

The Dropout Phenomenon: The Teachers' Viewpoint

by

Irene Guberman

A thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Masters of Science
in
Family Studies.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

(c) Irene Guberman, 1990



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-71836-6

Canada

*THE DROPOUT PEHNOMENON:
THE DROPOUT PHENOMENON:
THE TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT*

BY

IRENE GUBERMAN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

© 1990

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVER-
SITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis. to
the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this
thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY
MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the
thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or other-
wise reproduced without the author's written permission.

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

I authorize the University of Manitoba to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Irene Guberman

I further authorize the University of Manitoba to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Irene Guberman

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine an aspect of the high school dropout phenomenon. Elementary school teachers were asked to select which students, from a random list of grades 2 to 6 students in their schools, had the potential, in their opinion, to become high school dropouts. The teachers also submitted a short list of reasons why they felt the students who were chosen, had the potential to become dropouts. Seventy-nine (28.5%) of the 277 students in the study were selected by two or more teachers as potential dropouts. Teacher generated reasons were classified into categories. Sixty-six percent of the 385 reasons teachers proffered were personal reasons. Personal reasons reflected some aspect of the student's character or their family characteristics. Academic or school-related reasons represented 31% of the teacher generated reasons. The study gained its significance from teacher generated reasons as opposed to retroactive reasons from high school dropouts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people whose contributions, support and encouragement led to the completion of this thesis. Dr. Dale Berg, my advisor, deserves special recognition for the input, guidance and humour he provided through all the stages required to produce a thesis. Special thanks are also due to the other members of my committee, Dr. John Bond and Dr. Paul Madak for their helpful suggestions and their time.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Assistant Superintendent of the Winnipeg school division where this research was conducted, for his permission to do research in the division. Thanks are also due to the six elementary school principals who supported this research and encouraged their teachers to participate.

I also wish to thank my family, my sons and especially Barry Guberman, for their outstanding support and help. I could not have reached this goal without them.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v

	<u>page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	1
The Dropout Rate	2
The Dropout and the Economy	3
The Dropout and Society	5
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
The Decision to Leave School	6
Environmental Reasons	7
Cultural Reasons	7
English as a Second Language	9
Socioeconomic Status	10
Personal Reasons	11
Scholastic Performance	12
Self-esteem	13
Home Influences	14
Pregnancy	15
Student Economic Reasons	16
The Lure of Work	17
School-related Reasons	18
Nobody Cares	19
Dislike of school	20
School content is irrelevant	20
Alienation	21
Identifying Potential Dropouts	22
When most drop out	22
Early identification and prevention	23
Critique of the Research Literature	24
Methodology	25
Definition of a Dropout	26
Calculation of the Dropout rate	26
Design of Studies	28
The necessity of Grade 12	29
Summary	30

THE RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY	32
METHODS	39
Teacher Participation	40
Schools in the study	41
Research Design	43
Procedure for Data Collection	43
Analysis	45
Classification of Reasons	46
Personal Variables	46
Family Related Factors	47
Self-esteem	48
Attitudes	48
Learning Disabilities	49
Academic Problems	49
Other	50
Analysis of Reasons	50
RESULTS	52
Students with the Potential to Dropout	52
Agreement among Teachers	54
Frequency of Reasons	61
Frequency of Reasons for Students with High Dropout Potentials	62
Frequency of reasons for Students with Low Dropout Potentials	64
Breakdown of Categories	66
Distribution of Dropouts by Grade	69
Frequency of Reasons by Grade	73
DISCUSSION	75
The Potential Dropout Rate	75
Teacher Agreement	76
Teacher Generated Reasons	79
Distribution of Dropouts by Grade	85
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS	88
Summary	88
Limitations of the Study	89
Implications	91
REFERENCES	94

<u>Appendix</u>	<u>page</u>
A. FORM #1	97
B. FORM #2	98
C. PROFILE	99

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
1. Students with the potential to become Dropouts	53
2. Agreement among Teachers: School A	55
3. Agreement among Teachers: School B	56
4. Agreement among Teachers: School C	58
5. Agreement among Teachers: School D	60
6. Frequency of Reasons: All Potential Dropouts	62
7. Frequency of Reasons for Students with High Dropout Potentials	63
8. Frequency of Reasons for Students with Low Dropout Potentials	66
9. Breakdown of the Family Factors Category	67
10. Breakdown of the Attitudes Category	67
11. Breakdown of the Academic Problems Category	68
12. Breakdown of the Other Category	69
13. Distribution of Potential Dropouts by Grade	70
14. Distribution of Students by Grade at each School	72
15. Distribution of Students by Grade all Schools Combined	73
16. Frequency of Reasons by Grade	74

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

One of the problems facing educators today is the phenomenon of high school dropout. Beck and Muia (1980) contended that failure to complete high school is the most serious of all problems facing educators. The costs of quitting school are high for the dropout and high for society, which must bear the brunt of the dropouts' inability to hold a job (Beck & Muia). Radwanski (1987) concurred with this assessment. Indeed he labelled the dropout problem as a "tragic waste" (p.66). Radwanski stated that dropouts narrow the range of opportunities they will have in their lifetimes and they also diminish their potential contribution to society as a whole. Dropouts, according to Pittman (1986), are the single greatest evidence of waste in our educational system. Steinberg, Blinde, and Chan (1984) reported that premature school leaving is associated with increased expenditures for government assistance to individuals and families, higher rates of crime and the maintenance of costly special training programs. These statements seem to portend that young people who leave school early are a cost rather than an asset to society.

A recently published review of Manitoba's high schools stated that the phenomenon of high school dropout is becoming a major concern for schools across North America (Challenges and Changes, 1988). Greene

(1966) stated that high school dropout is not the problem that troubles society, the real problem is unemployment. In the past, high school dropouts were absorbed into the labour market. In times of high unemployment, the dropout has a more difficult time getting a job (Shreiber, 1967). The dropout also has a more difficult time keeping a job, according to Sullivan (1988). In his Ontario study, dropouts were more frequently unemployed, over a five year period, than were the high school graduates with whom they were compared.

The dropout leaves school without a diploma or a marketable skill, and faces unemployment or a low paying blue collar job (Beck & Muia, 1980). The circumstances that early school leavers may face, and the effect these circumstances may have on society, make the dropout rate a statistic worthy of review.

The Dropout Rate. There have always been individuals who fail to complete their high school education. In the 1950's, only 40 percent of the young people in Ontario graduated from high school (Radwanski, 1987). Radwanski estimated the drop out rate in Ontario in 1987 to be between 31 and 33 percent. This represents a considerable rise in the percentage of high school graduates over a 30 year period. Approximately 67 percent of young people in Ontario are now finishing their high school education.

Studies conducted in the United States reveal similiar statistics. In the 1940's, approximately 76 percent of American youth dropped out of high school (Mann, 1986). The current rate of dropping out in the United States is about 25 percent (Beck & Muia, 1980; Fine & Rosenberg,

1983; Hargroves, 1986; Kaplan & Luck, 1977; Mann, 1986; Maurer, 1982; Powell-Howard & Anderson, 1978; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). The current dropout rates in both Canada and the U.S. represent an increase in the percentage of young people who obtain a high school diploma. Still, dropping out is considered a major problem. The Manitoba High School Review (Challenges & Changes, 1988) stated that any dropout rate is significant and unacceptable, because the purpose of high school education is to provide young people with the skills for living in a future marked by rapid and continuous change. Education is a basic requisite for responsible citizenship, and for successful entry into today's complicated working world (PowellHoward & Anderson, 1978). These statements appear to indicate that a dropout rate, of even the smallest proportion, may have detrimental effects on our economy and our society.

The Dropout and the Economy. The dominant belief in society is that education leads to labour market success (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983), and that education is an important contributor to economic growth (Radwanski, 1987). Radwanski argued that our country can no longer compete with countries that have a large unskilled labour pool, with workers who are willing to work long hours, for low wages. The key competitive variable for the success of our economy is the quality of the work force. Schools, argued Maynard (1986), are not equipping students with even the most basic workplace survival skills. Radwanski defined a skilled work force not, as one trained for specialized job-specific skills, but rather a work force with a high level of general education.

The forces of the information age, according to Maynard (1989) are conspiring to make brain power the ultimate resource. Most of the job growth in Canada is occurring in high skill areas. There were more than 600,000 job openings across the country (Maynard, May, 1989) that, in most instances, could not be filled. The unemployed in Canada did not have the skills to fill these jobs.

Maynard (1989) claimed that technology has made even the so-called blue-collar jobs more complex. She quoted a U. S. study that found that the average service or technical worker spent about 160 minutes each day reading memos, manuals and other job-related material. Maynard estimated that 24 percent of high school dropouts were illiterate. A business task force on literacy conducted in Canada in 1988, conservatively estimated that illiteracy costs business at least \$4 billion a year in accidents, errors and lost productivity (Maynard, 1989).

Technology and scientific knowledge are increasing at a fast pace. This makes it almost impossible to predict the precise skills that employers will need even five years from now (Maynard, 1989; Radwanski, 1987). Employees will have to be flexible and willing to upgrade their skills or be retrained. A worker who has learned how to study, think independently and learn quickly will be in an advantaged position. Workers who leave school before acquiring these skills will have more problems obtaining and keeping jobs in the future than they have now. Sullivan (1988) found that more dropouts are currently (1988) unemployed than high school graduates and are also more likely to have been unemployed in the past five years than are graduates. Kaplan and Luck

(1977) contended that the nongraduate will become increasingly marginal and irrelevant to the economic system. It appears that the economic well-being of our society may be dependent on a high school educated work force.

The Dropout and Society. An education should provide an individual with the ability to make informed choices. The effective functioning of our system of government depends on this. Radwanski (1987) said that when people lack the knowledge to understand difficult issues, they either become indifferent, or follow the lead of people they find persuasive. Natriello, Pallas and McDill (1986) purported that such people are deprived of the opportunity of full participation in political and social affairs, which is the right of every citizen in countries that are committed to equal opportunity for all. Our system of government is best served by a well-informed public. A relevant, high-quality, general education helps prepare young people for effective and satisfying participation in society (Radwanski, 1987). Radwanski appeared to be saying that young people who leave high school without graduating might be lacking the means to fully participate in society. High school dropouts, in this context, might not be prepared citizens. Yet, a significant proportion of the population are high school dropouts. There are a variety of reasons why this segment of the population leaves school before graduating.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Decision to Leave School

Karp (1988) asked the subjects in her study how long it took them to decide to leave school. About 50 percent said they had been thinking about it for quite a while, but for 45 percent of the subjects, the decision was made very quickly. The subjects who made the quick decisions, according to Karp, were more likely to be those who had ranked themselves as poor or fair students. In contrast, the dropouts whose decision to leave school evolved over time were more likely to have ranked themselves as excellent or good students. In addition, 59 percent of this group of subjects had parents who had completed at least some university. Scholastic ability was just one among a number of reasons that young people admit influenced their decision.

Many of the factors that appeared to be influential were not cited by dropouts. These factors, which may be broadly categorized as environmental factors, emerged when studies focused on the characteristics of the dropout.

Schools, and how the dropouts viewed schools and their staffs were frequently implicated as influencing early school departure (Beck & Muia, 1980; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Karp, 1988; & Pittman, 1986). Schools were targeted in much of the literature as being inhospitable places for students who exhibit the characteristics of potential dropouts.

Factors that affected the decision to leave school can be broadly categorized into three areas, environmental, personal, and school based. A review of the literature made it possible to expand these areas to include a variety of reasons for the decision to drop out of school.

Environmental Reasons

Environmental reasons for dropping out of school can be described as the background characteristics of individuals that are related to leaving school early. The characteristic most frequently referred to in the research literature was socioeconomic status. A person's cultural heritage, that is, his/her ethnicity or race also may have a relationship to early school departure. A third background characteristic was related to English being one's second language. All three of the characteristics are interrelated. Visible minorities or recent immigrants are often of lower socioeconomic classes and are likely to have English as a second language.

Cultural Reasons. The ethnic dimensions of the school dropout phenomenon emerged in Karp's (1988) study from discussions with educators. The ethnic component was found to have two dimensions. First, many students who came from countries other than Canada did not have the same academic background or cultural perspective as Canadian born students. Second, some cultures did not appear to see the necessity of the educational system in Canada. Karp illustrated this second point with the example of a fisherman who learned to fish from his own father. He might consider an abstract higher education as irrelevant for his own son.

Native students, although they are born in Canada, have a different cultural background from nonnative Canadians. They also have a different educational system (Karp, 1988). Traditional native teaching methods are based on demonstration and imitation, and are often on a one to one basis, making the method of teaching in our schools seem foreign to them (Karp, 1988).

Recent immigration or ethnic group was not strongly associated with dropping out in a study conducted by Sullivan (1988) in Ontario. But, it is important to note that this was a province-wide study and it might have been more significant, according to Radwanski (1987), if the study had been restricted to metropolitan Toronto where the largest concentration of recent immigrants tend to be.

A cultural difference that was consistently linked to dropping out in U. S. studies is race/ethnicity (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Hargroves, 1986; & Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). Relative to population, racial minorities were grossly overrepresented in the dropout rate (Kaplan & Luck, 1977). Black and Hispanic students dropped out at a higher rate than white students, with the highest rate being for Hispanics (Ekstrom et al. 1986; Hargroves, 1986; Hinojosa & Miller, 1984; Kaplan & Luck, 1977; McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985; Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). Steinberg, Blinde and Chan's research was unable to account for the reason that dropping out was more prevalent among Hispanic youth, but they speculated that the reason was linked to the fact that English was their second language and that they were more likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

English as a Second Language. Steinberg, Blinde and Chan (1984) maintained that young people whose primary language was not English were more likely than their peers to leave school before graduation. The authors cited dropout statistics for Hispanics and American Indians that exceeded the national average for dropping out of high school. The national average of 25 percent was considerably lower than the rate of approximately 40 percent for Hispanics and American Indians. The most important determinant of dropping out, they found, was whether an individual spoke English rather than whether or not he or she came from an non-English speaking background. Steinberg, Blinde and Chan speculated that this may be one of the reasons why the Hispanic drop out rate was so high. The authors contended that Hispanic communities in the United States made a concerted effort to maintain Spanish as the dominant language. Thus when Hispanic youngsters entered the education system they were likely to be non-English speakers.

Similar findings emerged from a study conducted by the Toronto Board of Education (Radwanski, 1987). This study found that young people who entered high school having a language other than English as their primary language, were more likely to drop out than were their peers whose first language was English. The ratio increased from a dropout rate of 33 percent to 53 percent for the students who did not speak English. The students in this study who entered elementary schools as non-English speakers had a dropout rate that was virtually identical to the cohort rate (33 percent). In this Canadian study, English as a second language along with the age of the student was associated with the drop out rate.

Other studies (Beck & Muia, 1980; Challenges & Changes, 1988; Scrimshaw, 1980) listed English as a second language as a factor relating to an individual's chances of completing high school. These studies all linked this reason with socioeconomic status, because these young people were likely to be from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Socioeconomic Status. High school dropouts came from all socioeconomic levels of society, but their percentage increased with the descent on the socioeconomic ladder (Beck & Muia, 1980). Among youth in the upper, upper class (the top rung of the ladder) only two percent dropped out. The percentage descended by steps, to 25 percent of lower middle-class and upper-lower class youngsters to 50 percent for lower, lower-class youth, at the bottom rung of the ladder (Beck & Muia, 1980). Beck and Muia attributed the correlation between low socioeconomic status and high drop out rate to the disparity in attitudes and ideals between this group and the upper classes of society. Powell-Howard and Anderson (1978) stated that socialization in middle class families prepared youth to compete successfully in school, whereas lower-class youth were not prepared to conform to the academic and informal requirements of schools, which the authors explained required students to be studious, obedient and docile. Ekstrom et al. (1986) expanded on the reasons why lower class youth were less prepared for school. These youth often came from homes with weaker educational support systems. There were usually fewer study aids in the home, parents had low levels of formal education, and lower educational expectations for their offspring. Lower-class families were also less likely to have both natural parents living at home; and it has been found that students from

single-parent households were more likely to drop out than students from homes with both parents present (Challenges & Changes, 1988; Karp, 1988; Radwanski, 1987; Sullivan, 1988).

Radwanski (1987) emphasized that the correlation between socioeconomic status and high school drop out did not mean that young people from lower socioeconomic status families were less intelligent or less endowed with the potential to be educated. What appeared to be true, according to Radwanski, was that the influence of family socioeconomic background was a more powerful factor than a student's mental abilities. Studies that Radwanski cited demonstrated that students who scored low on mental ability tests but came from families with high socioeconomic status were more likely to remain in high school until Grade 12 than students with high ability but low socioeconomic status.

Personal Reasons

There is a tendency to stereotype high school dropouts as people who are, perhaps, not scholastically able to continue in school. This might be a factor that leads some young people to leave school before graduating, but it is just one of many reasons that could be thought of as personal reasons that influences young peoples' decisions to leave school. Some young people might well have the scholastic ability to succeed at school, but if they do not feel capable of completing school, they might not. Their lack of self-confidence or self-esteem might influence their decisions.

Problems or pressures at home were oft repeated reasons given by dropouts for leaving school (Radwanski, 1987). The literature suggested a number of variables that this area might encompass. One variable that should be considered on its own, although it affected females only, was pregnancy. In Sullivan's (1988) study 14 percent of the female dropouts cited pregnancy as their reason for leaving school.

For some young people, the option of completing school is not available. Economic necessity requires that they find employment. For others, it was not economic necessity, but lure of the work world that leads them to terminate their education.

Scholastic Performance. Research has shown a strong correlation between learning difficulties and the likelihood of dropping out (Beck & Muia, 1980; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Radwanski, 1987). Dropouts tended to accumulate credits at a slower pace than other students, to have failed one or more subjects, and to be behind in their grade level in reading ability (Challenges & Changes, 1988; Radwanski, 1987). In Karp's (1988) study, 82 percent of the dropouts reported failing at least one subject in high school, compared to 50 percent of the non-dropouts. As well, 30 percent of the dropouts, but only 7 percent of the non-dropouts failed a grade while in elementary or junior high school. Various studies have found that repeating a grade was a significant predictor of quitting school (Beck & Muia, 1980; Kaplan & Luck, 1977; PowellHoward & Anderson, 1978; Safer, 1986).

Some students dropped out even though they were doing well at school. In Sullivan's (1988) study, seven percent of the dropouts said

they had been A-average students and 46 percent said their average had been B. Karp's (1988) results were quite similar; four percent of the dropouts described themselves as excellent students and 37 percent said they had been good students. Lajoie and Shore (1981) found that gifted students were represented among dropouts. They did not state the proportion of this representation, only that the gifted were not overrepresented in the dropout population.

The profile of dropouts in terms of scholastic performance is a complex one. Dropouts, as a group, are composed of students with academic difficulties and also, students who are performing well enough to graduate if they stay in school.

Self-esteem. Dropouts in Karp's (1988) study rated themselves moderately high on a scale of self-esteem. Other factors in the study indicated this may not be true. More than half of the employers contacted in Karp's study stated that dropouts had less self-confidence than school graduates. Various studies described dropouts as people with low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (Challenges & Changes, 1988; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Scrimshaw, 1980). Fine (1987) did not describe all dropouts as having low levels of self-esteem or self-confidence, but there was a group for whom, she said, the description was apt. This group of dropouts, according to Fine (1987), have internalized ideologies about their inabilities and their uselessness and they opted to leave school because they did not believe they were capable of obtaining a diploma.

The development of this lack of self-esteem might well begin in the home. Rosenberg (1968) contended that lack of parental interest toward their children may lead to children with low self-esteem. Linked to this lack of interest was the failure to treat children with respect or to give them encouragement. The family environment had a strong impact on the development of young peoples' self-esteem.

Home Influences. Problems at home were the most frequently cited personal reasons for dropping out of high school, according to Radwanski (1987). As an example of home problems, Fine (1987) cited students who were needed at home to look after family -- a sick relative or younger siblings. This need superceded the need to attend school. School became less important. Sometimes family breakup or domestic conflicts, or the death of a close relative upsets or distracts students to such a degree that their school work suffered (Radwanski, 1987).

Beck and Muia (1980) reported on a study of dropouts in which the majority said that their home lives were unhappy. Children from unhappy homes often did not have their basic security and psychological needs met. This made it difficult for them to develop the higher drives toward achievement and self-improvement that were necessary for success in school (Beck and Muia, 1980).

Compounding the problem of unhappy homes was parental apathy towards education. Studies indicate, stated Beck and Muia (1980), that two-thirds of dropouts' parents had indifferent or negative attitudes about the value of education. The reason for these parental attitudes might stem from the parents' own difficulties with schooling. They

might not view educational attainment as a ladder to a better life (Sprinthall & Collins, 1984). Children who were exposed to these attitudes were likely to also develop negative attitudes towards school (Scrimshaw, 1980; Wagner, 1984).

Henderson (1981) found that family background exerted an effect on intellectual and economic accomplishments into adulthood. The intellectual environment of the family might have a direct influence on the intellectual development of the child. The presence of learning materials in the home, the quality of language used in the home, and whether or not the parents stimulated their young children to learn were all part of the learning structure of the home. The home was a vitally important learning environment. Contact with adults who valued educational achievement and who attempted to promote achievement in their children was important to the development of young peoples' desire to obtain a secondary education. Children whose parents believed in education, and who supported the school in its efforts had an enormous advantage in school over children with parents with indifferent or negative attitudes about the value of education (Wiseman, 1967). The dropouts in Karp's (1988) study appeared to concur with this view. They stated that if they had received encouragement from their parents to remain in school, they might not have dropped out.

Pregnancy. In Ekstrom et al.'s (1986), Karp's (1988), and Sullivan's (1988) research the number of dropouts who reported leaving school because they were pregnant ranged between 11 and 14 percent of the samples. Sullivan speculated that it was likely that when respondents gave marriage as a reason for dropping out, they were

implying that they were, in fact, pregnant and married as a result of the pregnancy. So the percentage of females who dropped out because they were pregnant might be higher than the 11 to 14 percent who gave this reason. In the past, pregnant students were required to leave school. This is no longer true, but it is likely difficult for young women to feel comfortable or accepted at school if they are visibly pregnant. If some of these young women are intent on keeping their babies, they might need to leave school to work in order to support themselves and their children.

Student Economic Reasons. Many young people left school to take jobs to meet personal or family needs (Wagner, 1984). The economic contribution of an adolescent might be very necessary in some families. This might be particularly true for single-parent families. A number of the students who cited financial problems as the reason for leaving school in Sullivan's (1988) study commented that they "only had a mom and she couldn't support me" (p. 33).

Some young people might not be able to meet the financial demands of an education. Although our system provides a free education there are many hidden costs, such as, dances, yearbooks, athletic events, class rings, graduation expenses and so forth (Powell-Howard & Anderson, 1978). Although these are not essentials, they are part of high school life.

Kaplan and Luck (1977) maintained that the dropout phenomenon was rooted in the material conditions of poverty. Poor people lived in crowded homes and neighbourhoods, with little privacy and lots of noise.

These conditions made it difficult to concentrate on school work, and the lack of proper desks, chairs, and lighting resulted in an atmosphere that was not conducive to studying. In short, said Kaplan and Luck, the physical circumstances of poverty made success in school exceptionally difficult.

The Lure of Work. Not all students who dropped out to work did so for economic reasons. For some, the lure of the work world was stronger than the desire to remain in school. To these young people work represented adulthood, money and freedom (Radwanski, 1987). Many young people believed that employment represented learning one task or set of tasks and then being rewarded with money for carrying them out. In contrast, education required constantly learning new things (Radwanski, 1987).

The introduction to the work place, for some young people, began with part-time work undertaken while still attending school. There appeared to be little consensus as to whether this type of work was beneficial or costly. Greenberger (1983) stated that the benefits her research had identified, such as an increased sense of responsibility, were in delicate balance with the drawbacks, such as decreased school involvement. D'Amico (1984) suggested that high school employment could be advantageous in the post school period. High school work experience might lead to finding better jobs. But, employment interfered with academic performance and time for extracurricular participation which has been shown to promote educational outcomes (D'Amico, 1984). A number of teachers in Karp's (1988) study recommended that students should not have part-time jobs until they were in grade 12. These

teachers felt that part-time work gave students a chance to earn money and this might cause them to lose interest in school.

One out of three of the dropouts, in Sullivan's (1988) study, went to work at the part-time or summer job that they already had, immediately after leaving high school. These findings suggested that access to a job might be a factor in deciding to drop out of school. D'Amico (1984) reported that a very intensive work involvement was associated with an increased probability of dropping out of school. Unfortunately, D'Amico did not define "a very intensive work involvement" in terms of hours. From a prediction standpoint, McDill, Natriello and Pallas (1985) maintained that holding a regular, part-time job while in high school was a potent predictor of dropping out.

Radwanski (1987) said that work-related reasons for dropping out were not entirely separate from school-related reasons. The strong drawing power of the work place, he said, was inversely proportional to the weak holding power of the high school.

School-related Reasons

School-related factors were the most frequently reported reasons for leaving high school (McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985). Many potential dropouts were discouraged by the impersonal and bureaucratic structures of today's large high schools (Challenges & Changes, 1988). Many students were turned off school by a sense that nobody cared about them as individuals. In retrospect, a number of dropouts, interviewed by Karp (1988), claimed that more encouragement and help from teachers

might have helped to keep them in school. This study did not mention the length of time the dropouts had been out of school when these comments were recorded. It is possible that the passage of time might have affected the subjects recall of their past attitudes.

Prominent among school related reasons that were given in Karp's (1988) study were had no interest in school, and school is repetitious and boring. Dislike of school was another oft repeated reason for dropping out of school (Dunham & Alpert, 1987; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Hewitt & Johnson, 1979; Powell-Howard and Anderson, 1978). "Dislike of school", "school is boring", and "no interest in school" were three very similar reasons and they are examined under the general heading of "dislike of school".

Subjects in a number of studies (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Karp, 1988; Radwanski, 1987; Wagner, 1984) commented that one of the reasons they left school was because the school curriculum was irrelevant; it did not apply to the real working world. Many dropouts felt that the school system was not geared to them. They felt alienated in a system that they believed was set up to most benefit students with top marks. This was particularly true for dropouts who considered themselves to be on the low rung of the academic ladder. These students felt alienated from teachers who they claim, did not have time to get to know them primarily because of the large size of classes (Karp, 1988).

Nobody Cares. A frequent refrain heard from dropouts in both Canadian and American studies was that nobody cared that these potential dropouts were not succeeding at school. In separate studies, 29% (Karp,

1988), 27% (Sullivan, 1988) and more than 50% (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986) of the dropouts reported that nobody cared. These figures contrast with graduates' views in both the Karp and Sullivan studies in which 12 percent and 6 percent respectively, felt that teachers did not care whether or not they succeeded. These, of course, were perceptions and might be incorrect. As well, it should be noted that these reports were solicited. Subjects in all of the studies quoted were asked to choose from a list, the statement that was most indicative of their situation. It was interesting to note that there was a difference between dropouts' and graduates' perceptions. Radwanski (1987) stated that although many dropouts tended to be students with academic difficulties, this might not be the key factor in their dropping out. The crucial factor, said Radwanski, might be the dropouts' perception of how the system responded to their academic performance. A fair percentage of dropouts felt that their performance was viewed with indifference or hostility. They felt rejected or ignored by the education system (Radwanski, 1987).

Dislike of school. Dislike of school was a prominently mentioned reason given by dropouts in the research literature (Dunham & Alpert, 1987; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Hewitt & Johnson, 1979; Powell-Howard & Anderson, 1978; Radwanski, 1987; Safer, 1986; Sullivan, 1988). Unfortunately, no effort was made to explain why these students developed their dislike of school. It can only be speculated that this variable was influenced by the students' behavior and the behavior's reception at school, and by parents' and peers' attitudes.

School content is irrelevant. The dropout viewed the school curriculum as removed from real life experience. Seventy-three percent

of the dropouts in Karp's (1988) research felt that too much emphasis was put on the past, rather than the present and future. These dropouts said that school should be more job or career oriented. Wagner (1984) also believed that the school curriculum should be more related to the real world. He used writing as an example. The writing of an adult in the real world, stated Wagner, relates to business letters, memos, committee minutes and other unglamorous forms. In contrast, school writing was primarily geared to research writing directed towards a college degree, though only a small percentage of the school population was headed in that direction. Wagner recommended that there be more "Industrial Education" provided for students.

Radwanski (1987) contended that the complaint of school curriculum being irrelevant was really an alienation-related complaint about teaching methods rather than subject content. An interesting teacher, he said, could make any subject seem relevant.

Alienation. It was not just teaching methods that alienated young people, it was also the inconsistencies of a system that treated them as adults in some respects and children in others (Challenges & Changes, 1988). Young people were also turned off by rules and disciplinary measures that they perceived as arbitrary or unfair, and by a perception that they were scorned or rejected rather than helped if they encountered serious learning problems (Radwanski, 1987).

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have isolated three variables that they said measured student alienation. They were, teacher interest in students; effectiveness of discipline; and fairness of discipline. All

three of these measures had consistently negative ratings from the dropouts in this research. All of these ratings were retrospective, that is, they were given by subjects after they had left the school system.

Identifying Potential Dropouts

This literature review clearly indicates that the dropout phenomenon is a multi-dimensional, complex issue. It was hard to ignore the disadvantages that accrued when a significant portion of students failed to complete their high school education. Although Grade 11 was the most common grade for dropouts to leave school (Sullivan, 1988), the predilection was felt to develop at a much earlier stage. Barrington and Hendricks (1989) found that identification of potential dropouts could be accomplished with reasonable accuracy as early as the middle elementary school years. Early recognition might be the best prescription for preventing a significant proportion of potential dropouts from leaving school before they graduated.

When most drop out. The majority of students dropped out of school when they had almost completed their high school education. The largest proportion left in Grade 11; 32 percent in Karp's (1988) study, 41 percent in Sullivan's (1988), and 44 percent in Ekstrom et al.'s (1986) study. Beck and Muia (1980) contended that dropping out was a cumulation of conditions and actions experienced long before the decision. The seeds might be developing as early as the first grade.

Early identification and prevention. Mann (1986) stated that the best way to avoid dropping out in high school was to make the elementary school more successful. This could be accomplished, Mann suggested, by minimizing school failure, maximizing school success, and providing a foundation of basic skills. These practices would reap high dividends, and the earlier they were implemented, the less damage there would be in terms of the future dropout rate. The key to lessening today's high dropout rate, stated Beck and Muia (1980), was early identification of dropouts and appropriate treatment of these children when they were young. They quoted educators who believed that programs in the nursery and kindergarten might prove to be the most beneficial in preventing dropout. These educators believed that programs that provided four and five year olds with educational experiences that they might otherwise miss, especially if they were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, would help these young people overcome some cultural disadvantages.

Bettleheim (1967) concurred that preschool programs would greatly benefit children who were potential dropouts. He stated that the early years were the optimal years for raising a child's I.Q., but most help programs for children with school problems began much later. The Perry Preschool study, has shown that good preschool programs could have a beneficial effect on the lives of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This was a longitudinal study that was able because of its design, to identify preschool effects 20 years later (Schweinhart, Berrueta-Clement, Barnett, Epstein, Weikart, 1985). All researchers did not agree that prevention programs needed to begin as early as the first few years of school, but nearly all recommended that detection and prevention begin before students entered high school. Caliste (1984)

recommended that intervention programs begin at the upper elementary level; Hargrove (1986) suggested that attention and resources should be concentrated at the grades six to nine level. There was general agreement that early recognition of a students' prediliction to drop out was desirable.

Critique of the Research Literature

Approximately seventy percent of the research consulted in this literature review was retrospective in nature, relying on the subjects' ability to recall events of the past. Subjects in the studies were asked not only to accurately recall events of the past, but also to recall attitudes and feelings. In many instances, the reader was not informed of the length of time that had elapsed since the subject dropped out of high school. Time might be an influential factor. Sullivan (1988) noted that it was well documented that recent experiences tended to colour people's recall of past events and attitudes. This limitation should not be overlooked. Sullivan suggested that the results of retrospective studies be used as indicative of patterns rather than factual information. That is, retrospective studies were useful as indicators to identify the variables that might be influencing the subjects' decision. Information that would be considered as more factual was best solicited at the time of occurence of the studied event.

There were other aspects of the methods employed in previous research that should be considered, including the design of the studies and justifying the rationales. Most of the research assumed that a high

school diploma was something that every individual should attain. Questions have been raised that speculate on the necessity of grade 12 or 13 for everyone. This question will be addressed later.

Methodology

A very basic methodological problem with the research cited, resided in the definition of a dropout. Mann (1986) stated there were as many different definitions of a dropout as there were school districts recording dropouts. Another basic problem deals with the procedures used to determine dropout statistics. These vary from school to school in the same school districts (Hammack, 1986). In Manitoba, education records compiled very little information about dropout rates (Challenges & Changes, 1988). As a result, the province had very limited information on the dropout rate.

The research also seemed to focus on the problems of specific demographic groups, and targeted schools and their staffs as a major reason for the dropout problem. Although schools and teachers were implicated, the research rarely consulted teachers or school administrators. Teachers have daily contact with students and are aware of the students who are having difficulties at school, and also can identify the students who have indifferent attitudes about the value of education. Teachers are also cognizant of which students come from families who are neither interested in nor supportive of their children's educational efforts. The research appeared to be missing a valuable source of information.

Definition of a Dropout. Radwanski (1987) defined a dropout as "...any student who leaves high school before having successfully completed Grade 12" (p.67). His rationale for this definition was that completion of Grade 12 was the norm expected by society and thus it was appropriate to include everyone who left high school before meeting that norm in the dropout statistic. This definition of a dropout included people who may drop out, but subsequently return to finish high school, or at some future date obtain a graduation equivalent degree, or those who may at some time enter university as mature students. It also included those who might go to private business or vocational schools, as well as people who might have been expelled from school or jailed.

Other studies used differing definitions of a dropout. Beck and Muia's (1980) definition was broader; it also included as dropouts students who failed to complete a program of study. Lajoie's (1981) definition of a dropout was "a student who had withdrawn from his/her academic setting without graduating, for any reason other than death, illness or transfer" (p.138). The majority of studies consulted in this literature review simply did not delineate who was a dropout.

Mann (1986), Morrow (1987), and Hammack (1986) emphasized the need for standardizing the definition of a dropout. Without a standard definition of a dropout it was difficult to meaningfully calculate the dropout rate.

Calculation of the Dropout rate. There were a number of different methods used to calculate the dropout rate (Hammack, 1986). Hammack contacted school officials in six large American cities to obtain

information on the methods that they used to determine the dropout rate. All systems, stated Hammack, began the process in the same manner. An attendance secretary at the school maintained records of attendance. When students formally left a school, standardized notations were recorded. The problems arose when students did not formally withdraw. There were differences among schools on the length of time a student might be truant before being classified as a dropout. Some schools registered transfers to business or trades schools as dropouts, others did not.

Another approach used to measure the dropout rate involved surveys of individuals or households. The research conducted by Karp (1988) and Sullivan (1988) in Ontario and Ekstrom et al. (1986) and Wehlage and Rutter (1986) in the United States used this approach. The Karp and Sullivan studies were province-wide (Ontario) telephone surveys of households with sampling quotas established for the targeted groups (i.e. dropouts, dropbacks, graduates). The data used in the Ekstrom et al. and the Wehlage and Rutter studies came from an American national survey called High School and Beyond. In this study, subjects were surveyed twice, first in 1980 when all were attending school, and again in 1982. Of the original 30,000 subjects, 22,000 were still in high school in 1982, and the study was able to contact 2,000 who had dropped out of school by this time. This study lost 6,000 students. This number represented 20% of the original sample. There was no indication in either Ekstrom et al. or Wehlage and Rutter, of what might have happened to these students. They might have dropped out, or transferred to a business school, or joined the armed forces, moved to another city

or state, or left the country. The assumption was that they were probably counted as dropouts when the dropout rate was calculated for this study.

In Manitoba, education records were organized around keeping track of marks rather than students (Challenges & Changes, 1988). This limited information did not provide the basis for an accurate estimate of dropout rates in Manitoba. Challenges and Changes recommended that all schools and school divisions in the province be provided with the appropriate computer software that would facilitate a complete and accurate system for tracking students.

Different methods of recording data and different sources resulted in dramatically different statistics on dropouts (McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985). Thus, it would be more appropriate to consider the dropout rates quoted in the literature as estimations or approximations rather than actual statistics.

Design of Studies. The retrospective nature of much of the research in this area has already been referred to as one of the design problems. The subjects in the studies were most often young people who had already dropped out of school, and they were asked to recall, from a list of options the researchers have prepared why they left school before graduating. Many of the reasons the subjects gave for dropping out were school related. The high school environment was frequently targeted as a major culprit in the dropout decision. Yet, studies rarely consulted with teachers or administrators to hear their side of the dropout story. Natriello, Pallas and McDill (1986) noted that data

on the experiences of teachers and students inside of schools were absent from much of the research. The absence of these indicators limited the value of this research. The impact of school processes and school personnel on dropping out cannot be ascertained from retrospective data collected almost exclusively from former students. Natriello, Pallas and McDill argued that the development of effective school programs involved systematic design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of school programs. This, the researchers contended, should be accomplished with the collaboration of researchers and school personnel. Research that raised the question of the role of schools in contributing to the dropout problem would be more credible if school personnel were involved in the studies.

The necessity of Grade 12. The Manitoba High School Review (Challenges & Changes, 1988) stated that everyone should have at least a Grade 12 education. Any high school student who left school prematurely, the report stated, mortgages his or her future. This assumed that all students were capable of graduating from high school. Radwanski (1987) was adamant that curriculum should not be diluted in order to ensure that all students obtained a diploma. He believed that everyone should receive the same basic education. There was no advantage to lowering the value of the diploma to raise the high school retention rate. This was logical, but it assumed that everyone could successfully complete a good and relevant secondary education.

Kaplan and Luck (1977) hinted that universal attainment of a high school diploma was not the goal. Kaplan and Luck argued that the goal of a high school diploma for everyone might lead to lowering the value

of the diploma as a symbol of achievement. Woodring (1989) stated, that the prolongation of schooling for young people has made the high school diploma almost meaningless. Keeping young people in school has not solved the problems of illiteracy, crime or unemployment (Woodring, 1989). Kaplan and Luck (1977) recommended that the goal be to increase the number of well-prepared graduates, not to lower the number of dropouts. Kaplan and Luck felt that even if there were no dropout problem, the larger task of finding employment for all high school graduates not planning to attend college would remain. They recommended that vocational training that teaches the student modern, salable skills would be more practical than stressing the goal of achieving a high school diploma. This seemed to be insinuating that Grade 12 might not be the goal that everyone must attain.

It is a normative value of society to strive to keep young people in school. The question of the necessity of grade 12 for everyone was raised to ponder the practical implications of the question.

Summary

Although research has revealed that the high school dropout rate has lessened over time, the phenomenon of high school dropout is still considered to be a serious problem facing educators and society. There was generally agreement in the research literature that young people who left school before completing their secondary education were not sufficiently prepared to enter a labour market that was continuously and rapidly changing.

As well as preparing young people for the workforce, a high school education should also provide them with the ability to be fully active participants in the society in which they live. The assumption appeared to be that high school dropouts may not be effective participants in society.

The research revealed that the decision to leave school early was a complex and multi-dimensional issue. The variables that have been found to be associated with this decision range from cultural and socio-economic background to poor scholastic performance and low levels of self-esteem. Negative parental attitudes regarding the value of a secondary education, the lack of a stimulating intellectual home environment, and economic necessity were also cited as contributing factors that influenced young peoples' decisions to leave school early. Schools, teachers, and the curriculum were frequently designated by the dropouts themselves as important factors in their decision to leave school early. Most researchers contended that early identification of potential dropouts might be the most beneficial method of reducing the dropout rate.

Methodological problems in the research literature were noted. There did not appear to be a standardized definition of a dropout nor a standardized method of calculating the dropout rate. As well, the majority of the research was retrospective and focused on the dropouts while rarely consulting teachers or school administrators.

THE RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

This study addressed an aspect of the high school dropout phenomenon that had been virtually neglected in previous research. This study consulted teachers, in elementary schools, and obtained data on their perceptions of the dropout phenomenon. As has been previously noted, there appeared to be agreement in the literature that early identification of potential dropouts might be the most beneficial method of preventing high school dropout. Elementary school teachers were thought likely to be cognizant of signs that pointed to a student's potential to become a high school dropout. General agreement among teachers of the signs that portend future dropout was an important aspect in early recognition. If efforts were to be made to prevent potential dropouts from reaching this predicted potential, they should have been treated consistently by all of the teachers they encountered in elementary school. That is, if teachers agreed on which students were potential dropouts, it should follow that teachers would try to help these students overcome the difficulties that led to their being chosen as potential dropouts. Thus, there should be agreement among teachers on which students were the potential dropouts. It was hypothesized that: elementary teachers would agree on their assessment of which students were potential dropouts.

There is an argument to be made for the value of identifying these children at this early stage in their school careers. These young

people might require extra attention or special programs. Whatever their needs, the object would be to identify them at an early stage and take action to ameliorate the problems before they grew to such an extent that they seemed unsurmountable. Early identification and prevention have been found to be necessary to effectively improve high school completion rates (Barrington & Hendricks, 1989).

The possibility exists that these students might become labelled as dropout prone and the label might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Research has documented that people tended to act as expected. Teachers' expectations could function as self-fulfilling prophecies (Papalia & Olds, 1976). Rosenthal and Jacobsen's (as cited in Papalia & Olds, 1976) research found that students who had been identified to their teachers as having an unusual potential for intellectual growth (although there was no basis in fact for this identification since subjects were randomly chosen) did, several months later, show unusual gains in I.Q. Thus, it could be assumed that if teachers identify students as potential dropouts, they would somehow convey their limited expectations to their students, and in return, get the little that they expect from them.

However, if teachers agree on their identification of potential dropouts and also agree on the value of a secondary education, it seems reasonable to assume that these teachers would try to help these young people overcome their difficulties so that their potential for success might be increased. The alternative of not formally identifying the children and thus not focusing on their needs might be more detrimental. These children's limitations would still be recognized by their

teachers, but there might be little effort made to help them exceed their perceived limitations, if special attention was neither accepted as viable nor required. Early identification of potential dropouts might have the positive effect of initiating action that would lead to special and appropriate help for these youngsters that might prevent their becoming part of the high school dropout statistic.

Research on the high school dropout phenomenon has primarily focused on querying dropouts to discover why they had left school prior to graduating. In most instances, dropouts were asked to recall their reasons. This type of research relies on the respondent's ability to recall events of the past. The passage of time could conceivably have influenced their responses. It was difficult to gauge, with this type of research, the effect of recent events on recollections of the past. The reasons dropouts most frequently cited for their failure to complete high school related to schools, teachers, and school curriculum. It was very possible that these reasons were valid, but there might also be a reconstruction of reality. It may have been easier to blame others, in this case school personnel and school processes, than to accept responsibility for a decision that in retrospect might be considered a mistake. The dropout might have experienced difficulty finding and maintaining satisfactory employment since leaving school. There might have been job opportunities that were desirable but unattainable because of the absence of a high school diploma. It would be difficult to admit that these opportunities were missed through a personal mistake. As previously stated, recent events can effect recollections of the past. Present experience would underline the desirability of a high school

diploma. The failure to have obtained this diploma might be conceptualized as something the dropout was prevented from achieving by others. Thus it could be rationalized that schools, or teachers, or the school curriculum played a major role in what would now appear to be an unfortunate decision.

Research that consulted both dropouts and school personnel, or even school personnel exclusively, on the dropout phenomenon was scarce. Karp's (1988) study was an exception. This study consulted both dropouts and teachers. Teachers' perceptions of the factors that led to high school dropout, in most instances, differed from students. Teachers gave greater importance to emotional, family, and attitudinal factors. Karp was not specific about the factors that constituted emotional problems, but a weak self-image or self-esteem are specifically cited as motivating factors that led a student to drop out. A number of studies cited in this review of research concurred that dropouts are people with low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (Challenges and Changes, 1988; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Fine, 1987; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Scrimshaw, 1980).

Thirty-nine percent of the teachers in Karp's (1988) study cited family problems as the main cause of the dropout problem. The family factors that teachers in Karp's study referred to included -- divorce; one-parent families; parents who were uninvolved in their child's education; and parents who did not care about their children. Beck and Muia (1980) stated that two-thirds of dropouts' parents were not concerned about their child's education. These parents did not encourage or support their children's efforts at school. Children from

homes with negative or uncaring attitudes about education were disadvantaged (Wiseman, 1967). That is, these children did not have the same advantages in school as children whose parents encouraged and supported their efforts at school. These children were also likely to develop attitudes that devalued the importance of school (Scrimshaw, 1980; Wagner, 1984). Teachers in Karp's study included students' negative attitudes about the relevance or importance of schooling among the factors that motivated a student to leave school early.

Teachers in Karp's (1988) study also focused on academic problem areas as being influential factors that contributed to future school drop out. Learning disabilities, the teachers stated, whether they were diagnosed or not, caused a student to drop out. There was support for this view in the literature. Beck and Muia (1980), Ekstrom et al. (1986), and Radwanski (1987) all noted a correlation between learning difficulties and the likelihood of dropping out.

Emotional, family, attitudinal, and learning factors were all major variables that this study hypothesized teachers would cite as being associated with future high school dropout. It was contended that there would be other indicators that would alert teachers to speculate on a student's potential to become a high school dropout. These signs might be related to behavior patterns that were frequently exhibited, such as being chronically absent from school or arriving late for school on a regular basis. Attendance at a number of schools during the course of a school year was another sign that might indicate to teachers that a student was dropout prone. Teachers might also view the absence of contact or interaction with the families of students as a portent of future educational difficulties.

Teachers may be a useful resource for predicting the potential dropout. They are involved with students on a daily basis and have contact with their families. Their perceptions of students' school performance and the students' potential to complete high school are current and not retrospective. This study proposed that teachers would have a strong perception about the factors that they believed are directly related to future high school dropout.

It was hypothesized that:

1. Elementary school teachers will agree on their identification of potential school dropouts.
2. Elementary school teachers will spontaneously cite the following personal variables as being positively associated with the probability of high school dropout rather than school-related variables:
 - a) family related factors
 - b) low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence
 - c) learning disabilities whether diagnosed or undiagnosed
 - d) attitudes of students that devalue the importance of school and formal learning
3. Elementary school teachers will cite the following signs as indicators of a student's potential to become a high school dropout:
 - a) chronic absenteeism
 - b) chronic late arrivals at school

c) little or no contact or interaction with families

d) attendance at several schools in the course of a school year

This study involved teachers who were employed full-time in Winnipeg public schools at the elementary level. A questionnaire was used to test the hypotheses.

METHODS

Five school divisions in the city of Winnipeg were contacted to obtain permission to approach elementary school teachers, grades 2 to 6, to participate in this study. The cooperation of an administrative person, as well as the participation of teachers, was required in each school. The school division where the research was ultimately conducted was the first to respond favourably to the request for permission. There was another favorable response, but this school division requested that the study be delayed to the autumn of 1990. This was not practical for the researcher. The other three school divisions declined to participate. Two divisions cited the heavy workload of their teachers as the reason for not participating and the other division expressed the opinion that the study was neither necessary nor appropriate.

Permission was granted by the assistant superintendent of the division to conduct research in this division's elementary schools with the proviso that each elementary school in the division was free to choose whether or not it wished to be part of the study. In total, nine schools were approached. Two schools declined to participate, for differing reasons. One principal stated that his teachers were too busy to take on any extra work; the other principal felt that his staff, for the most part, was very new and not familiar enough with the school population to effectively be part of the study. A third principal did not respond either positively or negatively to the request. The

principals in the six schools that were participants in the research gave their teachers the option to choose whether or not they would participate. Thus all of the teachers participated in the study on a completely voluntary basis.

Teacher Participation

In total, there were 65 teachers, grades 2 to 6, who were eligible to participate in the study. In one school in which ten teachers were eligible to participate, only three chose to be part of the study. One of the three responses from these teachers was improperly completed. It was decided that two responses would not represent a fair appraisal of which students on the random list had the potential to become dropouts and therefore, this school's data were not included in the analysis.

In another school there were 13 teachers, grades 2 to 6, and eight of the teachers chose to be part of the study. At this school the random list of student names was not correctly prepared. The student list was composed of names from kindergarten to grade 6 instead of names from grades 2 to 6 as was requested. In addition, equal numbers of names were chosen from each grade level. It was not a true random sample. Therefore the data from this school were also excluded from the final analyses.

The deletion of these two schools reduced the number of teachers eligible to participate in the study to 42. Of this number, 36 teachers (86%) chose to be part of the study. The design of the study was such that only favourable responses were collected from participating

teachers. Teachers were not asked to express their reasons for not participating in the study. Thus, it can not be determined why six teachers chose not to be participants.

Schools in the study

The data collected from four schools (Schools A, B, C, D) were analyzed for this study. School A is a small school with 73 students in grades 2 to 6. The school is located in a middle income, single family dwelling area, with residences approximately 25 to 30 years old. There were five teachers eligible to participate in the study at School A and four chose to be participants. The 73 students were divided by grade as follows: 23 in grade 2, 17 in grade 3, eight in grade 4, 11 in grade 5 and 14 in grade 6. The random list of student names for School A contained 37 names of which seven were in grade 2, 16 in grade 3, eight in grade 4, three in grade 5 and three in grade 6.

School B is located in a newer section of the same suburban area as School A. The residences are single family dwellings and were built approximately 15 to 18 years ago. School B is a dual track French and English immersion school and had a population of 318 students in grades 2 to 6 when the study was administered. There were 15 teachers who were eligible to participate in the study and of these, 12 chose to be participants. The 318 students were divided by grade as follows: 69 in grade 2, 61 in grade 3, 67 in grade 4, 60 in grade 5 and 61 in grade 6. The random list for this school contained 80 student names of which 17 were in grade 2, 14 in grade 3, 17 in grade 4, 15 in grade 5 and 17 in grade 6.

School C is located at the western limit of the school division. It is in an area predominated by subsidized, low rental housing with many semi-detached and multiple family dwellings. School C's catchment area is composed of families of lower income than the areas that Schools A and B serve. At the time this study was conducted there were 234 children in grades 2 to 6 of which, 50 were in grade 2, 48 in grade 3, 46 in grade 4, 45 in grade 5 and 45 in grade 6. The random list for this school was composed of 80 student names divided by grade as follows: 15 in grade 2, 17 in grade 3, 17 in grade 4, 13 in grade 5 and 18 in grade 6. There were 12 teachers eligible to participate in the study and all 12 took part.

The area in which School D is located is very similar in composition to School C's area. School D is in the south western tip of the area the school division serves and there are a number of subsidized, low rental units in this area as well as single family dwellings. The grades 2 to 6 student population at School D was 241 at the time the study was conducted. The 241 students were divided by grade as follows: 46 in grade 2, 53 in grade 3, 44 in grade 4, 53 in grade 5 and 45 in grade 6. The random list for School D contained 80 student names. Fourteen of the students were in grade 2, 20 in grade 3, 14 in grade 4, 18 in grade 5 and 14 were in grade 6. Ten teachers from School D were eligible to participate in the study and eight chose to be participants.

Research Design

The study was composed of two parts. In the first section, teachers were asked to identify those students from a list of names whom they believed were potential high school dropouts. Teachers were also asked to rate the level of probability for each of their choices becoming a dropout, on a scale ranging from high (7) to low (1). The second section of the study asked the teachers to list their reasons for choosing particular students as potential dropouts.

Procedure for Data Collection. In each school a member of the school administration was asked to prepare a random list of 80 students drawn from grades 2 to 6. The random lists were computer generated in each school. Each student had a number assigned to his/her name. From this list, teachers chose which students they felt were potential dropouts. The numbers 1 to 80 appeared on Form #1 (Appendix A). Teachers were asked to estimate the probability of each student becoming a dropout, on a scale from 1 - 7, beside each number on the form. If the teachers did not know a student, or if they felt that the student was not a potential dropout, they indicated this beside the student number on the form.

A second task of the study was to catalogue the factors that teachers believed were related to future high school drop out among these students. This section of the study asked teachers to provide the reasons why they felt that the students selected in section one were potential dropouts.

In previous research, the method that was most frequently used to determine why students dropped out of high school entailed having dropouts check the reasons that were most applicable from a checklist. This method presupposed that the checklist covered all of the possible reasons that might have contributed to a person's decision to leave school early. It did not allow respondents to generate their own responses. The method also provided reasons which might be 'suggestive' to respondents; that is reasons were possibly chosen because they were provided.

Teachers were asked to list up to five factors which they felt accounted for each of the students chosen being potential dropouts. The students' identification numbers were linked to the reasons which teachers felt contributed to each student's potential to become a dropout. On Form #2 teachers were asked to enter the code number of their choices, and beside this number, list the reasons why they felt these students had the potential to become dropouts (see Appendix B).

The school administration person also prepared a list of student code numbers along with the grade level of each student for the researcher. Grade level data were requested as it was felt that it would provide valuable extra information to complement the study and would be of potential value to school personnel who will receive a synopsis of the study. It was thought that knowing the grade level of potential dropouts would provide additional information about the stage at which the prognosis of the potential to drop out becomes more evident.

The design of this study was such that at no time were the names of the children known to the researcher. After the teachers completed sections 1 and 2 of the study, they were instructed to return the list with the students' names to a designated person for destruction. Teachers were not required to identify themselves in any way. The completed forms which the researcher received from each school identified students only by number. This method allowed teachers to independently choose the potential dropouts from the prepared list without revealing their choices to anyone. In fact, teachers were asked not to reveal their selections or to discuss them with other members of the school staff. The school administrator who prepared the list did not see the forms after they were completed. The student lists, unmarked, were destroyed by a person designated by the school administration. The forms were returned to the researcher in a sealed envelope.

Analysis

Each school's data was compiled and tabulated separately. Every student chosen as a potential dropout was entered on an individual form (see Appendix C). This form provided space to list the school; the student's code number; the number of ratings the student received from teachers; and the student's grade level. The form provided a summary of the participating teachers' assessments of the students chosen as potential dropouts. The form recorded how the teachers who knew the students rated their potential to drop out, that is their potential on a scale from a high potential of 7 to a low potential of 1. The form also

provided space to record the number of teachers who did not believe the students had the potential to drop out, as well as the number of participating teachers who did not know the students. A 'potential to drop out' score (the mean of all ratings) was calculated for each student. Also on this form, all of the reasons that teachers cited as contributing to the student's drop out potential out were recorded. Each form gave a complete profile of each student that was picked as being a potential dropout.

The profiles of students who were chosen by more than one teacher as having the potential to drop out were separated from the profiles of students chosen by only one teacher. All further analyses were conducted on the data obtained from the profiles of the students who were chosen by two or more teachers.

Classification of Reasons

The next step involved classifying the teacher generated reasons into categories. The reasons were collated and classified into the following broad categories: personal variables which included, family related factors; self-esteem; attitudes; learning disabilities; and academic problems and other (a residual category). A further refining of the reasons led to the creation of a number of distinct sub-classifications in all but two of the categories.

Personal Variables. The categories, Family related factors, Self-esteem, Learning disabilities, and Attitudes could be termed as personal reasons. Personal reasons reflect some aspect of the student's

character or their family characteristics. School-related reasons that relate directly to school curriculum or teaching methods or teacher attitudes toward students are not included as personal variables. In the category labelled Academic Problems, it could be argued that some of the sub-classifications are personal variables rather than school-related variables, but in every instance the students' problems may be related to or influenced by school curriculum, or teaching methods or teachers' attitudes toward students. For these reasons this category was not considered under the aegis of personal reasons.

Family Related Factors. The category, 'Family related factors' encompassed five sub-classifications. The first sub-classification, labelled '**family education history**', reflected teacher generated reasons that referred to the students', parents' and siblings' educational backgrounds. Thus, comments such as "parents didn't complete high school" or "brother has already dropped out" or "parents' education level is low" were included in this area. Into the next sub-classification, labelled '**family background**', all comments that referred to the students' home lives were catalogued. Typical reasons that came under this heading were: "tough homelife", "unstable home", "uncared for at home". The third sub-classification in this category is '**family socioeconomic status**' and comments such as, "family is poor" or "family from low SES" were put into this sub-classification. '**Family single parent**' is the fourth sub-classification in the category of family related factors and this reason referred to the student being from a single parent family. The last sub-classification in this category was called '**family support**'. Comments such as, "no support for school from

home" or "little or no encouragement from home for school" or "family doesn't value education" were recorded in this sub-classification.

Self-esteem. The category labelled 'self-esteem' was a single category. All reasons that referred to students' self-esteem or self-confidence were entered in this category.

Attitudes. The third category referred to broadly as 'Attitudes' embodied four distinct sub-classifications. The first is '**valuation of education**'. All of the attitudinal reasons that alluded to the student not valuing education, such as, "doesn't value school", "doesn't see school as a stepping stone to something better", "has negative attitudes towards school and learning" were included in this area. Many of the teacher generated reasons referred to students' behavior in school. These led to the formation of the sub-classification called '**behavior**' which included all reasons that commented on the students' behaviors in school, for example, "has poor self-control", "has social difficulties", "has emotional problems", or "psychological problems", "low maturity level". The third sub-classification in the Attitudes category was labelled '**motivation**'. This sub-classification included the reasons that referred to students' personal motivation towards school work. Teacher generated reasons in this sub-classification included comments such as, "poor or low motivation", "low commitment to school", "lots of excuses not to do things". The last sub-classification in this category is called '**follower**' and was listed by teachers as a reason simply by the single word -- "follower", or at times as "follower -- easily led into negative behaviors". This area could perhaps have been included in the 'behavior' area, but since it was mentioned as a very specific type of behavior, a separate sub-classification was created for followers.

Learning Disabilities. Learning disabilities was the other single category. All teacher generated reasons specifically termed as learning disabilities were entered in this category.

Academic Problems. The category, 'Academic problems' was divided into three sub-classifications. The first sub-classification, '**appropriate program**' encompassed the teacher generated reasons that stated that the student would not complete school without an appropriate program that was specifically designed for the individual. These comments suggested that the likelihood of such programs being created was rare and thus the student became a potential dropout. The second sub-classification in the category of academic problems, '**academic difficulties**', included all responses from teachers that alluded to students' difficulties with learning, such as, "has academic difficulties", "is several years behind in reading and writing", "has low ability", "has repeated a grade". It could be argued that the "has low ability" responses may have belonged in the Learning Disabilities category. Since low ability was the extent of the description of the students it seemed unreasonable to assume that the students in question had learning disabilities. There may have been a possible teacher bias towards the students that led to the "low ability" response. For these reasons, it was decided to place the few responses of this nature in the sub-classification of 'academic difficulties'. The last sub-classification in this category was labelled '**work habits**'. Included in this sub-classification were all reasons that referred to students' poor work habits at school.

Other. The last category labelled 'Other' was a compilation of reasons that did not fit into any of the other categories. There were three specific sub-classifications in this category, the first '**medical**' recorded references to health and medical problems; the second, '**attendance**' referred to poor attendance at school; and the third, '**moves**' indicated that students' frequent moves and therefore attendance at a number of schools attributed to their potential to become dropouts. The fourth sub-classification has been labelled with a '**?**'. The reasons that totally resisted categorization were entered here. They included reasons such as, "native background", "round peg in a square hole", and "will most probably go to a vocational school".

Analysis of Reasons. When the development of the reasons categories was completed, the teacher generated reasons on each potential dropout's profile sheet were classified. These individual profiles were used to analyze the frequency with which each category of reasons was cited. The number of times each category was cited in each school in the sample was calculated. Further analyses divided the number of times each category was cited by separating the reasons given to students with high potentials (mean dropout potentials of 4 or above) to become dropouts from students with lower potentials (mean dropout potentials of below 4). The selection of 4 and above to represent high dropout potentials and below 4 as low dropout potentials was arbitrary. The information from the profile sheets was also used to determine the number of students in each school sample deemed to be potential dropouts; the number of times 'Family related factors', 'Self-esteem', 'Attitudes', 'Learning disabilities', 'Academic problems' and 'Other'

categories were cited as reasons; and the total number of reasons generated in each school. A comprehensive breakdown of each category of reasons was also prepared for each school. As an example, the 'Family related factors' analysis tabulated the number of times each specific area in this category was cited as contributing to the potential to dropout.

The last section of the analysis looked at the distribution by grade of potential dropouts. It was presumed that the breakdown of analysis by grade would provide additional information about the stage at which the prognosis of the potential to dropout became more evident. Tables were created that showed the distribution by grade of the students chosen as potential dropouts. These students were then separated into two groups, those with mean dropout potentials of four or above and those with mean dropout potentials of below four. Finally, frequency tables were created that showed the three most frequent reasons cited by teachers for students' potential to become dropouts, by grade.

RESULTS

This study investigated the premise that elementary school teachers would agree on which elementary school students had the potential to become high school dropouts; and that teachers would have perceptions about the factors that related to future high school dropout. The results of this study are presented in this chapter. Results are discussed in terms of the agreement among teachers on which students had the potential to become dropouts and as well, the factors that related to this potential to drop out.

The results of this study are based on data collected from four schools (Schools A, B, C, D). Each of these schools had high participation from teachers and properly prepared random lists. In School A there were 37 students from grades 2 to 6, and in Schools B, C and D there were 80 students in grades 2 to 6. In each school, the majority of the students who were chosen as having the potential to become dropouts were picked by more than one teacher (see Table 1).

Students with the Potential to Dropout

In total, 79 students out of 277 were rated by two or more teachers as having the potential to become high school dropouts. Of these 79 students, 37 had a mean potential rating of four or above, and 42 had a mean potential rating of below four. Thus, 37 students were chosen as having a fairly high to high potential to become dropouts. Fifteen

students were chosen by one teacher (singly rated) as having the potential to become dropouts. Of these 15 students, 12 had a potential dropout rating of four or above and three had a mean potential rating of below four. Out of a total sample of 277 students, the 79 students represented 28.5% of the sample; 13.3% of the sample had a high potential and 15.2% of the sample had a lower potential. When the 15 students that were singly rated were combined with the 79 multiply rated students a total of 33.9% of the total sample were chosen as having the potential to become dropouts; data concerning these students were further analyzed. Table 1 illustrates the breakdown of these percentages by school. Schools A and B had 16.2% and 16.3% of their samples multiply chosen as having the potential to drop out, and Schools C and D had 36.3% and 38.8% of their samples multiply rated.

TABLE 1

Students with the potential to become Dropouts

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Total Sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Listed Students	37	100.0	80	100.0	80	100.0	80	100.0	277	100.0
Multiply rated	6	16.2	13	16.3	29	36.3	31	38.8	79	28.5
Singly rated	4	10.8	6	7.5	3	3.7	2	2.5	15	5.4
Combined	10	27.0	19	23.8	32	40.0	33	41.3	94	33.9

Agreement among Teachers

The degree of agreement among teachers was calculated using the data compiled from the 79 students who were chosen by two or more teachers as potential dropouts. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 identify these students in each school, along with their mean dropout potentials, the ratings they received from teachers and the range of the ratings.

In School A, two of the six students had a high potential (mean dropout potential of four or above) to drop out (see Table 2). Teachers at School A were not unanimous in agreement on the potential to drop out for the student with the highest mean dropout potential (5.5). Two teachers predicted this student would not drop out, and the two who predicted the student would drop out, differed by a spread of three in their range of ratings (from a possible high rating of 7 to a low of 1) for this student. There was more agreement for the student with the next highest mean dropout potential (4.2), all four teachers predicted this student had the potential to drop out, but the range of the teachers' ratings varied from seven to two. Of the four students with lower potentials to become dropouts (mean dropout potential of below 4) two were chosen by all of the raters that knew these students with having this potential, although the ratings range varied (four and three), and for the other two students there were dissenting opinions on their potential to become dropouts.

TABLE 2

Agreement among Teachers: School A

Raters: n = 4

Student	Mean	Don't Know	Ratings		Rating Range
			Will not drop out	Will drop out	
2	5.5	0	2	2	3
22	4.2	0	0	4	5
<hr/>					
17	3.6	1	0	3	4
4	3.5	0	2	2	3
30	3.0	1	0	3	3
10	2.0	1	1	2	2

In School B, (see Table 3) the seven students selected as potential dropouts had a high potential (mean dropout potential of 4 or above) and six students had a lower potential to become dropouts (mean dropout potential of below 4). There was considerable agreement among teachers for the seven students with the higher potential to drop out. There was complete agreement among the teachers who knew four of these students and for three of these four students, the rating range was two or less. In fact, the only range greater than two was for a student with a mean dropout potential of 4.5, but the four raters who knew this student all agreed on the student's potential as a future high school dropout. There were similar results for the six students with lower dropout potentials. For two of these students, all of the raters who knew them agreed on their dropout potential. Among the remaining four students, one rater in each case did not feel the student in question was a

potential dropout. The rating range for these six students varied from a high of four to a low of one.

TABLE 3
Agreement among Teachers: School B

Raters: n = 12

Student	Mean	Ratings			Rating Range
		Don't Know	Will not Drop out	Will Drop out	
70	6.0	10	0	2	0
25	6.0	8	1	3	2
2	5.3	9	0	3	1
69	5.0	10	0	2	2
17	4.5	8	0	4	4
6	4.0	9	1	2	2
59	4.0	8	2	2	2
<hr/>					
51	3.5	8	1	3	1
29	3.5	9	1	2	1
27	3.5	9	1	2	3
28	3.5	9	1	2	3
19	3.0	9	0	3	4
75	2.5	10	0	2	3

There were 15 students in School C (see Table 4) that were rated by teachers as having a high potential to become dropouts. Of these 15 students, 11 were rated as probable dropouts by all of the teachers that knew them, while for three of the students there was one teacher in each

case who disagreed with this assessment. The remaining student from this group had a mean dropout potential of 4, but three teachers believed that the student would not drop out. For the five students with the highest mean dropout potentials (two at 6.4 and three at 6) there was considerable agreement among teachers, four unanimous, and one who dissented. In the case of the student (number 44, mean dropout potential 6) with the dissenting rater, the rating range was four, but the range for the other four students was two or less. Students 21, 59, and 27 who all had high mean dropout potentials (4.7, 4.5, 4.3, respectively) also had larger rating ranges than any of the others in this group (two at five and one at six). All of the raters who knew these three students agreed that they had the potential to become dropouts. There was considerable agreement among teachers for the 14 students at School C rated as having a low potential to become dropouts. All raters agreed for four of the students; for six of the students there was a single dissenter, three others had two dissenters and one student had three raters who did not agree with the assessment. The rating range for these 14 students varied from five to one.

TABLE 4
Agreement among Teachers: School C

Raters: n = 12

Student	Mean	Don't Know	Ratings		Rating Range
			Will not Drop out	Will Drop out	
33	6.4	7	0	5	2
40	6.4	7	0	5	2
1	6.0	10	0	2	0
32	6.0	10	0	2	2
44	6.0	3	1	8	4
28	5.6	8	1	3	3
24	5.3	9	0	3	3
72	5.0	8	1	3	2
38	4.7	8	0	4	4
21	4.7	8	0	4	5
59	4.5	4	0	8	6
27	4.3	9	0	3	5
18	4.0	9	0	3	2
79	4.0	6	3	3	4
12	4.0	10	0	2	4
<hr/>					
43	3.8	5	1	6	3
35	3.8	5	1	6	4
39	3.8	5	1	6	5
3	3.6	9	0	3	5
17	3.5	10	0	2	1
42	3.3	9	0	3	1
52	3.3	4	2	6	4
15	3.2	7	1	4	4
55	3.0	5	1	6	4
54	2.7	6	2	4	4
77	2.6	8	1	3	2
57	2.6	9	0	3	4
36	2.2	6	2	4	3
61	2.2	4	3	5	3

Of the 13 students with high dropout potentials at School D (see Table 5), 10 were expected to drop out by all of the teachers who knew them. Student 28 with a mean dropout potential of 5.8 and Student 53 with a mean dropout potential of 5.2 each had one rater who did not agree that these students were potential dropouts. Student 5, whose mean dropout potential was 4.5, had three raters who did not believe this student was a potential dropout. The rating range for these 13 students was not greater than three. For two of the 13 students there was no range variation, and for three of the 13, the range variation was one. The raters at School D appeared to agree that these 13 students had a high potential to become dropouts.

Eighteen students at School D were rated as having a low potential to become dropouts. Of these 18, five were chosen by all of the teachers who knew them; five each had one rater who did not agree that they had this potential; five had two dissenters; two had three dissenters each; and one student had four raters who did not agree that they would become dropouts. The highest rating range for this group of students was four.

TABLE 5

Agreement among Teachers: School D

Raters: n = 8

Student	Mean	Ratings			Rating Range
		Don't Know	Will not Drop out	Will Drop out	
4	6.5	6	0	2	1
41	6.0	6	0	2	0
28	5.8	2	1	5	3
10	5.7	4	0	4	2
44	5.6	3	0	5	2
12	5.5	6	0	2	1
80	5.2	4	0	4	2
53	5.2	3	1	4	2
69	5.0	6	0	2	2
5	4.5	3	3	2	1
40	4.3	2	0	6	3
19	4.0	6	0	2	0
42	4.0	6	0	2	2
<hr/>					
50	3.7	4	0	4	3
9	3.5	4	2	2	1
49	3.5	6	0	2	1
76	3.3	5	0	3	3
62	3.3	2	0	6	4
43	3.3	4	1	3	4
77	3.2	3	1	4	4
66	3.0	4	2	2	2
7	3.0	4	1	3	3
8	3.0	5	1	2	4
60	3.0	3	3	2	4
13	2.8	2	0	6	4
29	2.6	2	3	3	1
18	2.6	2	1	5	2
54	2.5	2	2	4	1
55	2.0	4	2	2	0
70	2.0	2	4	2	0
52	2.0	4	2	2	2

Frequency of Reasons

All of the results reported in this section are based on the profiles of the 79 students who were multiply rated as having the potential to become high school dropouts. There were a total of 385 reasons listed by teachers as being factors that were related to future high school dropout. There were 157 attitude reasons, 72 family related factors, 16 self-esteem, and nine learning disabilities for a total of 254 (66%) personal reasons. The remaining 131 (34%) reasons were comprised of 120 academic and 11 other (see Table 6). The category most frequently cited by individual school was attitudes with the exception of school C; family factors was this school's most frequently reported category. Academic reasons were cited as the second most frequent category for Schools B, C and D, for School A the second most frequent category was family factors.

TABLE 6

Frequency of Reasons: All Potential Dropouts

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Reasons	41	100.0	68	100.0	114	100.0	162	100.0	385	100.0
Attitudes	22	53.7	34	50.0	23	20.2	78	48.2	157	40.8
Family	13	31.7	12	17.6	39	34.2	8	4.9	72	18.7
Self-esteem	1	2.4	4	5.9	9	7.9	2	1.2	16	4.2
Learning dis.	0	0.0	2	2.9	1	.9	6	3.7	9	2.3
Tot. Personal	36	87.8	52	76.4	72	63.2	94	58.0	254	66.0
Academic	4	9.8	15	22.1	35	30.7	66	40.8	120	31.1
Other	1	2.4	1	1.5	7	6.1	2	1.2	11	2.9
Total Ac./Oth.	5	12.2	16	23.6	42	36.8	68	42.0	131	34.0
N of students	(6)		(13)		(29)		(31)		(79)	

Frequency of Reasons for Students with High Dropout Potentials.

The 37 students with a high mean potential to drop out generated 240 reasons for this potential (see Table 7). This number was comprised of 81 (34%) attitude reasons, 55 (22.9%) family factors, 11 (4.6%) self-esteem, nine (4%) learning disabilities, for a total of 156 (65%) personal reasons; and 75 (31%) academic and nine (4%) other. The ratios of reasons by school differed in this breakdown from the ratios for all 79 students.

TABLE 7

Frequency of Reasons for Students with High Dropout Potentials

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Reasons	16	100.0	45	100.0	83	100.0	96	100.0	240	100.0
Attitudes	7	43.7	22	48.9	13	15.7	39	40.6	81	33.7
Family	7	43.7	11	24.4	31	37.4	6	6.3	55	22.9
Self-esteem	0	0.0	3	6.7	8	9.6	0	0.0	11	4.6
Learning Dis.	0	0.0	2	4.4	1	1.2	6	6.3	9	3.8
Tot. Personal	14	87.4	38	84.4	53	63.8	51	53.2	156	65.0
Academic	1	6.3	7	15.6	24	28.9	43	44.8	75	31.3
Other	1	6.3	0	0.0	6	7.2	2	2.0	9	3.7
Total Ac./Oth.	2	12.6	7	15.6	30	36.1	45	46.8	84	35.0
N of students	(2)		(7)		(15)		(13)		(37)	

At School A, the categories, family factors and attitudes were the most frequently cited categories of reasons for students' high potential (mean dropout potential of 4 or above) to become dropouts, with academic problems a distant third. The teachers who rated the students at this school appeared to believe that personal factors had more bearing on future high school drop out than academic factors.

For School B, attitudes was the most frequent category cited followed by family factors and then academic problems. Personal factors, which included attitudes, family, self-esteem and learning

disabilities reasons, greatly exceeded academic factors as reasons for potential drop out. The teachers at this school agreed that personal factors played an important role in the profiles of students with high dropout potentials.

At School C family factors was the most frequently cited category for future dropout followed by academic problems and next attitudes. Academic problems were influential in teachers' decisions to choose students as potential dropouts at this school, but as in Schools A and B, combined personal reasons were the most influential.

The breakdown of categories for School D differed from the other three schools. Academic problems was the most frequent reason cited at this school, followed by attitudes, with family factors a distant third. Teachers at this school reported that academic problems would lead to high school drop out; nevertheless combined personal reasons were again the most frequently cited reasons.

For every school combined personal reasons (attitudes, family, self-esteem, learning disabilities) exceeded the number of reasons in the academic and other categories. Although academic reasons were regarded by teachers as influential factors that contributed to students' high potential to become high school dropouts, these reasons were secondary to personal factors at every school in the study. Sixty-five percent of the reasons given by teachers were personal reasons.

Frequency of reasons for Students with Low Dropout Potentials. The 42 students with low dropout potential (mean dropout potentials of below 4) had 145 reasons cited by teachers for this potential (see Table 8).

The 145 reasons included 76 (52%) attitude reasons, 17 (12%) family factors, five (3%) self-esteem, for a total of 98 (68%) personal reasons; and 45 (31%) academic and two (1%) other.

Attitudes was the most frequently cited category for Schools A, B and D, with the academic category only marginally (academic - N=11, attitudes - N=10) ahead for School C. Academic problems was the second most frequently cited category for Schools B and D, and for School A, family factors were second. This breakdown for students with lower potentials closely resembles the breakdown for students with high dropout potentials in that combined personal reasons exceeded academic and other reasons for every school. Combined personal reasons accounted for 67.6% of the reasons cited by teachers. The importance of academic reasons as contributing factors to potential dropout cannot be denied, but they appeared, again, in this breakdown to be secondary to personal reasons.

TABLE 8

Frequency of Reasons for Students with Low Dropout Potentials

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Reasons	25	100.0	23	100.0	31	100.0	66	100.0	145	100.0
Attitudes	15	60.0	12	52.2	10	32.3	39	59.1	76	52.4
Family	6	24.0	1	4.3	8	25.8	2	3.0	17	11.7
Self-esteem	1	4.0	1	4.3	1	3.2	2	3.0	5	3.5
Learning Dis.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Tot. Personal	22	88.0	14	60.8	19	61.3	43	65.1	98	67.6
Academic	3	12.0	8	34.8	11	35.5	23	34.8	45	31.0
Other	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	3.2	0	0.0	2	1.4
Total Ac./Oth.	3	12.0	9	39.2	12	38.7	23	34.9	47	32.4
N of students	(4)		(6)		(14)		(18)		(42)	

Breakdown of Categories

Family factors accounted for 72 of the 385 reasons cited by teachers for students' potential to drop out (see Table 6). Of the family factor, 32 (44.4%) were family background reasons, 18 (25%) reasons were related to family education history, 15 (20.8%) were family support reasons, four (5.6%) family socioeconomic status, and three (4.2%) were family single parent reasons (see Table 9).

TABLE 9
Breakdown of the Family Factors Category

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Backgrd.	8	61.5	5	41.7	17	43.6	2	25.0	32	44.4
Ed. Hist.	0	0.0	4	33.3	11	28.2	3	37.5	18	25.0
Support	4	30.8	3	25.0	5	12.8	3	37.5	15	20.8
SES	1	7.7	0	0.0	3	7.7	0	0.0	4	5.6
Sgl. Par.	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	7.7	0	0.0	3	4.2

There were 157 reasons cited by teachers that were classified into the attitudes category. Of these, 82 (52.2%) were concerned with students' behavior, 36 (22.9%) with valuation of education, 32 (20.4%) students' motivation, and seven (4.5%) were entered in the follower category (see Table 10).

TABLE 10
Breakdown of the Attitudes Category

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Behavior	19	86.4	14	41.2	15	65.2	34	43.6	82	52.2
Valuation	3	13.6	10	29.4	4	17.4	19	24.3	36	22.9
Motivation	0	0.0	5	14.7	3	13.1	24	30.8	32	20.4
Follower	0	0.0	5	14.7	1	4.3	1	1.3	7	4.5

Academic problems were represented in 120 of the reasons teachers gave. This category divided as follows: 98 (81.7%) were academic difficulties, 16 (13.3%) pertained to students' work habits, and six (5%) were appropriate program reasons (see Table 11).

TABLE 11
Breakdown of the Academic Problems Category

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Acad. Diff.	4	100.0	15	100.0	27	77.2	52	78.8	98	81.7
Work Habits	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.7	14	21.2	16	13.3
Approp. Prog.	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	17.1	0	0.0	6	5.0

The other category accounted for 11 of the reasons cited by teachers. Five of these 11 reasons were recorded in the "?" sub-classification. These reasons all differed and did not represent a category. These reasons have been deleted from the analyses. The remaining six reasons in this category were as follows: three (50%) medical reasons, two (33.3%) frequent moves, and one (16.7%) attendance reasons (see Table 12).

TABLE 12
Breakdown of the Other Category

	School A		School B		School C		School D		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Medical	0	0.0	1	100.0	2	40.0	0	0.0	3	50.0
Freq. Moves	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	40.0	0	0.0	2	33.3
Attendance	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	1	16.7

Distribution of Dropouts by Grade

There were 79 students chosen as potential dropouts. Of these 79 students, 10 (12.6%) were in Grade 6, 19 (24.1%) in Grade 5, 22 (27.8%) in Grade 4, 21 (26.6%) in Grade 3, and seven (8.9%) in Grade 2 (see Table 13). When the students were separated into groups of those with mean potential dropout ratings of four or above and those with mean potential dropout ratings of below four, the ratios were similar to the group as a whole. Table 13 shows the percentages in each grade of the total sample of 277 students.

TABLE 13

Distribution of Potential Dropouts by Grade

Grade	Percentage of Total Sample (277)	Dropouts With Mean Potentials of 4 and above	Dropouts With Mean Potentials of below 4	Total Number of Dropouts	Percentage of Total N = 79
6	18.8	5	5	10	12.6
5	17.7	7	12	19	24.1
4	20.2	9	13	22	27.8
3	24.2	12	9	21	26.6
2	19.1	4	3	7	8.9

The pattern established for all 79 potential dropouts by grade was similar for all four schools in the study (see table 14). The least number of potential dropouts were recorded in grade 2, with grade 6 numbers the second lowest, with the exception of School D. Similar numbers of students were chosen as potential dropouts in grades 3, 4 and 5 at each school.

Table 14 displays the number of students who were on each school's random list by grade, the actual number of students in attendance by grade, the number of students chosen as potential dropouts by grade and the percentage of each grade that were potential dropouts. At School A, the distribution of students by grade was not as well balanced as it was in the other three schools. The number of students in grade 3 (16) was much higher than any of the other grades. This number represents almost the entire grade 3 population of the school. The number of students in the sample in grades 5 and 6 (three in each grade) are low in comparison to the sample from grade 3. The number of students in the sample in

grades 2 and 4 (seven and eight, respectively) are also low in comparison to the 16 students in the grade 3 sample although the eight students in grade 4 represent the entire grade 4 population at the school. The sample at School A was not proportionately representative of the actual school population from grades 2 to 6.

At School B there were fairly consistent numbers of students in the sample in each grade (grade 6 - 17; grade 5 - 15; grade 4 - 17; grade 3 - 14; grade 2 - 17), yet the percentage of students chosen in grade 6 was 5.9% as compared to approximately 20% for grades 3, 4, and 5. The actual student population at School B was fairly proportionately divided by grade.

Again, at School C, the numbers of students in the sample were fairly equitable, in fact the largest number (18) were in grade 6. The actual student population per grade was also fairly equitable. The lowest percentage (16.7%) of potential dropouts were in grade 6. The percentages of students for grades 3 - 5 range from a high of 52.9% for grade 4 to 41.2% of grade 3 students.

School D was the only school in the sample where grade 6 did not have the second lowest percentage of potential dropouts. Forty-three percent of grade 6 students were chosen as potential dropouts, which was fairly consistent with numbers in grades 3, 4, and 5 (40%, 50%, 50% respectively).

TABLE 14

Distribution of Students by Grade at each School

School A

Grade	Total # of Students in school	Total # of Students in the Sample	Total # of Potential Dropouts	Percentage of Grade that are Potential Dropouts
6	14	3	0	0.0
5	11	3	1	33.3
4	8	8	2	25.0
3	17	16	3	18.7
2	23	7	0	0.0

School B

6	61	17	1	5.9
5	60	15	3	20.0
4	67	17	4	23.5
3	61	14	3	21.4
2	69	17	2	11.8

School C

6	45	18	3	16.7
5	45	13	6	46.2
4	46	17	9	52.9
3	48	17	7	41.2
2	50	15	4	26.7

School D

6	45	14	6	42.8
5	53	18	9	50.0
4	44	14	7	50.0
3	53	20	8	40.0
2	46	14	1	7.0

When the numbers in the sample were combined for all schools the pattern was very apparent (see table 15). The lowest within grade percentage of potential dropouts was in grade 2, and the second lowest number was in grade 6. The percentages of potential dropouts in grades 3, 4 and 5 were similar.

TABLE 15

Distribution of Students by Grade all Schools Combined

Grade	Total # of Students in Schools	Total # of Students in Sample	Total #of Potential Dropouts	Percentage of Grade that are Potential Dropouts
6	165	52	10	19.2
5	169	49	19	38.8
4	165	56	22	39.3
3	179	67	21	31.3
2	188	53	7	13.2

Frequency of Reasons by Grade

Table 16 illustrates the three most frequent reasons by grade, which include 341 of the 385 cited reasons. Reasons in the attitudes category were the most frequently cited for most grade levels. The exception was the grade 6 level where reasons from the academic problems category were the most frequent.

TABLE 16
Frequency of Reasons by Grade

Grade	Attitudes		Academic Problems		Family Factors		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6	14	35.0	20	50.0	6	15.0	40	100.0
5	62	54.4	34	29.8	18	15.8	114	100.0
4	39	43.3	36	40.0	15	16.7	90	100.0
3	35	43.2	22	27.2	24	29.6	81	100.0
2	7	43.8	5	31.2	4	25.0	16	100.0
Totals	157		117		67		341	

DISCUSSION

Teachers in elementary schools, in a Winnipeg school division were consulted to obtain data on their perceptions of the high school dropout phenomenon. The following chapter presents a discussion of the results of the study and compares these results to the results cited in the research literature.

The Potential Dropout Rate

There were a total of 277 student names on the random lists in this study. Of this number, 94 students or 33.9% of the sample were thought to have the potential to become dropouts. Seventy-nine of these students (84%) were chosen by two or more teachers and 15 students (16%) were chosen by one teacher.

There was no accurate estimate of the drop out rate in Manitoba (Challenges & Changes, 1988), but the rate in Ontario was estimated at between 31 and 33 percent (Radwanski, 1987). The small sample in this study from one school division in Winnipeg had similar percentages to those estimated for Ontario. The predictions of elementary school teachers in this sample appeared to coincide fairly closely with the actual drop out rate in Ontario.

Two of the four schools in the sample, Schools C and D, had considerably higher potential dropout rates than Schools A and B.

Schools C and D are geographically located in the same area. There might be demographic characteristics that this study did not address, that would account for the differences in the potential dropout ratings between Schools C and D and Schools A and B.

The research literature has found that higher percentages of dropouts are from lower socioeconomic status families (Beck & Muia, 1980; Ekstrom et al, 1986; Radwanski, 1987). The areas where Schools C and D are located may be described as low income areas. There are a number of subsidized, low rental housing units in the area. In contrast, Schools A and B are in areas that are predominated by single family homes. They are also older, well-established middle income neighbourhoods. School B is a dual track French and English immersion school. French immersion is a voluntary program. Students choose to enter this program and it is thought to be a reflection of socioeconomic status, that is, French immersion is primarily the choice of students from middle class backgrounds. This factor may also have contributed to the lower percentage of potential dropouts at this school as compared to Schools C and D. The sample from this school was drawn from the French and English programs.

Teacher Agreement

It was predicted that elementary school teachers would agree on their identification of potential school dropouts. This prediction appeared to have been supported in the study. In School D, there was nearly unanimous agreement among teachers for the 13 students with high dropout potentials. The largest rating range for this group of students

was three. At School C, there were 15 students with high dropout potentials and again there was nearly unanimous agreement among the raters that these students had the potential to become high school dropouts. Among this group at School C there were some higher rating ranges (two at five, and one at six), but in each case, all of the raters who knew these students predicted that they had the potential to become dropouts. Only one of the seven students with high dropout potentials in School B had two raters who did not feel the student was a potential dropout. The rating range for the two teachers that concurred that the student was a potential dropout was two, which represents a small variation. At School A there were only two students with high dropout potentials. All four raters agreed that one student had this potential. The consensus was split for the other student. Two raters felt the student would drop out and two did not believe the student had this potential. These results generally supported the hypothesis that predicted that elementary school teachers would agree on their identification of potential school dropouts.

The agreement among teachers on the identification of potential dropouts that was shown in this research appears to substantiate the premise postulated in the rationale for this study. Teachers' daily contact with students and their families heightens their awareness of which students are encountering difficulties with school life. The teachers' experience, training and interest in their students' welfare might explain why the teachers recognize these students with difficulties. This may account for the degree of agreement among the teachers in this sample on the identification of potential school dropouts.

These results appeared to confirm the suspicion that elementary school teachers would agree on which students had the potential to become dropouts. It has been postulated that identifying young people as potential dropouts, or labelling them in this fashion, would lead to diminished expectations for the students and in time the prophecy would be fulfilled. This proposition might be valid; that is, if no action was taken to address the problems that led to the prophecy. Early identification of potential dropouts combined with the implementation of appropriate measures to attempt to overcome the difficulties that led to the label might be beneficial.

This research has revealed that elementary school teachers can agree on which students might be potential dropouts. If these students were not formally identified and given the resources they needed to succeed in school, they might well become high school dropouts. In other words, not labelling and recognizing these students might in fact contribute to their potential to become dropouts. The corollary is to identify and treat the problems and thus diminish the potential. School administrators might utilize this readily available resource, their elementary school teachers, if they are intent on lowering the dropout rate.

The Canadian government has recently recognized that tackling the problem of high school drop out must begin at an early age (French, 1990). The government has acknowledged that some students begin to dream about leaving school in the elementary grades. The federal government's new stay-in-school program is being targeted to grades 7 and 8 students. This research and the federal government's research (as

reported by French, 1990) seem to suggest that stay-in-school programs should begin even earlier than grade 7. Identifying potential dropouts in elementary school and targeting the stay-in-school programs to elementary students may ultimately produce the desired goal of reducing the dropout rate in Canada's schools.

Teacher Generated Reasons

The second part of this study asked teachers to provide reasons why they believed the students they selected as potential school dropouts had this potential. The teacher generated reasons were classified into categories. Four of the categories were deemed to be personal reasons. Personal reasons reflected some aspect of the student's character or their family characteristics. The personal reasons category represented 66% of the reasons that teachers believed related to the potential to drop out.

Personal reasons appeared to reflect on the teachers' belief in the importance of the family in students' school performance. It is thought to be important that the home atmosphere and attitudes be conducive to learning. Families may acknowledge the value of education but may not provide the encouragement and the setting necessary to ensure that their children stay in school. There may be no interest shown by families in their children's progress, or lack thereof, in school. There may be a total lack of communication with the school, and either no desire to amend this lack, or there may be a fear of educational institutions, for a variety of reasons that would deter communication. There simply may be no place in the home where a child can do homework or study. It

would be very difficult for a young child to overcome these family barriers and succeed at school. It is easy to understand why the majority of teacher generated reasons were personal reasons. In every school in the sample, personal reasons greatly exceeded academic reasons. It appeared that the teachers who participated in the study believed that personal reasons had greater bearing on future high school dropout than did academic factors.

The teachers in the sample might have believed that academic problems are for the most part, solveable. Academic problems can often be overcome by providing special attention to the students in need. Most elementary schools have resource teachers and remedial programs to help young children master their academic problems. Family related and attitudinal reasons for the potential to dropout may not be as solveable as academic problems. Overcoming these difficulties may require more resources than schools and teachers are currently equipped to provide. Attempting to resolve family related and attitudinal problems may involve increased communications with families, or changing students' attitudes and behaviors that have developed in their homes. Teachers may feel powerless, and unable to help students conquer these barriers to their future education. Conversely, these same teachers may feel, for the most part, competent to help the students overcome their academic difficulties. These are possible explanations for the high occurrence of personal reasons being selected by teachers in this sample as portents of future high school drop out.

Another possible explanation for the preponderance of personal reasons being selected by teachers in this sample may be attributed to

teacher bias. Research that consulted dropouts resulted in a high degree of blame being attached to the schools for the dropouts' failure to complete high school. This research consulted teachers and its results pointed to family background as strong portents of high school drop out. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) suggested that students bring characteristics from their family backgrounds to school and these family characteristics combined with institutional characteristics become problematic and may result in students' early departure from school. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) recommended that if it is school policy to reduce the number of dropouts, then schools should respond to the estrangement from institutions that arise from the family background of students. Some students may be more difficult to teach than others, but schools and teachers should attempt to make schooling profitable for all students.

In previous research that was consulted in the literature review, the reasons most frequently cited by dropouts themselves for leaving school early were related to schools, teachers and school curriculum. These reasons would be classified in this study as academic reasons. The majority of the research that questioned dropouts was retrospective in nature. Dropouts were asked after the fact, why they left school. Their memories might have been affected by the passage of time. The easiest answer for the dropouts was to implicate educational institutions. The federal government (French, 1990) also appears to now be discounting these research results. In the fall of 1990 the federal department of education will be asking between 8,000 and 10,000 students (those currently attending school) why teenagers quit school

(French, 1990). Research that is retrospective in nature relies too heavily on the vagaries of memory, which can be influenced by current events. That is one of the reasons why this study chose to ask teachers to evaluate students that they are currently dealing with. It did not ask teachers to ruminate on why students that have already dropped out, did so. The study was not retrospective, as was much of the reviewed research. This might also explain the contrasting results between this study and the research that was reviewed. Another factor that may have influenced the results of this study is age of the students. Most of the previous research was conducted on high school aged students. This research was concerned with elementary school aged children. Personal reasons were of greatest significance in this study in contrast to academic reasons in the reviewed research.

There was support for this study's results in one of the studies in the research reviewed that also consulted teachers. Karp (1988) consulted both teachers and dropouts in her research. The teachers' responses in Karp's study were similar to the results of this study. Family and attitudinal factors were also deemed of greater importance than school-related factors in Karp's research, as they were in this research. Attitudinal factors accounted for 40.8% of the reasons teachers generated and family factors, 18.7% of the reasons, in this study. Fifty-two percent of the attitudinal factors were behavior reasons and 23% pertained to students' negative valuation of school.

It could be argued that these attitudinal factors are family related. Several researchers (Scrimshaw, 1980; Wagner, 1984; Wiseman, 1967) stated that attitudes that devalue the importance of school are

likely to develop in the home. It is reasonable to assume that elementary school students' attitudes would reflect their parents' attitudes, particularly in relation to the importance of school. Thus attitudes that devalue the importance of school may appropriately be termed as family related. Behavioral attitudes might also be termed as family related. Comments from teachers that were included in this sub-classification such as: "has poor self-control", "has social difficulties", "has emotional or psychological problems" are likely to be rooted in the students' home lives. These behaviors are likely to have developed in the home. It would be difficult to imagine that the behaviors included in this sub-classification did not originate in the children's home lives. It is important to keep in mind that the students were in elementary school, and at ages when family and home life influences are primary. Thus these behaviors can be considered as being family related. When combined, attitudinal and family factors represented 59.5% of the reasons teachers attributed to the potential to drop out of school. Family related factors, according to the teachers in this sample, had an important bearing on the decision to drop out of school.

Although the home has been shown to be a major factor in relation to a student's success at school, it may be a difficult hurdle for students to overcome. More effort might be needed to help students from homes deemed as inappropriate to school success, overcome the barriers of their backgrounds.

It was predicted that elementary school teachers would cite the following personal variables as being positively associated with the

probability of high school dropout: a) family related factors, b) low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, c) learning disabilities whether diagnosed or undiagnosed, d) attitudes of students that devalue the importance of school and formal learning. The first personal variable, family related factors, proved to indeed be repeatedly cited by teachers. The second and third personal variables, low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, and learning disabilities represented 4.2% and 2.3% respectively, of the reasons generated by teachers in this sample. Thus these reasons represented a small percentage of the reasons teachers cited. The last part of the hypothesis that pertained to attitudes that devalue education, became a sub-classification in a broader attitudinal category. As a sub-classification it represented 22.9% of the attitudinal reasons that teachers cited.

The third hypothesis of the study predicted that teachers would cite the following signs as indicators of a student's potential to become a high school dropout: a) chronic absenteeism, b) chronic late arrivals at school, c) little or no contact or interaction with families, and d) attendance at several schools in the course of a school year. It was thought that these reasons would be indicators or signs that would cause teachers to more closely monitor students to see if the signs or reasons indicated along with other reasons, that a student was a potential dropout. These signs were not prominent among the reasons teachers generated. Attendance at several schools during the course of a school year was mentioned once by a teacher at School C. Chronic absenteeism and chronic late arrivals at school were not given as reasons by any of the teachers. The sub-classification under family

factors called 'Family support' encompassed the sign, little or no contact or interaction with families. This sub-classification accounted for 20.8% of the reasons categorized as family factors. This reason was cited by a small percentage of the teachers in the sample.

The design of this study may be part of the reason why the third hypothesis was not confirmed. The study did not ask teachers to identify signs that might be indicators of the potential to become a dropout.

Although the actual reasons generated by teachers in this study did not exactly match the breakdown of reasons in the hypotheses, personal variables, did outstrip school-related variables as reasons cited by teachers, as predicted. There was agreement among elementary school teachers in this sample on the students that had the potential to become dropouts, and teachers in this study had strong perceptions that family related factors were related to future high school dropout.

Distribution of Dropouts by Grade

The last section of the analysis which dealt with the distribution by grade of potential dropouts was undertaken to provide extra information to complement the study. The results of this analysis did not clearly delineate when the potential to drop out became most evident. There was a low percentage (8.9%) of potential dropouts in grade 2. Approximately 27% of the predicted dropouts were in grade 3. The percentages of potential dropouts in grades 4 and 5 were similar to those in grade 3 (27.8% and 24.1% respectively). These results seemed

to be suggesting that the potential to drop out which might become evident in grade 3, remained as evident in grades 4 and 5.

Approximately the same numbers of students were identified as potential dropouts in all three grades. These results might also be suggesting that the potential to drop out was not as easy to detect at the grade 2 level.

The low number of potential dropouts in grade 6 was surprising. The percentages of dropouts were very similar for grades 3, 4 and 5 and logic would expect similar numbers for grade 6. With the exception of School D, the number of potential dropouts dropped substantially at the grade 6 level. The actual number of students attending the schools at the time the study was conducted was fairly proportionately divided by grade. There were 866 students in grades 2 to 6 when the study was conducted. There were 165 (19.1%) students in grade 6, 169 (19.5%) in grade 5, 165 (19.1%) in grade 4, 179 (20.6%) in grade 3 and 188 (21.7%) in grade 2. The ratio of grade 6 students in the sample to the actual number of grade 6 students in the schools was 31%. This compares fairly equitably to the ratios for the other grades; 29% for grade 5, 34% for grade 4, 37% for grade 3 and 28% for grade 2.

The reasons for the drop at the grade 6 level can only be speculated. At the grade 6 level, academic reasons were more frequently cited as reasons that portended drop out than attitudinal reasons which were the most frequently cited for all other grades. This may be indicating that grade 6 students are settling down, maturing and becoming more responsible and their attitudes and behavior are improving. Or perhaps, the low percentage of potential dropouts in

grade 6 reflected the benefits of special help that students may have received in the lower grades. It has also been suggested that truancy increased in grade 6 and teachers might not know and cannot judge the students who were frequently truant. These reasons were all speculation. School personnel who will receive these results may have other ideas that would explain the drop in number of potential dropouts at the grade 6 level.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

A summary of this study is presented in this chapter. Also included in the chapter are some implications for educational personnel to consider and as well, some of the limitations of the study.

Summary

This study consulted elementary school teachers in a Winnipeg school division to obtain data on their perceptions of the high school dropout phenomenon. Teachers were asked to predict which students, from a random list of actual students in the schools where they taught, had the potential to become high school dropouts. The objectives of the study were: a) to learn if elementary school teachers were aware of which students had the potential to become dropouts, and b) to discover the reasons why the teachers believed the students they chose had this potential.

The sample consisted of teachers and students from four elementary schools in a Winnipeg school division. Seventy-nine students were chosen by two or more teachers as potential high school dropouts. Thirty-seven of these students were thought to have a fairly high potential to become dropouts, and forty-two students were believed to have a lower probability of becoming dropouts. There was general agreement among teachers at each school on which students were potential high school dropouts.

There were 385 reasons proffered by teachers as being factors related to future high school drop out. Sixty-six percent of the 385 reasons teachers listed were personal reasons, and not school-related reasons. Of the total sample, the 66% were subcategorized as 41% attitudinal, 19% family-related, 4% self-esteem, and 2% were in the learning disabilities category. As attitudes are formed in families, the majority of reasons that teachers provided had a relationship to the students' families. Academic reasons represented 31% of teacher generated reasons, and 3% were reasons that did not fit into any of the categories.

It appeared from this sample, that the potential to drop out may become more detectable as early as the grade 3 level. Approximately 27% of the potential dropouts were in grade 3, and just 9% were in grade 2, suggesting that potential dropouts were not as easy to detect in grade 2. The percentages of selected students in grades 4 and 5 were similar (28% and 25% respectively) to grade 3 percentages. The percentage was appreciably less for students in grade 6 (12.6%). Why this occurred can only be speculated. The nurturing effect of elementary schools and the increased maturity of the students at the grade 6 level might have been contributing factors.

Limitations of the Study

This study could have been strengthened in a number of ways. An addition that could have easily been incorporated would have been to include the sex of the students as well as their grade level on the random lists prepared by school administration personnel. Sex of the

student might have been a factor that would have helped to explain the low number of potential dropouts in grade 6. Perhaps the potential dropouts that were selected were mostly male. Females are known to mature earlier than males and this factor might have accounted for the drop in numbers at the grade 6 level. It would have also been of interest to have known the proportion of males and females amongst the 79 potential dropouts in this study.

This study would also have benefited from a greater participation of teachers. Teachers' participation was voluntary and many chose not to be part of the study. Data from one of the participating schools was not included in the study because of the low rate of teacher participation in that particular school. Greater participation by teachers would have served to strengthen the results of the study. If the researcher had the option to approach the teachers directly rather than having their participation solicited by the principals of their respective schools, the participation rate may have been larger. It is difficult to know how the study was presented to teachers by the principals of their schools.

Another factor that would have strengthened the study would have been the inclusion of more school divisions. This would have broadened the geographic area that the study would have reached, and may have meant that a broader range of families, students and teachers would have been culled. Researching a broader population base would have made the results of the study more generalizeable.

A study of this nature, would be most useful if it were longitudinal. Ideally, the names of the students on the random lists would be put in safekeeping to be reevaluated in approximately five years. The results of this type of research would be valuable. They would reveal how accurate teachers' predictions had been. It might also reveal if there were particular factors that might be effective in keeping young people in school despite the early prognosis of their potential to become dropouts. Comparisons would be possible between students that were chosen as potential dropouts and fulfilled this prophecy, and those students who were chosen as potential dropouts but defied the prognosis.

Implications

This study has demonstrated that elementary school teachers were able to identify the students they believed had the potential to become dropouts. There was general agreement in the research reviewed that the earlier these young people are identified, the more successful the attempt to keep them in school will be. Elementary school teachers may be a valuable resource and their abilities in this area, might be considered by educational administrators. Students should be identified in elementary school, their needs assessed, and appropriate action taken to implement the programs that will help these students complete their high school education. The need for a well-educated workforce is increasing in Canada. A task force report by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (as reported by French, 1990) presented in the fall of 1989, found that the education and skills level of young people entering the

workforce were inadequate for the demands of the jobs available. Originally Employment and Immigration Canada had planned to encourage students at the high school level to keep studying, they have since realized that the seeds of encouragement have to be planted much earlier (French, 1990).

Young people have to be helped as early as possible, to overcome the obstacles that may prevent them from completing their education. It is recommended that action be taken to identify potential dropouts in the elementary schools. The appropriate measures that will encourage and help young people stay in school should begin at the elementary level.

The importance of the family connection to high school drop out should not be overlooked by educational administrators. Teachers and school staffs can not be expected to overcome the drop out phenomenon on their own. An effort should be made to increase family participation in children's education. Parents too, should be educated to realize that their children will need a good education to prepare them to cope with a changing world. Family participation should be solicited and encouraged by educational administrators. Families have a role to play in their children's education and this role should be clarified and encouraged by the schools.

REFERENCES

- Barrington, B.L., & Hendricks, B. (1989). Differentiating characteristics of high school graduates and nongraduates. Journal of Educational Research, 82 (6), 309-319.
- Beck, L. & Muia, J.A. (1980). A portrait of a tragedy: Research findings on the dropout. The High School Journal, 64, 65-72.
- Bettleheim, B. (1967). How much can man change? In D. Schreiber (Ed.), Profile of the School Dropout (pp. 215-224). New York: Random House.
- Caliste, E.R. (1984). The effect of a twelve week dropout program. Adolescence, 19, 649-657.
- Challenges & Changes The report of Manitoba's high school review panel (September, 1988). Winnipeg: The Government of Manitoba.
- D'Amico, R. (1984). Does employment during high school impair academic progress? Sociology of Education, (1), 152-164.
- Dunham, R. B. & Alpert, G.P. (1987). Keeping juvenile delinquents in school: A prediction model. Adolescence, 22, 45-57.
- Ekstrom, R. B., Goertz, M.E., Pollock, J.M., & Rock, D.A. (1986). Who drops out of high school and why? Findings from a national study. Teachers College Record, 87 (3), 356-373.
- Fine, M. (1987). Why urban adolescents drop into and out of public high school. In G. Natriello (Ed.) School Dropouts Patterns and Policies (pp. 89-105) New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fine, M. & Rosenberg, P. (1983). Dropping out of high school: The ideology of school and work. Journal of Education, 165 (3), 257-272.
- French, O. (1990, June 21). Program targets potential dropouts from early grades. The Globe and Mail, p.3.
- Greene, B.I. (1966). Preventing Student Dropouts. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Greenberger, E. (1983). A researcher in the policy arena. The case of child labour. American Psychologist, 38, 104-111.
- Hammack, F.M. (1986). Large school systems dropout reports: An analysis of definitions, procedures, and findings. Teachers College Record, 87 (3), 324-341.

- Hargroves, J.S. (1986). The Boston Compact: A community response to school dropouts. Urban Review, 18, 207-217.
- Henderson, R.W. (1981). Home environment and intellectual performance. In R.W. Henderson (Ed.) Parent-child interaction (pp. 3-32). New York: Academic Press.
- Hewitt, J.D. & Johnson, W.S. (1979). Dropping out in "Middletown". High School Journal, 62, 252-256.
- Hinjosa, D. & Miller, L. (1984). Grade level attainment among migrant farm workers in South Texas. Journal of Educational Research, 77 (6), 346-350.
- Kaplan, J.L. & Luck, E.C. (1977). The dropout phenomenon as a social problem. Educational Forum, 42, 41-56.
- Karp, E. (1988). The dropout phenomenon in Ontario secondary schools. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario.
- Lajoie, S. P. & Shore, B.M. (1981). Three myths? The overrepresentation of the gifted among dropouts, delinquents, and suicides. Gifted Child Quarterly, 25 (3), 138-143.
- Mann, D. (1986). Can we help dropouts: Thinking about the undoable. Teachers College Record, 87 (3), 307-323.
- Maurer, R. E. (1982). Dropout prevention: An intervention model for today's high schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 63, 470-471.
- Maynard, R. (1989). Look, Jane. Dick can't read. Report on Business Magazine, 5 (11), 87-96.
- McDill, E.L., Natriello, G., & Pallas, A.M. (1985). Raising standards and retaining students: The impact of reform recommendations on potential dropouts. Review of Educational Research, 55 (4), 415-433.
- Morrow, G. (1987). Standardizing practice in the analysis of school dropouts. In G. Natriello (Ed.) School dropouts Patterns and Policies (pp. 38-51). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Natriello, G., Pallas, A.M., & McDill, E.L. (1986). Taking stock: Reviewing our research agenda on the causes and consequences of dropping out. Teachers College Record, 87 (3), 430-440.
- Papalia, D.E., & Olds, S.W. (1982). A child's world Infancy through adolescence. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- Pittman, R.B. (1986). Importance of personal, social factors as potential means for reducing high school dropout rate. The High School Journal, 70, 7-13.
- Powell-Howard, M.A. & Anderson, R.J. (1978). Early identification of potential school dropouts: A literature review. Child Welfare, 57, 221-231.

- Radwanski, G. (1987). Ontario study of the relevance of education, and the issue of dropouts. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario.
- Rosenberg, M. (1968). Parental interest and children's self-conceptions. In J. Heiss (Ed.) Family roles and interaction: An anthology (pp. 394-411). Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
- Safer, D.J. (1986). The stress of secondary school for vulnerable students. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 15, 405-417.
- Schweinhart, L.J., Berrueta-Clement, J.R., Barnett, W.S., Epstein, A.S. & Weikart, D.P. (1985). The promise of early childhood education. Phi Delta Kappan, 66, 548-553.
- Scrimshaw, R.T. (1980). Educational dropout among Blackfoot Indians in Alberta: A Sage analysis 1979. Doctoral dissertation, Brigham Young University.
- Shreiber, D. (1967). Profile of the school dropout New York: Random House.
- Sprinthall, N.A. & Collins, W.A. (1984). Adolescent psychology a developmental view. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- Steinberg, L., Blinde, P.L., & Chan, K.S. (1984). Dropping out among language minority youth. Review of Educational Research, 54 (1), 113-132.
- Sullivan, M. (1988). A comparative analysis of drop-outs and non drop-outs in Ontario secondary schools. Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario.
- Wagner, H. (1984). Why poor kids quit attending school. Education, 105, 185-188.
- Wehlage, G.G. & Robert, R.A. (1986). Dropping out: How much do schools contribute to the problem? Teachers College Record, 87 (3), 374-392.
- Wiseman, S. (1967). Education and environment. In M. Croft, J. Raynor, L. Cohen (Eds.) Linking home and school (pp. 107-122). London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd.
- Woodring, P. (1989). A new approach to the dropout problem. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 468-469.

Appendix A

FORM #1*Instructions:*

Beside the code number of the students, from the list provided, please circle the appropriate response. If you believe a student has the potential to become a high school dropout; that is, the student may not graduate from high school, circle the number (1 thru 7) indicating how probable you feel this prediction to be. Choose only as many students as you feel reasonably able to identify as potential dropouts. If you do not know the student, circle 'DK' or if you believe the student will not become a dropout, circle '0'.

STUDENT no.	Don't Know Student	Potential to Dropout							In my opinion, will NOT drop out
		High Probability			Low Probability				
01	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
02	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
03	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
04	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
05	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
06	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
07	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
08	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
09	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
10	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
11	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
12	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
13	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
14	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
15	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
16	DK	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Appendix B

FORM #2*Instructions:*

Please list, briefly, the reasons why you feel each student selected on Form #1 has the potential to become a high school dropout.

STUDENT #: _____

REASONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STUDENT #: _____

REASONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STUDENT #: _____

REASONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STUDENT #: _____

REASONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STUDENT #: _____

REASONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Profile

School:_____ Student:_____ N. Ratings:_____ Grade:_____

Summary: DK- 7- 6- 5- 4- 3- 2- 1- Will not

Mean: _____

Reasons:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)