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The development of an instrument for measuring the opinions of educators toward potential school dropouts

Blanton, Roy Ernest, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1990

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR MEASURING

THE OPINIONS OF EDUCATORS TOWARD
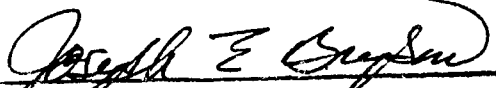
POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

by

Roy Ernest Blanton

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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Approved by

Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

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BLANTON, ROY ERNEST, Ed.D. The Development of an Instrument for
Measuring the Opinions of Educators Toward Potential Dropouts. (1990)
Directed by Dr. Joseph E. Bryson. 134 pages.

The purpose of this investigation was to develop an instrument to

measure the opinions that educators (teachers and administrators) have

toward potential school dropouts. The study also included data analysis

to establish the validity and reliability of the instrument.

The development and analysis of the instrument included knowledge

validity where educators were queried about their opinions of potential

dropouts and from that knowledge-base questions were created for

inclusion on an initial opinion survey. The questions were then

validated for content by a committee of judges from the field of

education.

The initial survey was given to 32 educators and their scores were

compared to interviews and observations to establish construct validity.

Questions that survived the scrutiny of content and construct validity

analysis were placed in a final survey form and administered to a sample

of 100 educators, which generalized the population of educators. The

final survey was administered to the same sample a month later and a

test-retest reliability was calculated. The final survey was also

analyzed for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha.

Based upon an analysis of the data, the following conclusions are

presented: 1) educators can recognize the predispositions and

characteristics that profile potential dropouts and can express their

opinions about these students and, 2) a valid and reliable instrument

can be developed to measure educators opinions toward potential

dropouts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of us, in the course of our lifetimes, brush against many people who affect us in important but sometimes fleeting ways. In an age of temporary systems where planned obsolescence often seems to be at least an economic necessity, we somehow learn to adjust to temporary people and throw-away relationships.

But for the lucky ones of us, there still comes into our lives a person whose presence lingers and whose influence abides. I have several such persons, and they are as much a part of this study as I.

My wife, Patty, and my children, Christy and Casey have not only provided encouragement, but have made personal sacrifices to accommodate the completion of this study. They provided unselfish support when needed, but always gave succor when that was needed more.

Dr. Joseph E. Bryson is an educational statesman of the first order. Throughout the several years of my relationship with him, he has consistently displayed what many men want but few obtain - conviction and peace, courage and forbearance, wisdom and compassion. Above all, in the role of my advisor, he possesses great patience. A relationship that began as an acquaintance has evolved into a genuine friendship.

I wish to extend my thanks to Dr. Robert T. Thomlinson for his continual support during my entire graduate school career; to Dr. David

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H. Reilly for encouraging me to investigate the important topic of at-risk students; and to Dr. Bert A. Goldman for providing constant feedback that insured the quality of my study.

I am especially grateful to my dear friend, Dr. Robert Hayman Kite, Sr., who helped me create a destination and then made sure I stayed on the "right" road.

My appreciation goes to the Faculty of Watauga County Schools who shared their valuable knowledge and gave me their enthusiastic cooperation.

Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Dr. Roy Russell Blanton, Jr. and Mrs. Gladys Shoemaker Blanton. They did much more than expose me to the value of education, they modeled the very essence of dedication and commitment to their students and shared their joy and love of teaching.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Throughout the nation, dropout prevention has become a major focus

for educators (Finn, 1989; Rumberger, 1989). The North Carolina

Department of Public Instruction, for instance, requires that every

school system submit a dropout prevention plan that outlines strategies

and programmatic activities to reduce the dropout rate. However, to

date, the dropout rate among public school systems in North Carolina has

remained relatively stable (North Carolina Department of Public

Instruction, 1989).

Educators have recognized the problems associated with dropouts and

have responded to these problems with various programmatic activities.

Morrow (1985) provides ample documentation of program activity in

schools across the country. A content analysis of programs for dropouts

submitted by a dozen school districts alone resulted in 360+ entries.

A review of existing dropout prevention programs revealed that an

emphasis on student characteristics exists in the majority of dropout

prevention programs (Morrow, 1985). Historically, dropout prevention

has focused on pupil characteristics alone as a cause for dropout.

Truancy, disruptive behavior, and low academic performance profiled

students as at-risk for dropping out of school and intervention programs were initiated, usually at the secondary level, to keep students in school (Elliott & Voss, 1974).

Merton (1938) was among the first researchers to suggest that schools, as institutions, be studied for possible causes of dropout. Many studies have followed (Combs & Cooley, 1968, Elliott & Voss, 1974; Kite & Blanton, 1985; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Finn, 1989) that relate the organization, structure and purpose of school to the decision to drop out.

This research is a continuation of two previous studies conducted by the author. The initial study (Kite & Blanton, 1985), attempted to identify predispositions of students entering school that might effect the way they experience school. These predispositions were labeled "causal factors." The study also attempted to identify conditions within the organization, structure, and purpose of school that would result in a propensity for students with causal factors to experience school differently than other students. The conditions within school were labeled "blockages." The study identified five predispositions that effected the school experience. The causal factors identified were; the socioeconomic status of students, assumed inadequacies of students by themselves and others, dropout reinforcement from the student's environment, immaturity in handling multiple issues, and non-traditional learning styles. The study also identified many blockages within school. Examples of blockages are; peer group rejection, poor relationship with educators (teachers and administrators), the curriculum (both speed and content), grades, rules

and regulations, time spent on the bus, and dressing out for physical education. The study found that causal factors or blockages alone did not account for the decision to drop out. In other words, coming from a low socioeconomic environment or having a low self-esteem alone did not account for the decision to drop out of school (this concept has been recently reiterated by Finn, 1989). However, the combination of causal factors and blockages proved to be a powerful basis for an explanation of dropout.

A scenario that includes the initial study (Kite & Blanton, 1985) and more recent studies (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Finn, 1989) is a student who enters school assuming that he or she is not capable of achieving success, either academically or socially. If that student encounters rejection by other students, develops a poor relationship with a teacher, or begins to receive low grades, then a feeling of alienation (Bryk & Thum, 1989) or a sense of detachment (Finn, 1989) occurs. The more chronic the feeling of alienation, the greater the chances are that behaviors will develop that flag the student as a potential dropout. Those behaviors - truancy, disruption, apathy, and low achievement - become the predictors for students at-risk of dropping out. Although many students who display these behaviors have been helped through programmatic activities, the process of causal factors combining with blockage is reoccurring and continuous.

The second study by this researcher (Blanton, 1986) looked to the student-educator relationship to disrupt the causal factor-blockage process. Finn (1989) described this process as participation of students to disrupt detachment from school. To eliminate the

student-educator relationship as blockage and further, to make that

relationship a positive, intervening response to other blockages was the

objective of the study. The explanation of the dropout decision process

developed in the initial study (Kite & Blanton, 1985) was presented to

27 schools in North Carolina (to over 2000 educators).

In the process of providing technical assistance to the public

schools in North Carolina, this researcher encountered various degrees

of acceptance and resistance from the educators being trained in the

explanation of dropout. There was no consistency in characteristics of

schools where educators were acceptant or resistant to changing

behaviors toward potential dropouts. The size of the school, geographic

location, percentage of minorities in the student and faculty

population, or socioeconomic location had no effect on the level of

acceptance or resistance. The factors that seemed to be consistent

between faculties and administrators in schools that formed resistance

were attitudes and opinions that were nonsupporting of helping the

at-risk student population. The nonsupportive opinions were verbalized

in statements such as

- If students don't want to learn, they shouldn't be in school;

- My job is to teach students, not to solve their personal
  problems; and

- All the children in that family are the same; they'll never
  make anything of themselves.

It became apparent that changing the nonsupportive opinions and

opinions of educators was the first obstacle to overcome before any

programmatic activities would be effective. This researcher looked to

the literature for methods and processes for influencing opinions and

changing behavior. According to Zimbardo and Ebbesen (1970)

> a process model to create change in opinion is a combined
> function of: a) the individual's initial position; b) the
> individual's attention to the communication and the message;
> c) comprehension of its arguments, examples, appeals and
> conclusion; and d) general and specific motivation for
> accepting its position (p. 18).

Zimbardo and Ebbesen further state:

> The variable which is crucial in estimating the probability
> that a specified persuasive communication will succeed in
> changing attitudes is the extremity of the initial position
> that the person has taken (p. 18).

This study will attempt to identify the initial positions of

educators regarding potential school dropouts and to create an

instrument to measure the extremities of those positions.

Purpose of the Study

Influencing opinions and changing the behavior of educators is not

unique to the problem of dropout. There have been many attempts to

alter and reform different elements of education using teachers and

administrators as the primary tool of the reform. Attempted reform has

included such efforts as open schools and non-graded schools. Current

efforts include middle level education and magnet schools (Crump, 1980).

A crucial element in addressing a problem or creating a change in

process or structure is the commitment level held by the people involved

in the change (Abelson & Karlins, 1959; Zimbardo & Ebbesen, 1970; Bryk &

Thum, 1989). The commitment level of a person or group of people can be

influenced by the opinions held by that person or group of people (Abelson & Karlins, 1959). Therefore, it is assumed that the opinions educators hold toward potential dropouts, open schools, middle schools, etc. can affect the overall success of the attempted change or reform.

The purpose of this study is to identify the opinions that educators hold toward potential school dropouts and to then develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure those opinions.

Significance of the Study

Administrators and teachers are being asked to bear the responsibility of reducing the number of students who drop out of school. For any strategy to be successful in this endeavor, a sincere commitment to helping potential dropouts should be felt by each educator. Commitment levels are often influenced by the opinions held by an individual (Abelson & Karlins, 1959). It is hypothesized that if an educator feels that some students should drop out of school, then that opinion could affect the educator's level of commitment to help all students stay in school.

To date, the researcher has not secured evidence that exposure of educators to the explanation of dropout proposed by Kite and Blanton (1985) has had any effect on the dropout rate. Similarly, evidence has not been secured that exposure to the explanation of dropout has had any effect in influencing opinions and changing the behavior of educators toward potential dropouts. A first step in securing that evidence is the identification of the initial position, or opinions that educators have regarding potential dropouts.

This then raises two questions:

- Do educators have opinions about potential dropouts? and

    if so,

- Can those opinions be identified and measured?

These questions must be answered prior to initiating a process to influence opinions and change the behavior of educators toward potential dropouts. It is hypothesized that a shift in opinions and behavior toward potential dropouts from negative to positive can result in more effective programmatic activities that use educators in the process.

Procedures

Data for this study were collected to determine knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity, generalizability, and reliability of a survey instrument designed to measure the opinions of educators regarding potential dropouts. The design of the instrument, suggested by Goodenough (1949), included items that reflected the educators' knowledge of potential dropouts. Responses to the survey items by educators were measured using the Likert Method of Summated Ratings, which allowed the researcher to measure the direction of an opinion (positive or negative) and the strength of an opinion (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Collection and analysis of data used the following sequence suggested by Zimbardo and Ebbesen (1970) and Thorndike (1971). A bank of survey items was created from interviews with educators that represented all grade levels (K-12) and administrative positions

(principals, assistant principals and counselors). This first sample of approximately 30 educators was created from volunteers from all the schools in the Watauga County, North Carolina School System. The initial bank of survey items also reflected the literature review on dropouts.

The bank of survey items was then analyzed by a Content Review Committee. The judges on this committee were made up of eight faculty volunteers from the College of Education at Appalachian State University. The judges were trained in the explanation of dropout and given a knowledge-base document that included an explanation of dropout, the criteria used to rate each item, a rating sheet, and the list of items created by the interviews with educators and the literature review.

The items selected by the judges as having content validity were placed in a survey form and administered to a second sample of educators. Once again, this sample of approximately 25 educators consisted of volunteers who represented all grade levels and administrative positions. The administration of the initial survey was followed by an interview with each of the educators completing the survey. The interview consisted of the same questions as the initial survey. A correlation coefficient using the survey data (interval) and the interview data (interval) was computed to determine construct validity.

All of the questions that were found to have construct validity were placed in a final survey form and administered to 100 educators who represented all grade levels and administrative positions. The

sample of 100 educators was considered representative of the population of educators in North Carolina. In other words, since there are three times as many elementary educators as secondary educators, the sample reflected the same ratio. The sample was also generalized for average years of experience. A test-retest of the final survey form was administered to the same sample and a Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to determine reliability. The final survey form data were also subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis for further evidence of reliability.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions apply to this study and are accepted by the researcher as valid:

1. That many educators through their contact with students form opinions about those students.

2. That students have characteristics or display behaviors that help form the opinions of educators.

3. That the educators' opinions about students who are potential dropouts can affect their level of commitment to help those students.

4. That once exposed, negative opinions can be overcome to increase the level of commitment of educators to help potential dropouts.

In addition to these broad assumptions, there are limitations to this study.

1. A report conducted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (1989) indicated that dropout rates of schools within North Carolina are not significantly altered by urban or rural settings, size of school, or racial makeup of the student body or faculty. The report also indicated that dropout rates are dictated by the internal environment of each school. Bryk & Thum (1989), identified an internal environment which reduces the incidence of dropout as a safe environment with a committed faculty that maintains high academic expectations. Although the population of the present researcher's study is intended to represent educators in North Carolina, the population sample is confined to one rural county in western North Carolina.

2. Dropout is a topic under considerable current research. As new research is published, the knowledge-base of educators expands and can, in itself, influence opinions. The questions used in the final survey are a reflection of the current knowledge-base of educators and the current research literature. As the knowledge-base changes, questions may need to be revised.

Definition of Terms

Educator - For the purpose of this study, educator refers to teachers, principals, assistant principals and counselors.

Dropout - The North Carolina Department of Education defines a dropout as any student who makes a decision to quit school before graduating.

Opinion - For the purpose of this study, an opinion is a basic

belief or impression of a potential dropout. Opinion differs

from attitude in that a behavior is not necessarily associated

with the basic belief or impression.

Potential Dropout - For the purpose of this study, the researcher

defines Potential Dropout as a student who is likely to make

the decision to dropout of school, but has not done so or been

allowed to. The likelihood to make the decision to dropout can

be influenced by factors in the family, community, school, or

any combination of the three.

Reality Context - Kite and Blanton (1985) define Reality Context as

the way individuals perceive themselves in terms of family,

community and school.

Summary

The use of an educator's opinion survey regarding potential school

dropouts has a great deal of potential. The review of literature and

overview of existing dropout programs indicate a relationship between

educators' opinions about potential dropouts and the educators' level of

commitment to help these students within programmatic activities.

Item analysis for the development of the opinion survey included

knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity,

generalizability, and reliability.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to
this study. The approach used is to: a) briefly describe the research
conducted on dropouts from a psychological and sociological viewpoint;
b) examine the influences on administrators' opinions regarding
dropouts; c) examine the influences on teachers' opinions regarding
dropouts; d) describe an explanation of dropout; and e) describe the
process of survey design and analysis.

Psychological and Sociological Perspective

There is general agreement that the way students experience school
is the most frequently stated reason for dropping out before
graduation. (Combs & Cooley 1968; Elliott & Voss 1974; Kite & Blanton
1985; Bryk & Thum 1989; Finn 1989; Rumberger 1989). Most of the
explanations for a student's quitting school early begin and end with a
trait-based profile, usually associated with dropping out.

In a recent study completed by Alpert and Dunham (1986) at the
University of Miami, five factors were found to be predictive of
dropping out. The researchers claimed they could predict, with 92
percent accuracy, who would and who would not drop out of school. The
five factors were: (1) how much the students felt they misbehaved in
class; (2) the relevance of school to their doing well in life; (3)

their success in school; (4) how much their parents mentioned their behavior; and (5) the proximity of their friends who had dropped out.

Four national studies, Moffitt, et al. (1981), Rumberger (1987), Hawkins and Lam (1987), and High School and Beyond (1974) confirm that a family social class position characterized by low socioeconomic status is significantly associated with dropping out. How this type of family background produces youth who are poor risks to finishing school is not clarified. Another finding is that poor school performance leading to low grades and course failure is associated with dropping out. It is not clear from the four studies whether measures of characteristics such as low aspirations, weak sociability, negative school attitudes, low self-esteem, and external sense of locus of control are in the mind set of a potential dropout or are produced by school experiences. The problem of females leaving school due to marriage and/or pregnancy is now a major factor in the dropout rate, as suggested in the High School and Beyond data. In addition, this study noted that dropouts do not expect to get as much schooling as their peers. The reasons cited for this are that dropouts did not perform as well as their peers, were more often truant, and generally displayed more disruptive behavior than other students. The High School and Beyond study also reported that expected school attainment was a powerful predictor of dropping out.

A study by Elliott and Voss (1974) identified three types of dropouts: involuntary, educationally handicapped, and capable. Their research revealed that approximately two-thirds of school dropouts are capable of completing high school. Ekstrom, et al. (1986)

suggests that the percentage of capable students is 85% but notes that expectations of student achievement has fallen in recent years. Most of these students left school voluntarily, and about 20 percent of them were forced to leave school by administrative order due to troublesome behavior. Nearly one-third of the dropouts (32 percent) were "educationally handicapped." Two percent of the dropouts left school due to death, illness, severe economic problems or other reasons that can be described as leading to involuntary dropping out. Each type of dropout can be described by specific characteristics. For example, low academic achievement would usually be characteristic of the educationally handicapped. Nonconforming behaviors would be associated with 20 percent of the capable students who were forced to leave school.

There apparently is no master key to unlock the question, why do students dropout? To answer the question requires consideration of a broad range of interrelated individual, institutional, and societal factors that together develop a comprehensive-based explanation for and understanding of the dropout phenomenon. The lack of an explanation for dropping out, that can be related to specific program results, leads to continued expenditures without accountability.

Development of an effective program requires knowing what has been done in the past, to whom, in what way, and with what effect. This requires a frame of reference, a conceptual scheme where practice is related to a theoretical explanation. There are conceptual schemes that have been developed that provide a beginning theoretical framework for developing an effective explanation of dropout. Lichter (1962), employing a psychological perspective, used a Freudian psychodynamic

framework for the diagnosis of personality problems in an attempt to gain knowledge of the adolescent ego that would, in turn, explain the difference between graduates and those students who dropped out. Lichter's findings show that dropouts: (1) had unsuccessful and unhappy school experiences; (2) were not leaving school to effect constructive plans; (3) had emotional problems that were the major cause of school difficulties; (4) had emotional problems that were severe; (5) attributed to the school a special psychodynamic meaning of a conflictual nature; (6) differed by gender in their approach to life and in the time of onset of school problems; and (7) were a heterogeneous group with regard to psychological traits.

Two theoretical models have been developed to explain the lack of school success of major ethnic groups in the United States: (1) the cultural difference or conflict model; and (2) the macrostructural model. The first model accepts that acquired values, attitudes, modes of cognition, and interactional styles acquired by any ethnic group of children constitute a complex cultural system that should not be judged as deficient, but different from the mainstream culture. The model postulates that the basic problem in ethnic education is in the culture conflict which takes place in the schools as minority cultures confront the mainstream culture (Gump, 1980).

The macrostructural model accepts the basic tenet of the cultural difference model that important cultural differences exist between ethnic groups and the mainstream culture, and these differences are important for understanding the comparative lack of educational success of major ethnic minorities within the context of the larger society.

Advocates of the model argue that ethnic minority groups exist and are related to educational failure primarily because of inequitable access to social, political, and economic roles in the U.S. society. The advocates of this model conclude that the school functions to maintain ethnic and socioeconomic stratification (Polk & Pink, 1971).

In a sociologically focused study, Tinto and Cullen (1959) developed a conceptual model to explain classroom deviation. These authors, using a means-ends scheme, defined goals (ends) as academic achievement or economic achievement; they defined means in terms of Merton's (1938) work as the legitimate social constraints by a variety of structural conditions in and out of the classroom by teachers, class and curriculum structure, grading system, and decisions regarding prerequisites in various academic structures. Conflict between student goals and legitimate means to achieve the goals created problems for students. To resolve the conflict required a reduction or accommodation of sources of conflict between the means-ends dimension.

Elliott and Voss (1974) developed a conceptual model based on four dimensions:

1.   Individual's failure to achieve desired goals;

2.   Extropunitiveness or belief that the school is responsible for individuals' problems;

3.   Social isolation; and

4.   Exposure to other dropouts.

These four conceptual dimensions are related to three settings which constitute the social environment of the student; the community, the home, and the school. Elliott and Voss's analysis is confined to

capable students.

According to Elliott and Voss's review of the literature, between 50 and 75 percent of all dropouts have the intellectual ability to graduate from high school. Consequently, these authors argue, conventional trait approaches to the study of dropouts are inappropriate .

> Because they are, by definition, intellectually capable, it is not possible to identify the students who are likely to drop out through examination of scores on intelligence and reading tests, grades, or other information available in school records. Explanation of these dropouts requires an analysis of the structure and processes characteristic of the schools in order to identify sources of strain and tension (p. 83).

The conceptual analysis used by Elliott and Voss places emphasis on the goals held or valued by youth. Dropping out is viewed as being generated by failure to achieve the students' desired goals. The authors hypothesize that:

> . . . dropout is precipitated by aspiration-opportunity disjunctions . . . goals may be either long-range educational and economic goals, formal academic goals, peer-culture goals, or acceptance within the family. While failure to achieve any of these goals may be conducive to dropout, we hypothesize that dropout is primarily a response to school failure. Specifically, it is failure to achieve the goals of the youth culture, rather than academic goals, that motivates most capable dropouts to leave school (p. 166).

It is not failure in academic achievement, but a failure within the school system which precipitates a voluntary dropout.

In completing his conceptual framework, Lichter (1962) argues that two aspects of student alienation are social isolation and normlessness, which are important precipitants of dropout.

The analysis by Lichter, using the conceptual framework developed by Elliott and Voss (1974), supported the conclusion that the school was the most critical context conducive to dropout and that academic failure seemed to be the strongest predictor for dropping out of school. Parental acceptance appeared to be a weak predictor, while exposure to dropouts via differential association was found to be related to dropping out.

Many of the studies completed by sociologists on dropout are influenced by the articles written by Robert K. Merton in 1938 and 1959, "Social Structure and Anomie" and "Society Today: Problems and Prospects." Merton's interest centered on discovering how some social structures exert pressure upon individuals in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct. Merton identifies two elements of social and cultural structure. The first consists of culturally defined goals, purposes, and interests. These goals result in a framework that generates within an individual's specific aspirations. The second element of the social structure defines and controls the acceptance modes of achieving these goals. The ways available for an individual to achieve his or her aspirations are limited by institutional norms and sanctions.

The conceptual model developed by Merton is comprised of cultural goals and institutional norms. The relationship between the two elements is never constant and varies between unacceptable innovation and obsessive stability. The social structure is maintained as long as satisfaction comes to individuals who can achieve their aspirations through accepted and socially approved norms.

There remains a substantial amount of literature focused on improving our understanding of the processes underlying decisions to drop out of school. Earlier, it was asserted by Lichter (1962) that there are no systematic explanations reflecting theoretical formulations about why students drop out. Elliott and Voss (1974) have certainly made one of the most important contributions toward a theoretical formulation of the causes of dropping out, but their work proves a major shortcoming in the neglect of factors external to the school as having any major significance in explaining the phenomenon. Merton's (1938) means-end dynamic provides a viable frame of reference for identifying sources of alienation but does not focus on the psychology of goals developed by adolescents. Lichter, (1962) ignores the social context of schools in favor of psychological considerations. Recent research documents the connections between the school and the student who drops out. Svec (1986) cites a report that states that 33.3% of those students who leave school prematurely do so for school-related reasons. Interestingly enough, Dale Mann (1986) contends that students blame the school for their failures less often than might be expected. Mann goes on to state that virtually everything the school does can be related to dropout. The juxtaposition of these two ideas leads one to the idea that, although schools certainly are part of the problem, students perceive other factors as being more important.

Finn (1989) compares two current model approaches to the problem of dropout. The frustration-self-esteem model is based on a cycle of school failure producing an impaired self-view, which in turn leads to more failure. The reduced self-esteem then produces the problem

behavior associated with potential dropouts. The participation-identification model examines the "idea that successful students develop a sense of identification with school, while less successful students do not, or not to the same extent..." (Finn, 1989, p. 123). The participation-identification model looks to student participation in class activities, extracurricular activities, decision-making and responding to school requirements as a means to create attachment or identification with school.

In a study by Bryk and Thum (1989), the relationship between characteristics of students and the organizational structure of school is applied to potential dropouts. The study also stated that students perform better in schools that have a committed faculty, orderly environment, and an emphasis on academic pursuits. Attendance was found to improve at schools where adult authority is perceived as fair and effective.

Bryk and Thum concluded that the internal organizational features of schools have significant educative consequences for all students, and especially for at-risk youth. A prompt, effective adult response to student behavior problems early in school may short-circuit what otherwise might be a continuous flow of negative school experiences, culminating in a decision to drop out.

During the past five years there has been some attempt to reduce dropout problems within the school through effective leadership. The primary leader in the school is the principal and the influence of the principal permeates the entire school social structure (Conrath, 1986). Many studies also cite the increasingly recognized influence of the

teacher (Larsen & Shertzer, 1987). Due to the complexity of the two positions in relation to the dropout situation, the influence of each position must be explored further.

An abundance of research has offered theoretical and knowledge-based explanations for student behavior, from both the psychological and sociological areas. Even with the vast knowledge of child and adolescent development, no theoretical explanation of the dropout phenomenon has been proposed, much less verified.

Influences on Administrative Opinions

The most important influence on a faculty's opinion toward dropouts is that of the principal (Conrath, 1986). The principal sets policies, influences the opinions of the staff, and institutes the programs necessary to reduce the number of students who drop out. Conrath links the effective principal to the effective school: "Effective schools, alternative or mainstream, are run by adults who have a powerful sense of mission, who take a stand on what young people need to learn, and who are willing to be authoritative--not authoritarian--on how to teach" (Conrath, 1986, p. 206). McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1986) agree in their article, "A Population at Risk":

> As director of school activities, the principal is viewed as playing a crucial part in establishing and maintaining the affective and intellectual tone of the institution (p. 197).

Thus, the importance of the principal's role in the school cannot be underestimated.

Secondary school leadership plays a vital role in dropout prevention since it is during the high school experience that students make the decision to drop out. However, the elementary school principal must also realize that he or she must work to prevent future dropouts. Dale Mann (1986), writing for the National Association of Secondary School Principals, asserts that the best way to avoid a high school dropout is to make the elementary school more successful. Mann goes on to include middle level education as well, noting that large numbers of already fragile adolescents fail to make the transition either into or out of such middle grades. The implication, then, is that principals of all schools must make a sustained effort to do what they can to avoid or combat the dropout problem.

In spite of the fact that elementary and middle school principals can positively influence potential dropouts, the bulk of the problem undeniably rests with secondary school administrators. There are many influences in the high school that might contribute to a student's decision to drop out. Larsen and Shertzer (1987) allude to the difficulty in isolating school-related causes: "No single reason accounts for students leaving school before graduation" (p. 18). Causal factors are attributed to individual behaviors, teacher and school limitations, parental and home conditions, and societal barriers. Truly, the problem of dropout is a collective one. The multitude of causes related to the dropout problem necessitate categorization. Strother (1986) groups the causes as follows: (1) alienation from teachers, administrators, and peers; (2) poor attendance and high truancy rates; (3) low academic achievement, especially in

reading; and (4) negative economic and social pressures at home or in school.

These causes can be loosely grouped into problems linked to academics and problems linked to discipline. One of the academic problems the principal has to deal with is the question of standards of excellence. According to Strother, many educators are concerned that higher standards will cause students who already perform poorly to drop out. Strother goes on to make the point that, although the rules for performance have changed, the system that has proven incapable of student motivation has not. Thirty-five states have tightened graduation requirements, but no state has pressed for a program to help the student who is more sharply at risk from the new standards (Mann, 1986). Each principal must be aware of the tightrope on which his school is walking and must search for creative solutions.

Naturally, a key part of the academic causal analysis must be the part played by teachers, a section to be covered thoroughly in this review. Because teachers are greatly influenced by the principal, strong leadership is essential. If a school is large, the principal needs to be aware of the dangers of impersonal teacher-student relations. Many potential dropouts have been sidetracked by a teacher who took interest and spent some time with the student. Principals need to model caring behavior and continually stress its importance to their teachers. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) cite the Foxfire magazine as an example of non-traditional learning that could be incorporated into many schools. Such innovative programs can only flourish through the leadership and guidance of an approving and encouraging principal.

If, as Wehlage and Rutter (1986) maintain, students perceive discipline in their school as being ineffective and unfair, then they may view school as "a place where one gets into trouble." Disciplinary problems such as cutting classes, truancy, and the disrupting of classes could be clear signals to an administrator that a student is a potential dropout. Encouraging teachers to be sensitive to recurring problems is one function of an exemplary principal. In fact, Wehlage and Rutter go so far as to state that discipline systems need to be creatively restructured.

A response to that call came in the same year, when Glasser (1986) published his Control Theory in the Classroom. Glasser suggested the emphasis on positive reinforcement as a means of behavior control, rather than traditional discipline. Further evidence of discipline systems being replaced is the study by Hawkins, et al. (1988) where "bonding" of students together and with significant adults became the approach to alter disruptive behavior.

Negative messages from the school concerning academic and discipline problems often contribute to the process which ends in a student's dropping out of school. Since principals lead and influence an entire school, part of their job is to permeate these areas with a positive, optimistic opinion toward dropout prevention. However, principals need support, also. Conrath (1986) reminds the school community that principals who do take the initiative to develop dropout prevention and alternative programs need support and reassurance that the district's concern for the dropout problem is not a critique of their leadership.

In addition, these principals need to be reminded that the problems of dropouts did not necessarily begin at their school.

Dropout prevention is an area that has been widely addressed of late. Many strategies have been formulated, all of which penetrate the core of the school program. However, for these strategies to be successful, a school must be led by an open-minded administrator dedicated to reducing the dropout problem. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) list three general areas of reform which are deeply rooted in theory and research:

> (1) an enhanced sense of professional accountability among educators toward all students; (2) a renewed effort to establish legitimate authority within the institution; (3) a redefinition of school work for students and teachers that will allow a greater number of students to achieve success and satisfaction and to continue their schooling (p. 323).

Furthermore, they advise schools to put an end to truancy, to provide caring and personalized teaching, to offer structured programs, to establish clear and demanding (but attainable) expectations for students, and to adapt schoolwork to children's individual needs.

Another creative way to infuse new life into the schools and to save potential dropouts is the use of business/school partnerships (Mann, 1986). Finally, improved home communication can be of benefit, but must result from a proactive, assertive act on the part of the administrator (Marockie & Jones, 1987). Home-school communication extends across a spectrum of interactions, from a school professional who visits homes, to counseling when a dropout wishes to return to school. Marockie and Jones conducted a study where this home-school communication drastically reduced dropout rates.

If principals are to lead their schools toward dropout prevention, there clearly is much that they can do. Their position gives them the authority to influence many people who are part of the dropout problem. If dropout prevention is a priority of principals, they can also institute many different programs designed to keep students in school.

Influences on Teacher Opinions

Why do some students choose to drop out of school? The reasons may be related to teacher opinion and behavior. Strother (1986) writes:

> Although not a study of dropout per se, Voices from the Classroom, by Laurie Olsen and Melinda Moore, presents additional information on why some vulnerable or marginal students choose to drop out of school. This information came from interviews with students about their classroom interactions with teachers. Most of the students viewed their teachers as unhappy with their jobs, disgruntled, bored, and boring. Olsen and Moore pointed out that "poor teachers erode students' self-confidence, their fragile sense of acceptability to their peers, and can contribute to truancy, dropping out, and acting out. Students go to great lengths to avoid teachers they feel put them in uncomfortable or humiliating positions--and if unable to avoid them, students can be affected for a long time by classroom situations they feel undermine, degrade or humiliate them" (p. 313).

The Moore and Olsen (1982) study revealed that interactions with teachers were primary reasons for students' dropping out of school. Strother reports specific findings from this study:

--The larger the school, the more problems that students and teachers reported with the quality of teaching.

--Large classes and overcrowded schools increased every teacher's workload and made it difficult for them to respond to individual needs.

--Students said that their prime concerns were teachers' knowledge of

subject matter and their accessibility.

--Students said that good teachers were characterized by accessibility and willingness to provide extra help. (The students emphasized that they relied on their teachers to answer questions, and discuss their work).

--Students reported that the better teachers went out of their way to follow-up on students who had fallen behind, to reach out to those who seemed to be having trouble, and to give all students opportunities to ask questions and receive help in class.

--Teachers who embarrassed students were roundly disliked, and some students said that they would do anything to avoid the classes of such teachers. Students--particularly those in the early teens--also expressed anger and hurt over teachers who showed favoritism to certain youngsters.

Moore and Olsen (1982) also indicate that dropping out is more likely to occur when teachers are not particularly interested in all students. These researchers note that schools must be caring places where students are afforded the opportunity to succeed, are expected to succeed, have demanding but clear-cut expectations, and adapt to individual needs. Teacher alienation proved to be a major risk factor in identification of high-risk students. Dropout students interviewed in this study also regarded the discipline as ineffective and unfair.

Researchers Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) in _Pygmalion in the Classroom_ revealed that teacher expectation had definite bearing on student achievement. When students were expected to achieve, they

achieved. High expectations on the part of the classroom teachers resulted in higher achievement for students.

A study by Aspy and Buhler (1982) found a correlation between teacher self-concept and student achievement. An effective teacher has a positive view of self.

> There is extensive evidence to support the contention that a student's self-concept influences his performance in the classroom. A second aspect of the issue of the self-concept in the classroom is that the teacher influences the students' self-concept. Students' perception of their teacher's feelings toward them correlated positively and significantly with their self-perceptions. Teacher behavior affects student performance including academic achievement, (p. 237).

Poulos (1986), in his study profiling dropouts in the Detroit schools system, found teacher-student relationships to be a major factor for students dropping out. Teachers do make a difference in a student's school experience. Research indicates that teacher behaviors are specifically related to students dropping out (Aspy & Buhler, 1982). Teacher expectation can often determine success or failure in the classroom, and a teacher's self-concept and how he or she perceives students is positively related to students' performance. The teacher influences the students' self-perception and, consequently, affects students' achievement. These findings have strong implications for classroom teachers.

Some students are "pushed out" rather than "dropped out," - pushed out by ineffective teachers who have alienated them while proposing to teach them (Kanungo, 1979; Newman, 1981). Effective teachers are leaders in the classroom. Often they determine a successful experience for students who might otherwise be lost in the schools. Aspy and

Buhler (1986) revealed that effective teachers are ones who respect the dignity of all students, have high expectations for them, have a positive self-concept and consider their students worthwhile human beings and let them know it.

An Explanation of Dropout

Potential school dropouts, over time, develop a pre-disposition for experiencing school that is different from other students (Elliott & Voss, 1974; Kifer, 1975; Bickel, et al., 1986).

Students create their lives from their environments. The primary sources include: family, community, and school. How students see themselves in this total environment becomes their Reality Context. The pre-disposition to experience school differently develops over time and in most instances is a result of specific causal factors present in a student's Reality Context. Thus, preventing dropout must change the student's Reality Context. The Reality Context is in part shaped by specific causal factors. To change the Reality Context requires a change in the status of specific causal factors (Kite & Blanton, 1985).

A potential dropout is less likely to quit school unless chronic blockage occurs over time during his school career. According to Kite and Blanton, an explanation of dropout can be condensed into the following:

The Reality Context of a student produces a predisposition to experience school.

The Reality Context of a student results in specific needs from family, community, and school.

The school environment allows for chronic blockage to occur.

The predisposition plus chronic blockage equals a propensity to have a negative school experience.

Thus

$$\text{predisposition} + \text{needs} + \text{blockage} = \begin{array}{l}\text{alternative means}\\ \text{for need}\\ \text{satisfaction}\end{array}$$

There are countless reasons that may cause a capable student to quit school. This knowledge will not necessarily help in dropout prevention. Out of those countless reasons, five categories of factors have been identified. Through their research, Kite and Blanton demonstrated that one or more of the five causal factors is most often present in the Reality Context of a dropout. It is assumed from this that the five factors are operating in a potential dropout and are the dominant causes for a pre-disposition to experience school differently than other students. They define the five causal factors as follows:

Dropout reinforcement: The array of messages a student receives over time from his family, peers, community, and school - the messages say it's alright to quit school - you can't do the work - a college education is not for you - your brother quit school and learned a good trade - plenty of jobs are available to kids who don't have a high school diploma, etc.

Low social class position: The social class position occupied by a student's family greatly influences how the student will experience school. There are many examples that could be provided to illustrate the impact of social class. This is one example: Student A is from a

middle class family - B is a student from a low social class family. They both fail a mid-term math test. A's family hires a tutor, restricts A's social privileges until the grades improve and one or both parents visit the teacher. B's family cannot afford extra help and cannot take time away from work to visit the school.

Internal blame: Internal blame is a self-perception that students have about themselves - that they are responsible for blockage because of personal inadequacies. Student A fails a mid-term math test. If Student A is asked why the test was failed, the reply would be that the test was stupid, the teacher is not a good teacher, etc. If Student B is asked why the test was failed, the response would be that material is too difficult, or "I just can't get this stuff." Student A represents external blame, Student B represents internal blame.

Multiple issues: Some children and adolescents have great difficulty handling more than one major issue at a time in their lives. Students who have more than one major issue in their lives at a time often respond with non-conforming behavior.

Alienation: This is a psychological state. The main attribute of the state is a feeling of powerlessness. The more powerless a student feels, the greater the impact upon school experience. Alienation is characterized by four conditions:

1. powerlessness

2. meaninglessness

3. isolation

4. self-estrangement

It is assumed that all students who make a decision to quit school are alienated. The four preceding causal factors, dropout reinforcement, low social class position, internal blame, and multiple issues produce alienation to some degree. At a point in time, alienation increases to the point the student opts to leave school.

Potential dropouts endure one or more of the four causal factors and alienation. The greater the number of causal factors in a student's life the greater the alienation.

The explanation of dropout is a synthesis of assorted and varied scholarly endeavors, empirical research and logic. The explanation is drawn from the works of the following authors:

Merton's (1959) interest centered on discovering how some social structures exert pressure upon individuals in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct. Merton identifies two elements of social and cultural structure. The first consists of culturally defined goals, purposes and interests. These goals result in a framework that generates specific aspirations within an individual. The second element of the social structure defines and controls the acceptance modes of achieving these goals. The ways available for an individual to achieve his or her aspirations are limited by institutional norms and sanctions. The conceptual model developed by Merton includes two elements - cultural goals and institutional norms.

When individuals have little access to conventional and legitimate means for attaining goals, the social context predisposes them to employ alternative modes of goal achievement outside institutional norms. When goals are not congruent with available means, anomie develops. As

a result the most effective rather than the most acceptable means come into use. Anomie refers to a condition of and denotes a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down and are no longer effective rules of behavior. "Aberrant conduct, therefore, may be viewed as a symptom of disassociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means" (Merton, 1959, p. 177).

Schools are cultural units. Students also come to school from a particular culture. The school is an institution organized and run as a system to achieve cultural literacy. Merton's conceptual scheme can be employed to understand dropout because the school is a microcosm of the greater society. Using Merton's scheme for analysis, the assumption can be made that students leave school to seek alternative methods for satisfying their aspirations. Merton's assumption that all youth aspire to the same success goals must be expanded to include a variety of aspirations and varying motivation to obtain avowed goals. In terms of the explanation invented, the term blockage is used to indicate recognition by a student that the means to achieve their aspirations within the school "system" was not accessible or usable. Further, the decision to drop out was a result of continued frustration (chronic blockage) to achieve aspirations. Dropout cannot be said to be a result of chronic blockage without considering why tolerance for blockage varies among students.

Merton's work provides a powerful tool for structuring an understanding of dropout. There is little empirical evidence to support Merton's concept of a means/ends dynamic in terms of dropout because

studies associated with dropout are designed to find the flaw in students that results in a decision to drop out rather than seeking institutionalized causes. Merton's scheme focuses upon a student's adaptation to an institution, and this gives rise to the notion that schools and the way they are managed and administered may contribute to dropout.

An important conceptual framework about the nature of human needs was developed by Maslow (1968). Maslow's view assumes that human beings are wanting entities as soon as one need is satisfied another appears in its place. This process, according to Maslow, is never-ending; it continues from birth to death. Maslow discovered that all people have five levels of needs:

> Self-actualization
>
> Achievement
>
> Social relationship
>
> Security
>
> Physical (survival)

He found that people are limited in their personal growth and development when deprived of need satisfaction at any level. Also, he concluded that a satisfied need is not a motivation of behavior. According to Maslow, all behavior is rational and behavior is simply a means to get needs satisfied. Further, Maslow indicated that behavior that does not work is repeated until the individual is taught, recognizes, or for some specific reason adopts a different behavior.

Maslow provides at least three important considerations in terms of the explanation of the decision to drop out. First, his conceptual

framework adds the dimension of motivation in terms of aspirations
(Note: aspirations in most instances are specific needs). The
motivation, the drive for need satisfaction, according to Maslow is the
source of behavior. Second, poorly designed behavior is rational to the
one employing the behavior and the poorly designed behavior will be
repeated. Finally, all human beings, given the opportunity, will strive
for self-actualization.

In developing an explanation, it is necessary to account for why a
student makes the devastating decision to drop out. It is essential to
recognize that a decision to drop out is a rational decision on the part
of the student. The behavior associated with the decision to drop out
is simply a capable student's poorly designed strategy to have needs met
(Maslow, 1968). Also, it is important to understand that a student will
repeat ineffective behavior until another acceptable alternative is
displayed to the student. The drive to get one's needs met and the
consequences of need deprivation, offer some idea of why a capable
student will opt to drop out regardless of efforts to keep the student
in school. Thus, a critical relationship always exists between the
drive for need satisfaction and a consideration of the school as means.
Finally, a realization must be met that superficial rearrangement of the
school as a system will not change behavior. In most instances, it will
simply reinforce ineffective behavior. To change a student's perception
of reality requires a kind of personal interaction provided by an
advocacy relationship between an at-risk student and an educator.

The idea that students must alter their reality contexts is
reinforced by Carl Rogers in his book On Becoming a Person (1961).

Rogers writes:

> It will be evident that another implication of the view I
> have been presenting is that the basic nature of the
> human being, when functioning freely, is constructive and
> trustworthy. For me this is an inescapable conclusion
> from a quarter-century of experience in psychotherapy.
> When we are able to free the individual from being
> defensive, so that he is open to a wide range of his own
> needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and
> social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be
> positive, forward, moving, constructive (p. 83).

The perceptual field of a student is conditioned by social demands,
the content of socialization, needs, and memories. A student accesses
resources and data within a perceptual field. An at-risk student, like
all students, adapts to institutional requirements to access means to
satisfy aspirations. What Rogers contends is that imagined and real
threat and chronic blockage actually reduce the student's perceptual
field. Although a student may be capable of doing acceptable work, the
student is less able to do the work because of a threat. The threat
results in a real reduction in a student's ability to solve problems and
behave effectively. A student's response to experience which is seen or
anticipated as threatening or incongruent with the student's
self-concept reduces the student's ability to access effective behavior
to repeat.

In the drive for need satisfaction, a student may become at-risk
because of imagined, anticipated, or real threat. Once a student begins
to be defensive, the student slowly loses the ability to function
freely, constructively, and in a trustworthy manner. When this reality
exists, the school becomes less of a means to achieve aspirations. The
at-risk student is caught in a downward spiral, becoming less and less

effective. If the institution responds in doing more of the same or doing the same differently, the student will continue with poorly designed behavior to get needs met.

It is assumed that students have needs and a tremendous drive to satisfy their needs. The school is viewed as a means to achieve aspirations, and chronic blockage between needs and means results in poorly designed behavior that results in repetitive, ineffectual behavior. Because of this, academically capable students do poorly over time and often make a decision to drop out. If it is said that all or the majority of students who are blocked drop out, then a valid explanation of why capable students opt to drop out has been formulated. However, there is a correlation between the intensity and kind of blockage and dropout. That is, the more chronic blockage, the more likely a student is to drop out. But there are some students who endure chronic blockage and do not drop out.

An at-risk student is at-risk because of a propensity to experience blockage at school differently than other students. Elliott and Voss (1974) provide a significant link in our understanding of the propensity to experience school differently. They confined their analysis to "capable" dropouts who they indicate compose between 50 to 75 percent of all dropouts. Elliott and Voss agree without reservation that blockage between aspirations and means results in poorly designed behavior. For example, the authors hypothesize that:

> ...dropout is precipitated by aspiration-opportunity
> dysfunctions. Again, the relevant goals may be either
> long-range educational and economic goals, formal academic
> goals, peer culture goals, or acceptance within the
> family. While failure to achieve any of these goals may

> be conducive to dropout, we hypothesize that dropout is
> primarily a response to school failure. Specifically, it
> is failure to achieve the goals of the youth culture,
> rather than academic goals, that motivates most capable
> dropouts to leave school (p. 35).

The authors view dropout as alternative adaptations to school

failure. What is important about their theoretical explanation is that

they recognize and account for the adoption of one alternative as

opposed to another as depending upon the individual's propensity to

experience failure (i.e., blockage). That is, certain conditions must

exist for chronic blockage to result in a decision to drop out.   -

According to the authors, the way students explain failure largely

determines their course of action. They also point out that no one acts

beyond their experience and due to this, a student must be exposed to

dropout to know that dropping out is an option. "The individual must

also have access to an environment in which he or she may learn the

necessary social definitions and skills as well as receive appropriate

social and psychological reinforcement" (Elliott & Voss, 1974,

p. 36). The socialization content either does or does not provide

dropout reinforcement. Elliott and Voss also acknowledge alienation as

a mediating factor in determining how a student will experience school

blockage. The alienation characteristic they assign to at-risk students

is social isolation.

A student who is exposed to dropout, explains failure in terms of

assumed inadequacy, and feels socially isolated will experience school

blockage differently than a student free of such factors.

In his article "The Adolescent Society," Coleman (1961) contends

that our schools carry on the process of socialization by transmitting

selected aspects of the culture. The process of transmission and the content are both important and necessary to effectively educate in an open, free enterprise, democratic society. This task would be simplified if society was not changing at an ever increasing pace. The change itself results from technological and scientific advances. Both technology and science increase specialization. Thus, society is changing rapidly due to technology and science making change more complex and this complexity is manifested through specialization. Also, the greater the specialization, the more training is required. Children spend more and more time in a school to prepare for life and work.

To socialize and educate the young is to set them apart from the rest of society, from the "real" world. According to Coleman, the student is cut off from the rest of society and forced inward toward the student's own age. Students over a time develop societies that maintain only limited connection with the outside adult society. Coleman refers to these societies as subcultures with language all their own, with special symbols, and most importantly, with value systems that may differ from adults.

Education has been institutionalized and set apart for ever increasing spans of time. During this time, students develop social systems that extend the physical segregation to emotional, social and intellectual segregation. A reality context forms for children composed of halls, classrooms, gyms, and offices. When not in this context, they gather at special places that range from empty parking lots to fast-food outlets. It is in these two contexts that much of children's socialization takes place beyond the influence of teachers

and parents. Students look to each other rather than to the adult community for much of their egoistic needs satisfaction.

Coleman's work provides information about the net/cultural composition of schools. The fact that social systems exist beyond the influence of teachers and parents has significant implications for understanding why capable students opt to dropout. Failure to be part of a social system is difficult for a student to accept. Without a social connection to the school, students become at-risk. It is possible that the pervasive influence of student social systems has been under-estimated. It is also possible that social isolation causes more students to drop out than any other single cause. If this is true, an explanation of dropout must account for social isolation as a primary cause of dropout.

John C. Coleman (1987) has composed a "focal" theory of adolescence. The theory is the result of a study of normal adolescent development. Findings from the study showed that attitudes toward all relationships changed as a function of age, but more importantly, the results also indicated that concerns about different issues reached a peak at different stages in the adolescent process. The focal theory suggests that at different ages particular sorts of relationship patterns come into focus but there is no pattern specific to one age only. Patterns overlap and come into focus at different times.

In America, it appears that students are more likely to face certain issues in the early stages of adolescence, and different issues at other stages, but the "focal" theory is not dependent on a fixed sequence.

Students cope (adapt) by dealing with one issue at a time. Coleman

states:

> They spread the process of adaptation over a span of years,
> attempting to resolve first one issue, and then the next."
> Students accommodate problems and relationship issues at
> different stages, so that the stresses resulting from the
> need to adapt to ways of behaving are not concentrated all
> at one time. It follows from this that it is precisely in
> those who, for whatever reason, do have more than one issue
> to cope with at a time that problems are most likely to
> occur (p. 68).

The "focal" theory is based directly on empirical evidence and on

the basis of the evidence conceptualizes the amount of adaptation

required during the transitional process characteristic of adolescents,

and the ability of most students to cope (adapt) successfully with the

pressures inherent in this process. Using the "focal" theory, a concept

of multiple issues as a causal factor has been developed.

From the preceding, the following generalizations can be made:

1. Students at a point in time view the school as one way to
   achieve avowed aspirations.

2. Students are endowed with tremendous drive to achieve their
   aspirations.

3. Students behave to get their needs met and they perceive their
   behavior to be rational.

4. Schools have institutionally prescribed means for achieving
   avowed aspirations.

5. Schools place varying emphasis and value on selected
   aspirations.

6. Students will use resources they perceive as accessible.

7. Students repeat ineffectual behavior unless the display provides an understandable and acceptable alternative.

8. Students given the opportunity will be constructive, productive, and trustworthy.

9. Students at one time or another will experience blockage between aspirations and means.

10. Some students will experience blockage differently because of specific mediating factors.

Each of the scholars and researchers reviewed pay particular attention to the institution as contributing to adjustment problems. That is, they view the social context of the school to be an important area to study for possible causes of dropout. Within the context of school, it is the student-teacher relationship that has the greatest potential to respond appropriately to blockage and to overcome student detachment from school.

Survey Design and Analysis

Survey Objectives

The analytical approach to designing a survey begins with a sequence of behavioral objectives. Placing objectives as the first stage of survey design sets a guide for the total process of survey construction and analysis. The following sequence of steps is suggested by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964):

1. Specify the ultimate goals of the educational process.

2. Derive from these goals the portion of the system under study.

3. Specify these goals in terms of expected behavior. If relevant, specify the acceptable level of successful learning.

4. Determine the relative emphasis or importance of various objectives, their content, and their behaviors.

5. Select or develop appropriate situations that will elicit the desired behavior in the appropriate context or environment, assuming the student has learned it.

6. Assemble a sample of such situations so that together they best represent the emphasis on content and behavior previously determined.

7. Provide for the recording of responses in a form that will facilitate scoring, but that does not change the nature of the behavior elicited so that it is no longer a true sample or an accurate index of the behavior desired.

8. Establish scoring criteria and guides to provide objective and unbiased judgments.

9. Try out the instrument in preliminary form.

10. Revise the sample of situations on the basis of tryout information.

11. Determine reliability, validity, and score distribution in accordance with purposes of score use.

12. Develop test norms and a manual, and reproduce and distribute test.

These steps give an overview of when and how behavioral objectives fit into the process of survey design.

Survey Specifications

According to Thorndike and Hagen (1969), establishing test specifications is essential to test planning. Test specifications should be so complete that two test designers operating from the same specifications would produce comparable instruments.

The following can be used as a checklist in the development of test specifications:

1. Define the general purposes and requirements of the test.

2. Establish the specific scope and emphasis of the test as expressed by the test outline or blueprint.

3. Select appropriate item types.

4. Determine the appropriate level and distribution of item difficulties.

5. Determine the appropriate number of items in the test and its parts.

6. Establish how the items are to be assembled in the final test.

7. Prepare the item-writing and item-review assignments.

Attention to these planning steps gives some assurance that the test design will have a sound basis.

Creating Survey Items

According to Dunn and Goldstein (1959), the definition of an item is a scoring unit. A test or survey consists of tasks to be performed by the examiner. Each item in the test should yield information about the person taking the test. "The test as a whole is no better than the sum

of its parts; a good test is one composed of well-written items" (p. 78).

> Item writing is essentially creative - it is an art. Just
> as there can be no set of formulas for producing a good
> story or a good painting, so there can be no set of rules
> that guarantees the production of good test items.
> Principles can be established and suggestions offered, but
> it is the item writer's judgment in the application - and
> occasional disregard - of these principles and suggestions
> that determines whether good items or mediocre ones are
> produced (Thornkike, 1971, p. 81).

Goodenough (1949) suggests using the Likert method of item responses for measurements of interest and opinions. The Likert method allows responses in both direction (negative or positive) and intensity (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Likert method also allows the researcher to form trends from groups of item responses or from groups of respondents. Examples of trends that can be formed by opinions are tolerance or intolerance, optimism or pessimism, and cynicism or approval.

The Nature of Measurement

The purpose of measurement is to acquire information about attributes of objects, organisms, or events (Thorndike, 1971). The interpretation of measurements allows for some kind of prediction.

Thorndike points out that if an attribute is to be measurable, it must fit the specifications of a quantitative variable. A quantitative variable is "one for which meaningful interpretation may be given to the magnitude comparison of any two attribute values" (1971, p. 256).

The nature of measurement can be summarized as a purposive

acquisition of information about an object, organism or event.

Attributes of objects, organisms or events can be specified in terms of

a unit of measurement, usually expressed by a number or quantity.

Reliability

The reliability of an instrument is the accuracy with which a sample

of items represents the universe from which they were drawn (Stanley,

1967). The degree of reliability of a test depends on the purposes and

circumstances of the test. The minimum acceptable reliability depends

on the seriousness of the decisions to be made based on test results.

Stanley (1967) further defines reliability as a function of the item

intercorrelations (or the item-test correlations) and the number of

items. The higher the average level of item intercorrelations in a

test, the more reliable it will be.

> Reliability becomes of critical importance in research
> studies at a number of points. In any study of prediction,
> and in any study of improvement resulting from training,
> some degree of reliability in the measure of the criterion
> being predicted, or in the ability being trained is
> imperative (Thorndike, 1971, p. 358).

Survey Validation

Cronbach and Meehl (1955) define validation as the process of

examining the accuracy of a specific prediction or inference made from a

test score. Validation examines the soundness of all the

interpretations of a test - descriptive and explanatory interpretations

as well as situation-bound predictions.

Three types of validity have been established by Thorndike and Hagen
(1969). The types of validity are defined as follows:

Criterion-related validation compares test scores, or
predictions made from them, with an external variable
considered to provide a direct measure of the characteristic
or behavior in question.
Content validity is evaluated by showing how well the
content of the test samples the class of situations or
subject matter about which conclusions are to be drawn.
Construct validity is evaluated by investigating what
psychological qualities a test measures; i.e., by determining
the degree to which certain explanatory concepts or
constructs account for performance on the test (pp. 12-13).

Summary

Historically, potential dropouts have been characterized and

identified by their behavior. A considerable amount of research

has been conducted to identify the root causes of behavior from

both psychological and sociological perspectives.

Recent research has looked at the school structure to see how

well that structure responds to predispositions that students

possess while attending school. An explanation that accounts for

both predispositions and school structure suggests that school

creates blockage for some students, which causes them to

experience school differently than other students. The

combination of predispositions and blockage creates alienation

and detachment from school. The stronger the feeling of

alienation, the more potential the student has for making the

decision to drop out.

There are many influences on educators that form their

opinions about students, and especially students who display

deviant behavior. Those opinions, whether conscious or not, ultimately affect the interest and commitment of educators to help potential dropouts. Programmatic activities that use educators need to have people who are knowledgable and committed to helping potential dropouts.

For a survey of opinions to be valid and reliable, it must have the capability to measure the opinions that an educator has about potential dropouts and it must measure those opinions consistently over time and at any geographic location. Data analysis used to verify the validity and reliability of the instrument include: knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity, test-retest reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This study is designed to determine the validity and reliability of an instrument to measure educators' opinions regarding potential school dropouts. The framework for this study is built around five quantitative methods of inquiry: knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity, generalizability, test-retest reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. Each of these methods will be used in the design and interpretation of the final survey form.

This chapter is a description of the research methodology instruments and target population of the study.

Procedures

The major focus of this dissertation was the development of an opinion survey that can be used to determine educators' opinions of potential school dropouts. The study also included evidence of the instrument's validity and reliability. To discuss the validity of an opinion survey is to ask what it should measure, within the context of school dropout (Cronbach, 1971). That educators have certain opinions about dropout does not, however, specify what those opinions are. Obviously, opinions are specific to the profession itself. The opinion survey must capture the variety of educators' opinions so that the

future use of the survey may contribute to an understanding of the relationship between educators' opinions of potential dropouts and school dropouts.

Five methods of inquiry were used in this study. A description of each method, in the sequence in which it was administered, follows.

Knowledge Validity

Educators, it is assumed, have "special" knowledge about students based on their experience and this knowledge results inevitably into an opinion about each student. Within the context of school, educators acquire an understanding of student behavior based on their experience. A valid survey demands that the special knowledge, opinions and understanding of educators about dropout be reflected in the questions posed. Two approaches were selected to establish knowledge validity. First, educators were queried regarding their opinions of dropout (Appendix A) and then, the literature was reviewed that reported educators' opinions regarding dropout. A bank of survey items was compiled (Appendix B). These items reflected the knowledge educators possess about dropouts. The items were not inclusive, but were considered representative enough to reflect educators' opinions of potential school dropouts.

Thirty-two educators, consisting of teacher and administrator volunteers (K-12) in Watauga County, North Carolina, were interviewed and asked their opinions about dropout. The interviews were structured to gather opinions in four categories (Appendix A). The categories were:

1. characteristics and behavior of potential dropouts;

2. teachers' influence on causing and preventing dropout;

3. administrators' influence on causing and preventing dropout; and

4. the influence of the school structure on the decision to dropout.

This process was followed by a review of the literature regarding dropout. The established categories were meshed to a knowledge-base from the literature on dropout. From the paring, items were developed and placed in an item bank (Appendix B). Thirty-five items were identified as representing the opinions of educators toward potential dropouts. In addition, 14 characteristics (including behavior and predispositions) were also identified and placed in the item bank.

A document was created from the literature review to describe the explanation of dropout and to summarize the research that helped form the explanation. This document, called the "Referent Knowledge-Base" (Appendix C), the list of 35 questions and 14 characteristics, and a committee rating sheet (Appendix D) were placed in a packet and given to each member of the Content Validation Committee, as described in the following section.

Content Validity

Another process of validation used was an advisory committee. The Content Validation Committee judges were composed of eight Appalachian State University - College of Education Faculty. Every faculty member who taught elementary education, secondary education or school

administration courses at Appalachian State University was asked to volunteer as a judge. Seven faculty volunteered, and one additional faculty member was asked to join the committee, making a total of eight judges. The judges had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Referent Knowledge-Base. In addition, each judge attended a two hour workshop on the knowledge-base and the criteria for rating each question in the item bank. The judges used a scoring sheet (Appendix D) to evaluate each item on the survey for content validity using the criteria suggested by Goodenough (1949).

The criteria included:

- Does the item match the objective for which it was written?

- Does the item have only one interpretation?

- Does the item reflect accurate information?

- Is the item free from bias?

- Does the item reflect an opinion about potential dropouts?

At least three fourths of the judges had to rate each item as valid in order for the item to be eligible for inclusion in an initial survey form (Appendix E).

Construct Validity

Construct validity as used here refers to a relationship between what the survey measures and the actual opinion educators hold regarding dropout. There should be a significant correlation between the two. To determine construct validity, volunteer teachers and administrators representing all grade levels, were administered the initial survey created by the Content Validation Committee. (A discussion of the

initial survey design is discussed later in this chapter; see

Instrumentation). Then each survey was scored to determine educators'

opinions on each survey question. Over a six-week period, the

administration of the initial survey was followed by an interview with

each educator who responded to the initial survey. The interview

consisted of the researcher asking the educator each of the 27 questions

on the initial survey and marking a subjective measurement (using the

same Likert scale as the initial survey) of the educator's oral

response. The interview was supplemented with an observation of a

conversation between each educator and a student who had recently

dropped out of school. The researcher used the observation of the

conversation to further verify the subjective measurement of the

interview. A Pearson product-moment correlation between interview score

and survey score for each item was determined to establish construct

validity. A correlation of .306 was necessary to meet the critical

value of r for a sample of 32 educators. The researcher used .500 as a

minimum correlation to establish construct validity. A correlation was

calculated for the direction of the opinion (positive or negative) and

both direction and strength (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

The validity literature (Cronbach, 1971; AERA et al., 1985;

Thorndike, 1971) emphasizes that "construct validity is evaluated by

investigating what psychological qualities a test measures; i.e., by

determining the degree to which certain explanatory concepts or

constructs account for performance on the test" (p. 76).

Generalizability

The purpose of generalizability is to determine the extent to which a sample population generalizes a universe population (Crocker & Algina, 1986). The universe is typically defined in terms of a set of populations that are more extensive than the conditions under which the sample population was obtained.

Conditions within a measurement are called "facets." For this study, the facets for a generalized population of educators were grade level being taught or administered (K-8 or 9-12) and the educators' years of experience.

The generalizability of the sample population was compared to the universe population using data obtained from The National Center for Educational Statistics (1987).

Reliability

According to Coon (1977), the reliability of a test may be determined in various ways. Coon refers to reliability in terms of text consistency. If a person receives approximately the same score when taking the same test on different occasions the test is considered reliable.

Test-Retest

To ascertain reliability of the opinion survey, a test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) approach was employed. The approach determined the degree to which the same survey given at different times was consistent, as measured by a reliability coefficient. A correlation coefficient of .80 or higher would meet

Coon's (1977) criterion for reliability. This study used a Pearson

product-moment formula to compute the coefficient of stability.

Coefficient Alpha

To further verify reliability, a coefficient alpha was computed for

the survey. A coefficient alpha is used to estimate the internal

consistency of test scores from a single sample of examinees on one

occasion.

Instrumentation

The instrument designed for this study was developed from existing

literature on educational measurement (Thorndike, 1969; Krathwohl, Bloom

& Masia, 1964; Angoff, 1971; Cronbach, 1971) and the measurement of

opinions (National Study of School Evaluation, 1975). The instrument

was designed to measure the opinions of educators toward potential

dropouts both in direction (positive or negative) and strength (strongly

agree to strongly disagree). Respondents to the survey had the

opportunity to make one of five choices using Likert's Method of

Summated Ratings. The choices given for each of the survey items were;

strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, and strongly disagree.

In addition to the items on the survey, educators were asked to mark

the characteristics that they associate with potential dropouts. They

were given 14 characteristics on the initial survey and 16 on the final

survey.

The survey was scored to show both direction and strength of an

opinion. The keyed responses were; very positive, positive, neutral,

negative, and very negative.

On some survey items, the keyed response matched the Likert choices. In other words, choosing "strongly agree" meant the opinion was "very positive" and choosing "strongly disagree" meant the opinion was "very negative." On other items, the keyed responses were the opposite of the Likert choices. A choice of "strongly agree" meant the opinion was "very negative." The scoring key for the initial survey is attached as Appendix F. The scoring key for the final survey is attached as Appendix H.

The surveys were scored and analyzed by computer. Respondents to the survey marked their choices on optical scanning sheets. The sheets were scanned by the computer and data analysis was done using the SPSS statistical software.

Educators taking the initial survey were asked to write on the back of the survey any suggestions they might have to improve the survey in terms of directions given, clarity of the questions, and ease of responding to the survey.

Population and Sample

The sample for this study was selected from educators in the Watauga County, North Carolina School System. The dropout rate for Watauga County was found to be slightly below the state and national averages. The county school system is composed of seven elementary schools and one secondary school. The sample of 159 educators was created from volunteers. Teachers, principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors from all schools were asked to volunteer their time to answer survey forms and to respond to interview questions. From the group of

approximately 200 volunteers, teachers randomly were selected to
represent each grade level from kindergarten to twelfth grade and
administrators were randomly selected to represent elementary and
secondary principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors.
A detailed description of the sample is attached as Table 1.

The initial interview of educators, to establish survey items, was
administered to 24 teachers, two from each grade level (first through
twelfth), two principals, two assistant principals, and four guidance
counselors. The initial survey and post interview, to establish
construct validity, were given to 10 elementary teachers, 10 secondary
teachers, three principals, two assistant principals, and two guidance
counselors. The final survey (test and retest) was given to 100
educators - 65 elementary teachers, 23 secondary teachers, one secondary
principal, three elementary principals, two assistant secondary
principals, two assistant secondary principals and four guidance
counselors.

Summary

Validity included knowledge, content, and construct validity
processes. Reliability used both test-retest and Cronbach's alpha. A
flow chart describing the sequence of item development and data analysis
follows as Figure 1.

Table 1

Sample Populations for Data Analysis

	NUMBER OF PERSONS		
Positions	Knowledge & Content Validity (Initial Interview)	Construct Validity (Initial Survey)	Reliability (Test-Retest; Cronbach's Alpha)
Elementary Teachers	12	10	65
Secondary Teachers	12	10	23
Elementary Principals	1	2	3
Secondary Principals	1	1	1
Elementary Asst. Principals	1	1	2
Secondary Asst. Principals	1	1	2
Counselors	4	2	4
Totals	32	27	100

Figure 1
Survey Development and Data Analysis Flow Chart

```
                              ┌── Educator Interview to Establish
┌─────────────────────┐       │   Survey Items
│                     │       │
│  Knowledge Validity │───────┤
│                     │       │
└─────────────────────┘       │
                              └── Literature Review


┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
│  Content Validity   │────────── Content Validity Committee
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘


┌─────────────────────┐                         ┌── Initial Survey
│                     │                         │
│  Construct Validity │───── Correlation ───────┤
│                     │                         │
└─────────────────────┘                         └── Educator Interview-
                                                    Observation


                              ┌── Years Experience
┌─────────────────────┐       │
│                     │       │
│  Generalizability   │───────┤
│                     │       │
└─────────────────────┘       │
                              └── Grade Level (K-8, 9-12)


                              ┌── Correlation ──┬── Survey (Test)
┌─────────────────────┐       │                 │
│                     │       │                 └── Survey (Retest)
│    Reliability      │───────┤
│                     │       │
└─────────────────────┘       │
                              └── Cronbach's alpha
```
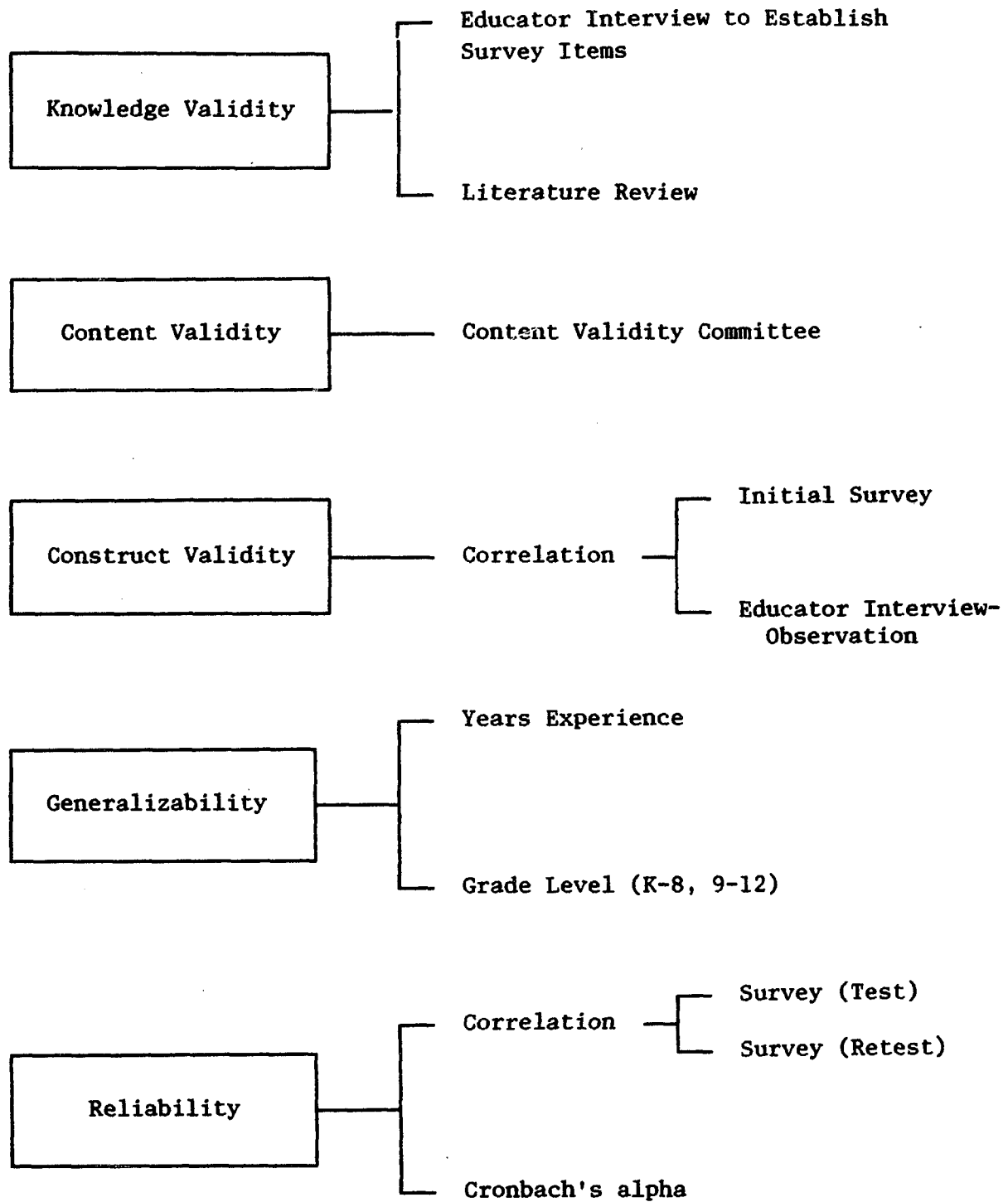
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Data were collected in this study in order to investigate the validity and reliability of an opinion survey, created by the researcher, regarding potential dropouts.

A review of literature on educational measurement, mental testing, test design, and data analysis helped to create a blue print for the development of the opinion survey and the analysis necessary to determine the survey as valid and reliable. Of the entire faculty and school administration of Watauga County, North Carolina, 159 educators were selected from a group of volunteers to represent all grade levels (K-12) and administrative positions (principal, assistant principal, counselor). Different groups of these educators were used to create survey items, analyze the validity and determine reliability.

Since previous research indicated a relationship between the opinions educators hold toward potential dropouts and their commitment level to help those students (Abelson & Karlins, 1959); and since previous research also indicated a relationship between changing levels of commitment and the identification of an initial position (Zimbardo & Ebbesen, 1970), it was viewed by this researcher as important to investigate the opinions that educators have regarding potential dropouts. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the

validity and reliability of an opinion survey regarding potential
dropouts.

In order to examine the purpose of this study, a research question
was formulated: Is the opinion survey designed for this study a valid
and reliable instrument to measure the opinions of educators regarding
potential dropout?

The remainder of this chapter will provide an analysis and
discussion of the results of this study. The results will be analyzed
in terms of knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity,
generalizability, and reliability. The discussion of these analyses
also acts as a sequential outline for the development of the survey
items and the design of the survey format.

Discussion of the Results

Knowledge Validity

A valid survey item demands that the question reflect the knowledge
that educators have about the causes of dropout. A group of educators
made up of 12 elementary teachers, 12 secondary teachers, one elementary
principal, one secondary principal, one elementary assistant principal,
one secondary assistant principal, and four counselors were interviewed
and asked their opinions about different aspects of the dropout
phenomenon. The interview format is attached as Appendix A. The
categories used to codify educators' opinions were: characteristics and
behavior of potential dropouts; the teacher's influence on causing and
preventing dropout; the administrator's influence on causing and
preventing dropout; and the influence of the school structure (such as

peer groups, grades, curriculum, extra curricular activities, schedules, graduation requirements, rules and regulation, etc.) on the decision to drop out. The interviews resulted in a bank of 35 questions and 14 characteristics of potential dropouts (attached as Appendix B) that reflected the educators' opinions about dropouts. To insure that the questions were representative of the universe of opinions, the researcher subjectively compared each item with the review of literature on dropouts.

The 35 items were then placed in a survey format using Likert's Method of Summated Ratings for scoring. The 14 characteristics were placed at the end of the survey for selection by each respondent. (See Appendix E). The initial items were then subjected to analysis by a Content Validation Committee.

Content Validity

The Content Validation Committee, as described in Chapter III, rated each of the initial 35 items and 14 characteristics based on the following criteria, as suggested by Goodenough (1949):

- Does the item match the objective for which it was written?

- Does the item have only one interpretation?

- Does the item reflect accurate information?

- Is the item free from bias?

- Does the item reflect an opinion about potential dropouts?

At least six of the eight judges (75%) had to rate each item as valid under each criterion in order for the item to be included in the initial survey form. Of the initial 35 items, 27 met the criteria from

75% of the judges, while all 14 characteristics met the criteria. A detailed description of the results of each item is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Item Analysis by an Eight Member Content Validation Committee

	Meets Criteria*									
Question	1		2		3		4		5	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
1	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
2	8	0	7	1	7	1	8	0	8	0
3	8	0	6	2	8	0	8	0	8	0
4	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
5	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
6	8	0	6	2	8	0	7	1	8	0
7 **	7	1	2	6	2	6	1	7	8	0
8	8	0	7	1	7	1	8	0	8	0
9 **	3	5	8	0	4	4	2	6	7	1
10	8	0	7	1	8	0	7	1	8	0
11 **	8	0	8	0	6	2	3	5	8	0
12	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
13 **	8	0	8	0	3	5	2	6	8	0
14	8	0	7	1	7	1	8	0	8	0
15 **	3	5	2	6	8	0	8	0	8	0

Question	1		2		3		4		5	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
16	6	2	6	2	7	1	7	1	8	0
17	8	0	6	2	7	1	8	0	8	0
18	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
19	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
20	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
21	8	0	6	2	8	0	8	0	8	0
22	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
23	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
24	8	0	7	1	7	1	7	1	8	0
25	8	0	6	2	7	1	7	1	8	0
26	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
27	8	0	8	0	7	1	6	2	8	0
28 **	3	5	1	7	8	0	8	0	8	0
29	8	0	6	2	7	1	8	0	8	0
30	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
31	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
32 **	8	0	2	6	8	0	8	0	8	0
33	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
34 **	3	5	3	5	8	0	8	0	8	0
35	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0

Characteristic	1		2		3		4		5	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
1	8	0	8	0	8	0	7	1	8	0
2	8	0	8	0	7	1	7	1	8	0
3	8	0	8	0	8	0	6	2	8	0
4	8	0	6	2	8	0	8	0	8	0
5	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
6	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
7	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
8	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
9	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
10	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
11	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	0
12	8	0	7	1	8	0	8	0	8	0
13	8	0	7	1	8	0	7	1	8	0
14	8	0	6	2	8	0	8	0	8	0

* Item Criteria

1. Does the question match the objective for which it is written?

2. Does the question have only one interpretation?

3. Does the question reflect accurate information?

4. Is the question free of bias?

5. Does the question reflect an opinion about potential dropouts?

** Questions did not meet all five criteria.

Construct Validity

An initial opinion survey form, composed of 27 items and 14

characteristics (Appendix E) was administered to 27 educators, including

the following positions:

- 10 elementary teachers

- 10 secondary teachers

- 1 high school principal

- 2 elementary school principals

- 1 high school assistant principal

- 1 elementary school assistant principal

- 2 counselors

Each survey was scored using the survey scoring key (Appendix F) to

establish the direction and strength of opinion for each item and the

overall survey. Conclusion of the survey was followed by the

researcher's interview-observation. Each question on the survey was

repeated by the researcher, and the educator being tested was given the

opportunity to verbalize his/her opinion. The researcher subjectively

measured the direction (negative or positive) and the strength (strongly

agree to strongly disagree) of each educator's opinion using the same

Likert scale as the initial survey. In addition, the researcher

observed a discussion between each educator and a student who had

recently dropped out of school. The observation was used to further

verify the subjective measure of the interview. The researcher felt

that an observation of the interaction between the educator and a

dropout would help establish the direction and strength of the

educator's opinions. The observation proved to be helpful in

establishing direction with statements such as; "Other students with problems have made it through school, there is no reason why you can't," or just the opposite; "What could I have done differently to help you stay in school?" The observations, however, were little or no help in establishing the strength of the educator's opinion. The interaction between the educator and the dropout did not create strong statements or enough emotion to indicate a difference between "very negative" and "negative" or "very positive" and "positive". Since the strength of the opinions were difficult to measure through the interview / observation, a Pearson product-moment correlation using survey data (interval) and interview data (interval) was computed for direction only (positive or negative) and both direction and strength (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Of the 27 items on the initial survey, 22 met the .500 correlation needed for inclusion in the final survey form. The initial survey form allowed the respondents to write-in characteristics that were not part of the original test. Two additional characteristics were added as a result of the write-in opportunity. An item analysis for the 27 questions is shown in Table 3. A frequency distribution for the 16 characteristics is shown in Table 4.

TABLE 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficient Based on Survey Score and
Interview/Observation Score for a Sample of Thirty Two Educators

Item	Pearson Correlation (r)	
	Direction & Strength	Direction Only
1	.71	.88
2	.78	.93
3	.69	.96
4	.72	.98
5	.88	1.00
6	.77	.93
7 *	.38	.66
8 *	.42	.62
9	.67	.83
10 *	.36	.66
11	.79	.97
12	.65	.91
13	.70	.91

| | Pearson Correlation (r) | |
Item	Direction & Strength	Direction Only
14	.68	.87
15	.70	.91
16 *	.44	.70
17	.78	.95
18	.73	.96
19	.77	.96
20	.86	1.00
21	.75	.95
22	.68	.86
23	.77	.91
24	.91	1.00
25 *	.36	.73
26	.84	.98
27	.73	.95

* Question did not meet critical value of r

p = .05

TABLE 4

Frequency Distribution for Characteristics of Potential Dropouts
From the Final Survey of One Hundred Educators

Characteristic	Frequency
Family income	36
I.Q. score	15
Student's appearance	61
No realistic goals in life	77
Low self-esteem	91
Immature behavior	74
Peer group	90
Drug/alcohol abuse	68
Low grades	97
No extra curricular activities	78
Disruptive behavior	77
Truancy	83
Low motivation	66
Educational level of parents	27
No interest in school	66
Home environment	67

Generalizability

The purpose of generalizability is to determine the extent to which a sample population generalizes a universe population. The universe population for this study is teachers and administrators (K-12).

There are many factors that might be considered when creating a sample that reflects educators' opinions. The factors considered were geographic locations of schools, urban or rural settings, size of schools, ratio of minorities in the faculty and student population, grade levels taught or administrated (secondary, middle or elementary), socio-economic locations of schools, years of experience of the educators, and student-teacher ratios. This list is not all inclusive, but was structured to represent the major factors that could significantly affect educators' opinions about potential dropouts.

To determine which factors would be used to create the sample population, a review of literature was conducted to find empirical evidence that any of the factors had a significant impact on the dropout rate. One of the most recent studies was conducted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (1989). In this study, dropout rates for all school systems were compared and correlated with the previously stated factors. There was no significance attached to any of the factors in terms of dropout rates. The study concluded that the factors affecting dropout rates were internal and associated with individual schools. Some factors that could influence opinions are: level of morale of faculty and students; commitment of educators to student achievement; participation of students in academic and extra curricular pursuits; and the value that the students (often influenced

by parents and community) place on academic success.

Previous research has indicated that two factors can influence educators' opinions towards students (Kite & Blanton, 1985). First, is the grade level being taught or administered. The research concluded that disruptive or immature behavior by young children is more acceptable and less likely to influence opinions than the same behavior from older students. It was found that nationally, there are approximately three times as many educators at the elementary level as there are at the secondary level. Therefore, the final survey was given to approximately three times as many elementary educators (72) as secondary educators (28). The sample included at least two teachers in every grade level (K-12) and at least one educator in each administrative position (principal, assistant principal and counselor).

Second, the number of years that educators have been exposed to students at any grade level has been shown to influence their opinions of students. The national average for years of experience of all educators is 18.3 years. The average experience for the sample was 18.7 years. A detailed explanation of generalizability is shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Profile of Educators Responding to the Final Survey

	Teachers			Administrators		
	Men	Women	Mean Yrs. Experience	Men	Women	Mean Yrs. Experience
Elementary Schools	13	43	13.6	3	2	18.7
Secondary Schools	12	20	17.8	3	4	24.6

Reliability

Reliability is defined in terms of test consistency. If a person receives approximately the same score when taking the same test on different occasions, the test is considered reliable.

Reliability was ascertained in two ways for this study. The final opinion survey (Appendix G) was given to 100 educators. This sample was made up of the following positions:

- 65 elementary teachers

- 23 secondary teachers

- 3 elementary principals

- 1 secondary principal

- 2 elementary assistant principals

- 2 secondary assistant principals

- 4 counselors

One month after the administration of the final survey, a retest of the survey was given to the same population. A correlation coefficient was computed for the mean scores of both survey tests. The mean score for the survey test was 3.40 and the mean score of the retest was 3.31. The Pearson product-moment correlation was .96.

Reliability was also represented by coefficient alpha. Coefficient alpha is used to estimate the internal consistency of test scores from a single sample of examinees on one occasion. Cronbach's alpha was computed for the final survey using the above sample. Cronbach's alpha for the final survey was .91.

Final Survey Form: Interpretation and Use

Educators who responded to the initial survey had the opportunity to make suggestions to improve the final survey format. Their recommendations, along with continued comparison with commercial surveys resulted in a final survey form.

Recommendations from educators included changes in the survey directions to include use of the optical scanning sheets. They also suggested changing the wording of the directions and rewording some questions to make them less threatening to educators who might feel they were being judged by their responses.

The final survey included changes in how some questions were worded. The new questions reduced the chances that the question could have more than one interpretation. Two additional characteristics were added to the final form to make a total of 16.

The final survey form is attached as Appendix G. The scoring key for the final form is attached as Appendix H.

The literature review suggests that opinions can form trends in a person's overall behavior. In the case of potential dropouts, the behavior trends could be toward tolerance, optimism, and patience with a positive opinion, or toward intolerance, pessimism, or impatience with a negative opinion.

The scoring key for the final survey allows the administrator to look at the direction and strength of opinions for each question and for the overall survey. The mean score for each question and the overall survey is 3.0, which means that a score of 2.9 or less would indicate a positive opinion with the strength of the opinion getting greater as the

score approaches 1.0. Similarly, a score of 3.1 or higher indicates a negative opinion with the strength of the opinion increasing as the score approaches 5.0. Since the questions are not weighted, it would probably be wise to consider all scores between 2.5 and 3.5 as neutral.

There are several important possible uses for this instrument. If a school is having a chronic problem with students dropping out, the instrument could identify the overall opinions of the faculty as a possible influence on students' decisions to drop out. The instrument could be used to identify the initial position of individual educators and the overall faculty before and after in-service training on dropout prevention. The instrument could be of great value in helping to identify individual educators who would work well in intervention strategies such as advocacy teams, one-on-one mentors, and in-school suspension programs.

Summary

Data in this study were collected to determine knowledge validity, content validity, construct validity, generalizability, and reliability. A bank of 35 questions regarding potential dropout was created from interviews with educators and compared with the literature review. A content validity committee analyzed the bank of questions and found 27 to have content validity. The 27 items were given to a sample of 27 elementary and secondary educators. Each educator was interviewed following the administration of the survey and a correlation was computed for the two. Twenty-two of the 27 items were found to be valid. The sample population of educators in this study was compared

with the universe of educators and found to be representative of educators in terms of factors that affect dropout rates. Finally, the final survey format was administered to 100 educators and found to be reliable using a test-retest correlation and Cronbach's alpha.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the opinions that educators have about students who are considered potential dropouts and to develop an instrument to measure those opinions. The rest of this chapter will present a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Summary

The problem that guided this study was that past attempts at educational reform often neglected the influence of classroom teachers and the leadership of administrators in the success or failure of the intended reform. In the case of school dropouts, programmatic activities and school-based prevention efforts that used educators as the means for delivery often neglected to identify the opinions and attitudes that those educators hold toward potential dropouts.

The reports of programmatic activities on potential school dropouts have been mixed, with some programs attaining sustained success, while other programs have been abandoned after a short time with little or no success. A review of programmatic activities suggests that the success or failure of these activities has little to do with their design or structure. Knowledge of the causes of dropout and a high level of commitment on the part of personnel involved with implementing these

programs seem to be determining factors in programmatic success. This explains why successful programs are not as equally successful when replicated in other schools, and why successful programs do not always sustain success when personnel turnover occurs.

Knowledge of the explanation of dropout can be delivered easily and effectively through in-service training, but motivating a high level of commitment from educators requires identification of their attitudes and opinions regarding potential dropouts and initiating a process to modify negative opinions about potential dropouts.

Jones (1984) suggests that attitudes are a combination of opinions, concepts, verbal information, and emotions that result in a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward particular people, groups, ideas, events, or objects. The importance of favorable opinions of educators toward students, especially students who are struggling with factors in their lives that identify them as potential dropouts, cannot be underestimated.

The review of literature identified different perceptions of the problem of dropout. One perception of dropout was that potential dropouts had character and personality flaws that caused them to be outside the mainstream of education. Profiles were created to identify potential dropouts, and were used in the selection of students to be placed in intervention efforts. Another perception suggested looking at the school, as an institution, as a cause of dropout. This outlook viewed the lack of flexibility within the school structure as not meeting the needs of all students.

Publication of research on dropout is frequent, but most of the current research suggests that the explanation of dropout is a combination of predispositions that some students possess and the structure, purpose, and expectations of school as an institution. The predispositions that some students possess cause them to experience the structure of school differently than other students. Different authors label predispositions and school structure differently, but for the purpose of this study, predispositions were labeled "causal factors" and school structure was labeled "blockage." The combination of causal factors and blockage creates a feeling of alienation or detachment from school for the potential dropout. The stronger the feeling of alienation, the more potential a student has to make the decision to dropout.

The identification and measurement of educators' opinions regarding potential dropouts were made in three phases. The first phase was to create knowledge and content validity of the measurement instrument. Teachers, principals, assistant principals, and counselors, representing all grade levels (K-12) were interviewed to establish a bank of survey items that would reflect various opinions about students who are considered potential dropouts. A series of characteristics, behaviors, and predispositions of potential dropouts was also created through these interviews. The items and characteristics were compared with the review of literature to determine compatibility. This process produced 35 items and 14 characteristics, which were scrutinized by a panel of judges - the Content Review Committee. The committee was comprised of eight members of the Appalachian State University, College of

Education faculty who were trained in the explanation of dropout and given an opportunity to rate each question by five criteria. Each item had to be identified as having met the criteria by at least six of the eight judges (75%). Of the initial 35 items and 14 characteristics, 27 questions and all 14 characteristics were identified as being valid in knowledge and content. The 27 items were placed in a survey format, which used the Likert scale to measure the direction (positive or negative) and strength (strongly agree to strongly disagree) of educators' opinions.

The second phase of development of the instrument was to measure construct validity of the initial survey. The survey was administered to 27 educators who were volunteers from all grade levels and administrative positions, and a total score was calculated for each survey. The score on each item and the total score ranged from 1 to 5 with 1 having a strongly positive opinion to 5 having a strongly negative opinion. Within six weeks of the administration of the survey, each participating educator was interviewed and observed by the researcher. The interview and observation resulted in a subjective measurement of each educator's opinion of students who are considered potential dropouts. A Pearson product-moment correlation of the survey score (interval) and observation score (interval) was calculated for direction only (positive or negative) and both direction and strength (strongly agree to strongly disagree). The educators responding to the initial survey also had the opportunity to identify which of the 14 characteristics they would use to profile a potential dropout, as well as adding any additional characteristics they felt expanded the list.

Of the 27 items in the initial survey, 22 were identified as meeting the criterion for construct validity. Two additional characteristics were added to make a total of 16.

The third phase was to measure reliability. The 22 items and 16 characteristics were placed in a final survey format. The final survey format used optical scanning sheets for responses rather than responding on the survey forms. This was done to expedite the tabulation of answers for a larger sample population. The final survey was administered to 100 educators. This sample was created from volunteers to represent the universe population of educators in terms of grade level and years of teaching experience. The sample population contained approximately three times as many elementary educators as secondary educators, and the average years of experience for all the educators was 18.7 years. The same survey was readministered to the same population one month later and a test-retest reliability was calculated. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha.

The findings of the study were that opinions of educators regarding potential school dropouts can be identified and that a valid and reliable instrument can be developed to measure those opinions.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were gleaned from the findings of this study:

1. If given the opportunity, educators can express their opinions about students who possess predispositions, characteristics, and behaviors that allow them to be identified as potential

dropouts. The opinions of educators regarding potential
dropouts can be deducted from questions, which allows for a
comparison with other educators in other school systems.

2. An instrument to measure the opinions of educators regarding
    potential dropouts can be developed. That instrument can be
    shown to have knowledge validity, content validity, construct
    validity, test-retest reliability, and internal consistency.
    The instrument can also be shown to generalize the population
    of educators nationally with regard to grade level (K-8 or
    9-12) and years of experience in the field of education.

Thus, the general conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the
opinions of educators regarding potential dropouts can be identified and
an instrument to measure those opinions can be developed.

Implications

Although this study involved a small population of educators, there
are implications that are applicable to other educators in other school
systems. However, the reader must keep in mind that there are certain
factors about this study that might limit its generalizability. The
researcher was well-acquainted with the sample of educators who
participated in this study. The closeness generated by years of
acquaintance and interaction perhaps allowed for a more receptive and
trustful environment for these educators to share their opinions. The
same atmosphere might not exist with a stranger administering the survey
in a setting that might be perceived as uncomfortable, or even
threatening.

The implications of this study include awareness of potential outside influences on the outcomes of the instrument that may not be related to potential dropouts. An administrator of this instrument should be aware of the overall morale of the educators being surveyed. The morale of educators can be affected by the value placed on education by the community, leadership styles of board members and administrators, and localized issues such as bond referendums, budget cuts, curriculum disputes, and political differences.

The reader should also keep in mind that the value of each question is not weighted. At this point, there is no evidence that the opinion of any one question outweighs another. But, there is a possibility that a negative opinion on the question "Some students should drop out of school" might outweigh a positive opinion on the question "I can identify potential dropouts when I see them." With this possibility in mind, a slightly positive or negative total score (2.5 to 3.5) might be considered neutral.

Although negative implications exist, there are positive ones as well. Educators who are made aware that their opinions and attitudes are not supportive of helping potential dropouts often form a collective objective to aid each other in changing their behaviors and levels of commitment to help those students. A rapport develops among these educators, a bond resulting from sharing experiences with each other about students' alienated behaviors. Often, this closeness fosters a team approach, such as in advocacy teams, to improve the relationship between potential dropouts and educators. Most important of all is how identification of negative opinions can improve the school environment

for all students. Educators who have been influenced by the identification of their negative opinions realize the impact of their opinions on responding favorably or unfavorably to the needs of potential dropouts. More simply stated, identification of educators' opinions about potential dropouts has the potential to change the educational experience from negative to positive for thousands of students.

Opinion about potential dropouts is not a narrow concept limited to a few educators or students. Instead, it is broad-based and has the potential to influence the future of educational reform.

Recommendations

During the course of this study, several areas that will require further study were identified. To accommodate those areas, the following recommendations are made.

One area which requires more explanation is the ability of the instrument to generalize the population of educators on a national level. Although geographic location, urban or rural settings, and racial make-up of faculties and students have not been shown to substantially influence dropout rates, the instrument could be made more representative with small revisions for use in various locations across the country. Also, there could be factors that influence educators' opinions in New York City that are not applicable in western North Carolina. The instrument could be revised to address an even wider range of opinions.

Also, a bias study of the instrument needs to be conducted.
Exposure to various locations and cultures within the country would
further indicate the exactness of the instrument's measurement of
educators's opinions regarding potential school dropouts. This study is
especially needed so that the instrument can be used with confidence in
school systems where the majority of dropouts come from minority
backgrounds.

Further inquiry is needed into the relationship between educators'
opinions and the incidence of dropout. How well does the measurement of
opinions correlate with the dropout rate? If geographic location and
racial ratios are not related to dropout rates, can the opinions of
educators about potential school dropouts be significantly tied to the
number of dropouts within a school system?

Similarly, further inquiry is needed into identifying the
relationship between educators' opinions and the success or failure of
programmatic activities using educators as a means of delivery. A
significant relationship in this study would indicate the value of the
instrument to predict the success or failure of dropout prevention
programs based on the opinions of the educators included in the
programmatic activities.

There is also a need to investigate factors that can influence the
opinions of educators about potential school dropouts. Are the opinions
of third grade teachers significantly different from those of tenth
grade teachers? Is there a difference between teachers' opinions and
administrators' opinions about the same students? Is the number of
years of experience a factor that influences opinions? These questions

and others could help pinpoint factors that would aid in programmatic design and implementation.

Can the instrument be used to measure the effectiveness of in-service training about potential school dropouts? There are many teacher training programs that claim to have an impact on the opinions of teachers and administrators. Can the instrument designed in this study be used for pre- and posttesting for opinion change?

These recommendations are by no means inclusive. Since school dropouts have become a major topic of research, the field is open for many types of research and investigation.

Postscript

Good teachers and administrators have a feel for the needs of all students and the communication necessary to identify those needs and respond to them appropriately. This quality extends far beyond the formal training of educators or the evaluation of their teaching or administrative effectiveness. If the presence or absence of this quality is reflected in opinions and attitudes, then the value of this study will take its place in future efforts to eliminate the need for some students to drop out of school.

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APPENDIX A
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORMAT

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORMAT

1. What characteristics or behavior would you use to identify a potential dropout?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

   e.

   f.

   g.

2. How do administrators cause a student to become a potential dropout?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

3. How do administrators help prevent a student from becoming a school dropout?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

4. How do teachers cause students to become potential dropouts?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

5. How do teachers help prevent students from becoming school dropouts?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

6. How does the school structure (curriculum, schedule, grades, rules, etc.) influence the cause of school dropouts?

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS CREATED BY

EDUCATOR INTERVIEWS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

QUESTIONS CREATED BY

EDUCATOR INTERVIEWS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Some students should drop out of school.

2. Potential dropouts do not like going to school.

3. Potential dropouts cannot do the academic work required for school success.

4. Potential dropouts tend to blame themselves for their failure at school.

5. Potential dropouts can be identified in elementary school.

6. Potential dropouts have certain identifiable characteristics.

7. The majority of potential dropouts are from minority groups.

8. Potential dropouts have low aspirations.

9. I care more about helping potential dropouts than my colleagues.

10. Potential dropouts most often come from low income families.

11. Potential dropouts should be channeled into other alternatives, such as vocational education.

12. I believe any student with reasonable intellectual ability can succeed at school.

13. Potential dropouts come from families that don't value education.

14. I believe it is too late to do anything about students dropping out after they reach high school.

15. Every student who enters school has the potential to graduate.

16. I work harder at helping the potential dropout than my fellow teachers.

17. More than half the students I teach are not self-motivated to learn my subject.

18. I believe I should spend my time with students that want to learn, not with those who don't.

19. I believe the purpose of school is to educate all students regardless of their intelligence or interest.

20. Teachers do not have enough influence to help potential dropouts.

21. We cannot do anything about dropout without parental cooperation.

22. It is part of a teacher's responsibility to help potential dropouts stay in school.

23. Special programs should be created to help potential dropouts.

24. Criteria for graduation should be lowered to help potential dropouts finish school.

25. Money should be taken from other programs to support dropout prevention activities.

26. Teachers need special training to work with potential dropouts.

27. Potential dropouts have low I.Q. scores.

28. Potential dropouts are less capable of doing the academic work.

29. Potential dropouts do not view school as helping them achieve their life goals.

30. The attention given to dropout is just another passing "fad" in education.

31. I can identify potential dropouts when I see them.

32. Potential dropouts don't participate in school-related activities.

33. I feel pressure to help potential dropouts.

34. Schools are not structured to educate all students.

35. I believe the home environment is more important than the school in determining whether a student is going to drop out.

APPENDIX C

REFERENT KNOWLEDGE-BASE:

A CONTENT VALIDATION COMMITTEE REVIEW

REFERENT KNOWLEDGE-BASE:

A CONTENT VALIDATION COMMITTEE REVIEW

An Explanation of Dropout

Potential school dropouts, over time, develop a pre-disposition for experiencing school that is different from other students (Elliott & Voss, 1974).

Students create their lives from their environments. The primary sources include: family, community, and school. How students see themselves in this total environment becomes their Reality Context. The pre-disposition to experience school differently develops over time and in most instances is a result of specific causal factors present in a student's Reality Context. Thus, preventing dropout must change the student's Reality Context. The Reality Context is in part shaped by specific causal factors. To change the Reality Context requires a change in the status of specific causal factors (Kite & Blanton, 1985).

A potential dropout is less likely to quit school unless chronic blockage occurs over time during his school career. According to Kite and Blanton (1985), an explanation of dropout can be condensed into the following:

The Reality Context of a student produces a pre-disposition to experience school.

The Reality Context of a student results in specific needs from family, community, and school.

The school environment allows for chronic blockage to occur.

The pre-disposition plus chronic blockage equals a propensity to have a negative school experience.

Thus

pre-disposition + needs + blockage = alternative means
for need
satisfaction

There are countless reasons that may cause a capable student to quit school. This knowledge will not necessarily help in dropout prevention. Out of those countless reasons, five categories of factors have been identified (Kite & Blanton, 1985). Through their research, Kite and Blanton demonstrated that one or more of the five causal factors is most often present in the Reality Context of a dropout. It is assumed from this that the five factors are operating in a potential dropout and are the dominant causes for a student to experience school differently than other students. Kite and Blanton (1985) define the five causal factors as follows:

Dropout reinforcement: The array of messages a student receives over time from his/her family, peers, community and school - the messages say it's alright to quit school - you can't do the work - a college education is not for you - your brother quit school and learned a good trade - plenty of jobs are available to kids who don't have a high school diploma, etc.

Low social class position: The social class position occupied by a student's family greatly influences how the student will experience school. There are many examples that could be provided

to illustrate the impact of social class. This is one example: Student A is from a middle class family - B is a student from a low social class family. They both fail a mid-term math test. A's family hires a tutor, restricts A's social privileges until the grades improve and one or both parents visit the teacher. B's family cannot afford extra help and cannot take time away from work to visit the school.

Internal blame: Internal blame is a self-perception that students have about themselves - that they are responsible for blockage because of personal inadequacies. Student A fails a mid-term math test. If Student A is asked why the test was failed, the reply would be that the test was stupid, the teacher is not a good teacher, etc. If Student B is asked why the test was failed, the response would be that material is too difficult, or "I just can't get this stuff." Student A represents external blame, Student B represents internal blame.

Multiple issues: Some children and adolescents have great difficulty handling more than one major issue at a time in their lives. Students who have more than one major issue in their lives at a time often respond with non-conforming behavior.

Alienation: This is a psychological state. The main attribute of the state is a feeling of powerlessness. The more powerless a student feels, the greater the impact upon school experience. Alienation is characterized by four conditions:

1. powerlessness

2. meaninglessness

3. isolation

4. self-estrangement

It is assumed that all students who make a decision to quit school are alienated. The four preceding causal factors, dropout reinforcement, low social class position, internal blame, and multiple issues produce alienation to some degree. At a point in time, alienation increases to the point the student opts to leave school.

Potential dropouts endure one or more of the four causal factors and alienation. The greater the number of causal factors in a student's life the greater the alienation.

The explanation of dropout is a syntheses of assorted and varied scholarly endeavors, empirical research and logic. The explanation is drawn from the works of the following authors:

Robert K. Merton

Studies completed by sociologists related to the issue of dropout draw upon the work of Robert K. Merton specifically "Social Structure and Anomie," (1938) and "Society Today: Problems and Prospects" (1959). Merton's interest centered on discovering how some social structures exert pressure upon individuals in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct. Merton identifies two elements of social and cultural structure. The first consists of culturally defined goals, purposes and interests. These goals result in a framework that generates specific aspirations within an individual. The second element of the social structure defines and controls the acceptance modes of achieving these goals. The ways available for an

individual to achieve his or her aspirations are limited by institutional norms and sanctions. The conceptual model developed by Merton includes two elements - cultural goals and institutional norms.

When individuals have little access to conventional and legitimate means for attaining goals, the social context predisposes them to employ alternative modes of goal achievement outside institutional norms. When goals are not congruent with available means, anomie develops. As a result the most effective rather than the most acceptable means comes into use. Anomie refers to a condition of and denotes a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down and are no longer effective rules of behavior. "Aberrant conduct, therefore, may be viewed as a symptom of disassociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means" (p. 33).

Schools are cultural units. Students also come to school from a particular culture. The school is an institution organized and run as a system to achieve cultural literacy. Merton's conceptual scheme can be employed to understand dropout because the school is a microcosm of the greater society. Using Merton's scheme for analysis, the assumption can be made that students leave school to seek alternative methods for satisfying their aspirations. Merton's assumption that all youth aspire to the same success goals must be expanded to include a variety of aspirations and varying motivation to obtain avowed goals. In terms of the explanation invented, the term blockage indicates recognition by students that the means to achieve their aspirations within the school "system" was not accessible or usable. Further, that the decision to

drop out was a result of continued frustration (chronic blockage) to achieve aspirations. Dropout cannot be said to be a result of chronic blockage without considering why tolerance for blockage varies among students.

Merton's work provides a powerful tool for structuring an understanding of dropout. There is little empirical evidence to support Merton's concept of a means/ends dynamic in terms of dropout because studies associated with dropout are designed to find the flaw in students that results in a decision to drop out rather than seeking institutionalized causes. Merton's scheme focuses upon a student's adaptation to an institution, and this gives rise to the notion that schools and the way they are managed and administered may contribute to dropout.

Abraham Maslow

An important conceptual framework about the nature of human needs was developed by Maslow (1968). Maslow's view assumes that human beings are wanting entities as soon as one need is satisfied another appears in its place. This process, according to Maslow, is never-ending; it continues from birth to death. Maslow discovered that all people have five levels of needs:

Self-actualization

Achievement

Social relationship

Security

Physical (survival)

He found that people are limited in their personal growth and
development when deprived of need satisfaction at any level. Also, he
concluded that a satisfied need is not a motivation of behavior.
According to Maslow, all behavior is rational and behavior is simply a
means to get needs satisfied. Further, Maslow indicated that behavior
that does not work is repeated until the individual is taught,
recognizes, or for some specific reason adopts a different behavior.

Maslow provides at least three important considerations in terms of
the explanation of the decision to drop out. First, his conceptual
framework adds the dimension of motivation in terms of aspirations
(Note: aspirations in most instances are specific needs). The
motivation, the drive for need satisfaction, according to Maslow is the
source of behavior. Second, poorly designed behavior is rational to the
one employing the behavior and the poorly designed behavior will be
repeated. Finally, all human beings, given the opportunity, will strive
for self actualization.

In developing an explanation, it is necessary to account for why a
student makes the devastating decision to drop out. It is essential to
recognize that a decision to drop out is a rational decision on the part
of the student. The behavior associated with the decision to drop out
is simply a capable student's poorly designed strategy to have needs met
(Maslow, 1968). Also, it is important to understand that a student will
repeat ineffective behavior until another acceptable alternative is
displayed to the student. The drive to get one's needs met and the
consequences of need deprivation, offers some idea of why a capable
student will opt to drop out regardless of efforts to keep the student

in school. Thus, a critical relationship always exists between the

drive for need satisfaction and a consideration of the school as means.

Finally, a realization must be met that superficial rearrangement of the

school as a system will not change behavior. In most instances, it will

simply reinforce ineffective behavior. To change a student's perception

of reality requires a kind of personal interaction provided by an

advocacy relationship between an at-risk student and a teacher.

Carl R. Rogers

The idea that students must alter their reality contexts is

reinforced by Carl Rogers in his book On Becoming a Person (1961).

Rogers writes:

> It will be evident that another implication of the view I
> have been presenting is that the basic nature of the
> human being, when functioning freely, is constructive and
> trustworthy. For me this is an inescapable conclusion
> from a quarter-century of experience in psychotherapy.
> When we are able to free the individual from being
> defensive, so that he is open to a wide range of his own
> needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and
> social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be
> positive, forward, moving, constructive (p. 83).

The perceptual field of a student is conditioned by social demands,

the content of socialization, needs, and memories. A student accesses

resources and data within a perceptual field. An at-risk student, like

all students, adapts to institutional requirements to access means to

satisfy aspirations. What Rogers contends is that imagined and real

threat and chronic blockage actually reduce the student's perceptual

field. Although a student may be capable of doing acceptable work, the

student is less able to do the work because of a threat. The threat results in a real reduction in a student's ability to solve problems and behave effectively. A student's response to experience which is seen or anticipated as threatening or incongruent with the student's self-concept reduces the student's ability to access effective behavior to repeat.

In the drive for need satisfaction, a student may become at-risk because of imagined, anticipated, or real threat. Once a student begins to be defensive, the student slowly loses the ability to function freely, constructively, and in a trustworthy manner. When this reality exists, the school becomes less of a means to achieve aspirations. The at-risk student is caught in a downward spiral, becoming less and less effective. If the institution responds in doing more of the same or doing the same differently, the student will continue with poorly designed behavior to get needs met.

It is assumed that students have needs and a tremendous drive to satisfy their needs. The school is viewed as a means to achieve aspirations, and chronic blockage between needs and means results in poorly designed behavior that results in repetitive ineffectual behavior. Because of this, academically capable students do poorly over time and often make a decision to drop out. If it is said that all or the majority of students who are blocked drop out, then a valid explanation of why capable students opt to drop out has been formulated. However, there is a correlation between the intensity and kind of blockage and dropout. That is, the more chronic blockage, the

more likely a student is to drop out. But there are some students who endure chronic blockage and do not drop out.

Delbert S. Elliott and Harwin L. Voss

An at-risk student is at-risk because of a propensity to experience blockage at school differently than other students. Elliott and Voss (1974) provide a significant link in our understanding of the propensity to experience school differently. They confined their analysis to "capable" dropouts who they indicate compose between 50 to 75 percent of all dropouts. Elliott and Voss agree without reservation that blockage between aspirations and means results in poorly designed behavior. For example, the authors hypothesize that:

> ...dropout is precipitated by aspiration-opportunity dysfunctions. Again, the relevant goals may be either long-range educational and economic goals, formal academic goals, peer culture goals, or acceptance within the family. While failure to achieve any of these goals may be conducive to dropout, we hypothesize that dropout is primarily a response to school failure. Specifically, it is failure to achieve the goals of the youth culture, rather than academic goals, that motivates most capable dropouts to leave school (p. 35).

The authors view dropout as alternative adaptations to school failure. What is important about their theoretical explanation is that they recognize and account for the adoption of one alternative as opposed to another as depending upon the individual's propensity to experience failure (i.e., blockage). That is, certain conditions must exist for chronic blockage to result in a decision to drop out. According to the authors, the way students explain failure largely

determines their course of action. They also point out that no one acts

beyond his or her experience and due to this, a student must be exposed

to dropout to know that dropping out is an option. "The individual must

also have access to an environment in which he or she may learn the

necessary social definitions and skills as well as receive appropriate

social and psychological reinforcement" (Elliott & Voss, 1974,

p. 36). The socialization content either does or does not provide

dropout reinforcement. Elliott and Voss also acknowledge alienation as

a mediating factor in determining how a student will experience school

blockage. The alienation characteristic they assign to at-risk students

is social isolation.

A student who is exposed to dropout, explains failure in terms of

assumed inadequacy, and feels socially isolated will experience school

blockage differently than a student free of such factors.

James S. Coleman

In his article "The Adolescent Society," Coleman (1961) contends

that our schools carry on the process of socialization by transmitting

selected aspects of the culture. The process of transmission and the

content are both important and necessary to effectively educate in an

open free enterprise democratic society. This task would be simplified

if society was not changing at an ever increasing pace. The change

itself results from technological and scientific advances. Both

technology and science increase specialization. Thus, society is

changing rapidly due to technology and science making change more

complex and this complexity is manifested through specialization. Also,

the greater the specialization, the more training is required. Children

spend more and more time in a school to prepare for life and work.

To socialize and educate the young is to set them apart from the

rest of society, from the "real" world. According to Coleman, "He (the

student) is 'cut off' from the rest of society, forced inward toward his

own age" (p. 18). Students over a time develop societies that maintain

only limited connection with the outside adult society. Coleman refers

to these societies as subcultures with language all their own, with

special symbols, and most importantly, with value systems that may

differ from adults.

Education has been institutionalized and set apart for ever

increasing spans of time. During this time, students develop social

systems that extend the physical segregation to emotional, social and

intellectual segregation. A reality context forms for children composed

of halls, classrooms, gyms, and offices. When not in this context, they

gather at special places that range from empty parking lots to fast-food

outlets. It is in these two contexts that much of children's

socialization takes place beyond the influence of teachers and parents.

Students look to each other rather than to the adult community for much

of their egoistic needs satisfaction.

Coleman's work provides information about the net/cultural

composition of schools. The fact that social systems exist beyond the

influence of teachers and parents has significant implications for

understanding why capable students opt to dropout. Failure to be part

of a social system is difficult for a student to accept. Without a

social connection to the school, students become at-risk. It is

possible that the pervasive influence of student social systems has been under-estimated. It is also possible that social isolation causes more students to drop out than any other single cause. If this is true, an explanation of dropout must account for social isolation as a primary cause of dropout.

John C. Coleman

Coleman (1987) has composed a "focal" theory of adolescence. The theory is the result of a study of normal adolescent development. Findings from the study showed that attitudes to all relationships changed as a function of age, but more importantly, the results also indicated that concerns about different issues reached a peak at different stages in the adolescent process. The focal theory suggests that at different ages particular sorts of relationship patterns come into focus but there is no pattern specific to one age only. Patterns overlap and come into focus at different times.

In America, it appears that students are more likely to face certain issues in the early stages of adolescence, and different issues at other stages, but the "focal" theory is not dependent on a fixed sequence. Students cope (adapt) by dealing with one issue at a time. Coleman states:

> They spread the process of adaptation over a span of years, attempting to resolve first one issue, and then the next." Students accommodate problems and relationship issues at different stages, so that the stresses resulting from the need to adapt to ways of behaving are not concentrated all at one time. It follows from this that it is precisely in those who, for whatever reason, do have more than one issue to cope with at a time that problems are most likely to occur (p. 43).

The "focal" theory is based directly on empirical evidence and on the basis of the evidence conceptualizes the amount of adaptation required during the transitional process characteristic of adolescents, and the ability of most students to cope (adapt) successfully with the pressures inherent in this process. Using the "focal" theory, a concept of multiple issues as a causal factor has been developed.

From the preceding, the following generalizations can be made:

1. Students at a point in time view the school as one way to achieve avowed aspirations.

2. Students are endowed with tremendous drive to achieve their aspirations.

3. Students behave to get their needs met and they perceive their behavior to be rational.

4. Schools have institutionally prescribed means for achieving avowed aspirations.

5. Schools place varying emphasis and value on selected aspirations.

6. Students will use resources they perceive as accessible.

7. Students repeat ineffectual behavior unless the display provides an understandable and acceptable alternative.

8. Students given the opportunity will be constructive, productive, and trustworthy.

9. Students at one time or another will experience blockage between aspirations and means.

10. Some students will experience blockage differently because of specific mediating factors.

Each of the scholars and researchers reviewed pay particular
attention to the institution as contributing to adjustment problems.
That is, they view the social context of the school to be an important
area to study for possible causes of dropout. Within the context of
school, it is the student-teacher relationship that has the greatest
potential to respond appropriately to blockage and to overcome student
detachment from school.

APPENDIX D

CONTENT VALIDATION COMMITTEE

RATING SHEET

CONTENT VALIDATION COMMITTEE
RATING SHEET

For each item, indicate with an "x" if the item meets the following criteria:

1. Does the item match the objective for which it is written?

2. Does the item have only one interpretation?

3. Does the item reflect accurate information?

4. Is the item free of bias?

5. Does the item reflect an opinion about potential dropouts?

ITEM   CRITERIA

	1	2	3	4	5
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					

ITEM   CRITERIA

	1	2	3	4	5
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					
31					
32					
33					
34					
35					

CHARACTERISTIC	CRITERIA				
	1	2	3	4	5
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

APPENDIX E

INITIAL OPINION SURVEY ON

POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

INITIAL OPINION SURVEY ON
POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

This survey is designed to find out what opinions educators have developed at various stages of their careers regarding potential dropouts. The results of this inventory will help your administration develop better and more productive ways to prevent students from dropping out of school.

All the information in this survey will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

The following is a list of statements that may identify your opinion about potential dropouts. Please state your reaction to these items, not in accordance with what you think you should or should not feel, or what you think others feel, but in accordance with what you, yourself actually feel. Please answer all questions.

After each statement you will find columns 1,2,3, and 4. Mark each item by checking (x) the space in column 1,2,3, or 4 - whichever best describes your feeling about the statement. Remember, this is a survey of your present opinions regarding potential dropouts. Check each item in accordance with the following key.

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. Some students should drop out of school.	—	—	—	—
2. Potential dropouts do not like going to school.	—	—	—	—
3. Potential dropouts cannot do the academic work required for school success.	—	—	—	—
4. Potential dropouts tend to blame themselves for their failure at school.	—	—	—	—
5. Potential dropouts can be identified in elementary school.	—	—	—	—
6. Potential dropouts have certain identifiable characteristics.	—	—	—	—
7. Potential dropouts have low I.Q. scores.	—	—	—	—

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4

8. Potential dropouts have low aspirations.   ___ ___ ___ ___

9. Potential dropouts do not view school as helping them achieve their life goals.   ___ ___ ___ ___

10. Potential dropouts most often come from low income families.   ___ ___ ___ ___

11. I can identify potential dropouts when I see them.   ___ ___ ___ ___

12. I believe any student with reasonable intellectual ability can succeed at school.   ___ ___ ___ ___

13. I feel pressure to help potential dropouts.   ___ ___ ___ ___

14. I believe it is too late to do anything about students dropping out after they reach high school.   ___ ___ ___ ___

15. I believe the home environment is more important than the school in determining whether a student is going to drop out.   ___ ___ ___ ___

16. I work harder at helping the potential dropout than my fellow colleagues.   ___ ___ ___ ___

17. More than half the students I teach are not self-motivated to learn my subject.   ___ ___ ___ ___

18. I believe I should spend my time with students that want to learn not with those who don't.   ___ ___ ___ ___

19. I believe the purpose of school is to educate all students regardless of their intelligence or interest.   ___ ___ ___ ___

20. Teachers do not have enough influence to help potential dropouts.   ___ ___ ___ ___

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
21. We cannot do anything about dropout without parental cooperation.	___	___	___	___
22. It is part of a teacher's responsibility to help potential dropouts stay in school.	___	___	___	___
23. Special programs should be created to help potential dropouts.	___	___	___	___
24. Criteria for graduation should be lowered to help potential dropouts finish school.	___	___	___	___
25. Money should be taken from other programs to support dropout prevention activities.	___	___	___	___
26. Educators need special training to work with potential dropouts.	___	___	___	___
27. The attention given to dropout is just another passing "fad" in education.	___	___	___	___

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS DID YOU USE TO PROFILE A POTENTIAL DROPOUT?

___ Family income   ___ Low grades

___ I.Q. Score   ___ No extra curricular
                                         activities

___ Student's appearance   ___ Disruptive behavior

___ No goals in life   ___ Truancy

___ Low self-esteem   ___ Low motivation

___ Immature behavior   ___ Educational level of parents

___ Their peer group   ___ No interest in school

___ Other_____   ___ Other_____

APPENDIX F

SCORING KEY FOR THE

INITIAL OPINION SURVEY

SCORING KEY FOR THE
INITIAL OPINION SURVEY

The actual scoring of the surveys will be done by computer using optical scanning score sheets entered into the SPSS statistical computer analysis.

Each survey will be scored using the following key:

    1 - Very positive

    2 - Positive

    3 - Negative

    4 - Very negative

The choices for each item in the survey are as follows:

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
1. Some students should drop out of school.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
2. Potential dropouts do not like going to school.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
3. Potential dropouts cannot do the academic work required for school success.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
4. Potential dropouts tend to blame themselves for their failure at school.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
5. Potential dropouts can be identified in elementary school.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
6. Potential dropouts have certain identifiable characteristics.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
7. Potential dropouts have low I.Q. scores.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
8. Potential dropouts have low aspirations.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
9. Potential dropouts do not view school as helping them achieve their life goals.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
10. Potential dropouts most often come from low income families.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
11. I can identify potential dropouts when I see them.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
12. I believe any student with reasonable intellectual ability can succeed at school.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
13. I feel pressure to help potential dropouts.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
14. I believe it is too late to do anything about students dropping out after they reach high school.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
15. I believe the home environment is more important than the school in determining whether a student is going to drop out.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
16. I work harder at helping the potential dropout than my fellow colleagues.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
17. More than half the students I teach are not self-motivated to learn my subject.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
18. I believe I should spend my time with students that want to learn not with those who don't.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
19. I believe the purpose of school is to educate all students regardless of their intelligence or interest.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
20. Teachers do not have enough influence to help potential dropouts.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_

Column 1: Strongly Disagree   Column 3: Agree

Column 2: Disagree   Column 4: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4
21. We cannot do anything about dropout without parental cooperation.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
22. It is part of a teacher's responsibility to help potential dropouts stay in school.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
23. Special programs should be created to help potential dropouts.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
24. Criteria for graduation should be lowered to help potential dropouts finish school.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_
25. Money should be taken from other programs to support dropout prevention activities.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
26. Educators need special training to work with potential dropouts.	_4_	_3_	_2_	_1_
27. The attention given to dropout is just another passing "fad" in education.	_1_	_2_	_3_	_4_

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS DID YOU USE TO PROFILE A POTENTIAL DROPOUT?

___ Family income   ___ Low grades

___ I.Q. Score   ___ No extra curricular
                                         activities

___ Student's appearance   ___ Disruptive behavior

___ No goals in life   ___ Truancy

___ Low self-esteem   ___ Low motivation

___ Immature behavior   ___ Educational level of parents

___ Their peer group   ___ No interest in school

___ Other_____   ___ Other_____

APPENDIX G

OPINION SURVEY

ABOUT

POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

(Final form)

OPINION SURVEY
ABOUT
POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

The statements that follow are opinions or ideas about students who
are considered potential dropouts. By potential dropouts we mean
students who you feel have predispositions or exhibit behaviors that
would indicate to you that they are likely to make the decision to drop
out of school before graduating. There are different opinions about
potential dropouts. Many people agree with each of the following
statements while many people disagree. We would like to know what you
think. Each statement has five choices. If a separate scoring sheet is
not provided, use the spaces to the right of each question to indicate
your choice. If a separate scoring sheet is provided, mark the number
(1,2,3,4,or 5) that corresponds with your opinion. Please make a choice
for each statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Some students should drop out of school.	__	__	__	__	__
2. Potential dropouts do not like going to school.	__	__	__	__	__
3. Potential dropouts cannot do the academic work required for school success.	__	__	__	__	__
4. Potential dropouts tend to blame themselves for their failure at school.	__	__	__	__	__
5. Potential dropouts can be identified in elementary school.	__	__	__	__	__
6. There are characteristics that can be used to identify potential dropouts.	__	__	__	__	__
7. Potential dropouts don't believe that finishing school will help them achieve their goals in life.	__	__	__	__	__

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

		1	2	3	4	5

8. I can identify a potential dropout
   when I see him/her.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

9. I believe any student with reasonable
   intellectual ability can succeed at
   school.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

10. Educators are under a lot of pressure
    to help potential dropouts.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

11. Once a student reaches high
    school it is too late to keep
    him/her from dropping out.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

12. The home environment has more
    influence than schools in
    determining whether a student
    is going to drop out.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

13. More than half the students I teach
    are not self-motivated to learn my
    subject.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

14. My role should be to educate those
    students who want to learn
    not with those who don't.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

15. A school's primary purpose should be
    to educate all students regardless
    of their intelligence or interest.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

16. Teachers alone do not have enough
    influence to help potential dropouts.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

17. We cannot do anything about
    dropout without parental cooperation.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

18. It is part of every educator's
    responsibility to help potential
    dropouts stay in school.   ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Strongly agree   Agree   No opinion   Disagree   Strongly disagree

		1	2	3	4	5
19.	Special programs should be created to help potential dropouts.	___	___	___	___	___
20.	It should be possible for every student to graduate even if it means lowering graduation standards.	___	___	___	___	___
21.	Educators need special training to work with potential dropouts.	___	___	___	___	___
22.	The attention given to dropout is just another passing "fad" in education.	___	___	___	___	___

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS DO YOU ASSOCIATE WITH A POTENTIAL DROPOUT?

___ Family income   ___ Low grades

___ I.Q. Score   ___ No extra curricular
                                         activities

___ Student's appearance   ___ Disruptive behavior

___ No realistic goals in life   ___ Truancy

___ Low self-esteem   ___ Low motivation

___ Immature behavior   ___ Educational level of parents

___ Peer group   ___ No interest in school

___ Drug/alcohol abuse   ___ Home environment

___ Other _____   ___ Other _____

Grade level(s) you teach _____

Your years of teaching experience _____

APPENDIX H

KEY FOR

OPINION SURVEY

ABOUT

POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

KEY FOR
OPINION SURVEY
ABOUT
POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS

The statements that follow are opinions or ideas about students who are considered potential dropouts. By potential dropouts we mean students who you feel have predispositions or exhibit behaviors that would indicate to you that they are likely to make the decision to drop out of school before graduating. There are different opinions about potential dropouts. Many people agree with each of the following statements while many people disagree. We would like to know what you think. Each statement has five choices. If a separate scoring sheet is not provided, use the spaces to the right of each question to indicate your choice. If a separate scoring sheet is provided, mark the number (1,2,3,4,or 5) that corresponds with your opinion. Please make a choice for each statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Some students should drop out of school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Potential dropouts do not like going to school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Potential dropouts cannot do the academic work required for school success.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Potential dropouts tend to blame themselves for their failure at school.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Potential dropouts can be identified in elementary school.	5	4	3	2	1
6. There are characteristics that can be used to identify potential dropouts.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Potential dropouts don't believe that finishing school will help them achieve their goals in life.	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5

8. I can identify a potential dropout
when I see him/her.   _5_ _4_ _3_ _2_ _1_

9. I believe any student with reasonable
intellectual ability can succeed at
school.   _5_ _4_ _3_ _2_ _1_

10. Educators are under a lot of pressure
to help potential dropouts.   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

11. Once a student reaches high
school it is too late to keep
him/her from dropping out.   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

12. The home environment has more
influence than schools in
determining whether a student
is going to drop out.   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

13. More than half the students I teach
are not self-motivated to learn my
subject.   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

14. My role should be to educate those
students who want to learn
not with those who don't.   _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

15. A school's primary purpose should be
to educate all students regardless
of their intelligence or interest.   _5_ _4_ _3_ _2_ _1_

16. Teachers alone do not have enough
influence to help potential dropouts. _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

17. We cannot do anything about
dropout without parental cooperation. _1_ _2_ _3_ _4_ _5_

18. It is part of every educator's
responsibility to help potential
dropouts stay in school.   _5_ _4_ _3_ _2_ _1_

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5

19. Special programs should be created
to help potential dropouts.   5   4   3   2   1

20. It should be possible for every
student to graduate even if it means
lowering graduation standards.   1   2   3   4   5

21. Educators need special training to
work with potential dropouts.   5   4   3   2   1

22. The attention given to dropout is just
another passing "fad" in education.   1   2   3   4   5

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS DO YOU ASSOCIATE WITH A POTENTIAL DROPOUT?

___ Family income   ___ Low grades

___ I.Q. Score   ___ No extra curricular
activities

___ Student's appearance   ___ Disruptive behavior

___ No realistic goals in life   ___ Truancy

___ Low self-esteem   ___ Low motivation

___ Immature behavior   ___ Educational level of parents

___ Peer group   ___ No interest in school

___ Drug/alcohol abuse   ___ Home environment

___ Other _____   ___ Other _____

Grade level(s) you teach _____

Your years of teaching experience _____