

IDENTIFICATION OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN  
WITH CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH  
SCHOOL DROPOUTS

By

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

#### The Problem

The question for this study is: Can characteristics of high school dropouts be identified in first grade children? The findings of such a study should be of value to classroom teachers, school administrators and researchers in assessing which school children might have difficulty in their future school years.

#### Need for Study

"Early identification of potential dropouts is one of the least considered facets in education, but is believed by many to have the most potential in combating the early school-leaving problem," (Porter, 14, p. 362). There is evidence that many factors are at work, determining whether a pupil will continue in school or drop out. Those factors which influence a decision to leave school in the ninth or tenth grade have been working on the youth throughout his elementary schooling and even from the time of birth. Thus, if the school is to solve the dropout problem, consideration of the factors influencing youth in their early years is essential. Porter's (14) study reveals that, "many pupils have become psychological dropouts long before they enter the secondary schools," (p. 363). Several factors may operate together to contribute

to the cause of dropouts. The problem is complicated by the fact that the same factors may influence individuals in different ways and even affect the individual in different ways at different times.

Lambert (12) in Guidance and the School Dropout reports that

Education's part in the dropout problem or in the prevention of delinquency lies in the extent to which urgency is recognized in making modifications in the education program. The fact that schools contribute to the production of dropouts and delinquents cannot be denied. When curriculum and class work are beyond the capacities of the pupils, the schools present a series of experiences in which the child is bound to fail. This situation, compounded by poor social environment, maladapted behavior patterns, and feelings of inadequacy, leads to frustrations of school failure for such pupils. (p. 61).

Porter (14) in "The Heart of the Dropout Problem: Early Identification" emphasizes the need to begin from the day the child first enters school to work toward the prevention of withdrawal from school rather than rehabilitation after the youth drops out. Porter (14) further explains that:

The young people I am talking about can be helped--they must be--beginning in the first grade. It will not be easy to convince laymen and educators of this, and of the need to spend more time and money in the elementary grades. But, this must be done. (p. 363).

If factors and characteristics of high school dropouts are identifiable in elementary school children, then it follows that modifying these factors and characteristics should result in a change in the status of the pupil as an adolescent. Thus the first concern must be that of early identification of children with potential or predicted problems; then secondly these children must be helped to gain confidence and skills necessary to be successful in the school situation; and thirdly the public schools and society must alter their techniques to more adequately meet the needs of all school age children. More money



must be spent during preventative stages for preschool and primary aged children rather than costly rehabilitation. In addition, the families with children identified with potential or predicted problems must also be assisted so the whole family can progress in many areas including skills to gain employment, furthering the amount of education attained, understanding human relations, improving child care and guidance, communicating with the schools and understanding community relations.

#### Definition of Dropout

Cervantes (5), describes a school dropout as: "any youth who for any reason except death, has left school before graduating from high school and without transferring to another school," (p. 196).

#### Dropout Rate

Nationally the dropout rate is about forty percent. To educators, this means four out of ten youth do not complete their high school education. This is a waste of potential which our nation cannot afford (Cervantes 5, p. 197 and Porter 14, p. 362).

#### Personal Characteristics of Dropouts

The school dropout does not exhibit a unique behavior pattern. However, each individual who leaves school before graduation will possess some of the characteristics which identify the total group.

Age. Due to the compulsory attendance laws most dropouts will occur at about sixteen or seventeen years of age. The dropout may leave from a grade lower than would be normal for a student of that age (Tesseneer's 18, p. 143).

Sex. The dropout rate is higher among boys than girls. The percentage of male dropouts is between fifty and sixty percent as found in the research studies on dropouts by Bledsoe (2) and Cervantes (5) (p. 4 and p. 197).

Mental Ability. Snepp's (18) research found dropouts scored below average in scholastic aptitude as measured by the Otis Test of Mental Ability. Test results on 174 dropouts indicate that 115 scored below 96 percent and of this group 40 were below 80 percent as compared with 59 who measured above the 96th percentile (pp. 49 and 50).

Lichter (13) reports in a study on potential dropouts which were referred by the Chicago public high schools that all of the 105 adolescent children that he studied had at least average mental ability (p. 246). Cervantes' (5) findings are in harmony with Lichter in which he found a majority of dropouts fall within the average IQ range (p. 197). Haimowitz reported in Schreiber's (16) the School Dropout, an investigation of 150 dropouts from two Chicago neighborhoods and found them to be mostly average in intelligence (p. 170).

Mental ability of dropouts compares favorably to all who stay in school as indicated by a majority of the literature on dropouts. Some graduates have above average mental ability and some have below average mental ability; this also holds true for the dropouts.

Personal Adjustment. All of the research in the area of personal adjustment supports that dropouts have poor personal adjustment as well as poor adjustment to home, family and school. Arnholter (1) in "School Persistence" found using the California Mental Health Analysis that graduates were better adjusted than dropouts on total scores with a difference that was significant at the .02 level (p. 108).

Lambert (12) devised a study to determine to what extent delinquents, dropouts, culturally deprived, emotionally disturbed and other similarly labeled groups are distinct populations. The sample was composed of 194 elementary students who fit into one of the following three groups: a) identified emotionally disturbed by school guidance office, b) unidentified poorly adjusted pupil unknown to the school guidance offices but listed by teachers as "one of the two most maladjusted in my class," and c) average or better adjusted pupil as listed by the teacher. Comparison of the sample groups was made at the end of a five-year period when most of the group were in high school. Information from schools, guidance office files and social service agencies were utilized for analysis. The previously listed group of identified emotionally disturbed was further subdivided on the basis of psychiatric reports into these groups: a) pupils expected to graduate; b) pupils who will drop out; c) those who were delinquent. The dropout group was characterized as having interpersonal problems and poor social adaptability (pp. 40-65).

Lichter (13) in The Dropouts worked most closely with 70 potential or probable school dropouts referred by the Chicago Public high schools. Careful diagnostic evaluation of this group disclosed that the youngsters had serious emotional problems which was the major cause of school difficulties and the resultant school-leaving. The potential dropouts were dependent, immature and unwilling to assume any self-responsibility (p. 249).

Cervantes (5) in his dropout research reported that using the Thematic Apperception Test was of greater descriptive than statistical assistance. His findings included: "The overriding differential

attitude is that of hostility. Hostility against authority or adult controls of all types--home authority, civil authority, intellectual authority, occupational authority," (p. 192). Cervantes found further, among the psychological tendencies of the dropout derived from the Thematic Apperception Test characteristics of the dropout to be: dissatisfied, antisocial, maladjusted, unstable and weak self-image (p. 194).

### Scholastic Characteristics of Dropouts

From the point of view of the school these are some of the major factors involved in the dropout problem:

Scholastic Achievement. The scholastic aptitude of those who left school was below the average of students who remain in high school, as measured by the Otis Test of Mental Ability (Snepp 18, p. 49). Like findings were given in research by Porter (14), who found most dropouts to be achieving academically below average.

Probably the most critical area in which dropouts have achieved low scholastically is reading. If a student cannot read then, obviously he will encounter difficulty in other academic areas.

Snepp (18) reported that the reading ability of 159 dropouts as measured by the California or Iowa Silent Reading Test was found to be 21.4 percent retarded three or more years, 26.6 percent retarded two years, and slightly over 22 percent retarded one year. The remaining 30 percent were rated as normal or better in reading ability (p. 50).

Bledsoe (2) obtained the results from the California Reading Achievement Test (Advanced) to compare the scores of 247 Georgia dropouts and all other students in the same schools at the ninth grade

level. The mean reading comprehension score for students who dropped out of the ninth and tenth grades was 7.9; mean reading comprehension score for remaining ninth graders was 8.9 (p. 4).

Cervantes (5) found certain central and characteristic tendencies of the dropouts in his study of 100 dropouts and 100 graduates. One commonly listed predictor was that dropouts were two years behind in reading at the seventh grade level (p. 193).

Grade Retardation. Grade retardation is different from grade retention. Grade retardation means a pupil is unable to complete the classwork at one grade level because it is too difficult and may or may not be promoted. A pupil in the third grade may be doing first grade work because he lacks the basic skills taught in the earlier grades. The pupil who is retarded in grade level may or may not have been retained previously in school. Most likely grade retardation precedes grade retention. Grade retention is the situation when a pupil is retained to take a grade or class over due to failure to complete the required work. Several of the reviewed research studies described the dropout in their findings as grade retarded. This characteristic was reported by Cook (6), Heckner (10), and Tesseneer's (19) (p. 57, p. 389, and p. 143).

Cook (6) reported an interesting finding which could be a cause of grade retardation. He found in the case of dropouts that the class size in the first, second and third grades was greater than the class size of graduating students (p. 57). Bledsoe (2) concurred with the observations of Cook. Bledsoe also studied grades four through eight and found that the classes in which dropouts were enrolled during these five years of grades averaged fewer students (p. 4). This emphasizes the

need for small classes for the primary grades when basic reading skills are presented to pupils. Later attempts to create small classes and thus make up for deficiencies were not too successful, according to research by Bledsoe (2) (p. 4). School administrators should consider providing smaller primary classes so pupils will be able to receive more individualized teaching at this early stage.

Grade Retention. Many educators who have studied dropouts report that most have been retained one or more years in the public schools with a large number of dropouts failing in the first grade. This has been reported in the research of Cook (6), Deutsch (7), Dresher (8), Heckner (10), Schreiber (15) and Tesseneer's (19) (p. 57, p. 700, p. 289, p. 389, p. 5, and p. 143).

School Attendance. The literature reveals that studies of older boys and girls who drop out of school before graduation had a record of absenteeism. Lichter (13) and Snapp (18) reported that poor attendance was found in 50 to 80 percent of the cases of dropouts in their respective studies (p. 61 and p. 52). Cervantes (4) gives irregular attendance and frequent tardiness as a predictor of potential dropouts (p. 198).

#### Home and Family Characteristics of the Dropout

Home Life. Approximately 70 percent of the dropouts in Snapp's research (18) came from broken or unstable homes where they experienced frustration and instability (p. 52). Morris Haimowitz, in Schreiber's (16) the School Dropout, found in working with 150 dropouts from two Chicago neighborhoods that most of the dropouts came from broken homes characterized by low income (p. 170).

Cervantes (4) confirms that the dropout is generally the product of a family deficient in primary relations. His study matched 150 dropouts with 150 graduates and found the following differences all significant at the ( $p < .001$  level): a) dropouts perceive themselves as less understood and accepted by their families than do graduates, b) dropouts perceive themselves as receiving less encouragement from their families in their educational and occupational plans that graduates perceive, c) there is less intrafamily communication in the families of dropouts than in the families of graduates, d) dropouts manifest less family joint leisure activity than graduates, and e) dropouts report their homes as being less happy than do the graduates (pp. 218-223).

Parental Attitude Toward School. Arnholter (1) reports the attitude of the mother toward the school and her expectations in regard to her child's school attainment are important concomitants of a pupil's remaining in high school through graduation or of his dropping out (p. 109). Further support that the attitude of parents of dropouts is usually negative and indifferent was given in studies by Porter (14) on page 365, Schreiber (16) on page 5, and Youmans (19) on page 28.

Educational Level of Parents. Bledsoe (2) and Cervantes (5) discovered the usual educational level of parents of dropouts is no higher than eighth grade.

#### Summary of Findings

Literature on dropouts was reviewed to determine characteristics of high school and junior high school dropouts to be identified in first grade children. This study is based upon the characteristics

found in research studies of older dropouts. The characteristics of dropouts given in the literature are listed below:

#### Personal Characteristics

1. Age. Sixteen years was the average age of dropouts, this was old for grade placement.
2. Sex. More dropouts were boys, 50 to 60 percent; girls make up the remaining 40 to 50 percent.
3. Mental Ability. Dropouts were typical of the total population in mental ability with most being of average intelligence but with some low and some high.
4. Personal Adjustment. Dropouts were found to have frequent interpersonal problems and poor social adaptability.

#### Scholastic Characteristics of the Dropout

5. Scholastic Achievement. Most were below average in achievement and were behind in reading.
6. Grade Retardation. Many were grade retarded. There is a positive relationship between the size of the class and the number of dropouts in grades one through three.
7. Grade Retention. Most dropouts have been retained with a large number failing first grade.
8. School Attendance. Frequent absenteeism was found.

#### Home and Family Characteristics of the Dropout

9. Home Life. Dropouts often come from broken or unstable homes which are deficient in primary relations.
10. Parental Attitude Toward School. Usually parental attitude toward school is indifferent or negative.
11. Educational Level of Parents. Eighth grade or lower was given as the educational level of parents of most dropouts.

#### Plan for the Investigation

The characteristics of dropouts found in the review of the literature formed the characteristics to be studied in first grade children. Based on the review of literature, two questionnaires were devised (1) to learn the child's attitude and feeling toward school and (2) to learn what the child feels his mother's attitude is toward school. A



standardized test was selected to measure personal and social adjustment of first grade children. Information from the literature was secured to assist in selection of final subjects and available material in the school files concerning dropout characteristics. Chapter II will include a discussion of procedure and method.

## CHAPTER II

### PROCEDURE AND METHOD

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of high school dropouts in first grade children. The procedure for identifying the characteristics of the high school dropouts was reported in Chapter I. To identify first grade children with the characteristics of the high school dropouts the following steps were followed: administration of the personal and social adjustment test; development and administration of a questionnaire on first grade children's attitude toward school; development and administration of a questionnaire on the child's interpretation of their mother's attitude toward school, and information from available school records was recorded on the face sheet. The data from the foregoing tests, questionnaires, and school records were analyzed to compare the presence of characteristics of high school dropouts with first grade children.

This chapter will include a description of (1) the subjects, (2) procedure for obtaining data, (3) test selected for the measurement of personal and social adjustment, (4) administration of the personal and social adjustment, (5) development and administration of the attitude questionnaire for the child's attitude toward school and his understanding of his mother's attitudes toward school.

## Subjects

The subjects consisted of 85 first grade children in four self-contained classrooms. There were 51 boys and 34 girls in the sample.

Table I presents the subjects by sex and race. All subjects had attained age six by November first of the school year in which the testing was done. Data were collected in May of the school year.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION BY SEX AND RACE  
(N = 85)

Race	Boys	Girls	Total
White	47	29	76
Negro	01	04	05
Indian	03	01	04
Total	51	34	85

### Procedure for Obtaining Data

Permission to collect data was obtained from the Superintendent of a small town public school in North Central Oklahoma. An appropriate time for testing the subjects was determined through a conference of the investigator with the principal of the elementary schools. A letter was sent by the principal to the parents to obtain their permission for

the children to participate in the study (Appendix A). The first grade teachers of the four rooms contacted those parents who did not return the letter of permission for their child to be tested, and with further explanation by the teachers, all parents granted permission for their children to participate. The four classroom teachers of the first grades then met with the investigator and chose a day they preferred for the testing of their classrooms.

#### Personal and Social Adjustment Test

The California Test of Personality, Primary, form AA, was selected as the instrument to be used to measure the personal and social adjustment of the subjects.

The California Test of Personality is organized around the concept of life adjustment as a balance between personal and social adjustment. Personal adjustment is assumed to be based on feelings of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belonging, withdrawing tendencies, and nervous symptoms. Social adjustment is assumed to be based on feelings of social security as seen in its six components: social standards, social skills, anti-social tendencies, family relations, school relations, and community relations. Under each of these 12 components are eight questions to be answered either "yes" or "no"; thereby, simplifying the administration of the test, especially with younger children. Validity is increased by requiring a choice between only these two alternative responses (20).

The norms provided for the California Test of Personality, Primary Level, were derived from test data secured from 4,511 pupils in kindergarten to grade three inclusive in schools in South Carolina, Ohio,

Colorado, and California. The statistical reliability of instruments of this kind sometimes appears to be lower than that of good tests of ability or achievement since the child is an ever-growing, changing organism whose attitudes and feelings are not a static element giving constant results (Buros, 3).

#### Administration of the Personality Test

The California Test of Personality was administered according to the directions in the test manual, with the investigator and an assistant giving all the subjects the test individually. These directions were as follows:

Young children (especially those in kindergarten and first grade) who do not have a sufficient reading ability to follow the printed questions, should have the questions read aloud to them individually and the responses of the pupil should be recorded by the examiner.

The manual suggested that rest periods are desirable, and due to the length of time the testing required, each child was given an opportunity to rest. While resting, he was able to move about or talk with the investigator.

The investigator and trained assistant took one child at a time to a room other than the child's homeroom for testing. This helped to provide privacy and a relaxed atmosphere. The procedure of testing was then explained to each of the subjects.

#### Development and Administration of the Attitude Questionnaire

Design. A questionnaire concerning attitudes toward school was designed so that the vocabulary would be within first grade subject's

understanding and the questions could be answered "yes" or "no" as in the California Test of Personality. The questions were developed to identify the subject's attitude on the value of school, grades, attendance, asking mother for supplies and materials needed at school, and the mother's interest in discussing school experiences with the child.

Pretest. The initial questionnaire was given to 30 first grade children in a summer city recreation program to evaluate the clarity of the questions included.

Final Questionnaires. The final testing was done by means of two questionnaires which were administered to each subject individually in the same period of testing as the California Test of Personality. The subject was informed that the investigator had some statements about school she would like for him to answer as honestly as possible. The words "honestly" and "truthfully" were discussed and/or explained to the subject. Each of the subjects had opportunity to ask questions to clarify his understanding of the directions. The investigator read aloud each sentence slowly and carefully and recorded the subjects' response. The sentence was repeated if the child did not respond within a short period of time. (Appendix B).

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of high school dropouts in first grade children. Data were collected on 85 first grade children. The subjects were then matched; ten high boys and ten low boys plus ten high girls and ten low girls for analysis on the basis of total personal and social adjustment scores. These pairings of the subjects resulted in the following four groups, each consisting of ten subjects: high-scoring boys, high-scoring girls, low-scoring boys, and low-scoring girls. To arrive at the ten top and ten low groups, scores were arranged in rank order. The highest total personal and social adjustment score was 88 and the lowest total personal and social adjustment score was 36. The pairing of subjects on the basis of total personal and social adjustment scores resulted in the two high-scoring groups having similar means and the two low-scoring groups having similar means (Table III, p. 20).

The data are presented in the following order: (1) personal characteristics including age, sex, mental ability and personal adjustment; (2) scholastic characteristics including scholastic achievement, grade retardation, grade retention and school attendance; (3) home and family characteristics including home life, parental attitude toward school and educational level of parents.

Personal Characteristics of First Grade Children

Age. The forty matched first grade children included in the sample had reached the following ages at the time of testing: four children were eight years old; twenty-one children were seven years old; fifteen children were six years old. The four children who were eight years old, as well as four of the seven year olds, had been retained and when tested were in first grade for the second time.

TABLE II

AGE OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN BY HIGH-SCORING BOYS  
AND GIRLS AND LOW-SCORING BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 40)

Age When Tested	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Eight Years	1	0	3	0	4
Seven Years	7	4	4	6	21
Six Years	2	6	3	4	15
Total	10	10	10	10	40

All of the eight year old first grade children were boys. Three of the boys who were eight years old were in the low-scoring group and one was in the high-scoring group. The number of children from the high-scoring group who were seven years old when tested is comparable to the number of children from the low-scoring group who were also seven. In the case of the seven year old children more of the boys who were seven



were in the low-scoring group. The high-scoring and low-scoring groups were composed of about the same number of six year old first grade children. A greater number of six year old girls were in the high-scoring group whereas in the case of the boys the larger number of six year olds was in the low-scoring group. This finding coincides with the long accepted generalization that girls are more mature than boys at the beginning of first grade.

Sex. The sample was matched so that half of the subjects would be boys and half of the subjects would be girls. Twenty boys and twenty girls were the subjects.

The girls, both high-scoring and low-scoring, were above the low-scoring boys as measured by the mean scores on each component of the Stanford Achievement Test. The girls, both from high-scoring and low-scoring groups, scored higher than the high-scoring boys on the word meaning and paragraph meaning components of the Stanford Achievement Test. The high-scoring boys scored above the girls and the low-scoring boys on the vocabulary and arithmetic components of the Stanford Achievement Test (Table V, p. 22).

More boys were retained in the first grade than girls. Two high-scoring boys and eight low-scoring boys were retained in the first grade. Four low-scoring girls were retained in first grade but no high-scoring girls were retained.

Mental Ability. The public schools that cooperated with this study did not have a test of mental ability filed in the school records and preferred that a test of mental ability not be given to the first grade children. If there had been opportunity to acquire this information it would have been included in the analysis.

Personal and Social Adjustment. The subjects were selected on the basis of total personal and social adjustment scores. The distribution of raw scores for the high-scoring and low-scoring groups is presented in Tables III and IV. Because of the method of selection, the high- and low-scoring groups were necessarily different in both personal and social adjustment scores.

TABLE III

PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT, SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND TOTAL ADJUSTMENT  
RAW SCORES OF THE HIGH-SCORING BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 20)

<u>High-Scoring Boys</u> Adjustment Scores				<u>High-Scoring Girls</u> Adjustment Scores			
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	35	40	75	21	38	45	83
2	37	41	78	22	39	44	83
3	35	38	73	23	35	42	77
4	42	46	88	24	40	42	82
5	43	45	88	25	34	43	77
6	34	44	78	26	33	43	76
7	32	42	74	27	32	40	72
8	38	44	82	28	32	45	77
9	42	42	84	29	34	41	75
10	36	40	76	30	33	40	73
Mean Score	37.4	42.2	79.6		35.0	42.5	77.5

Sex differences were analyzed using the Mann Whitney U Test. For high-scoring boys and girls there was no significant difference in the personal and social adjustment, but for low-scoring boys and girls

there was a significant difference in social adjustment ( $U = 14.0$ ;  $p < .02$ ). The low-scoring girls had higher social adjustment scores than low-scoring boys. This difference must be considered when interpreting other findings.

TABLE IV  
PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT, SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND TOTAL ADJUSTMENT  
RAW SCORES OF THE LOW-SCORING BOYS AND GIRLS  
( $N = 20$ )

<u>Low-Scoring Boys</u> Adjustment Scores				<u>Low-Scoring Girls</u> Adjustment Scores			
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Total</u>
11	21	30	51	31	22	28	50
12	27	32	59	32	20	30	50
13	31	24	55	33	23	35	58
14	27	31	58	34	30	32	62
15	23	26	49	35	26	36	62
16	17	22	39	36	31	34	65
17	17	27	44	37	25	36	61
18	24	27	51	38	21	36	57
19	22	22	44	39	32	27	59
20	23	30	53	40	29	32	61
Mean Score	23.2	27.1	50.3		25.9	32.6	58.5

#### Scholastic Characteristics of First Grade Children

Scholastic Achievement. Results for the Stanford Achievement Test, Primary I Form W, were available in the public school files. The boys who scored high in the total personal and social adjustment had higher

mean scores on the Stanford Achievement Test than the boys who were in the low-scoring group. The high-scoring group of girls had a higher mean score on all components of the Stanford Achievement Test as compared to the low-scoring girls.

TABLE V

THE MEAN, RANGE AND NATIONAL NORMS FOR THE COMPONENTS OF THE STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST, PRIMARY I FORM W AS REPORTED BY HIGH-SCORING AND LOW-SCORING FIRST GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS (N = 40)

Test Component	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>		National Norms
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Word Meaning	*4.5 **1-----7	5.2 3-----8	2.9 1-----5	4.8 1-----8	8
Paragraph Meaning	4.3 1-----7	5.3 3-----8	2.6 1-----5	4.7 1-----8	8
Vocabulary	5.2 1-----7	4.6 1-----8	3.9 1-----7	4.0 1-----8	6
Arithmetic	5.7 1-----9	5.1 2-----9	3.4 1-----6	3.8 1-----8	6

\* Mean Scores

\*\* Range Scores

The mean scores of the high-scoring boys and girls and the mean scores of the low-scoring boys and girls were below the national norms for all the components of the Stanford Achievement Test. The mean scores for the low-scoring group were lower than the mean scores for the

high-scoring group when compared with the same sex. The low-scoring girls scored higher on the word meaning and paragraph meaning components compared to the high-scoring boys.

Three subjects scored at the national norm on word meaning and the remaining thirty-seven were below. Two subjects scored at the national norm on paragraph meaning and thirty-eight scored below the norm. Sixteen subjects scored at the national norm or above on vocabulary while twenty-four were below the norm. Thirteen subjects scored at or above the national norm on arithmetic as compared to twenty-seven who were below.

Mann-Whitney U Test analyses give support that the high-scoring boys' achievement scores for word meaning, paragraph meaning and arithmetic was significantly different from the same component scores of the low-scoring boys. No significant difference was found between the component scores of the high-scoring girls and the low-scoring girls (Table VI, p. 24).

Grade Retardation. A large number of the subjects would be considered grade retarded when the results from the Stanford Achievement Test were compared to the national norms. (See Table V, p. 22.)

Grade Retention. Fourteen of the 40 subjects from the sample tested have been retained in the first grade. Eight of the subjects retained were in first grade for a second time when tested and the remaining six were retained for the next year following testing. (See Table VII, p. 25.)

No high-scoring girls were retained in first grade. The fourteen who were retained were from the following groups: two high-scoring boys, eight were low-scoring boys and four were low-scoring girls.

Some other children who were in the first grade but were not one of the forty subjects were also retained in first grade.

TABLE VI

VALUES OF  $U^*$  IN A COMPARISON OF THE COMPONENTS OF STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST BY HIGH-SCORING BOYS WITH LOW-SCORING BOYS AND HIGH-SCORING GIRLS WITH LOW-SCORING GIRLS  
(N = 40)

Stanford Achievement Test Components	U	p
Word Meaning		
High Boys:Low Boys	25.5	** <.10
High Girls:Low Girls	47.5	n.s.
Paragraph Meaning		
High Boys:Low Boys	24	** <.10
High Girls:Low Girls	41	n.s.
Vocabulary		
High Boys:Low Boys	28	n.s.
High Girls:Low Girls	42	n.s.
Arithmetic		
High Boys:Low Boys	16	<.02
High Girls:Low Girls	35.5	n.s.

\*Mann-Whitney U Test

\*\*A difference at the .10 level was considered significant in this study.

TABLE VII

RETENTION OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN AS REPORTED BY  
HIGH-SCORING AND LOW-SCORING FIRST GRADE  
BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 40)

Year Retained	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
1965*	1	0	4	3	8
1966**	1	0	4	1	6
Total	2	0	8	4	14

\*These subjects were in first grade for the second time during the school year 1966 when the testing was done.

\*\*These subjects were retained after the school year 1966 to repeat first grade.

School Attendance. The mean number of days absent from school for the high-scoring boys and girls is less than the mean number of days absent for the low-scoring boys and girls. The children who were in first grade for the second time and those who were retained for the year following the testing had a mean of 13.75 days absent from school during the year tested. (See Table VIII, p. 26.)

#### Home and Family Characteristics of First Grade Children

Home Life. Three low-scoring boys and two low-scoring girls were from homes in which a step-parent was present. The remaining thirty-five children reported that their parents were living in the home.

The California Test of Personality includes a component on family

TABLE VIII

ABSENTEEISM OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR  
1965-66 AS REPORTED BY HIGH-SCORING BOYS AND GIRLS,  
LOW-SCORING BOYS AND GIRLS, AND  
RETAINED BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 40)

	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Retained</u>
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Children
	22	18.5	42	46	46
	13	15	22.5	16	42
	11	9	13.5	10	22.5
	8.5	8.5	7	7.5	13
	7	6	5.5	5	7.5
	6	4	3	4	7
	2.5	3	1.5	3	4
	2	1	1.5	2	3
	0.5	0	1	0	2
	0	0	1	0	1.5
					1.5
Mean					1
Score	7.25	6.50	9.75	9.35	1
					0.5
					13.75



relations. Table IX gives the mean score of the high-scoring boys and girls and the mean score of the low-scoring boys and girls.

TABLE IX  
 MEAN SCORES FROM THE FAMILY RELATIONS COMPONENT OF THE  
 CALIFORNIA TEST OF PERSONALITY AS REPORTED BY  
 HIGH-SCORING AND LOW-SCORING FIRST  
 GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS  
 (N = 40)

	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	90	90	80	80
	90	90	50	80
	90	80	20	50
	90	80	20	50
	90	80	20	30
	80	80	20	30
	50	80	20	20
	50	50	20	20
	30	50	2	20
	30	50	1	20
Mean Score	69.0	73.0	25.3	40.0

Mann-Whitney U Test analyses indicate that there is a significant difference between the high-scoring and low-scoring boys on the component of family relations with the high-scoring boys receiving more favorable family relations scores. A significant difference was also found between the high-scoring and low-scoring girls on the family relations component, with the high-scoring girls receiving more favorable family relations scores (Table X, p. 28).

TABLE X  
 VALUES OF U\* IN A COMPARISON OF THE FAMILY RELATIONS  
 COMPONENT OF CALIFORNIA TEST OF PERSONALITY  
 REPORTED BY HIGH-SCORING AND LOW-SCORING  
 FIRST GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS  
 (N = 40)

	z	p
Family Relations		
High Boys:Low Boys	7.5	<.002
High Girls:Low Girls	14	<.02

\* Mann-Whitney U Test

Parental Attitude Toward School. The results of the two questionnaires are given in Table XI. The first questionnaire results are concerned with the child's feeling and attitude toward school and the second results given are what the child feels his mother's attitude is toward school. No statistical analysis was completed on these data. Each questionnaire had ten questions that were asked of the child. The questionnaires were scored by assigning each correct response a value of one. Thus the maximum score would be ten and the minimum score would be zero.

Educational Level of Parents. The public schools that cooperated with this study did not have information about the educational level of the parents in the school records. If there had been opportunity to provide this information it would have been included in the analysis.

TABLE XI

MEAN SCORES FROM THE ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRES AS REPORTED BY  
HIGH-SCORING AND LOW-SCORING FIRST GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS  
(N = 40)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL

	<u>High Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	9	9	10
	9	9	8	9
	9	9	7	8
	8	9	7	7
Mean Scores	9.6	9.6	9.1	9.4

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIS  
MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL

	<u>High-Scoring Group</u>		<u>Low-Scoring Group</u>	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	10	10
	10	10	9	9
	10	9	9	9
	9	9	7	9
	8	9	6	8
Mean Scores	9.7	9.7	9.1	9.5

## Summary of Chapter

The results of the analysis of data were as follows:

1. The ages of the first grade children ranged from six years to eight years at the time of testing. Therefore, some of the first grade children were old for their grade assignment.

2. The sample was composed of equal number of boys and girls. Several differences between boys and girls were detected. Girls as a group were higher than boys on the reading related components of the Stanford Achievement Test. More boys were retained in first grade than girls.

3. There was a significant difference in the social adjustment, but not personal adjustment, of the low-scoring boys and girls. This difference is assumed to be the result of the method of selection and must be considered when interpreting other findings.

4. There was a significant difference between the high-scoring boys and low-scoring boys with reference to the Stanford achievement scores for word meaning ( $p < .10$ ), paragraph meaning ( $p < .10$ ), and arithmetic ( $p < .02$ ). No significant difference was found between the high-scoring girls and the low-scoring girls for achievement components.

5. A large number of the subjects would be considered grade retarded when results from the Stanford Achievement Test were compared to the national norms.

6. Over one-third of the subjects were retained in first grade.

7. School absences were greater for children who were retained.

The low-scoring group had greater absenteeism according to the mean score

as compared to the high-scoring group.

8. There was a significant difference in the family relations component of the California Test of Personality between the high-scoring boys and the low-scoring boys ( $p < .002$ ) and between the high-scoring girls and the low-scoring girls ( $p < .02$ ).

9. Questions concerned with the child's attitude toward school and the child's opinion of the mother's attitude toward school seemed to discriminate very little between the high-scoring and low-scoring groups.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of high school dropouts in first grade children. The subjects for this investigation were 40 first grade children enrolled in a public elementary school in Oklahoma. The California Test of Personality, Primary, form AA, was administered as a measure of personal and social adjustment. Children were administered two questionnaires, which had been developed by the investigator, on the child's attitude toward school and his understanding of his mother's attitudes toward school. Available information from school files included age, sex, achievement scores, attendance and was discussed in the analysis of data.

#### Findings

The findings of this investigation were as follows:

1. There was evidence that some children were old for their first grade placement.
2. There was a significant difference in the social adjustment, but not personal adjustment, of the low-scoring boys and girls. This difference is assumed to be the result of the method of selection and must be considered when interpreting other findings.
3. There was a significant difference between the high-scoring

boys and low-scoring boys on achievement scores for word meaning ( $p < .10$ ), paragraph meaning ( $p < .10$ ), and arithmetic ( $p < .02$ ).

4. A large number of the subjects would be considered grade retarded when results from the Stanford Achievement Test were compared to the national norms.

5. Over one-third of the subjects were or had been retained in the first grade.

6. School absences were greater for children who were retained. The low-scoring group had greater absenteeism according to the mean score as compared to the high-scoring group.

7. There was a significant difference in the family relations component of the California Test of Personality between the high-scoring boys and the low-scoring boys ( $p < .002$ ) and between the high-scoring girls and the low-scoring girls ( $p < .02$ ).

#### Recommendations

1. A larger, more representative investigation should be conducted to ascertain if the findings of this study are typical of the general population.

2. A longitudinal type investigation should be designed to follow children who manifest dropout characteristics during first years of school until they complete their schooling.

3. A future investigation should secure contact with the homes of the subjects to more adequately measure parental attitudes, educational level and occupation.

### Limitations

An evaluation of the study by the investigator revealed the following limitations:

1. The size of the sample was small; for the purpose of this study it was deemed practical to use the entire population of first grade children in one school system; and on this basis the largest possible group of matched subjects was used.
2. This study lacks some valuable information about the children's families which was unavailable in the school records.
3. Questionnaires concerned with the child's attitude toward school and the child's opinion of the mother's attitude toward school seemed to discriminate very little between the high-scoring and low-scoring groups.

### Implications for School Administrators

1. There is need to re-evaluate entrance ages of children as maturity may influence school achievement.
2. There is need to keep the enrollment number of children in each classroom for grades one through three smaller than what is now permitted.
3. There is need to continue to search for more effective techniques for teaching reading to primary children.



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**APPENDIX A**

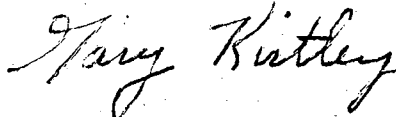
Dear Parents,

Mrs. Barbara Ferguson and Miss Judy Kays, graduate students from the Department of Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University, are conducting a study on normal children in the first grade to gather information that will help other teachers working with this age child. Their specific research will be to develop an instrument to determine characteristics of the normal first grader that will assist his teacher in understanding him more fully. The results obtained will also enable the teachers to develop an instructional program better suited for each individual child.

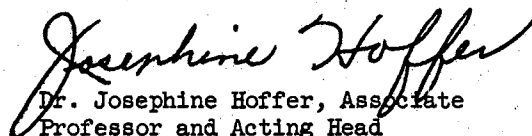
All material obtained in this study will be strictly confidential. No names will be used since the purpose of the study will be to identify characteristics of the children as a group. Perry schools were selected for this study because of the normality of the children as a group. This experience should prove interesting to your child and in no way could harm him. Mrs. Ferguson or Miss Kays, both certified teachers with teaching experience, will administer the questionnaire to the children at school during school hours.

If you are willing for your child to participate in this study, please mark YES on the attached form and sign your name and the child's name. If you do not wish to participate, mark NO and sign both your name and your child's and return the slip to the teacher tomorrow.

Sincerely yours,



Mr. Gary Kirtley, Principal



Dr. Josephine Hoffer, Associate  
Professor and Acting Head  
Department of Family Relations  
and Child Development

**APPENDIX B**

DIRECTIONS FOR INTRODUCING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST GRADE  
CHILDREN ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS TOWARD SCHOOL

I would like to know how you feel about school. I will ask you questions which are sometimes hard but you can answer if you will think very hard. There are no right or wrong answers. Each boy and girl in your room will answer the questions differently because all of you are different. Answer the questions the way you honestly feel about school. I will read a sample question. Think what the question means to you.

Most of the time I want to go to school.

If most of the time you want to go to school, answer by saying yes; if you feel that most of the time you do not want to go to school, answer by saying no. I will read each question aloud to you. If you have any questions about the words--what they mean--just ask and I will read it again. I will write down what you tell me so I won't forget your thoughts. You may answer by saying yes or no to each question or you may need to explain in a few words to help me understand how you feel about school.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST GRADE CHILDREN

I want to be on time for school each day. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I would be unhappy if I made a low grade on my report card. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If I don't want to go to school I would say I am sick when I really am not sick. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I want to go to school. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I am happy when I make good grades. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I like to tell my mother what I am doing and learning at school.  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I tell my mother when I need things for school like pencils, paper, pictures. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I think school is important for all boys and girls. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I think school is good for me. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

I like for my mother to listen when I tell her about school and the things I am doing and learning. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

DIRECTIONS FOR INTRODUCING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST GRADE CHILDREN  
ABOUT THEIR MOTHER'S FEELINGS TOWARD SCHOOL

I will ask you questions about how you think your mother feels about school. This is sometimes hard but you can do it if you will think very hard. There are no right or wrong answers. Each boy and girl in your room will answer the questions differently because all of you have different mothers. Answer the questions the way you feel your mother thinks about school. I will read a sample question. Think what the question means to you.

Most of the time my mother wants me to go to school.

If most of the time your mother wants you to go to school, answer by saying yes; if you feel that most of the time your mother does not want you to go to school, answer by saying no. I will read each question aloud to you. If you have any questions about the words--what they mean--just ask and I will read it again. I will write down what you tell me so I won't forget your thoughts. You may answer by saying yes or no to each question or you may need to explain in a few words to help me understand how you think your mother feels about school.



Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom \_\_\_\_\_

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST GRADE CHILDREN ON HOW THEY  
THINK THEIR MOTHER FEELS ABOUT SCHOOL

Most of the time my mother wants me to be on time for school each day.  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Most of the time my mother would be unhappy if I made a low grade on  
my report card. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If I were not sick my mother would let me stay home if I didn't want  
to go to school that day. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother wants me to go to school. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother is happy when I make good grades. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother asks me what I am doing and learning at school. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother helps me get things I need for school like pencils, paper,  
pictures. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother thinks all boys and girls should go to school. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother thinks school is good for me. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

My mother listens to me when I tell her about my school and the things  
I am doing and learning. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

VITA

Judy Ann Kays Thomas

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Thesis: IDENTIFICATION OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN WITH CHARACTERISTICS  
OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

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Education: Attended grade school at Stillwater Public Schools, Stillwater, Oklahoma, and East Lansing Public Schools, East Lansing, Michigan; was graduated from Stillwater High School in 1960; attended Merrill-Palmer in the fall of 1963; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Oklahoma State University, with a major in Family Relations and Child Development, in January, 1965; completed requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family Relations and Child Development in July, 1968.

Professional Experience: Taught sixth grade in Haysville, Kansas, from January, 1965, to May, 1965; Graduate assistant in the Department of Family Relations and Child Development from 1965 to 1966; taught third grade in the Kansas City Public Schools from 1966 to 1967; Assistant Regional Training Officer for Head Start, Child Development Programs, University of Oklahoma, July, 1967 to July, 1968.

Professional Organizations: Southern Association on Children Under Six, Oklahoma Association on Children Under Six, National Education Association, Oklahoma Education Association.