



Peer group violence as a factor in the high school dropout problem.

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PEER GROUP VIOLENCE AS A FACTOR
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PROBLEM

A Dissertation Presented

By

ROBERT H. CARRIERE

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University of Massachusetts in
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PEER GROUP VIOLENCE AS A FACTOR
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PROBLEM

A Dissertation

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Peer Group Violence As A Factor
In The High School Dropout Problem
(May 1973)

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A B S T R A C T

This study was concerned with the hypothesis that peer group violence is one real but unstated reason why a small percentage of youngsters do drop out of school.

The study was conducted in a medium size New England city with a population of about seventy thousand inhabitants. There are some twelve thousand public school students in the community, ninety-eight percent of whom are white. The community is relatively large in area and has no densely populated districts.

The design was a non-experimental investigation using the written questionnaire to gather information pertinent to the purposes of the study. The names of the respondents were not sought in order to relieve anxiety in respect to the personal nature of the items.

The survey population consisted of one hundred and twenty members comprising the entire enrollment of an evening school program specifically oriented to providing opportunity for former dropouts to complete their high school education.

To assure responses from all members of the population, the writer received permission to personally distribute and conduct the survey which the evening school was in session. Follow-up visits were made to insure that all enrollees in the program were surveyed.

As a result of the study, tables were developed which identified the relationship of peer group violence and early school withdrawal as perceived by this group.

The hypothesis that peer group violence is a factor in the dropout problem in this community was accepted. The data obtained in the study provided evidence to support the hypothesis.

As indicated by the data, it was found that four percent of the total survey population viewed peer group violence as an important factor in their decision to withdraw from school. Although males were more apt to experience direct peer group violence, it was evident from the study that females were also subjected to violence.

In addition to the relationship of violence and early withdrawal from school, it was observed that threats or violence had a negative effect on the desire to learn for nine percent of the total population.

This study does not recommend a specific program to curb violence in our schools for this would necessitate trial and evaluation. However, as a result of the interpretation of the data, the writer believes that a successful program must allow for the direct involvement of students.

As evidenced by the data, students did not consider police very effective in performing protective functions. Although students saw

principals and teachers as playing a more important role than police in this function, most faith and responsibility was placed with their fellow students.

Perhaps the most essential ingredient in an effective program would be the mechanism under which peer group pressure could be brought to bear upon those who inflict violence on their fellow students.

It was the purpose of this dissertation to give credence to the proposition that peer group violence does, indeed, exist as a factor in the high school dropout problem in this community.

Proposals for further research in several specific areas and a detailed review of the literature are contained in the study.

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C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

To combat society's declining acceptance of untrained youth, schools are making headway in prolonging education for a greater percentage of students each year. However, the adolescent population is growing faster than dropout rates are decreasing with the result that each year a slightly greater number withdraw from school. According to estimates, the 1960's produced some 7,500,000 job seekers without high school diplomas.¹

A review of the literature has revealed many investigations into the basic causes of early school leaving. However, this writer believes that in some instances the reasons given by the dropouts are rationalizations for more fundamental problems. Specifically, it is the belief of this writer that peer group violence is one real but unstated reason for a small percentage of youngsters who do drop out of school.

If we hope to reduce the number of dropouts in the future, we must discover and diagnose the true causes before we can hope to effect the cures.

¹Abraham J. Tannenbaum. Dropout or Diploma. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1966.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the hypothesis that peer group violence is a factor in the high school dropout problem.

This writer assumes that in some instances, the reason given by the student at the time of leaving may be used as a face-saving device for his true reason for withdrawing from school--namely, fear of peer group violence. The decision to leave school helps the youngsters to reduce some of his anxiety because it removes the threat to his self-concept.

Information pertinent to the above hypothesis should be of substantial value to administrators, teachers and others concerned with developing effective new approaches to the dropout problem.

The Need for the Study

Existing studies involving early school withdrawal have provided significant data needed by educators in developing dropout prevention programs. This is attested to by the increased holding power of the schools. However, continued research into the reasons why students leave school is necessary if we are ever to eliminate the problem. If we are to reduce the number of dropouts, we must know why they dropped out.

Many investigations have been conducted to determine why students drop out of school. However, this writer was unable to discover any study directly related to peer group violence as a factor in this problem.

To learn first-hand, how the dropout sees the situation, Weber and Motz² interviewed two groups of Negro dropouts who had been enrolled in inner-city schools of a large eastern city. One of the reasons these former students gave for leaving school was the problems going to and from school, which included being attacked by organized groups. In their study involving disadvantaged inner-city dropouts, Weber and Motz³ discovered that gang war pressures on some boys to pay protection money, fighting, gambling and drinking occurred to such an extent that policemen were also considered school functionaries. However, they were considered ineffective in performing protective functions.

Harrington⁴ points out that during the Los Angeles student disorders, some one thousand students stayed away from school for fear of violence.

Millard,⁵ in "Some Clinical Notes on Dropouts," asserts that mental health be brought more into the basic causes of early school leaving. He reveals that the usual explanations as offered by the youngsters cannot be accepted because they are rationalizations covering up more basic and fundamental conflicts.

²George H. Weber and Annabelle B. Motz. "School as Perceived by the Dropout," Journal of Negro Education, Volume 37, Spring 1968, pp. 127-134.

³Ibid.

⁴John H. Harrington. "L.A.'s Student Blowout," Phi Delta Kappan, Volume 50, October 1968, p. 75.

⁵Thomas L. Millard. "Some Clinical Notes on Dropouts," Journal of Secondary Education, Volume 39, December 1964, pp. 343-347.

Unmanageable hostility toward classmates, disinterest in learning or truancy are but surface descriptions of school difficulty. Far more fundamental forces are fear and anxiety, feelings of inferiority, hatred, aggressiveness, guilt and other mental disorders that prevent youngsters from assembling a well-organized and stable personality able to relate itself in a more positive way with the influences interacting with it.⁶

It is expected that the conclusions of this investigation into peer group violence as a factor in the dropout problem will contribute one more segment to the body of knowledge about early school withdrawal.

Design

This study was conducted in a medium size New England city with a population of some seventy thousand inhabitants. There are about twelve thousand public school students in the community, ninety-eight percent of whom are white. The community is relatively large in area and has no densely populated districts.

The design of the study was a non-experimental investigation using the written questionnaire to gather information pertinent to the purposes of the study.

The survey group consisted of one hundred and twenty members comprising the entire enrollment of an evening school program specifically oriented to providing opportunity for former dropouts to complete their high school education.

Due to the nature of the study, the writer assumed that the respondents would react more honestly and candidly to an anonymous questionnaire than they would in a personal interview.

⁶Ibid.

To assure responses from all members of the group, the writer received permission to personally distribute and conduct the survey while the evening school was in session. Follow-up visits were made to insure that all enrollees in the program were surveyed.

The fact that the entire population was included in the study negated the need for using a sampling technique. A descriptive analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.

Limitations of the Study

This study will not attempt to delve into the psychological or emotional aspects of fear in regard to violence. Its inquiry is limited to determining if, indeed, peer group violence as perceived by students does exist as a factor in the dropout problem in this community.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

Dropout.

A dropout is a person who does not complete twelve grades of school for reasons other than illness, death, transfer to other schools, commitment to correctional institutions, or expulsion. (This person cannot be identified by any particular code--he may come from every walk of life, any social-environmental background, and every educational level.)⁷

Violence.

An act of behavior designed to inflict physical injury to people or to damage property.

⁷G. V. Campbell. "Review of the Dropout Problem," Peabody Journal of Education, Volume 44, September 1966, pp. 102-109.

Organization

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter one introduces the problem, purpose, need, and limitations of the study. Chapter two reviews the literature. Chapter three discusses the design, instrument, and procedure for collection of data. Chapter four presents an analysis of the data. Chapter five provides the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and need for future research.

C H A P T E R I I

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

An exhaustive review of the literature related to the school dropout would be a prodigious task. Schreiber⁸ states that over one thousand references to the dropout problem have been published. Over two hundred studies have been made in the past decade. Although many studies arrive at specific research conclusions, many others are reviews or interpretations of previous findings.

This review attempts to categorize the literature into the following general areas:

1. The Problem Encountered by the Dropout
2. Characteristics of the Dropout
3. Characteristics of the Potential Dropout
4. Reasons for Dropping out of School
5. Delinquency-Violence and the Dropout
6. Possible Solutions to the Dropout Problem
 - A. Current Programs
 - B. What the Schools Can Do
 - C. Educator's Part
7. Prospects for the Future

1. The Problem Encountered by the Dropout.

One of the first problems which the dropout encounters after leaving school is the shortage of jobs. His limited education will,

⁸Daniel Schreiber. "700,000 Dropouts," American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 5-7.

with few exceptions, continue to affect his job potential and his job status for the remainder of his working career.

The estimates of having only five percent of jobs in the 1970's of the unskilled type in our complex society are understandable. Only lower economic wages and irregular employment are the promises of the future that face the dropout.⁹

Schreiber¹⁰ points out that the dropout is relegated to a lower status--"This working life will be passed in low-level jobs paying low wages and susceptible to layoffs. He is forced to be content or discontent with relatively little, surely with less than was possible. The future faced by the dropout, the vocationally incompetent, is a future of social failure and economic suicide."

During periods of high employment such as our war years, the dropout is often able to find some type of job and does not become too great a burden on society. Today, however, technological changes, automation, the population explosion and a decelerated economy combine to severely jeopardize the employment opportunities for dropouts.

With today's jobs calling for higher skills and responsibilities, it would appear that even a stimulated economy would not provide employment now and in the future seems to be a certainty for these vocationally disadvantaged youths.

⁹Campbell, Op. cit.

¹⁰Daniel L. Schreiber. "The School Dropout--A Profile," Educational Digest, Volume 30, October 1964, pp. 10-14.

Schreiber writes,

The United States, no matter how productive and affluent it is, cannot afford to have almost one million youths dropout of school each year to become unwanted and unemployed. The accumulation of the millions of excluded and alienated young adults cannot and will not remain quiescent.¹¹

Novak views the dropouts as objects of serious social concern when he states,

The dropout represents not only a waste of human resources, but is prey to demoralization, hostility, and delinquency and crime as he drifts in a vacuum of idleness.¹²

2. Characteristics of Dropouts.

The first step in improving the dropout rate is to understand the problem. Zeller, in "Lowering the Odds on Student Dropouts," writes,

Too often teachers and even some administrators hold misconceptions about dropouts that have no basis in fact. Usually these misconceptions stem from believing one or more of the following myths.¹³

Myth #1: The dropout problem is a relatively new one.

At the turn of the century, eighty-five to ninety percent of all students entering high school left before graduation.

Hence, it is not the dropout problem that is new, but rather the "concern" about students who leave school before completing their education.

Myth #2: Reasons for leaving school fall into diagnostic categories.

A stereotyped caricature of the school dropout has evolved--low

¹¹Daniel Schreiber. "700,000 Dropouts." American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 5-7.

¹²Benjamin J. Novak. "Looking Realistically at the Dropout Problem." Education, Volume 86, October 1965, pp. 82-85.

¹³Robert Zeller. "Lowering the Odds on Student Dropouts." Successful School Management Series, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966. pp. 11-13.

intelligence, low socio-economic background, poorly developed reading skills, withdrawn or aggressive behavior, and a feeling of not belonging to the school.

Unfortunately, such a list fails to explain the exceptions.

Myth #3: All dropouts fall into a particular type. A personality myth has developed that has given birth to a number of false generalizations.

One frequent generalization is that the dropout is a juvenile delinquent or a trouble-maker. All of the larger studies show that delinquents account for only a minority of the total number of school leavers.

Another phase of the "dropout personality" myth is the idea that dropouts as a group, are unintelligent. While as a group, dropouts will have a lower measured academic intelligence, many who leave school are among the brightest in their class.

Myth #4: The solution to the dropout program is required school attendance.

To persuade a dropout to return to school is not necessarily a solution if he returns to the same situation that he left. In some areas, counselors have worked long and hard to encourage students to return, only to have seventy percent of them drop out again within a year.

While statistics on the dropout problem are important, it is necessary to know the factors which influence students to leave school before we can arrive at solutions to the problem.

To keep youths in school attention must be focussed on a meaningful curriculum, enlightened guidance efforts, and a program of financial aids.¹⁴

¹⁴M. L. Thompson and R. H. Nelson. "Twelve Approaches to Remedy the Dropout Problem." Clearing House, Volume 41, December 1966, pp. 238-242.

The authors, summarizing an N.E.A. Research Report¹⁵ provide the following description of the characteristics of the dropout.

The average dropout is sixteen years old; often he has been marking time, waiting to reach the age when he may legally quit school. He is most likely to quit between the ninth and tenth, or the tenth and eleventh grades. It is especially likely that he will not return after a summer session.

As a rule, the dropout has shunned participating in extracurricular activities, and he may have failed to become part of a social group within the school.

Usually his relationships with his teachers and many of his fellow students indicate tension, suspicion, and strain. His poor attendance record, lack of interest, and failure to cooperate have contributed to his being retarded by about two years. Before leaving school, he may have spent as many years there as one who graduates, but because he has probably been held back rather than promoted regularly he will not have completed the full program by the end of his attendance period.

The typical dropout's parents are unimpressed with the value of education; often they openly scorn "book learning." In addition, the family is likely to regard school as a financial burden; not only does it cost something to keep a child in school, but the family is deprived of the money which the boy or girl could be contributing to the budget.

Although each dropout is an individual whose reasons for dropping out are peculiar to himself, Schreiber's¹⁶ study developed the following portrait of an average dropout.

- 1) He is first past his sixteenth birthday.
- 2) Has average or below average intelligence.
- 3) More likely to be a boy than a girl.
- 4) Functioning below his potential.
- 5) Below grade level in reading.

¹⁵National Education Association, Research Division. Estimates of School Statistics, 1960-1961. Research Report, 1960. Washington, D.C.: The Association, December, 1960, p. 12. [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "700,000 Dropouts."

¹⁶Schreiber, Op. cit.

- 6) Academically he is in the lowest quartile.
- 7) He is slightly over age for his grade.
- 8) Held back once in the elementary or junior high school grades.
- 9) He has not been in trouble with the law although he does take up an inordinate amount of the school administrator's time because of truancy and discipline.
- 10) He seldom participates in extra-curricular activities.
- 11) He feels rejected by the school, and in turn rejects the school.
- 12) His parents were school dropouts, as were his older brothers and sisters.
- 13) He says that he is leaving school because of lack of interest but that he will get a high school diploma in some way or other because without it he cannot get a good job.
- 14) He knows the reception that awaits him in the outside world, yet believes it cannot be worse than remaining in school.

Russell¹⁷ in analyzing work-study programs observed that some were very successful while others failed miserably. He noted the critical elements associated with success or failure appeared to be rooted in the dropout courses themselves rather than in the programs. He then searched out characteristics of dropout prone youngsters and related these to school programs. These characteristics fell into three categories.

The first includes youngsters who present difficulties in the school setting but who fit adequately into the world of work. A number of their social and cultural characteristics are quite familiar: orientation toward immediate vocational goals, an image of masculinity-femininity which differs from the standard middle-class concept. Boys that associate masculinity with aggressive sexual and thrill-seeking behavior. Girls may place high value on submissiveness, marriage,

¹⁷Kenneth Russell. "Stay in School." American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 8-13.

maternalism, and anti-intellectualism. Dropout programs should attempt primarily to assure acceptance and a place for these students in the school setting since there is no reason for the youngsters to change in order to fit into jobs and society.

The second category includes individuals who have trouble adjusting to both school and society. They have a variety of anti-social symptoms: low-esteem, usually accompanied by poor social adjustment; a fatalistic attitude, the feeling that one has no power to influence his environment; a negative view of adults and authority figures in general; a disinclination toward self-control, organization, and striving toward a goal; an emotional and non-analytical approach toward life's problems; a familial, community, or peer group orientation that is non-academic. Values significant to these youngsters may lie in possessing a job regardless of its quality, or in the responsibilities of marriage, or in freedom from restraint, or in plain rebelliousness. Basic attitude needs to be changed.

The students in the third category may require special treatment within the school and sometimes help from outside the school. Some fail to perform adequately in the normal school setting because of health or physical problems, emotional maladjustment, or immaturity. Low, basic intelligence is another condition in this group. Financial need of the student or his family is another consideration.

Intelligence

Warner¹⁸ states that the image of the dropout as lazy, unambitious and below average in scholastic ability is like all stereotypes--oversimplified and based on uncritical judgment. He refers to a U.S. Department of

¹⁸Ray O. Warner. "The Scholastic Ability of School Dropouts." School Life, Volume 47, October 1964, pp. 21-22.

Labor Survey¹⁹ of 21,000 dropouts in seven communities, three states, four cities, and one county which showed that bright as well as slow pupils drop out of school.

	<u>Percent of Population At Each Level</u>	<u>Percent of Dropouts At Each Level</u>	<u>Difference (Percent)</u>
IQ RANGE			
110 and above	30.7	11	-19.7
90 to 109	46.5	50	+ 3.5
80 to 89	14.5	20	+ 5.5
Below 80	8.2	19	+10.8

Warner²⁰ suggests that eleven percent of the dropouts represented in the surveys had the ability to complete college. The fifty percent in the 90-109 range could have completed post-high-school vocational-technical programs. He then applies the above percentages to the 7.5 million students estimated to have dropped out of school between 1960 and 1970. He shows that 825,000 students who have the ability to complete college work and 3,750,000 who have the ability to complete post-high school vocational-technical training will not reach these goals. In addition, about 1.5 million young people with IQ's of 80 to 89 will drop out of school with little or no vocational preparation. They will not be able to qualify for

¹⁹U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "School and Early Employment of Youth": A Report of Seven Communities 1952-1957, Bulletin 1277. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1960. [Cited by] Ray O. Warner, "The Scholastic Ability of School Dropouts."

²⁰Warner, Op. cit.

the vocational-technical programs. At the same time, they fall outside the programs of special education that most states provide for pupils with IQ's below 80.

Reading Retardation

Cervantes²¹ observes that of greater importance from an analytic viewpoint than the question of IQ was the inability of the dropout to read accurately, to communicate freely, and the frequency of retardation. He claims almost one-third of graduates were retarded in school by one year or more but a startling four out of five of dropouts were one or more years behind the normal grade for their age.

Schreiber cites a study by Nachman²² in which it was found that 75.4 percent of the dropouts for whom reading test information was available scored below the median for their grade level; 53.4 percent were in the bottom quartile.

Grade Retention and School Achievement

Citing the Maryland State Department of Education Study (1963), Schreiber²³ notes that one-half of the dropouts had been compelled to repeat a grade at least once in the elementary or junior high school.

²¹ Lucius F. Cervantes. The Dropout: Causes and Cures. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1965. p. 252.

²² Leonard R. Nachman and others. Pilot Study of Ohio High School Dropouts, 1961-1962. Ohio State Department of Education, 1963. [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout-Causes and Consequences." Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Fourth Edition. London: Macmillan Company, 1969. pp. 308-315.

²³ Maryland State Department of Education. Our Dropouts: What Can Schools Do? The Department, 1963, [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout-Causes and Consequences."

Referring to the Los Angeles City School District Study (1965), Schreiber²⁴ revealed that the subject marks of the dropouts during their last school year were substantially below those of the graduates. The dropout had a grade-point average of 1.19 (D); the graduate had a grade-point average of 2.63 (B-). Yet thirty percent of the dropouts were making C averages or better. Even at the junior high school level, grade seven, the differences in the school marks were quite apparent. The future dropouts had "C" averages (passing), while the future graduates had "B" averages.

Personality, Attitudes, and Interests

French and Cardon²⁵ in a Pennsylvania Study of dropouts with IQ's of 110 and above attempted to provide some of the needed information concerning intellectually above-average youth. They found that these dropouts differed from graduates in such areas as personality, attitudes and interests.

Personality

Males: uninhibited, frankness of speech, assertive, independent, unconventional, and more rebellious than the persisters. The personality description of unmarried female dropouts basically the same.

The girls who withdrew because of pregnancy and for marriage were far less socially oriented than were the persisters; more inclined to work alone; tended to be shy and retiring.

²⁴Los Angeles City School District. Dropouts vs. Graduates. Report No. 266. The District, 1965. [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout-Causes and Consequences."

²⁵Joseph L. French and Bartell W. Cardon. "Characteristics of High Mental Ability School Dropouts." Vocational Guidance Quarterly, Volume 16, March 1968, pp. 162-168.

Attitudes

Difference from persisters--matter of degree--parents considered school to be important. Expressed concern that schools were not preparing students for the "real" world. Lack of student involvement in course selection--felt that they knew their own needs and expectations. Emotional gap between male dropouts and their teachers. Dropouts tended to complain more about the strong forces within the school to conform. They emphasized the importance of being able to be an individual.

Interests

The dropouts expressed greater interest in mechanical activities. The items which differentiated persisters from dropouts related to speaking and writing, art and music, and other socially accepted "highly thought of" activities.

Ninety percent of the dropouts stated they were interested in furthering their education. Eighty-eight percent of the unmarried dropouts and ninety-two percent of the married dropouts were either involved in educational activities or expressed such an interest.

The purpose of a study by Randall²⁶ in the Bloomington, Minnesota Public School District was to determine dropout characteristics and what happens to the student after he drops out. A random sample of fifty-two dropouts were interviewed to obtain information about their occupations, attitudes, adolescent experiences and parental characteristics.

²⁶Charles V. Randall and others. A Study of Early Childhood Leavers and Significant Causes. Bloomington Public Schools, Minnesota. Ed. 014086, R.I.E., Summer 1966.

The attitudes of the dropouts interviewed towards the subjects they had taken, their teacher, and the activities offered were generally favorable. However, their behavior in school left something to be desired as over seventy-three percent of those interviewed had been referred to the principal for disciplinary reasons and almost half had been suspended from school for violations of regulations. It was interesting to note that in spite of the high incidence of disciplinary action, over two-thirds of the dropouts said they were encouraged to remain in school or return the following year.

Home and Family

The goal of Cervantes,²⁷ classic study was to investigate and analyze the social background and personality characteristics of three hundred youths, half of whom continued their education at least to graduation from high school and half of whom dropped out of high school.

The design of the study²⁸ was that each pair of respondents, one of whom was a dropout and the other a stay-in would be of the same sex, age, IQ, attend the same school, and have the same general socioeconomic background. Since both the dropouts and stay-in would be processed with the identical questions, the salient factors would more likely become evident.

Understanding and Acceptance Within the Home (In Percentages)

	VERY LITTLE	LITTLE	MODERATE	MUCH	VERY MUCH
DROPOUTS	43	41	9	5	2
GRADUATES	3	15	20	24	38

²⁷Cervantes, Op. cit.

²⁸Ibid.

The overwhelming majority of the graduates see their families as accepting each other as complete persons; the overwhelming majority of the dropouts see their families as failing to accept each other as complete persons.²⁹

Communication Within the Home (In Percentages)

	VERY INFREQUENT	INFREQUENT	MODERATE	FREQUENT	VERY FREQUENT
DROPOUTS	43	38	11	6	2
GRADUATES	3	17	20	24	36

Eighty-one percent (43% + 38%) of the dropouts receive their life's basic orientation in a family of inadequate intercommunication and eighty percent (20% + 24% + 36%) of the graduates receive their life's basic orientation in a family of at least adequate intercommunication.³⁰

Confiding in Other Members of the Family

	WITH NONE OF FAMILY	WITH 25% OF FAMILY	WITH 50% OF FAMILY	WITH 75% OF FAMILY	WITH 100% OF FAMILY
DROPOUTS	35	27	25	10	3
GRADUATES	7	5	14	16	58

The above distribution by percentages was in reply to the question: "And at home, how many were there that you could say accept you, and you like to confide in and you enjoy being with?"

Hypothesis: The dropout has primary relationships with a smaller percentage of his family than does the graduate.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

³¹ Ibid., p. 34.

Happiness Within the Home (In Percentages)

	VERY UNHAPPY	UNHAPPY	INDIFFERENT	HAPPY	VERY HAPPY
DROPOUTS	35	27	25	10	3
GRADUATES	17	5	14	16	48

The typical home of the dropout is reported as unhappy (35% + 27%) and the typical home of the graduate is reported as happy (16% + 48%).

The hypothesis that the dropout population would report their homes to be less happy than would the student population is validated at the .001 level of confidence.³²

In another set of findings dealing with home and family, Cervantes³³ revealed:

- 1) There is a higher incidence of divorce, desertion, delinquency, and dropouts among the families of the dropouts.
- 2) There is a higher incidence of divorce, desertion, delinquency, and dropouts among dropouts' family friends.

Hunt,³⁴ citing a study by Mannino which compared the parental attitudes of students who dropped out with those who did not, matched on socioeconomic background, and found that the mothers of students who stayed in school were more likely to have encouraged their children's schooling and to have been acquainted with families whose children attended college. "Mothers of lower class high school students exert a much stronger influence

³² Ibid., p. 35.

³³ Ibid., p. 53.

³⁴ David E. Hunt. "Adolescence: "Cultural Deprivation, Poverty, and the Dropout." Review of Educational Research, Volume 36, October 1966, pp. 463-473.

upon the aspirations and career plans of their children than do the mothers of middle class students (aspiration is really a wish) while with middle class parents it is an expectation."

In Schreiber's review,³⁵ he observes that in the Los Angeles City School District Study (1965), it was found that almost one-fourth of the parents of dropouts encouraged their children to dropout, and another one-fourth were indifferent; fewer than one-half of the parents of dropouts encouraged their children to stay in school. In further analyzing the Los Angeles Study, Schreiber states:

In Los Angeles, a comparison of the occupational statuses of parents of dropouts and of graduates revealed that whereas almost one-half of the parents of dropouts were employed in unskilled service, or semi-skilled occupations, only one-sixth of the parents of graduates were so employed. Also twice as many dropouts as graduates came from families in the lowest income brackets (thirty-five percent and fifteen percent), and twice as many graduates as dropouts came from families in the highest income brackets (twenty-three percent and twelve percent).

. . . It seems obvious that children whose parents are unemployed, or employed in unskilled or semi-skilled work, drop out of school in greater-than-average proportions, while children whose parents are employed in professional, managerial, clerical, or sales work drop out in less-than-average proportions.

The educational level of parents is no doubt a significant factor in early school withdrawal. Education does not have much relevance in the lives of these parents.

In the Maryland State Department of Education Study (1963) cited by Schreiber,³⁶ it was found that seventy-eight percent of mothers and eighty percent of the fathers of dropouts had themselves never finished

³⁵ Daniel Schreiber. "Dropout-Causes and Consequences." Encyclopedia of Educational Research. Fourth Edition. London: Macmillan Company, 1969. pp. 308-315.

³⁶ Ibid.

high school. Also, twenty-five percent of the mothers and thirty percent of the fathers had never gotten beyond the sixth grade.

Self-Concept of the Dropout

Whisenton and Loree³⁷ compared the values, needs, and aspirations of grade nine students in a large southern urban Negro high school who dropped out of school at the end of grade nine with those who continued in school.

They found that the beliefs and values of the continuing student did differ significantly from the beliefs and values of the dropout. The dropout tended to have more fatalistic views on life; the continuing student appeared to view success in life as depending on his own efforts.

The Modesto, California High School Study (Whitmore and Chapman, 1965), cited by Schreiber³⁸ revealed that the dropout tends to reject both school and self, is usually insecure in his school studies, is less respected than other students by his teachers because of academic inadequacy, is usually hostile toward other persons, and has not established adequate goals.

As viewed by Schreiber, dropouts seem to be "losers."

They are much more dissatisfied with their social relationships in school than are the stay-ins. They frequently consider themselves poorly treated or unesteemed by teachers and other pupils. They often feel that the teacher is not interested in them or their problems. Perhaps, more often than not, they are right in their perceptions. Too frequently, they permit these perceptions to down-grade

³⁷ Joffre T. Whisenton and Ray M. Loree. "A Comparison of the Values, Needs, and Aspirations of School Leavers With Those of Non-School Leavers." Journal of Negro Education, Volume 39, Fall 1970, pp. 325-333.

³⁸ P. M. Whitmore and P. W. Chapman. "Dropout Incidence and Significance at Modesto High Schools 1964-1965." Modesto, California, 1965. (Mimeographed.) [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout-Causes and Consequences."

an already deflated self-image, contributing to a vicious cycle of further failure, non-participation, and social withdrawal. Sometimes they engage in acts of rebellion in the form of remarks or other behavior. Girls are especially sensitive to snubs, to the lack of "right clothes," and to rejection by established cliques.³⁹

3. Characteristics of Potential Dropouts

The purpose of Goodner's study⁴⁰ was to identify common traits or responses among a group of capable ninth-grade students behaving as potential dropouts. Some of the traits he observed were:

- 1) The potential dropout expressed feelings that the situations which were occurring were largely beyond his control and acted accordingly.
- 2) Most of the capable potential dropouts began to exhibit symptoms of school leaving after entering junior high school.
- 3) While success experiences apparently drew students closer to the school programs, few such experiences were achieved by the group studied.
- 4) Conflicts with a teacher did cause students to be terminated from school.
- 5) Undesirable school behavior was becoming more frequent and more severe during the ninth grade.
- 6) Delinquent activity outside the school was on the increase during the ninth grade.

³⁹Schreiber, Op. cit.

⁴⁰Jack Goodner. Case Studies of Ninth-Grade Students Identified As Capable of High School Graduation But Exhibiting Behavior Symptomatic of a School Dropout. Doctor's Thesis. Tempe: Arizona State University, 1964. p. 269.

Cervantes⁴¹ determined that the following characteristics are commonly found among youth who are potential or actual dropouts:

School

- 1) Two years behind in reading or arithmetic at seventh grade level.
- 2) Failure of one or more school years.
- 3) Irregular attendance and frequent tardiness.
- 4) Performance consistently below potential.
- 5) No participation in extracurricular activities.
- 6) Frequent change of schools.
- 7) Behavior problems requiring disciplinary measures.
- 8) Feeling of not belonging.

Family

- 9) More children than parents can readily control (e.g., only child for divorced and working mother).
- 10) Parents inconsistent in affection and discipline.
- 11) Unhappy family situation.
- 12) Father figure weak or absent.
- 13) Education of parents at eighth grade level.
- 14) Few family friends; among these few many problem units (divorced, deserted, delinquents, dropouts).

Peers

- 15) Friends not approved by parents.
- 16) Friends not school oriented.
- 17) Friends much older or much younger.

⁴¹Cervantes, Op. cit.

Psychological Orientation

- 18) Resentful of all authority.
- 19) Deferred gratification pattern weak.
- 20) Weak self-image.

The greater the number of negative factors working to the disadvantage of the pupil, the greater the chance of his dropping out of school.

Matika and Sheerer⁴² quoting a study by Lloyd Seven, director of guidance in Canton, Ohio in which Seven noted eleven reoccurring problems associated with dropouts. In Seven's experience, any student to whom any four of these apply must be considered a potential dropout.

- 1) Seventh grade achievement a year or more below grade level in arithmetic and reading.
- 2) Attendance in several elementary schools. The student cannot develop a sense of belonging to anyone.
- 3) A newcomer to the city.
- 4) Failure in one or more years of elementary or high school.
- 5) Low economic level. This is generally accompanied by a lack of parental emphasis on education.
- 6) A broken home.
- 7) An irregular attendance pattern.
- 8) Difficulty in adjusting to high school. The student does not take part in school affairs.
- 9) Community problems. A youth who has been in difficulty with the police.

⁴²Francis W. Matika and Rebecca Sheerer. "Are the Causes of Dropouts Excuses?" Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, Volume 46, November 1962, pp. 40-44.

- 10) Among girls, going steady with older boys.
- 11) Among boys, ownership of a car. He must drop out to earn money to support his vehicle.

The potential dropouts seem to have certain characteristics which can be called clues. Campbell⁴³ found some of the most common clues which are: low scholastic aptitude; low reading ability; record of failures; little respect for teachers or schools; inadequate family background; and/or father is an unskilled laborer. He further claims, "Early detection of potential dropouts by elementary teachers could cause a program of dropout prevention to be activated. Some educators sociologists, and psychologists strongly believe the seventh grade offers the most opportune last chance for the prevention of dropouts."

Differences in Characteristics-Dropouts and Graduates

Randall,⁴⁴ in the Bloomington, Minnesota Study, indicated that some significant differences in characteristics existed between the dropout and the graduate.

- 1) There was greater stability in the families of the graduates.
- 2) There was a considerably larger percent of fathers of dropouts who held unskilled jobs.
- 3) Almost two-thirds of the dropouts had been retained at least once.
- 4) Over one-third of the dropouts returned to school only to drop out again.

⁴³Campbell, Op. cit.

⁴⁴Randall, Op. cit.

- 5) Absenteeism was nearly three times greater among dropouts.
- 6) Participation in extracurricular activities was over four times greater among graduates.
- 7) The tested reading abilities of the graduates were substantially better.
- 8) The IQ scores of the graduates were considerably higher.
- 9) The results of the standardized achievement tests of graduates were considerably higher in all areas measured.
- 10) The average report card marks received by graduates were at least one letter grade higher.

The intent of a study by Gallington and Sievert⁴⁵ was to identify potential high school dropouts. Some conclusions they revealed are as follows:

- 1) Graduates and potential graduates have a more wholesome attitude than dropouts and potential dropouts toward people, authority, and school.
- 2) Students who rate highly in their ability to communicate verbally are more likely to graduate than students without this ability.
- 3) Peer pressures or stresses are much stronger than authoritative pressures or stresses among all levels of students.
- 4) Grade retardation was of some significance among dropouts, but it was less significant than absenteeism.

⁴⁵Ralph O. Gallington and Norman W. Sievert. Basic Criteria for Identifying Potential High School Dropouts. Southern Illinois University School of Technology, A Research Project. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1966.

nervous, shy, felt out of place (seven percent). Twenty-five additional reasons for dropping out were recorded from six percent to one percent.

Female Dropouts

Why do most girls drop out of school? Pollack claims the greatest number of dropouts say they quit to marry or because they wish to marry. Unhappy school experiences include feeling discouraged due to a broken home or a family death, reading retardation, dissatisfaction with the school program, moving from school to school, and rejection by classmates or teachers.

Rebellion against their parents is another reason adolescent girls leave school.

Many dropout girls with better-than-average abilities deeply resent the rigid, dictatorial, or compulsive attitudes of their parents. They strike back against parental nagging and tyranny by making the school the battleground of their conflict with their parents. Some girls, on the other hand, are hampered by our protective parents.⁴⁶

Psychological Reasons

As viewed by Millard, a substantial number of children become school dropouts by overcompensating for their feelings of inadequacy or failure by withdrawing from the educational environment.

Out of sheer need for self-preservation, he makes sweeping use of denial and flight which in effect is an attempt to dilute the experience, i.e., devalue or minimize its importance, thus reassuring the person of his ability to control the emotions attendant with self-inadequacy.

. . . By means of dropping out, the individual attempts, consciously or unconsciously, to master unpleasant or intolerable feelings by blunting, then nullifying them, denying, repressing or suppressing them.

⁴⁶J. H. Pollack. "Astonishing Truth About Girl Dropouts." Education Digest, Volume 32, November 1966, pp. 14-16.

Then too, he may resort to realignment of these feelings from the specific social or learning activity causing them, and link them to some innocent or neutral object, for example, down-grading his school performance with the rationalization. 'Those kids are jerks. Who wants to go to school with them.' or 'They don't like me and I can get a job anyway.' and so on, all of which suggest a facade for his intense feelings of hostility and self-pity.

. . . For some children, the very act of withdrawing from an emotionally-laden situation with its attendant frustrations and anxieties is a safety valve by which the individual seeks to consolidate his ego strengths in coping with the specific emotional predicament.⁴⁷

Dropouts Side of the Story

Matika, through a series of taped interviews with senior boys who were on the "bad kids" list found that certain points persisted through all the sessions.

The boys agreed that the things which cause pupils to drop out of school are: unfairness, teachers make it 'rough on kids,' 'hold things against you,' 'pick favorites,' 'never let you off when you get on the wrong road.'

Some of the things they all want from teachers are: (1) when a teacher has something to say to a student, say it in privacy; (2) they want adults to 'show you by example and not just tell you;' (3) they want the teacher to be a friend and to help a student when he 'gets into trouble.'⁴⁸

In the interest of learning first-hand how the dropout sees the situation, Weber and Motz⁴⁹ interviewed two groups of Negro dropouts who had been enrolled in inner-city schools of a large eastern city. Some of the reasons these former students gave for leaving school are as follows:

⁴⁷Thomas L. Millard. "Some Clinical Notes on Dropouts." Journal of Secondary Education, Volume 39, December 1964, pp. 343-347.

⁴⁸Matika and Sheerer, Op. cit.

⁴⁹George H. Weber and Annabelle B. Motz. "School As Perceived by the Dropout." Journal of Negro Education, Volume 37, Spring 1968, pp. 127-134.

- a) Lack of opportunity to make choices as to where to go to school and subjects they could take.
- b) Problems going to and from school, which included being attacked by organized groups.
- c) The school age-grade system that required them to meet certain academic expectations because of their age, irrespective of their achievement level or capacity.
- d) Student school personal relations.
- e) The effects of the social-economic-legal structure.

These former students saw the principal as a man who was supposed to provide leadership and help to the school, but who had not done so.

For some, counselors provided a positive link between themselves and the school; for others they seemed to symbolize the punitive, authoritative, impersonal educational structure.

The teacher was depicted as "a boring talker." The boredom was related to the teacher's inability to stimulate the students.

They saw themselves as the captives of dull, uninspiring, and threatening persons whose positions in the educational structure enabled them to be authoritarian and punitive.

Pseudo-Reasons for Dropping

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons for leaving school because quite often the reasons given by the pupil and by the school are contradictory. Moreover, data collection by questionnaire realizes a notoriously low return from dropouts.⁵⁰

Russell⁵¹ states that in a 1967 dropout study in Fairfax County, Virginia, these general items dominated the list of reasons youngsters gave

⁵⁰Schreiber, Kaplan, and Strom, Op. cit.

⁵¹Kenneth Russell. "Stay in School." American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 8-13.

- 5) An accumulation of many correlates is much more predictive of graduation or not, than any one correlate alone.

4. Reasons for Dropping out of School

The public school's holding power is undoubtedly increasing. This evidence is a tribute to modern school administration, better public support, and more functional curriculum practices.

Why then do pupils leave our schools? Undoubtedly reasons given on questionnaires may be symptoms of greater conflicts and disturbances which have been endured over a period of years.⁵²

Novak writes,

Symptoms of the dropout syndrome appear early. Poor attendance, indifference to instruction, isolation from involvement in the broader phases of school life, parental indifference, unsavory out-of-school entanglements, absence of occupational goal other than the desire for money for immediate spending, and resentment of authority, all portend disaster. Often the home and neighborhood breed indifference and antagonism.⁵³

Other contributing factors are: some high school youngsters become bored with their school problems, the instability of the family, maternity cases, emotional problems of the student, inadequate guidance and counseling services, and the basic philosophy of the community and the school.⁵⁴

Many school systems have engaged in extensive studies to find out why pupils quit school. The rationale behind this is that the number of dropouts could be reduced if we know why they dropped out.

⁵²Frederick L. Pond. "Pennsylvania Study of Dropouts and the Curriculum." Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, Volume 37, March 1953, pp. 81-87.

⁵³Novak, Op. cit.

⁵⁴Robert S. Ritchie. "The High School Dropout--An Educational Dilemma." Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Volume 46, November 1962, pp. 45-48.

Schreiber points out,

These studies usually combine data from several of the following sources: (1) teacher and/or counselor opinion of the dropout; (2) opinion of the dropouts themselves; (3) comparison of dropouts with pupils who were graduated with respect to intelligence, sex, age, average marks, socio-economic status of family, race, and health; (4) examination of evidence in the cumulative school record of each individual; and (5) personal interviews with dropouts and their families.⁵⁵

The Pennsylvania Study was an attempt by French and Cardon⁵⁶ to provide needed information concerning intellectually above-average youth.

From a list of 1,721 high ability dropouts submitted by public and private schools in Pennsylvania, a sample of one hundred twenty-five boys and eighty-one girls was selected. A like number of male and female persisters of similar IQ, neighborhood, and grade at the time of withdrawal were used for comparison.

The reasons supplied by school personnel for student withdrawal were varied, but approximately sixty percent of the boys reported to have left school because they had either passed the required age or had entered the armed forces; a similar percentage of girls were reported to have left school because of pregnancy and/or for marriage.

The dropouts provided somewhat different reasons for withdrawal. The majority of the male dropouts left because they did not like school (twenty percent), they were asked to leave (eighteen percent), they wanted to get a job (seventeen percent), or because they wanted to get married (eleven percent).

⁵⁵Daniel Schreiber, Bernard A. Kaplan, and Rober D. Strom. Dropout Studies; Design and Conduct. Washington, D.C.: Project on School Dropouts, National Education Association, 1965.

⁵⁶French and Cardon, Op. cit.

Twenty percent of the unmarried female dropouts left because they did not like school; others left to get a job (sixteen percent), because of failing grades (twelve percent), or because they were needed at home (twelve percent). A large majority (eighty-two percent) of the females left school to be married.

Randall⁵⁷ reveals the reasons for dropping out as given in cumulative record folders of the Bloomington, Minnesota class of 1965.

REASON	<u>GRADE 10</u>	<u>GRADE 11</u>	<u>GRADE 12</u>
Insufficient Credit	0	0	4
Lack of Interest	17	9	2
Age	7	4	1
Summer Dropout	0	4	5
Seek Employment	6	7	1
Enlist in Service	3	3	4
Expelled	1	1	0
Marriage	0	2	1
Transferred and Dropped Out	8	2	7
Non-Attendance	4	3	1
Personal	1	0	1
Health	0	0	1
Emotional	0	1	0
Left Home	0	0	1
Known But Not Stated	0	0	3
Unknown	1	0	2
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
TOTAL	48	36	34

⁵⁷Randall, Op. cit.

Knudsen's Study⁵⁸ of a southern city of 100,000 showed that 6.7 percent of those who had not repeated an elementary grade withdrew from school prior to graduation but 27.2 percent of the students who had not been promoted at some time during their elementary school careers were dropouts.

He cites a statewide study of dropouts in Louisiana by Robert and Jones who found that seventy-two percent of the dropouts had been forced to repeat at least one year. There seems to be little doubt that the effects of non-promotion on the student result in pressures that discourage him from remaining in school.

In a Buffalo, New York study, Boggan⁵⁹ states that generally, the causes given for pupils failing to be graduated from high school were: lack of guidance, lack of parent interest, lack of interest in the school, failing grades, and the narrow course of study.

Patterson⁶⁰ in a study involving one hundred dropouts discovered the reasons for dropping out were: wanted to work (thirty-nine percent), disliked school (thirty percent), family needed financial help (twenty-one percent), dissatisfaction caused by inability to get curriculum wanted (sixteen percent), discouraged by failure and low grades (eleven percent), death of parent (seven percent), could see no value in school (seven percent), disliked teacher or teachers (seven percent), not interested in school (seven percent), serious illness in the family (seven percent), unhappy,

⁵⁸D. D. Knudsen. "Relationship Between Nonpromotion and The Dropout Problem." Theory Into Practice, Volume 4, June 1965, pp. 90-94.

⁵⁹Walter C. Patterson and Earl J. Boggan. "What Are the Major Causes of Student Dropouts and What Should the School Do About the Present Condition?" Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, Volume 39, April 1955, pp. 85-88.

⁶⁰Ibid.

for leaving high school: dissatisfaction with school, desire to seek or accept work, marriage. However, these were considered surface reasons by the investigators.

A critical appraisal offered by Millard⁶¹ in "Some Clinical Notes on Dropouts," asserts that mental health be brought more into the basic causes of early school leaving. He reveals that the usual explanations as offered by the youngsters cannot be accepted, because they are rationalizations covering up more basic and fundamental conflicts.

Unmanageable hostility toward classmates, disinterest in learning or truancy are but surface descriptions of school difficulty. Far more fundamental forces are fear and anxiety, feelings of inferiority, hatred, aggressiveness, guilt and other mental disorders that prevent youngsters from assembling a well organized and stable personality able to relate itself in a more positive way with the influences interacting with it.⁶²

Some dropouts claim that they are unhappy with the school's educational diet. Perhaps the most frequent reason given for withdrawal is financial need. In many instances, these reasons may be used as a face-saving device for those forced to curtail their studies for less flattering reasons.⁶³

Cervantes⁶⁴ refers to a study conducted by Dr. George Mowrer, Director of Guidance of the St. Louis Public School System in which Mowrer found that of the 2,579 youths who dropped out, only three out of one hundred withdrew because of financial need. Though the youth might state on a

⁶¹Millard, Op. cit.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Tannenbaum, Op. cit.

⁶⁴Cervantes, Op. cit.

questionnaire that financial difficulty was the reason they were leaving school, the interview situation would reveal in the majority of cases that finances was not the real reason.

The 'slum and suburb' analysis of the dropout problem is misleading. Insofar as it suggests that the poor, in general, and the slum dweller, in particular, drop out of school because of inadequate funds and that the cure of the dropout problem lies in the finances.

Granted that the vast majority of dropouts come from the milieu of poverty, it is still true that only five percent give clear evidence of having to leave school for financial reasons.

One out of three professionals and one out of two college graduates come from the lower economic classes of society. Of itself, membership in the lower economic class is not a determinant of academic achievement.

With more specific references to teenagers, we find that more than twice as many dropouts as stay-ins of any particular school have cars. More than twice as many stay-ins as dropouts have jobs while in school. Neither of these facts harmonize with the economic deficiency analysis of the dropout situation.

Poverty is the milieu but not the cause of dropping out.⁶⁵

5. Delinquency-Violence and the Dropout

Foster, in "The Inner-City Teacher and Violence," writes,

There is a difference between the violence of the middle class and that of the lower class. In the middle or upper classes, violence is experienced vicariously, safely, at a distance, in small chunks, as in TV reporting of the Vietnam conflict or Sunday afternoon professional football. However, for many disadvantaged children, violence is a way of life. It is very real; to cope with it is to survive.⁶⁶

In their study involving disadvantaged inner-city dropouts, Weber and Motz⁶⁷ discovered that gang war pressures on some boys to pay protection

⁶⁵Cervantes, Op. cit.

⁶⁶Herbert L. Foster. "The Inner-City Teacher and Violence: Suggestions for Action Research." Phi Delta Kappan, Volume 50, November 1968, p. 173.

⁶⁷Weber and Motz, Op. cit.

money, fighting, gambling and drinking occurred to such an extent that policemen were also considered school functionaries. However, they were considered ineffective in performing protective functions.

Harrington⁶⁸ points out that during the Los Angeles student disorders, some one thousand students stayed away from school for fear of violence.

Cervantes⁶⁹ analyzed the results of Thematic Apperception Tests and interview material gleaned from his study of three hundred youths, half of whom were dropouts. He found a greater incidence of sensate vocabulary and theme in dropout and delinquent responses. Violence, hostility, aggression, tragedy, strife, drunkenness, cheating, and suicide occurred with greater frequency in the speech and thematic references of the dropout youth. More important, he observes, is the question of attitude. "The overriding differential attitude is that of hostility. Hostility against authority of adult controls of all types--home authority, civil authority, intellectual authority, occupational authority. The dropout does have his very definite authorities, controls, norms, and values, but they are more characteristically non-parentally approved peer controls."

In Bridgeport, Connecticut, a study of court records revealed that twenty-four percent of the high school dropouts had personal court records. In addition, referrals for other members of the dropouts'

⁶⁸John H. Harrington. "L.A.'s Student Blowout," Phi Delta Kappan, Volume 50, October 1968, p. 75.

⁶⁹Cervantes. Op. cit., p. 191.

families showed that one-third of the families of those youngsters had members with court records.⁷⁰

A follow-up study of potential dropouts in a single high school in Seattle, Washington, found that whereas the rate of delinquency, defined as involvement with a juvenile court, was three percent for the total youth population, it was seven percent for those youngsters tentatively identified as dropouts but who did succeed in graduating, and thirty-five percent of those who in fact did drop out.⁷¹

In both studies, the percentage of dropouts who became involved with the courts was very high, twenty-four and thirty-five percent, respectively. Thus, while the majority of dropouts tend to be law-abiding, they are clearly more susceptible to delinquency and more often in trouble with law enforcement agencies than the average adolescent.⁷²

6. Possible Solutions to the Dropout Problem

A. Current Programs

No one program can meet the needs of all potential dropouts. Ithaca, New York focusses ten different programs on its potential

⁷⁰L. Silverstone and C. G. Hoyt. Bridgeport, Connecticut School Dropout Study. Bridgeport Board of Education, 1963. [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout Causes and Consequences."

⁷¹Peter Schneller. "Unwilling Learner and Dropout Study, 1958-1961." Ballard High School, Seattle, Washington, 1962. (Mimeographed.) [Cited by] Daniel Schreiber, "Dropout Causes and Consequences."

⁷²Daniel Schreiber. "Dropout Causes and Consequences." Encyclopedia of Educational Research. Fourth Edition. London: Macmillan Company, 1969, pp. 308-315.

dropouts. They have cut Ithaca's dropout rate by twenty-five percent in three years.⁷³

(1) School-to-Employment Program

Students spend half the school day attending classes and the other half, working on a job. A teacher coordinator meets with the group daily and works closely with each student, attempting to define individual problems and to help develop attitudes, habits, and skills that overcome them.

(2) Distributive Education

A work experience programs in the field of retailing. Resembles S.T.E.P., but differs sharply in the type of student. A teacher coordinator conducts distributive education courses and places students in outside jobs.

The program is oriented to long-range vocational aims, rather than immediate intensive care. It gives students a chance to earn money while they work toward those goals.

(3) Neighborhood Youth Corps

N.Y.C. is operated jointly by the Ithaca schools and the state employment office.

Individuals are placed in jobs with the understanding that they will receive special supervision and training. The full counseling resources of the employment office and the schools are focussed on participants.

⁷³ School Management, "Ten Proven Programs to Prevent Dropouts," School Management, Volume 9, October 1965, pp. 70-74, 126, 128.

(4) Evening Extension School

For dropouts of any age who want to complete requirements for a high school diploma. Here, emphasis is placed on guidance and remedial reading.

(5) Terminal Counseling Program

One guidance counselor specializes in the problems of the terminal student and works only with those students.

(6) Vocational Education

New technical training programs such as: food services, cosmetology, and landscaping are provided for boys and girls identified as possible dropouts.

(7) Career Fair

An introduction to the workaday world--speeches, interviews, exhibits emphasizing non-professional occupations.

(8) Tutorial Program

Volunteer college students provide individual tutoring during school day or after school.

(9) Remedial Summer School

Summer programs designed to solve the dropout problem early by helping youngsters overcome deficiencies in reading and mathematics.

(10) High School Equivalency Examination

Special instruction to prepare dropouts for a state-administered high school equivalency examination.

It appears that work-related programs, alone, are no guarantee of success in preventing students from dropping out of school.

In a study by Longstreth, et al.⁷⁴ approximately seventy-five potential dropouts (twenty-nine classified as "aggressive," forty-six as "passive") were exposed to a program that differed from the regular school program in four main ways: (a) a small stable pupil-teacher ratio; (b) a vocational curriculum; (c) a counselor immediately available; and (d) afternoon jobs for pay and school credit. Evaluation was in terms of dropout rates, police contact rates, and attitudes assessed by before and after interviews; comparison was with an equal number of potential dropouts enrolled in the regular school program. The program, in general, was unsuccessful in altering dropout behavior, but the aggressive members of the experimental group improved reliably more than others in attitude toward school.

Wilkerson⁷⁵ cites Mowrer's project on the effectiveness of the St. Louis School and Community Work-Related Educational Program in encouraging students who would normally be expected to drop out of school to remain in school. Involved were 609 white and black students enrolled in several high schools, selected as potential dropouts on the basis of a series of criteria and randomly divided into an experimental group of 343 students and a control group of 266 students. The two groups were

⁷⁴Langdon E. Longstreth, Fred J. Shanley, and Roger E. Rice. "Experimental Evaluation of a High School Program for Potential Dropouts," Journal of Educational Psychology, Volume 55, August 1964, pp. 228-236.

⁷⁵Doxey A. Wilkerson. "Programs and Practices in Compensatory Education for Disadvantaged Children," Review of Educational Research, Volume 35, December 1965, pp. 426-440.

roughly equal in mean age (about seventeen years), mean I.Q. (about 94.0). The experimental group received normal school services plus special counseling, helps in obtaining and holding jobs, and special assistance on the job from employer and school personnel. The control group received only normal school services.

Comparative data for the two groups revealed among other things, that the dropout rate was greater for the control group than for the experimental group by 17.9 percent.

The general inconclusive evidence from evaluations in most other areas of compensatory education may be a function of theoretically unsound programs, of ineffective implementation of programs that are sound, of technically inadequate procedures of evaluation or of some combination of these. The profession is in no position yet to make firm judgments and long-term commitments for or against most programs in this field.⁷⁶

Novak⁷⁷ stated that practical learning may be the only way in which part of the compulsory school population can be induced to remain long enough to absorb the more verbal and academic kinds of learning needed by our responsible citizens. He believes work programs including outdoor opportunities are justifiable possibilities in a broadened curriculum.

Hunt⁷⁸ suggests that the planning of educational programs for potential dropouts should involve immediate objectives more modest

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷ Benjamin J. Novak. "Looking Realistically at the Dropout Problem," Education, Volume 86, October 1965, pp. 82-85.

⁷⁸ David E. Hunt. "Adolescence: Cultural Deprivation, Poverty, and the Dropout," Review of Educational Research, Volume 36, October 1966, pp. 463-473.

than decreasing the dropout rate, or at least they should include multiple criteria in the design. He writes, "More attention should be focussed on the variation in learning styles with the culturally deprived group so that differential programs can be planned for students who are accessible to specific forms of educational intervention."

As viewed by Russell,⁷⁹ "A great deal is known about causes, but we have only begun to scratch the surface on cures. It would appear that the solution to the dropout problem lies in schools developing effective new approaches to the wide range of student needs."

B. What The School Can Do

Millard,⁸⁰ in "Some Clinical Notes on Dropouts," observes that "mental health" can shed new light on ways of preventing young people from early school leaving by assisting in programs that build up their hopes and natural wants through reassuring and supportive experiences that enable these children to tolerate more comfortable educational demands.

In our high-success value orientation, everyone must succeed; hence, failing in school is a very serious matter, both socially and psychologically; it leaves one with a feeling of defenselessness, a feeling of inadequacy and failure.

All children invest something of themselves in the learning process. Failing in school means, in a sense, that this invested portion of oneself has failed.

⁷⁹Kenneth Russell. "Stay in School," American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 8-13.

⁸⁰Millard. Op. cit.

Consequently, there is a need to find some less difficult and complex task, something easier and less demanding that can restore his nearly shattered concept of himself, and since for these youngsters there is still a sub-cultural identification in "toiling with the hands," they view employment as one area in which investment of natural strength rather than formal learning is the common denominator of acceptance and success.

Hence, the idea of work has an irresistible attraction to frustrated youngsters. The proposed solution in dropping out helps the youngster to reduce some of his anxiety because it removed the threat to his self-concept. But unfortunately, it does not help him to make any positive moves to cope with the real problem.

Intensive personal guidance is especially helpful to the potential dropout who is beset with the kinds of problems that require attention from a skilled person interested in his welfare. In intensive personal guidance, the counselor plays a pivotal role in coordinating faculty efforts because he has easy access to teachers, students, and parents.⁸¹

Novak⁸² points out that young people need to understand very clearly the inhospitable nature of the working world that now refuses to accept the untrained, immature, and unpromising.

The dropout, after he has had time to attempt an exploration of his own resources and motives, should find it possible to apply at a counseling center, not necessarily at his own school, for thorough guidance leading to new insights and an educational program based on realistic goals.

⁸¹ Abraham J. Tannenbaum. Dropout or Diploma. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1966.

⁸² Novak. Op. cit.

NOTE: A recent summary reference on innovative programs for these students is available (Bill Howard et al., National School Public Relations Association, Washington, D.C., 1972, 56pp.)

Pollack writes,⁸³

The door should always be left open to enable all girl dropouts to return to their classrooms. Even after she has quit, each girl should be made to feel that she can talk to her school guidance counselor. The way to help these girls is to show them in words and deeds that we adults—parents, teachers, employers care what happens to them.

Russell⁸⁴ believes that the outstanding dropout prevention programs of the future will contain at least eight basic program elements.

- (1) The assurance of closer personal contact between students and significant adults.
- (2) A system for evaluating academic progress that does not destroy the student's self-esteem. Non-graded classes may be one way of accomplishing this purpose.
- (3) Allowance for flexible scheduling.
- (4) Gearing the educational program to personality and motivational aspects as well as intellectual capacity. Education must be made relevant to the world of work as it will probably exist for each individual.
- (5) Provisions of outlets for frustrations. Social and recreational programs should include all students, even if sometimes the program is very unusual.
- (6) Assurance of remedial work for students who need it, but with the "unsatisfactory" stigma removed.
- (7) Provision of in-service training for the school staff. The enthusiasm and the competence with which a program is carried out are more important than elements of the program itself.

⁸³J. H. Pollack. "Astonishing Truth About Girl Dropouts." Education Digest, Volume 32, November 1966, pp. 14-16.

⁸⁴Russell, Op. cit.

- (8) Requirement and assurance of total community involvement. The business community can do much to improve the quality of education. They might set up training programs for dropouts, cooperate in work-study programs, help the schools develop a curriculum relevant to the needs of the labor markets, institute in-plant adult education courses for low-skilled workers, encourage management to participate in classroom activities, set up a speaker's bureau to go out to the schools and talk to the students about the realities of the job market, and encourage the use of the school as a community center to be open twelve months a year.

The characteristics of the student and of educational objectives must both be used as guides in the design of an effective learning program.

In an appraisal by Cervantes⁸⁵ he expresses the need for multi-type curricula.

- (1) Academic -- for many college-bound pupils.
- (2) Technical -- for some college bound pupils and others oriented directly for industry.
- (3) Vocational -- for those who will move into skilled crafts.
- (4) Commercial -- for some college-bound and others going directly into business.
- (5) Occupational -- for those whose aptitudes suit them for unskilled labor.

⁸⁵Lucius F. Cervantes. The Dropout: Causes and Cures. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965, p. 252.

He cites the need for multi-approaches and multi-purposes of curricula. "The book approach is one approach, but not the only one. For the potential dropout, the tactile and aural and personal approach may be better than the book and oral and impersonal one."

Increased pressures upon students and faculty, the trend toward tougher curricula, heavier work loads, higher achievements, should not obscure the fact that perhaps one out of three high school students is neither emotionally nor intellectually prepared to cope even with the present curricular demands.

For the college and university oriented youth, the goal of a curriculum may well be the acquisition of facts and the covering of academic area.

For the disadvantaged, the non-college oriented and the less talented, the goal of the curriculum may well be helping each child to become his best self--a good citizen and a productive worker.⁸⁶

Thompson and Nelson in "Twelve Approaches to Remedy the Dropout Problem" conclude that treating the symptoms never removes the cause. For a program to be successful, it is necessary to spot the potential dropout as early as possible and apply the eventual cure:

- (1) Compulsory school attendance should be eliminated. It would be better to eliminate the age requirement and provide a curriculum that would encourage them to remain in school.
- (2) There should be a cooperative relationship between the planners of the school curriculum and industry.

⁸⁶
Ibid.

- (3) There should be an increase in special services such as guidance, remedial programs, testing, psychological assistance, and health service.
- (4) Urban renewal should be fostered. A child's environment greatly influences his chances of graduating from high school.
- (5) There should be a greater influence on adult education. First, to train adults who are unemployed because of a lack of marketable skills. Second, studies have shown that parents of dropouts have a negative attitude toward education.
- (6) School administrators should strive to obtain personnel who have an understanding of interpersonal relationships with students.
- (7) School facilities should be up-to-date. Flexibility of the building will continue to be vital.
- (8) Systematic evaluation should be made of school retention power.
- (9) A pupil involvement activities program should be maintained.
- (10) Full use should be made of all community resources.
- (11) Remove "hidden" costs of education. One of the causes for dropping out of school is the lack of adequate financial resources. Therefore, if the schools are to be really "free," they should assume all costs.
- (12) The board of education must be convinced that it cannot sit back, but must be willing to go to the public to obtain money which will provide an educational program to meet the needs of all youth in the community.

Full attention should be focussed on the recommendations, because the problem knows no boundaries. It has pervaded all facets of our society to such an extent that it has become a national crisis. Generation after generation of dropouts is placing added burdens on our national economy. It would be cheaper in the long run to educate all of our boys and girls and to eliminate this educational cancer, rather than to treat its side effects.⁸⁷

In analyzing the results of the 1963 Dropout Campaign, Prakken⁸⁸ observed that many schools were capable of making adjustments to meet the needs of the students.

Adjustments in Educational Offerings. The report noted a need for greater strength and diversification in vocational courses of the curriculum. Many schools found work study programs successful in motivating students who said they would otherwise be dropouts.

Increased Remedial Help. Since most dropouts and potential dropouts are academically retarded in reading or other "solid" subject matter fields, many schools scheduled remedial classes to meet their special needs.

Adjustment in Time Schedules. Provisions for part-time scheduling to permit outside employment.

Waiving of Requirements. Some schools adopted ungraded programs at the high school level so that potential dropouts might elect only the courses they wanted. Other schools experimented with

⁸⁷M. L. Thompson and R. H. Nelson. "Twelve Approaches to Remedy the Dropout Problem," Clearing House, Volume 41, December 1966, pp. 238-242.

⁸⁸Lawrence W. Prakken, editor. "Results of the 1963 Dropout Campaign." Reported from The 1963 Dropout Campaign. Published by the U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1964. Excerpt: Educational Digest 30, September 1964, pp. 27-28.

trial promotion of students who lacked a single course or two to permit them to be with other students their own age or maturity level.

Improved Counseling Services. Stressed the need for early identification of potential dropouts for year-round preventive measures. Activities suggested emphasized two major areas of effort--an annual summer campaign and continuing emphasis on preventive measures.

A large part of the answer to the dropout problem is one hundred percent dedication by schools to make school experiences meaningful to the individual child.

C. Educator's Part

Goodner⁸⁹ found the influence of teachers upon his study group was great. While most contacts were reported in a negative fashion, some few counselees generalized their feelings toward all teachers. The teacher most frustrated by and most frustrating to these young people was the one who held academic excellence in the highest esteem to the exclusion of most other areas of development.

It is often assumed by secondary school staff members that the "best" pattern of courses a student could possibly take would be those of a strictly college preparatory nature and that any other pattern of courses would be "second best."

⁸⁹Jack Goodner. Case Studies of Ninth-Grade Students Identified as Capable of High School Graduation But Exhibiting Behavior Symptomatic of a School Dropout. Doctor's Thesis, Tempe: Arizona State University, 1964, p. 269.

It is as though public secondary education is supposed to operate by establishing "first class" courses for "first class" students and a series of "second class" courses for what be regarded as "second class" students. We should recognize both the fallacy of such an assumption and the dangerous implication it holds so far as many dropouts are concerned.⁹⁰

⁹¹ Matthews states,

Teacher attitude toward the student is seen as a contributing factor in the dropout problem and combined with academic pressure causes poor attitude and poor performance. A need is shown for a different type of curriculum rather than a watering-down of the traditional curriculum. Teaching is seen a needing to be therapeutically oriented rather than having the goal of catching the students up with other students.

Matike⁹² feels it is the interpersonal relationships that count. Instead of the negative approach to the pupil with problems, we should take a positive attitude and encourage the good qualities.

He states that one approach to seeking a solution of the dropout problem is to extend a real helping hand to the potential dropout so he can understand his personal problems, and gain self-acceptance and respect.

7. Prospects For The Future

The increasing retention rate of public high schools is indicated by the improvement that has taken place during the most recent

⁹⁰ K. B. Hoyt. "Guidance and School Dropouts," Education, Volume 85, December 1964, pp. 228-233.

⁹¹ Charles V. Matthews and John E. Roam. Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Cooperative Research Projects No. D-041 and No. HRD-555-66. Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University.

⁹² Francis W. Matika and Rebecca Sheerer. "Are the Causes of Dropouts Excuses?" Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Volume 46, November 1962, pp. 40-44.

five-year period. The high school graduates in 1967-1968 represented 77.6 percent of the class that entered the ninth grade in 1964-1965, higher than the ratio five years earlier when the 1962-1963 high school graduates represented 70.9 percent of the ninth-grade class of 1959-1960.⁹³

If the indications are true, the number of dropouts will decrease. Historically, this has happened; however, the problems caused by dropouts will increase because of the decrease of types of employment available to these persons. The problems faced by dropouts will become more involved because life is growing more complex daily, and each person needs to become more understanding and competent in every walk of life.⁹⁴

In the past, there were alternative paths to growing up. A young person could quit school, find a job, discover what he was good at, and eventually become a successful, participating adult; or he could reach adulthood by remaining in school and graduating. Today, there seems to be only one way--the school way. The dropout, never really learning in school what he is good at, drifts into adulthood confused, bewildered, insecure, and unsure of himself, wondering whether he is good at, or for that matter, good for anything. For the overriding fact is simply that increasingly, there is little place in our society for the dropout youngster and that increasingly, the dropout has a poor future.⁹⁵

There are stirrings now that should help improve the dropout situation. Schools are starting preventive programs earlier--pre-school education for three and four-year-olds.

⁹³ Richard H. Barr and Betty J. Foster, compilers. Fall 1968 Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Center for Educational Statistics, Washington, D.C., March 1969, p. 4.

⁹⁴ G. V. Campbell. "Review of the Dropout Problem," Peabody Journal of Education, Volume 44, September 1966, pp. 102-109.

⁹⁵ Daniel Schreiber. "Dropout--Causes and Consequences," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Fourth Edition, London: Macmillan Company, 1969, pp. 308-315.

Schools are paying more attention to remediation within the regular program and are taking more responsibility for working outside the formal setting.

Closer community involvement is being built into many school activities because of the positive influence of the home and neighborhood upon youngsters' inclination to stay in school.

Congress has allocated substantial sums of money to help in developing and maintaining programs directly or indirectly related to the school dropout. It initiated and supported the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Head Start and follow-through programs, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Manpower Development Training Centers. The National Defense Education Act has funded programs, now under the Education Professions Development Act, to up-grade the quality of teachers and counselors.⁹⁶

French and Cardon,⁹⁷ in summarizing the Pennsylvania study, offer the following recommendations.

First, although the dropouts anticipated employment in the trades, a large percentage of them were in a "general" curriculum. . . a more comprehensive system of vocational guidance would seem to be in order.

Second, what most of the dropouts wanted was "practical" courses which would assist them in "living in the real world."

As programs develop to pay potential dropouts for work around school or for part-time employment elsewhere, attention should be given

⁹⁶Daniel Schreiber. "700,000 Dropouts," American Education, Volume 4, June 1968, pp. 5-7.

⁹⁷Joseph L. French and Bartell W. Cardon. "Characteristics of High Mental Ability School Dropouts," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, Volume 16, March 1968, pp. 162-168.

to the objectives of such programs. Attitudes of dropouts toward classes and teachers must change if they are to profit from staying in school. Potential dropouts must find school interesting and helpful if they are to profit from attending.

Third, more and better vocational course offerings. Dropouts in the study desired more opportunity to arrange for good classes with understanding teachers in all curricular offerings. Diversified learning activities to meet the needs of bright, average, and dull students in each curriculum was frequently requested by students in this study.

Fourth, bright students are often expected to go into the academic curriculum as a matter of course. When failure is apparent, they are transferred to another curriculum. What is needed, then, is a fostering in parents, students, and teachers, of respect for non-professional occupations.

A number of the male dropouts want to go back to high school. Unfortunately, there are pressures which make this difficult. Dropouts reject the idea of re-entering school with younger classmates. In addition, many male as well as female dropouts are married and have established increased financial need. Programs to financially assist dropouts to complete high school and gain further training should be explored.⁹⁸

The studies mentioned in this paper indicate two basic facts: There are a large number of dropouts and few jobs available to them, and there are many and varied reasons for dropping out of school.

⁹⁸
Ibid.

If we are to reduce the number of dropouts in the future, we must establish preventive programs. There is no panacea for this illness that is debilitating our society. We must discover and diagnose the causes before we can prescribe the remedies.

C H A P T E R I I I

METHODS OF PROCEDURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the hypothesis that peer group violence is a factor in the dropout problem. Specifically, it was an attempt to show that peer group violence is one real but unstated reason why a small percentage of students drop out of school.

Monograph of the Community

This study was conducted in a medium size New England city with a population of some seventy thousand inhabitants.

Diversified manufacturing is the predominant economic pursuit involving sixty-seven percent of the labor population. The yearly median salary is about \$7,500.

Physically, the city is spread out over some twenty-five square miles with no densely populated areas. Only 12.5 percent of the dwellings have five or more units. Fifty-five percent of the homes are valued in the twelve thousand to eighteen thousand bracket.

The median number of school years completed by persons twenty-five years and over was 9.9 percent (1960). Presently, there are about twelve thousand public school students, ninety-eight percent of whom are white. The operating cost is approximately \$620 per pupil in net average membership.⁹⁹

⁹⁹Massachusetts Department of Commerce and Development Monograph. Boston, Massachusetts (revised March, 1972).

The writer assumed that if the study evidenced violence as a factor in the dropout problem in this community, it would be an indication that the situation would exist to a greater extent in a large urban setting.

Design and Survey Population

The design was a non-experimental investigation using the written questionnaire to gather information pertinent to the purposes of the study.

The survey population consisted of one hundred and twenty members comprising the entire enrollment of an evening school program specifically oriented to providing opportunity for former dropouts to complete their high school education.

The aim of this study was to produce an accurate and useful picture of the data concerning violence and the dropout. Due to the nature of the study, the writer assumed that the respondents would react more honestly and candidly to an anonymous questionnaire than they would in a personal interview. Good¹⁰⁰ and Lunney¹⁰¹ agree with this position.

Description of the Instrument

The form of the questionnaire was short, concise, direct, and honest. Payne's¹⁰² checklist of considerations was used as a guide in

¹⁰⁰Carter V. Good. Introduction to Educational Research. New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1959, p. 170.

¹⁰²Gerald H. Lunney. The Construction of Questionnaires for Surveys in Education. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1965, pp. 1-12.

¹⁰³Stanley L. Payne. The Art of Asking Questions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. 228-237.

formulating questions. His list of one thousand words that are known in reading in the fourth grade was used as a basis for wording the questions.

The questionnaire contained items seeking factual information and reactions concerning the dropout's experience with violence.

Most of the answers allowed for a choice of a descriptive adjective. At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked to offer a comment as to what they considered would be the most effective approach the schools could take to prevent violence.

The following is an example of the type of question used in the questionnaire:

As a student, were you ever faced with a shakedown by other kids your age, before, during, or after school?

OFTEN/OCCASIONALLY/NEVER

This line of questioning built up to more direct questions involving violence and subsequent withdrawal from school.

To verify the construction of the questionnaire, the writer followed the suggestion offered by Hillway¹⁰³ and Good¹⁰⁴ and gave it a trial run by administering it orally to several respondents.

Procedure for Data Collection

Data collection by mailed questionnaires realizes a notoriously low return from dropouts.¹⁰⁵ To avoid this problem, the writer received

¹⁰³Tyrus Hillway. Handbook of Educational Research. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969, pp. 31-60.

¹⁰⁴Good. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁵Schreiber, Kaplan, and Strom. Op. cit.

permission to personally distribute and conduct the survey while the evening school was in session. Follow-up visits were made to insure that all enrollees in the program were surveyed.

The fact that the entire population was included in this study negated the need for using a sampling technique.

A descriptive analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.

C H A P T E R I V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The Study Population

This chapter presents the data obtained from the questionnaire. The information is presented in tabular form to illustrate the responses. Percentages shown are rounded off to the nearest whole percent.

The data for each question is categorized into seven classifications:

Total Survey

All Males

All Females

All Males Under 25

All Males Over 25

All Females Under 25

All Females Over 25

The one hundred and twenty members of the survey population consisted of the following:

35 males

75 females

10 who did not respond to the race-sex question

A further breakdown of the population who answered the race-sex question shows:

25 males under 25 years old
10 males over 25 years old
36 females under 25 years old
39 females over 25 years old

Only three members--one male and two females--identified themselves as non-white. The writer, therefore, did not include race as a separate classification.

Basis for Percentage Figures

The percentages listed in the first column, "Total Survey," for each question are based on the responses of the entire one hundred and twenty membership population.

The percentage figures given in the next six columns are based on the number of males and females who identified their sex. Ages were given on all questionnaires.

There are several points the writer would like noted as one reads through the statistics.

First, the community in which the survey was conducted has no densely populated districts.

Secondly, women from the majority of the survey population.

Thirdly, on most of the questions, four choices are given: Often, Occasionally, Seldom, and Never. One must consider the cumulative position reaction of the first three choices. For example, on question number eight, "Did you ever have a gang shake-down worked against you before, during or after school?" Only one percent answered "Often;" however, a total of eleven percent actually experienced this type of violence.

One other item that should be noted is the response to question number twelve, "Was race a factor in any violence you have experienced?" A total of eight percent answered affirmatively. As was previously noted, only two percent of the community and about two and one-half percent of the survey population are non-white.

Several possibilities exist here. One, prejudice on the part of the respondees; two, the racial problem may have been concentrated in one of the two high schools; three, the reason the writer believes to be more plausible, a number of older students working on their diploma in this community actually attended an interracial high school in a different community.

Following are the tabular responses to the twenty items included in the survey.

QUESTION 1: Was "being tough" valued by students at your school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	34%	48%	26%	48%	50%	45%	11%
NO	58%	48%	63%	48%	50%	42%	81%
UNDECIDED	8%	3%	11%	4%	0%	12%	8%

These responses show that one out of two males and about the same number of females under 25 years old viewed "being tough" as a trait valued by students in this community. Interestingly, only eleven percent of females over 25 agreed with this viewpoint.

QUESTION 2: Were high grades frowned upon by your peers or crowd?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	9%	21%	4%	29%	10%	6%	3%
NO	83%	76%	86%	71%	80%	82%	89%
UNDECIDED	8%	3%	9%	0%	10%	12%	8%

The degradation of high grades by peers is apparently an occurrence experienced, for the most part, by the group of male students who are under 25 years old.

QUESTION 3: Were you subject to obscenities and insults by other kids before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	6%	6%	3%	5%	10%	0%	6%
OCCASION-ALLY	25%	27%	26%	33%	20%	42%	14%
SELDOM	22%	24%	17%	19%	30%	12%	19%
NEVER	47%	42%	54%	43%	40%	45%	61%

Considering the cumulative effects of the positive reactions to this question, more than one-half of the members of this group have experienced these affronts.

QUESTION 4: Were you threatened to be hurt or terrorized by individuals or gangs before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	2%	3%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	7%	12%	7%	19%	0%	6%	8%
SELDOM	13%	12%	11%	10%	10%	15%	6%
NEVER	78%	73%	82%	71%	80%	79%	86%

The results show that, although this is not a frequent occurrence, over twenty percent of the group have been subjected to this intimidation.

QUESTION 5: Have you witnessed violence to other students before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	9%	21%	4%	29%	10%	9%	0%
OCCASION- ALLY	25%	24%	26%	33%	0%	39%	14%
SELDOM	17%	24%	15%	9%	50%	15%	11%
NEVER	49%	30%	55%	29%	40%	36%	75%

It is apparent that witnessing violence has not been an uncommon event for the majority of these students.

QUESTION 6: Were you attacked and hurt by other kids before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	3%	3%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
OCCASION- ALLY	4%	9%	3%	14%	0%	3%	3%
SELDOM	4%	6%	4%	0%	10%	3%	6%
NEVER	88%	82%	92%	81%	90%	94%	90%

These responses disclose that direct attacks have not occurred frequently. However, eighteen percent of the males and seven percent of the females of this group have sustained this mistreatment.

QUESTION 7: Were you beat up just for "kicks" before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	3%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	6%
SELDOM	5%	10%	3%	12%	10%	3%	3%
NEVER	89%	89%	92%	87%	90%	94%	90%

Relatively few of the students indicate that they have suffered this terrorism. It is worth noting, however, that females have been subjected to this maltreatment to nearly the same extent as the males in this group.

QUESTION 8: Did you ever have a gang shake-down worked against you before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	1%	0%	1%	0%	5%	3%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	5%	7%	3%	5%	10%	6%	0%
SELDOM	5%	10%	3%	14%	5%	3%	4%
NEVER	89%	82%	92%	81%	80%	88%	95%

It is evident that males, regardless of age, are more apt to encounter the outrage of extortion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that twelve percent of females under twenty-five years old have been subjected to this violence.

QUESTION 9: Did you ever get beat-up because you wouldn't come up with the "bread" before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	3%	3%	2%	5%	0%	0%	4%
SELDOM	3%	6%	2%	10%	0%	0%	4%
NEVER	93%	91%	95%	85%	100%	100%	91%

Apparently, this has not been a prevalent experience for these students; however, the results do show that fifteen percent of the males under twenty-five years old have been victims of this crime.

QUESTION 10: Were you threatened with violence if you "finked" to the cops or school authorities?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	1%	3%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	8%	15%	4%	14%	20%	6%	4%
SELDOM	3%	6%	3%	0%	20%	0%	4%
NEVER	87%	76%	92%	81%	60%	94%	92%

The results show that males were more likely to encounter retaliation if they informed on fellow students.

QUESTION 11: Were you threatened or attacked by individuals or gangs using belts, knives, or other weapons before, during, or after school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
OCCASION-ALLY	3%	3%	1%	5%	0%	3%	0%
SELDOM	6%	15%	3%	14%	10%	0%	6%
NEVER	90%	82%	95%	81%	90%	97%	93%

Although this terrorism was not a frequent experience for any classification of students, cumulative position responses show that eighteen percent of males have suffered this offense.

QUESTION 12: Was race a factor in any violence you have experienced?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	8%	9%	7%	10%	10%	12%	4%
NO	50%	76%	41%	76%	70%	33%	45%
DOES NOT APPLY	41%	15%	51%	14%	20%	55%	50%

It is interesting to note that although only two percent of the students in the community are non-white, eight percent of the members of the study group indicate race as a factor in the violence they have experienced. The writer, in the analysis of the data included in Chapter IV, offers several possible explanations for this student reaction.

QUESTION 13: Did the fear of violence make you feel personally more uneasy?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	19%	18%	18%	19%	20%	15%	18%
NO	46%	61%	41%	62%	50%	45%	34%
DOES NOT APPLY	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%

These responses show that the apprehension of violence pervades all student classifications to about the same degree.

QUESTION 14: Did you take the long way home from school, not because you wanted to, but because you felt you had to for your own safety?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	3%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	7%
OCCASIONALLY	5%	3%	6%	5%	0%	0%	12%
SELDOM	5%	9%	4%	10%	10%	6%	4%
NEVER	86%	88%	86%	85%	90%	94%	76%

Interestingly, females over twenty-five years old appear to have undergone this experience more than any other category of students.

QUESTION 15: Did you miss school, not because you wanted to, but because you felt you had to for your own safety?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
OFTEN	3%	3%	1%	5%	0%	0%	3%
OCCASION- ALLY	3%	3%	3%	5%	0%	6%	0%
SELDOM	5%	12%	3%	19%	0%	3%	3%
NEVER	88%	82%	92%	71%	100%	91%	93%

Twenty-nine percent of males under twenty-five years old admit to having been intimidated to such an extent that it was cause for them to miss school. Evidently, this was not a problem for males in the over twenty-five years old group.

QUESTION 16: Did threats or violence interfere with your desire to learn?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	9%	12%	7%	14%	10%	6%	8%
NO	56%	76%	49%	76%	70%	45%	50%
DOES NOT APPLY	34%	12%	44%	10%	20%	48%	42%

The results again show that males under twenty-five years old were affected by threats or violence to a greater degree than any other classification of students.

QUESTION 17: Did you desire to escape or leave school because of violence?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
YES	4%	6%	3%	10%	0%	3%	3%
NO	66%	79%	62%	76%	80%	58%	67%
DOES NOT APPLY	29%	15%	35%	14%	20%	39%	30%

These responses disclose that four percent of the survey group was victimized to the point where they wished to leave school.

QUESTION 18: Was violence a factor in your decision to leave school?

	TOTAL SURVEY	ALL MALES	ALL FEMALES	ALL MALES UNDER 25	ALL MALES OVER 25	ALL FEMALES UNDER 25	ALL FEMALES OVER 25
	N=120	N=35	N=75	N=25	N=10	N=36	N=39
VERY IMPORTANT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IMPORTANT	4%	9%	2%	14%	0%	0%	3%
UNIMPORTANT	6%	3%	7%	5%	0%	12%	3%
NOT AT ALL	89%	88%	90%	81%	100%	88%	93%

In response to this question, four percent of all members of the survey cite violence as an important factor in their decision to leave school. Again, males, and especially males under twenty-five years old, are seen as the principal victims.

Question number nineteen seeks to determine what the students think should be done to prevent violence. The findings are reported below:

QUESTION #19: What, as a student, do you think should have been done about preventing violence and shake-downs?

	<u>TOTAL SURVEY</u>
Principal should have helped	18%
Teachers should have helped	18%
Other students should have helped	28%
Police should have helped	14%
Nothing could have been done	3%
Does not apply	50%

The "Total Survey" column adds to more than one hundred percent because of some multiple responses.

As evidenced by the data, students did not considered police very effective in performing protective functions. Although students saw principals and teachers as playing a more important role than police in this function, most faith and responsibility was placed with their fellow students.

Item number twenty on the questionnaire, although not directly related to the study, gives valuable insights into other major factors that influence youngsters to withdraw from school.

The item consisted of the following statement: "If this questionnaire did not touch on your reason for leaving school, would you please check or state what you consider to be the major factor that caused you to leave school."

The findings, reported to the nearest whole percent, are listed below:

1. Marriage	19%
2. Enlisted in service	3%
3. Expelled	1%
4. Left home	3%
5. Financial need	18%
6. Wanted to work	18%
7. Did not like school	18%
8. Could see no value in school	11%
9. Lack of opportunity to select desired courses	11%
10. Disliked teacher or teachers	10%
11. Lack of guidance	10%
12. Illness or death in family	4%
13. Lack of parent interest	5%
14. Discouraged due to a broken home	6%
15. Rejection by classmates	4%
16. Rejection by teachers	5%
17. Resentment of authority	3%
18. Shy, felt out of place	8%
19. Compulsory physical education	4%
20. Compulsory swimming lessons	4%
21. Fear and anxiety	4%

The percentage column adds to more than one hundred percent because of some multiple responses.

Chapter V will present a summary of the study, and will attempt to draw conclusions based on the findings of the study.

C H A P T E R V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was concerned with the hypothesis that peer group violence is one real but unstated reason why a small percentage of youngsters do drop out of school.

The study was conducted in a medium size New England city with a population of about seventy thousand inhabitants. There are some twelve thousand public school students in the community, ninety-eight percent of whom are white. The community is relatively large in area and has no densely populated districts.

The design was a non-experimental investigation using the written questionnaire to gather information pertinent to the purposes of the study. The names of respondents were not sought in order to relieve anxiety in respect to the personal nature of the items.

The survey population consisted of one hundred and twenty members comprising the entire enrollment of an evening school program specifically oriented to providing opportunity for former dropouts to complete their high school education.

To assure response from all members of the population, the writer received permission to personally distribute and conduct the survey while the evening school was in session. Follow-up visits were made to insure that all enrollees in the program were surveyed.

As a result of the study, tables were developed which identified the relationship of peer group violence and early school withdrawal.

Conclusions

The hypothesis that peer group violence is a factor in the high school dropout problem in this community was accepted. The data obtained in the study provided ample evidence to support the hypothesis.

As indicated by the data, it was found that four percent of the total survey population viewed peer group violence as an important factor in their decision to withdraw from school. It should also be noted that nine percent of all male students and fourteen percent of male students under twenty-five considered peer group violence as an important factor in their early withdrawal from school.

The data indicates that males and especially males under twenty-five were more apt to experience direct peer group violence. However, it is evident that females were also subjected to violence. For example, in answer to question number seven, "Were you beat up just for 'kicks' before, during, or after school?" Seven percent of the females indicated that they had experienced this type of violence.

In addition to the relationship of violence and early withdrawal from school, it should be observed that threats of violence has a negative effect on the desire to learn. In response to question number sixteen, "Did threats or violence interfere with your desire to learn?" Nine percent of the total population answered in the affirmative.

A final observation which deserves constant attention is that the percentages presented in this study do represent students. It is

the responsibility of our schools and society to insure for these students the right to attend our schools in safety.

Recommendations

It is not the purpose of this study to recommend a specific program to curb violence in our schools, for this would necessitate trial and evaluation. However, as a result of the interpretation of the data, the writer believes that a successful program must allow for the direct involvement of students.

As evidenced by question number nineteen, "What, as a student, do you think should have been done about preventing violence and shake-downs?" Twice as many respondees indicated "Other students should have helped" as compared to the choice "Police should have helped."

This would signify that students do not consider police very effective in performing protective functions.

Although students see principals and teachers as playing a more important role than police in providing protection, most faith and responsibility is placed with their fellow students.

For a program to be effective, a student victim must have confidential resource to his fellow students. This might be accomplished through a student ombudsman, or special student committee. This action could then be pursued by cooperative reaction on the part of student and authorities.

Perhaps the most essential ingredient in an effective program would be the mechanism under which peer group pressure could be brought to bear upon those who inflict violence on their fellow students.

Finally, school districts should have a policy of rights and responsibilities of students. Included in this policy should be the right of students to attend school without fear of being subjected to physical violence.

Need for Future Research

It has been the purpose of this dissertation to give credence to the proposition that peer group violence does, indeed, exist as a factor in the high school dropout problem in this community.

Further studies might be conducted to ascertain if the problem exists to a greater extent in our large cities which are generally considered to be more prone to crime and violence.

A comparative study might be directed to discovering the relationships of peer group violence on urban and suburban high school dropouts.

Psychological research involving the fundamental forces of fear and anxiety could attempt to ascertain the causes for the behavior patterns that lead these students to withdraw from the educational environment.

Continued research into the dropout problem is vital, if we are to reduce the number of dropouts in the future. We must discover and diagnose the causes before we can apply the remedies.

It is hoped that this study has provided one more segment to the body of knowledge concerning the school dropout.

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A P P E N D I X

R E S E A R C H Q U E S T I O N N A I R E

DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

Dear Student:

Can you spare ten minutes? That's the time it will take to complete a questionnaire that will help us to help your fellow students.

Last year, nearly 17,000 Massachusetts high school students left school before graduating. Although we know many of the reasons why students withdraw from school, we must try to discover all possible reasons if we are to provide meaningful programs that will encourage students to remain in school.

There will, of course, be no identification of you or your community in any part of this study.

I would like to thank each of you for your cooperation in helping us compile this valuable information.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Carriere
Research Director

DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

Directions:

Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you. Do not allow yourself to be influenced by the answers that you think your friends would give. Your frank, straight-from-the-shoulder answers are the important ones.

Please check the one box which most nearly represents your position on each of the following questions.

DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

8. Did you ever have a gang shake-down worked against you before, during, or after school?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER
9. Did you ever get beat-up because you wouldn't come up with the "bread" before, during, or after school?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER
10. Were you threatened with violence if you "finked" to the cops or school authorities?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER
11. Were you threatened or attacked by individuals or gangs using belts, knives, or other weapons before, during, or after school?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER
12. Was race a factor in any violence you have experienced?
- YES NO DOES NOT APPLY
13. Did the fear of violence make you feel personally more uneasy?
- YES NO DOES NOT APPLY
14. Did you take the long way home from school, not because you wanted to, but because you felt you had to for your own safety?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER
15. Did you miss school, not because you wanted to, but because you felt you had to for your own safety?
- OFTEN OCCASIONALLY SELDOM NEVER

RULES FOR SCORING

Please check the one box which most nearly represents your position on each of the following questions.

DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

16. Did threats or violence interfere with your desire to learn?
 YES NO DOES NOT APPLY
17. Did you desire to escape or leave school because of violence?
 YES NO DOES NOT APPLY
18. Was violence a factor in your decision to leave school?
 VERY IMPORTANT IMPORTANT UNIMPORTANT NOT AT ALL
19. What, as a student, do you think should have been done about preventing violence and shake-downs?
 PRINCIPAL SHOULD HAVE HELPED
 TEACHERS SHOULD HAVE HELPED
 OTHER STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE HELPED
 POLICE SHOULD HAVE HELPED
 NOTHING COULD HAVE BEEN DONE
 DOES NOT APPLY

Please check the one box which most nearly represents your position on each of the following questions.

DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME

If this questionnaire did not touch on your reason for leaving school, would you please check or state what you consider to be the major factor that caused you to leave school.

- Marriage
- Enlisted in service
- Expelled
- Left home
- Financial need
- Wanted to work
- Did not like school
- Could see no value in school
- Lack of opportunity to select desired courses
- Disliked teacher or teachers
- Lack of guidance
- Illness or death in family
- Lack of parent interest
- Discouraged due to a broken home
- Rejection by classmates
- Rejection by teachers
- Resentment of authority
- Shy, felt out of place
- Compulsory physical education
- Compulsory swimming lessons
- Fear and anxiety
- OTHER: (please state) _____

And now, finally, just a few questions about yourself.

- Check whether:
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White man | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-white man |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-white woman |

What is your age please _____.

What was the last grade or class you COMPLETED before leaving school? _____



