricultural industrial community. Six elementary schools and one high school serve the community. The findings suggest that boys may be more likely to drop out of high school than girls.

The factors of parent occupation and level of parent education are probably closely related to the level of aspiration of the student. School administrators and teachers should do whatever possible to encourage able persons from lower occupational and educational strata to stay in school, and look at education as a continuous process. Serious studies of the need and the implementation of an adult education program on a local basis were needed.

Limited ability to read with understanding was not only ego-deflating but was a serious handicap in the academic arena. There was a need for improving teaching of reading at all levels as well as increasing efforts at diagnosis of reading difficulties and remedial teaching.

A study was made by Harry H. Scales (8) to find ways of reducing high school dropout rates. The study involved interviews with recent dropouts and high school personnel, and a statistical analysis of the relationship between the dropout rates of 194 California high schools and eighteen possible factors contained within the school setting that purport to help keep young people who would otherwise drop out of school. Eleven of the eighteen factors were found to be significantly related to the dropout rate. The eleven significant factors indicated several basic needs of the adolescent which the schools are trying to meet, not only for the potential dropout, but also for others who would benefit from this help. The concept was verified by talking with the fifty dropouts who were the subjects of the study. First, there was the need for the teenager to be liked and respected. Second, young people need to have a feeling of achievement that is realistic. Third, the need to belong must be met. For the 194 schools counseling, teaching the curriculum factors make their greatest contribution in schools that are more prone to have a higher dropout rate because of the ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the pupil population and size of the school.

In a Pennsylvania study by Daniel Schreiber (9), it was found that if a child enters grade one and comes from a home where the father is not working and there is no telephone, the chances are eight out of ten he will drop out. It was also found that if a child fails in the first or second grade in reading, the chances are eight out of ten he will not graduate.

Richard H. Ayling (10) stated that he was able to reach children by individualized instruction programs. In one such program, Ayling pointed out that one Negro boy who was described by his teachers as being absolutely unteachable, turned out to be the best student. Ayling sent letters to 225 dropouts, twenty-two of whom agreed to return. Another sixteen were so poor academically that they were obviously not going to graduate, and another seven were disciplinary and behavioral problems.

Dewitt (11) described a program designed and devoted to the concept that the slow learner can be helped and can be saved if the counselor, the administrator and teachers have desire, a good plan, and the decision to execute it properly. The program described is in operation at East High School, Aurora, Illinois, and Provisa Township High Schools of Maywood and Hillside Illinois. Specific goals for such a program are: (1) To strengthen the student's self-esteem by providing sufficient individualized instruction, (2) to provide instruction which will let him experience success and achievement, (3) to reduce the class size and concentrate on the slow learner as an individual, (4) to provide fun and experience, thus changing the educator's belief that school threatens the self-concept and (5) to concentrate on remedial effort to resolve academic problems that are resolvable.

At the end of four years the student should leave school with dignity, having experienced academic success and having completed a work-experience contributing to a more confident self-image.

In 1963 Francis Keppel (12) stated, "The fundamental goal is not merely to keep children in school but to educate them. The test of success, therefore, is not merely the reduction of the dropout rate but the improvement of the educational product."

The United States, no matter how productive and affluent it is, cannot afford to have almost one million youth drop out of school each year to become unwanted and unemployed. The millions of excluded and alienated youth and young adults cannot and will not remain quiescent. The educational system must be reconstructed to provide relevant successful experiences for all children so that they will become and remain an integral part of society. (13)

A study done at South East High School in Atlanta indicates that the reasons given by students for leaving school were usually not the real ones. In this Atlanta School the reasons most frequently stated by the dropouts themselves were jobs and disinterest. The author contends in this report that the real reason is probably the inability to do work of a satisfactory nature, dislike of school, lack of money, or marriage. Prevention of dropouts must begin long before the actual act of dropping out. This prevention can be achieved only by early identification of the potential dropout.

Among other significant studies made to show the values of counseling programs was an eight-year study made in a Tucson, Arizona High School between 1946 and 1953. This study showed that before 1946 Tucson's dropout rate was always twenty-two percent. After a counseling system was established in 1947, the dropout rate dropped to fourteen percent. (13)

To the writer's knowledge, the only formal study that has been done in Mississippi on the dropout problem was done by Dr. McAllister. (14) This study entitled "These Three," dealt with the following organizations: SHOC--the Self Help Opportunity Center; SHEP--the Self Help Elementary Program; and NDEA--National Defense Education Act, which includes institutes for Teachers of Disadvantaged youth. SHOC and SHEP were the Institute's



concrete back-to-school emphasis. Some children belonging to these institutes took high school equivalency tests which enabled them to receive a high school diploma.

McAllister's study showed that many students who dropped out of school had never had any one really listen and respectfully consider their ideas. These youths came from families which never had a member finish eighth grade. Many dropouts came from families who had lived their entire lives on public welfare and relief, either with acceptance or defeat. Many parents and young people were rejected in schools, a hostility which needs to be overcome.

It was interesting to note that in Dr. McAllister's (14) study marriages were contracted in fifth and sixth grades by students who were too old for the grade level. Retardation, dissatisfaction of the schools, parental attitudes, poor personal adjustment, and financial needs all were causes for delinquency.

#### SUMMARY

Considerable research has been reported on the characteristics of students who will leave school prior to graduation. Various criteria have been used to differentiate the dropout from the high school graduate, covering sociological, educational and psychological information. These criteria show the dropout to be disadvantaged by social-economic forces. Consequently, these children must find the school program very difficult and thus experience considerable frustration and failure. By contrast, students who graduate from high school, and potential dropouts who manage to complete school, make better community and occupational adjustments.

There would be considerable advantage to identifying potential dropouts before they quit school in order to establish special procedures and place them in remedial education programs which might help them complete school. Teachers are the heart of the school program as experienced by individual students, and therefore teachers are in a position to assess students' potential to benefit from the usual school program.

#### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study is designed to determine the major causes, if any, for children dropping out of school before graduation. The two senior high schools, two junior high schools and six elementary schools of McComb, Mississippi were chosen to participate in the experiment. These ten schools make up the McComb Public School System.

The procedure was:

1. An examination of pertinent literature contained in the Farrell Library at Kansas State University.
2. A letter along with a short questionnaire was mailed to McComb Public School Administrators, asking for general information concerning dropouts and a possible opportunity for a school visitation.
3. A school visitation questionnaire was drawn up and taken to each school visited.
4. Personal interviews were held with administrators, counselors, homeroom teachers, parents, and students. These interviews were recorded.

5. A letter was sent to the state department requesting information on dropouts.
6. Data was compiled for the schools under study.

#### ANALYSIS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The McComb Public School Principals reported that 4,216 pupils were enrolled in the system on September 12, 1968. By February 29, 1970 it was discovered by the writer that 99 pupils had left school.

The holding power of McComb Public Schools for 1968 was 4,117.

Table I shows the enrollment and the number of dropouts by schools for 1968.

TABLE I  
ENROLLMENT AND NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY SCHOOLS

Number of Schools	Number of Pupils En- rolled by Schools	Number of Dropouts by Schools		Percent of Drop- outs by Schools	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1 Elementary 1 - 6	500	216	284	2	0
2 Elementary 1 - 6	184	132	152	0	0
3 Elementary 1 - 6	257	135	122	10	3
4 Elementary 1 - 6	510	192	328	4	1
5 Elementary 1 - 6	176	87	89	0	0
6 Elementary 1 - 6	279	134	145	7	1
7 Elementary 1 - 6	179	85	94	0	0
8 Junior High 7 - 8	513	206	307	11	5
9 Junior 7 - 8					
Senior High 9 - 12	886	365	521	40	6
10 Senior High 9 - 12	732	352	380	25	10
Total All Schools (10)	Total Enrollment 4,216	Total Dropouts 99		Percent of Dropouts; 2.34	
				or 2.35	

Seven of the 10 schools were Elementary Schools, grades 1 - 6. One of the ten was a Junior High School, grades 7 - 8. Two were high schools, grades 9 - 12. One of the high schools included both a junior and senior high department. The enrollment for this school was 886 pupils. Forty of the 886 were dropouts. The three schools with the lowest enrollment reported 0 dropouts.

The total enrollment for the ten schools that participated in this study was 4,216. The total number of dropouts was 99.

TABLE II  
PUPIL IDENTIFICATION

Ethnic Origin	Sex		Nationality	Total Number of Dropouts by Ethnic Origin	Percentage of Dropout by Ethnic Origin
	Male	Female			
Negro	49	17	American	66	67
White	24	9	American	33	33
Total (all races)	73	26		99	100

Of the 99 pupils to leave school in 1968 before graduation, 49 were American Negro boys and 17 were American Negro girls. The total number of Negro pupils to leave school in 1968 were 66. Twenty-four of the 99 pupils were American white boys and 9 were American white girls. The total number of white pupils to leave school in 1968 was 33.

The data in Table II indicates that 73 of the 99 dropouts were male and 26 were female.

TABLE III  
GRADE LEVEL AT WHICH DROPOUTS OCCURRED

Grade Interval	Total Enrollment	Number of 1968 Dropouts	Percent of 1968 Dropouts	Regularity of Attendance		
				Reg.	Irreg.	Truant
1-6	2028	25	25.25	4	16	5
7-8	1236	24	24.24	8	16	1
9-12	952	50	50.50	12	30	8
Total Grades 1-12	4216	99	99.99	24	61	14

The information in Table III indicates that 50 of the 99 dropouts were high school pupils, grades 10 - 12. Twenty-five of the 99 were elementary pupils grades 1 - 6 and 24 were Junior High, grades 7 - 9.

Sixty-one of the 99 dropouts had irregular attendance. Twenty-four had regular attendance and 14 had truant attendance.

TABLE IV  
AGE LEVEL AT WHICH DROPOUTS OCCURRED

Age Interval	Total Enrollment	Number of 1968 Dropouts	Percent of 1968 Dropouts	Sex			
				Male		Female	
				No.	Percent	No.	Percent
6-8	1008	4	4.04	2	2.02	2	2.02
9-11	1020	7	7.07	5	5.05	2	2.02
12-14	1237	23	23.23	18	18.18	6	6.06
15-17	940	55	55.55	44	44.44	11	11.11
18-20	11	10	10.10	4	4.04	5	5.05
Total (all ages) 6 - 20	4216	99		73	74	26	26

Fifty-five percent of the dropouts occurred between the ages of 15 - 17. Forty-four percent occurred among males. Twenty-three percent of the dropouts occurred between the ages of 12 - 14. Eighteen percent occurred among males.

Seventy-four percent of the dropouts were male. Twenty-six were female.

TABLE V  
LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT - NUMBER HOURS PER WEEK

	Number Hours per Week							Total	Percent
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	over 30	Un- Known		
Working	2	5	4	1	1	1	2	16	16
Not Working	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	83	84
Total	2	5	4	1	1	1	2	99	100

Of the 99 pupils who left school before graduation 83 were unemployed. The writer interviewed the one dropout who worked over 30 hours per week. This youngster felt that working was essential to meet the needs of younger brothers and sisters.

TABLE VI  
SCORES ON SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TESTS

Classification of I.Q. Scores	Frequency of Response	Percent of Dropouts
110-114	3	3.03
105-109	4	4.04
100-104	0	0
95-99	12	12.12
90-94	6	6.06
85-89	5	5.05
80-84	10	10.10
75-79	14	14.15
70-74	11	11.11
65-69	0	0
60-64	13	13.13
55-59	5	5.05
50-54	5	5.05
45-49	8	8.08
40-44	3	3.03
Total	99	100.00

Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores. Table VI indicates the I.Q. scores of the 99 dropouts. These scores ranged from a high of 110 - 114 to a low of 40 - 44. There were 14 dropouts with an I.Q. ranging from 75 - 79 for a percentage of 14. The data in table VI were collected from the McComb Public School Counselors.

Of the ten schools interviewed, nine had a program of studies designed to prepare for admission to higher education. The program consisted of studies in English, one foreign language, History, economics, mathematics, and sciences. One Junior High School had a modified program within the school pupils who deviated far from the relatively homogeneous groups of so-called normal pupils.

TABLE VII  
AGE-GRADE PLACEMENT

Grade Placement	Number of Dropouts	Percent of Dropouts	General Scholastic Achievement	Number of Dropouts	Percent of Dropouts
At	11	11.11	Average	18	18.18
Above	1	1.01	Above Average	2	2.02
Below	87	87.88	Below Average	79	79.80
Total	99	100.00	Total	99	100.00

Age-Grade Placment. Of the 99 dropouts, 88 percent were below normal age grade placement. Only one percent of the 99 dropouts were above age-grade placement.

The McComb Public Schools Counselors and Administrators adopted the Stanford Achievement Test to determine the grade placement of all students in the school system. The standardized test is administered to each pupil twice a year, the second week in October and the second week in April.

The Stanford Achievement Test also determines the general scholastic achievement for each pupil. Eighty percent of the 1968 dropouts were below-average in achievement. Only two percent were above-average in achievement.



This data was obtained from the McComb Public School Counselors Test Data Sheets of the McComb Public Schools Testing Center.

TABLE VIII  
ESTIMATED READING LEVEL

Grade	Estimated Reading Level													Total Percent of Dropouts				Total Number of Dropouts
	0.0	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	13.0	a-	per-	per-	
	0.2	1.2	2.2	3.2	4.2	5.2	6.2	7.2	8.2	9.2	10.2	11.2	12.2	above	bove	cent	at cent	
1	1														0	0	0	1
2		1	1												0	0	0	2
3			2	2											0	0	0	6
4			1	1	3										0	0	0	5
5				1	2	1	2	1							0	0	1	6
6				1		1	1	1							0	0	0	4
7				1		3	2	2							0	0	0	9
8					2	1		2	1						0	0	0	6
9					1	4	1	2	1						0	0	0	9
10					4	1	9	3	6	2	2	2			0	0	2	27
11								8		4	6	1	1		1		1	18
12															1	1	0	0
Total All Grades	5	7	7	10	12	14	9	16	2	6	8	1	1	1				99

Estimated Reading Level. Table VIII indicates the estimated reading levels of the 99 dropouts of the McComb Public Schools for 1968. The data was taken from reading charts of homeroom teachers.

Of the 99 pupils who left school in 1968, 93 were below grade-level in reading. Six of the dropouts were reading at or above the estimated reading level.

TABLE IX  
ESTIMATED RANK IN CLASS

	Number of Dropouts	Percent
4th Quarter	0	0
3rd Quarter	10	10.10
2nd Quarter	35	35.35
1st Quarter	54	54.55
Total	99	100.00

Estimated Rank in Class. Fifty-four percent of the 1968 dropouts ranked in the lowest quartertile (or the first quarter). There were no dropouts that ranked in the fourth quarter or the highest quartertile. There were only ten percent of the dropouts that ranked at the third quarter. Forty-seven pupils had failed from 1 - 4 courses at the last report.

TABLE X  
PUPIL FAMILY BACKGROUND

Highest Grade Completed by Father	Number of Dropouts	Percent	Highest Grade Completed by Mother	Number of Dropouts	Percent
1-6	42	42.43	1-6	26	26.26
7-9	33	33.33	7-9	29	29.29
10-12	21	21.21	10-12	39	39.40
13-15	2	2.02	13-15	3	3.03
16-up	1	1.01	16-up	2	2.02
Total 1 - 16	99	100.00		99	100.00

There was a strong relationship between the level of education achieved by parents and the likelihood of children dropping out. Forty-two percent of the fathers and 26 percent of the mothers completed grades 1 - 6. Twenty-one percent of the fathers and 39 percent of the mothers completed grades 10 - 12. There were only one father and two mothers completing grades 16 and above.

TABLE XI  
RESIDENT OF DROPOUTS

Pupil Living With	Dropouts	Percent
Both Natural Parents	13	13.13
Mother Only	39	39.40
Father Only	0	0
Mother and Stepfather	15	15.15
Father and Stepmother	7	7.07
Grandparent	18	18.18
Foster Parent	4	4.04
Relatives	3	3.03
Friends	0	0
Institution	0	0
Total	99	100.00

Residence of Dropouts. Thirty-nine percent of the 99 dropouts indicated "living with mother only." Eighteen percent reported "living with the grandparent." There were three percent that reported "living with relatives" and four percent "living with foster parent." No dropouts reported "living with friends," "the father only" or "in an institution."

TABLE XII  
ECONOMIC STATUS OF RESIDENT

Economic Status	Dropouts	Percent
Public Assistance	47	47.47
Below Average	31	31.32
Average	21	21.21
Above Average	0	0
Total	99	100.00

Economic Status of Resident. Of the 99 dropouts, 47 percent came from families receiving public assistance (Welfare or The Food Stamp Program). Thirty-one percent came from families with below-average income but did not receive public assistance. Twenty-one percent came from families with average income. There were no dropouts from families with above-average income.

TABLE XIII  
ESTIMATED ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME

Family Income	Number of Siblings	Number of Dropouts	Percent of Dropouts
Under \$1,000	4-11	21	21.21
1,000-2,999	5-18	26	26.27
3,000-3,999	4-6	15	15.15
4,000-4,999	4-9	16	16.16
5,000-5,999	4-5	9	9.09
6,00-6,999	4-6	6	6.06
7,000-7,999	4-5	6	6.06
8,000-8,999			
9,000-9,999			
Above 10,000		0	
Total	4-18	99	100.00

Estimated Annual Family Income. From the data reported in Table XIII, the annual income ranged from \$850 to \$9,999. The number of siblings per family ranged from 4-18. Of the 99 dropouts, there were 21 percent from families with an annual income less than \$1,000. Twenty-six percent were from families with an annual income less than \$3,000. Fifteen percent were from families with an annual income less than \$4,000. Sixteen percent from families with an income less than \$5,000.

Dropouts from families with an annual income ranging from \$5,000 to \$9,000 were average. There were no dropouts that came from families with an annual income exceeding \$9,999.

TABLE XIV  
SCHOOL REASON FOR DROPPING OUT

Reason for Dropping Out	Grade												Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Physical Illness										1			1	1.01
Physical Disability				1									1	1.01
Mental Illness														0
Behavior Difficulty					2	2	2		2	3			11	11.11
Academic Difficulty					2				2	1	2		7	7.07
Lack of Appropriate Curriculum														0
Poor Pupil Staff Relationship										4			4	4.04
Dislike of School Experience				1	2	2	2			3	2		12	12.12
Parental Influences										2			2	2.02
Needed at Home														0
Economic Reasons							1		1		2		4	4.04
Employment								2		5	2		9	9.09
Marriage							1	2			1		4	4.04
Pregnancy							2	2		5	4		13	13.13
Reasons Unknown	1	1	4	3	1		1		4	5	2	1	23	23.24
New Residence School Status Unknown		1	2								1		4	4.04
Total Dropouts	1	2	6	5	7	4	9	6	9	29	20	1	99	100.00



School Reasons for Dropping Out. Twenty-three percent of the 99 drop-outs left school for "reasons unknown". There were 13 percent that left because of "pregnancy." Twelve percent left because of "dislike of school experience." Eleven percent left because of "behavior difficulty."

TABLE XV  
PUPIL REASON FOR DROPPING OUT

Pupil Reasons	Grade												Total Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Dislike of School Experience						1	2	1	3	2			9 9.09
Lack of Appropriate Curriculum								1		3	2		6 6.06
Poor Pupil Staff Relationship						2	4	1	1	1			9 9.09
Need at Home							1		1	1	2		5 5.05
Employment											1		1 1.01
Marriage												1	1 1.01
Total Dropouts						3	7	3	5	7	6		31 31.31

Pupils Reasons for Dropping Out. The writer interviewed only 31 of the 99 pupils who left school in 1968 and who remained in the McComb School District. Nine percent of the dropouts admitted leaving school because of "poor pupil staff relationship." Nine percent admitted leaving because of "dislike of school experience." Six percent left because of "lack of appropriate curriculum." Five percent believed that being needed at home was more important than the need for an education.

One percent accepted the fact that marriage was a reason for leaving school before graduation, and one percent reported that employment was essential for livelihood.

TABLE XVI  
ACCEPTANCE BY PEERS

	Number of Dropouts	Percent of Dropouts
Rejected	7	7.07
Tolerated	18	18.18
Accepted	58	58.59
Popular	12	12.12
Unknown	4	4.04
Total	99	100.00

Acceptance by Peers. Fifty-eight percent of the 99 dropouts were accepted by peers. Twelve percent were popular. Seven percent were totally rejected because of behavior difficulties.

TABLE XVII  
DISCIPLINARY RECORD

	Number of Dropouts	Percent
Expulsion	10	10.10
Suspension	1	1.01
Warning	27	27.27
All of the Above	0	0
None of the Above	61	61.62
Total	99	100.00

Disciplinary Record. According to the counselors and administrators, 62 percent of the 99 dropouts that left school in 1968 had no disciplinary record. Twenty-seven percent had been warned of conduct by administrators. Ten percent of the 99 dropouts were punished by school authorities. Only one percent was suspended from school indefinitely.

TABLE XVIII  
SPECIAL EFFORTS MADE BY SCHOOL

	Number of Dropouts	Percent
Referred to Guidance Specialist	13	13.13
Work Study Program	3	3.03
Modified Program	3	3.03
Tutoring	2	2.02
All of the Above	7	7.07
None of the Above	71	71.72
Total	99	100.00

Special Efforts Made by School. Seventy-two percent of the 99 dropouts left school before graduation without the knowledge of school officials. Thirteen percent were referred to a guidance specialist before the actual act of dropping out occurred. Seven percent of the dropouts had the opportunity of receiving the aids pointed out in Table XVIII.

TABLE XIX  
EXIT INTERVIEW WITH WHOM

	Number of Dropouts	Percent
Counselor	3	3.03
Principal	4	4.04
Teacher	2	2.02
Others	2	2.02
Not Held	88	88.89
Total	99	100.00

Exit Interview With Whom. Eighty-nine percent of the 99 dropouts did not attempt to hold an exit interview of any sort. Two percent felt confident to talk with the homeroom teacher. Three percent talked with the school counselor and four percent with the school principal.

TABLE XX  
WHOSE IDEA TO LEAVE SCHOOL

Whose Idea to Leave School	Number of Dropouts	Percent	Parent Attitude Toward Dropping Out		Number of Dropouts	Percent
			Encouraged Leaving	Indifferent		
Pupil	66	66.67	Encouraged Leaving		3	3.03
Relative	1	1.01	Indifferent		32	32.32
Parent	2	2.02	Encouraged Staying		41	41.42
Guardians	1	1.01	Unknown		23	23.23
Friends	4	4.04				
School	1	1.01				
Others	1	1.01				
Unknown	23	23.23				
Total	99	100.00			99	100.00

## INTERPRETATION

There were ten schools in the McComb Public School System. The enrollment of the schools participating in the study ranged from a low of 176 to a high of 886 pupils. On September 12, 1968, the total enrollment for the entire school system was 4,216. By February 29, 1970, the total number of dropouts was 99. The holding power for the McComb Public Schools for 1968 was 4,117.

Of the 99 pupils that left school, 66 were American Negroes and 33 were American Whites.

Seventy-three of the dropouts were male and 26 were female.

Fifty percent of the pupils that left school were high school pupils, grades 10 - 12. There were 25 percent that were elementary pupils, grades 1 - 6, and 24 percent were Junior High, grades 7 - 9.

Sixty-one percent of the pupils had irregular attendance. There were 24 that had regular attendance and 14 with truant attendance.

The age level of the dropouts ranged from 6 - 20. Fifty-five percent occurred between the ages of 15 - 17. Forty-four percent of the pupils that ranged from the ages 15 - 17 were of the male sex. Twenty-three percent occurred between the ages 12 - 14. Eighteen percent of the pupils that ranged from the ages 12 - 14 were of the male sex.

Eighty-three percent of the dropouts were unemployed and 16 percent worked from one to over 30 hours per week.

The I.Q. scores of the 99 pupils ranged from a high of 110 - 114 to a low of 40 - 44. Of the ten schools interviewed, nine had a program of studies designed to prepare for admission to higher education. One junior high school had a modified program within the school.

Of the 99 dropouts, 88 percent were below normal age-grade placement. One percent was above normal age-grade placement.

Eighty percent of the dropouts were below average in achievement. Two percent were above average in achievement. The Stanford Achievement Test determined the grade-placement and scholastic achievement of all the pupils within the school system.

Ninety-three percent of the pupils who dropped out of school in 1968 were below average in reading. Six percent were reading at or above the estimated level.

There were 54 percent of the dropouts ranked in the lowest class quartile. There were no dropouts in the highest class quartile.

A strong relationship points out the level of education achieved by parents, and the likelihood of children dropping out of school. Forty-two percent of the fathers and 26 percent of the mothers completed grades 1 - 6. Twenty-one percent of the fathers and 39 percent of the mothers completed grades 10 - 12. One father and two mothers completed grades 16 and above.

Thirty-nine percent of the dropouts reported living with the mother only. Eighteen percent reported living with grandparents. No dropouts reported living with friends, the father only, or in an institution.

There were no dropouts that came from families with above-average or affluent income. Forty-seven percent came from families receiving public assistance which referred to welfare or the Food Stamp Program.

There were four main reasons why the pupils left school as indicated by counselors, principals and homeroom teachers:



1. Behavioral Difficulty	11 percent
2. Dislike of School Experience	12 percent
3. Pregnancy	13 percent
4. Reasons Unknown	23 percent

The 31 dropouts that were interviewed by the writer gave four main reasons for leaving school:

1. Dislike of School Experience	9 percent
2. Poor pupil staff relationship	9 percent
3. Lack of appropriate curriculum	6 percent
4. Need at home	5 percent

In the McComb Public School System, 59 percent of the pupils that dropped out in 1968 appeared to be accepted by peers. Eighteen percent were tolerated, twelve percent were popular and seven percent were rejected.

Counselors and administrators reported that 62 percent of the 1968 dropouts had no disciplinary record. Twenty-seven percent had been warned of conduct by administrators, ten percent were punished by school authorities and one percent were suspended from school indefinitely.

Seventy-two percent of the 99 dropouts left school without the knowledge of school officials, and 13 percent were referred to a guidance specialist before the actual act of dropping out.

Eighty-nine percent of the dropouts did not attempt to hold an exit interview of any sort. There were two percent who felt confident to talk with the homeroom teacher, three percent with the school counselor and four percent with the school principal.

Thirty-two percent of the parents interviewed had indifferent attitudes towards dropping out. Three percent of the parents encouraged leaving.

Forty-one percent encouraged staying and the attitude of 23 percent of parents was unknown.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the major factors associated with the dropout problem in the McComb Public School System. Information gathered in this investigation may prove to be valuable to educators in the McComb Public School System in trying to improve the holding power of the schools.

To the writer's knowledge no formal studies have been made toward seeking to find the major factors associated with pupil's dropping out of school. This investigation might be useful to McComb educators doing related research.

The specific objectives were to determine through interviews with parents, children, principals, counselors and homeroom teachers:

1. The major factors associated with the dropout problem in McComb, Mississippi.
2. What high school counselors and other educators have done to help alleviate the dropout problem.
3. What may be done at the elementary level to motivate and encourage boys and girls to stay in school.

### IMPLICATIONS

1. Since most of the elementary pupils who dropped out were below average in age-grade placement, careful thought should be given to social promotion at the elementary level.

2. It is recommended that elementary and secondary schools pay increased attention to the probability of dropouts, especially as students pass their 11th birthday. Some suggested procedures for helping to reduce the incidents of dropouts are more frequent conferences with students, remediation work, more learning activities which include physical activity and individualization of instruction.

3. It was found that dropouts tend to occur more often among students who score below the average on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, and who read below their age-grade level. The following recommendations are made:

- a. Extreme care should be exercised in interpreting scholastic aptitude test scores to students and their parents.
- b. The schools should institute immediately a program in developmental reading especially for those students who are found to have reading difficulties.
- c. Serious thought should be given to holding summer school for those students, both elementary and secondary, who are behind in their achievement level.

4. Educators should become active in helping to find employment for parents, and part-time employment for students. This recommendation stems from the fact that dropouts are highly associated with unemployment and low income of families.

5. Since the majority of the dropouts occur during the junior-senior years in high school, the schools might seriously consider instituting programs in vocational and technical education as means of increasing interest in school work and as a means of making education relevant to the students objectives.

6. Careful observation should be made of the attendance, performance and attitude of all students in order to spot potential dropouts.

## APPENDIX A

.

1019 North Warren Street  
McComb, Mississippi  
September 7, 1969

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am in the process of completing the requirements for a master's degree at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. I have chosen to do a special report to meet some of these requirements. The report is centered around dropouts.

I am enclosing a questionnaire that I would like for you to fill out and return to me at your earliest convenience.

Please state numbers for item E under I, and item II.

Thank you very kindly for giving this matter your immediate attention.

Yours truly,

(Mrs.) Doris E. McGowan

Enclosure: 1

## Q U E S T I O N N A I R E

- I. School Identification
- A. Name of School \_\_\_\_\_
- B. County School Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- II. The enrollment of your school for 1967-68 \_\_\_\_\_
- The enrollment of your school for 1968-69 \_\_\_\_\_.
- III. According to your 1968-69 annual report, how many dropouts did you have in your school? \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. Are you willing for the writer to visit your school? \_\_\_\_\_
- V. Are you willing for your school to participate in an experimental study concerning dropouts? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- VI. Would you give the writer permission to examine your inactive cumulative folders? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- VII. Would you give the writer permission to talk with you, your counselors, or homeroom teachers concerning dropouts?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## SCHOOL VISIT - QUESTIONNAIRE

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Last Address \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Person Completing Form \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_



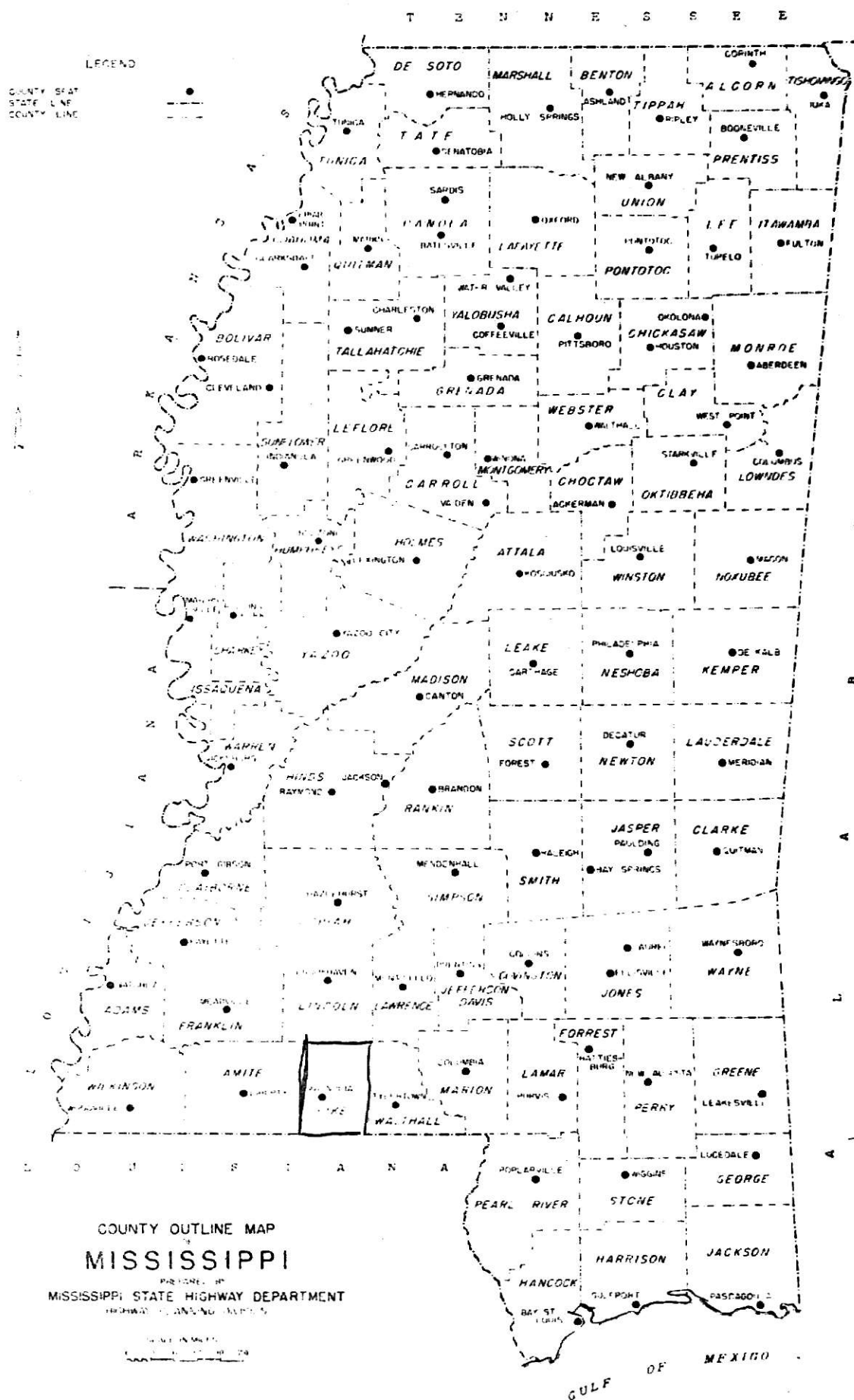
## SCHOOL VISIT - QUESTIONNAIRE

- I. The Enrollment of Your School  
Boys \_\_\_\_\_ Girls \_\_\_\_\_
- II. Pupil Identification  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_  
Nationality \_\_\_\_\_  
Ethnic Origin \_\_\_\_\_
- III. Pupil Status at Time of Dropping Out  
Date of Exit \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade at Exit \_\_\_\_\_  
Age at Exit \_\_\_\_\_
- IV. Employment: Hours per Week  
Not Working \_\_\_\_\_  
1 - 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
6 - 10 \_\_\_\_\_  
11 - 15 \_\_\_\_\_  
16 - 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
21 - 30 \_\_\_\_\_  
Over 30 \_\_\_\_\_  
Unknown \_\_\_\_\_
- V. I.Q. Scholastic Aptitude Score \_\_\_\_\_
- VI. Age-Grade Placement \_\_\_\_\_  
At \_\_\_\_\_  
Above \_\_\_\_\_ Years Above \_\_\_\_\_  
Below \_\_\_\_\_ Years Below \_\_\_\_\_
- VII. Estimated Reading Level \_\_\_\_\_  
At \_\_\_\_\_  
Above \_\_\_\_\_ Years Above \_\_\_\_\_  
Below \_\_\_\_\_ Years Below \_\_\_\_\_
- VIII. Estimated Rank in Class \_\_\_\_\_  
Highest Quartile \_\_\_\_\_  
Next Highest \_\_\_\_\_  
Third Highest \_\_\_\_\_  
Lowest \_\_\_\_\_
- IX. Pupil Family Background  
Highest Grade Completed by Father \_\_\_\_\_  
Highest Grade Completed by Mother \_\_\_\_\_
- X. Residence of Dropouts  
Both Natural Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother Only \_\_\_\_\_ Father Only \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother and Stepfather \_\_\_\_\_  
Father and Stepmother \_\_\_\_\_  
Grandparents \_\_\_\_\_  
Foster Parents \_\_\_\_\_ Relatives \_\_\_\_\_  
Friends \_\_\_\_\_ Institution \_\_\_\_\_

- XI. Economic Status of Resident  
 Below Average \_\_\_\_\_  
 Average \_\_\_\_\_  
 Above Average \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affluent \_\_\_\_\_  
 Unknown \_\_\_\_\_
- XII. Annual Family Income  
 Under \$1,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 1,001 - 2,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2,001 - 3,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3,000 - 5,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5,000 - 7,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 7,000 - 10,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 10,001 - 15,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Above 15,000 \_\_\_\_\_
- XIII. School Reason for Dropping Out  
 Physical Illness \_\_\_\_\_  
 Physical Disability \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mental Illness \_\_\_\_\_  
 Behavioral Difficulty \_\_\_\_\_  
 Academic Difficulty \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lack of Appropriate Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_  
 Poor Pupil Staff Relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dislike of School Experiences \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parental Influence \_\_\_\_\_  
 Need at Home \_\_\_\_\_  
 Economic Reasons \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Known Reasons \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employment \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Pregnancy \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reasons Unknown \_\_\_\_\_  
 New Residence, School Status Unknown \_\_\_\_\_
- XIV. Pupil's Reason \_\_\_\_\_
- XV. Acceptance by Peers:  
 Rejected \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tolerated \_\_\_\_\_  
 Accepted \_\_\_\_\_  
 Popular \_\_\_\_\_  
 Unknown \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are Closest Friends Out of School? \_\_\_\_\_
- XVI. Disciplinary Record  
 Expulsion \_\_\_\_\_  
 Suspension \_\_\_\_\_  
 Warning \_\_\_\_\_  
 All of the Above \_\_\_\_\_  
 None of the Above \_\_\_\_\_

- XVII. Special Efforts Made by School  
Referred to Guidance Specialist \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Study Program \_\_\_\_\_  
Modified Program \_\_\_\_\_  
Tutoring \_\_\_\_\_  
All of the Above \_\_\_\_\_  
None of the Above \_\_\_\_\_  
Others \_\_\_\_\_
- XVIII. Exit Interview with Whom  
Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Principal \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_ Not Held \_\_\_\_\_
- XIX. Whose Idea to Leave School  
Pupil's \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's \_\_\_\_\_ Guardian's \_\_\_\_\_  
Relatives \_\_\_\_\_ Friends \_\_\_\_\_ Schools \_\_\_\_\_  
Others \_\_\_\_\_ Was Parent Contacted \_\_\_\_\_
- XX. Parent's Attitude Toward Dropping Out  
Encouraged Leaving \_\_\_\_\_  
Indifferent \_\_\_\_\_  
Encouraged Staying \_\_\_\_\_  
Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B



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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DROPOUT PROBLEM  
IN THE McCOMB, MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Doris E. McGowan

B.S., Alcorn A & M College, 1960

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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 Curriculum and Instruction

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the major factors associated with children dropping out of school before graduation in the McComb Public Schools of McComb, Mississippi; what high school counselors and other educators have done to help alleviate the dropout problem; and what may be done at the elementary level to motivate and encourage boys and girls to stay in school.

Counselors, teachers and administrators of the McComb, Mississippi Public Schools have focused some attention on the number of pupils that leave school before graduation. McComb Public School educators have talked about making an effort to improve the holding power of the schools by erecting an Alpha Center for children who have an I.Q. range of approximately 50 - 75. But, to the knowledge of this writer, no formal studies have been made in the McComb, Mississippi Public School System concerning the dropout problem.

To begin the study a letter and questionnaire combined was designed and sent to each of the ten school principals of the McComb Public School System. The letter stated the purpose for the study. The questionnaire was designed to obtain general information about each school in the McComb Public School System. The questionnaire also asked for permission to visit the schools, examine inactive cumulative folders, and an opportunity to have conferences with teachers, administrators and counselors concerning dropouts.

Ten schools responded to the questionnaire for a percentage of 100.

In order to gain as much specific information as possible about each dropout a second questionnaire was designed. From this questionnaire, the writer was better able to determine the major factors associated with children dropping out of school.

The study revealed that the enrollment of the schools participating ranged from a low of 176 to a high of 886 pupils. On September 12, 1968, the total enrollment for the entire elementary and secondary school system was 4,216. By February 29, 1970, the total number of dropouts was 99. The holding power of the McComb Public Schools for 1968 as determined by this study was 97 percent.

There was a close relationship between the level of education achieved by parents and the likelihood of children dropping out of school. Forty-two percent of the fathers of the dropouts completed grades 1 - 6. Thirty-nine percent of the mothers completed grades 10 - 12. One father and two mothers completed grades 16 and above.

Thirty-nine percent of the dropouts reported living with the mother only. Eighteen percent reported living with grandparents. No dropouts reported living with friends, the father only, or in an institution.

There were no dropouts from families with above-average incomes. Forty-seven percent were from families receiving public assistance consisting of welfare or The Food Stamp Program.

Of the 99 pupils that left school, 73 percent were boys, and 26 percent were girls.

There were two major reasons why the pupils left school as indicated by counselors, principals and homeroom teachers:

1. Behavioral Difficulty
2. Dislike of School Experience

Thirteen percent of the girls left because of pregnancy.

Twenty-three percent of the pupils dropped out for reasons unknown.

The 31 of 99 dropouts that were interviewed by the writer gave these four major reasons for leaving school:

1. Dislike of School Experience
2. Poor Pupil-Staff Relationship
3. Lack of Appropriate Curriculum
4. Needed at Home

According to counselors, administrators and students in the McComb Public School System, 59 percent of the pupils who dropped out in 1968 were accepted by peers, 18 percent were tolerated, 13 percent were popular, and 9 percent were rejected.