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## **An Analysis Of The Causes Of Non-Attendance And Dropouts In The Bohner School, Olton, Texas**

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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AND DROP-OUTS  
IN THE BONNER SCHOOL, OLYON, TEXAS**



**BOOKER T. GRAVES**

**1958**



AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AND DROP-  
OUTS IN THE BOYNER SCHOOL, ELTON, TEXAS

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of the Graduate School

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

Prairie View, Texas

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

Approved by:

*J. W. Echols*

Date: August 1, 1958

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AND DROP-  
OUTS IN THE BOHNER SCHOOL, OLTON, TEXAS**

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**by**

**Booker T. Graves**

**August, 1958**



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Sincere gratitude is expressed to Dr. J. W. Echols, adviser, for his guidance and supervision in the initial and final stages of preparation of this thesis.

To my wife, Esther Patridge Graves and my five darling children, Edwin, Lynne, Esther Ruth, Cecelia, and Eric who were very patient and understanding.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

With the emphasis being placed today on the needs for trained personnel in all areas, it has become increasingly important for educators to try to solve problems confronting the school as are related to attendance. The larger public school systems have put into action a visiting teacher program which proposes to help prevent non-attendance and to improve irregular attendance. However, rural schools very often, have no access to the visiting teacher program or to any other type of truancy prevention. They have had to seek other means to combat this problem.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. The purposes of this study are (1) to explore the philosophy of, and factors involved in school attendance; (2) to ascertain the probable causes of non-attendance in the Bohner School, Olton, Texas; and (3) to use the findings to make recommendations for possible improvement in attendance.

The current study was undertaken in an effort to throw light upon the real reasons why pupils are absent from school. Particularly it sought to ascertain what could be done to gain a more complete understanding of fundamental causes for pupil absence in a particular school situation.



Significance of the Study. The need for studying the causes of non-attendance and drop-outs was made evident by a constant increase of attendance problems in the Bohner School, Olton, Texas, to the extent that the possible future of financial appropriations for the school will be reduced.

It may be said quite safely that school administrators and teachers are universally interested in the problems associated with non-attendance, and are much concerned with reducing them. The tax-payers are concerned in part because their money is being used to provide buildings, equipment, and teachers for the use of all students. Citizens are concerned also because the quality of the product of the school is influenced by the extent to which students attend school regularly.

It would seem that any successful attack upon the absence problem should start with an analysis of the cause of absence among a particular group of pupils. It may be assumed that if we know the cause of a condition we are able to place an intelligent attack to remove the condition. If pupils are absent because of health factors, an effort to reduce absence will take the direction of changing those health factors. Similarly, if pupils are absent because of shortcomings in the school program, better attendance will require that these shortcomings be changed.

Previous studies associated with the preparation of this thesis, however, have stopped with an analysis based upon the reason given by pupils or parents. This still leaves unanswered the question of underlying fundamental causes. When a boy gives the reason for an absence



as sickness and he plays a game of football the same day, one suspects at once that the reason given was not the real reason. Yet, his absence was real. If his absenteeism is to be eliminated, the real cause must be sought out.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

To clarify the meaning of certain terms used in this study, the following terms are defined by Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education:

School absence. School absence may be defined as loss of a full day from school.

Broken homes. Broken homes refer to the family unit broken either by separation, divorce or death.

Truant. Truant refers to a pupil absent without permission from the school or parents.

## III. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Certain limitations in the scope of the problem of discovering the causes of non-attendance in the Bohner School, Olton, Texas, are made in keeping with the primary purpose of the study. Only those data directly concerned with attendance and relevant personal data are presented. An attempt was made to omit an irrelevant statistical or personal data. It should be mentioned that all records available were used to the fullest extent.



#### IV. METHODOLOGY

Primary sources of data used in this study include (1) the individual teacher's grade books, in which had been kept a day by day record of pupil absences for the semester, (2) the file in the office of the principal which contained the records of all the school-age pupils included in the community served by the Bohner School, and (3) information obtained from the tabulation of data received on the questionnaire and the personal interviews made in connection with the study. The secondary materials used, included numerous selected references on school absences, school laws regarding absences and other closely related topics.

As a basis for this investigation toward ascertaining the probable causes of non-attendance at the Bohner School, Olton, Texas a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to all the families with school-age children who resided in the community served by the Bohner School. In addition to the questionnaire, an interview check list was prepared to supplement the information on the questionnaire. The two instruments were constructed so that any overlapping information could be quickly detected and tabulated correctly. In all cases the respondents were assisted in executing the questionnaires. It was assumed that assistance would further assure accurate information.



## V. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

In Chapter I, attention has been given to the statement of the problem, significance of the study, definitions of terms used, limitation of the study and techniques used in collecting data. A review of the literature dealing with school attendance and absences, school laws regarding absences and other closely related topics is presented in Chapter II. Included are materials, references, and quotations from books, periodicals, bulletins, and other sources of information. The third Chapter contains the analysis and interpretation of data and Chapter IV, the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

It was noted that in school where probably 70 per cent of working men earning a livelihood. The idea of this attitude having existed is substantiated by Jones who gives the following statistics:

In 1907, Thorndike estimated that 85 per cent of the children that began school never reached the seventh grade, 75 per cent never reached the sixth grade, and 52 per cent did not graduate from high school. In 1930-1931, 47 per cent did not reach the seventh grade, 35 per cent did not reach the sixth grade, and 23 per cent did not graduate from high school.

Immediately after World War II there appeared to have been an increased amount of interest in the non-attendance problem. In the *National Education Journal* of December, 1940, Lambert reported

Arthur J. Jones, *Principles of Statistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1929), p. 221.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Prior to 1935, there was very little evidence presented in educational literature that studies were made to determine the causes for non-attendance in public schools of this country. An examination of the Education Index and The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature for the period of 1929-1951 inclusive show no listings under this heading. Schools and society as a whole seem to have had little concern for children who, after learning to read, write and do simple arithmetic, decided not to attend school any more. It was assumed by those who should have been concerned that those who chose not to attend school were probably better off working and earning a livelihood. The idea of this attitude having existed is substantiated by Jones who gives the following statistics:

In 1907, Thorndike calculated that 46 per cent of the children that began school never reached the seventh grade; 73 per cent never reached the ninth grade; and 92 per cent did not graduate from high school. In 1928-1929, 19 per cent did not reach the seventh grade, 26 per cent did not reach the ninth grade, and 73 per cent did not graduate from high school.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after World War II there appeared to have been an increased amount of interest in the non-attendance problem. In the National Education Journal of December, 1950, Lambert reported

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur J. Jones, Principles of Guidance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1945), p. 28.



on an important study of voluntary withdrawals from the public schools of West Virginia. The study was significant for a number of reasons. Techniques used were original, thorough, and successful. Held under the direction of the State Teachers Association and covering a three-year period, it was state-wide in scope with every school participating in one or more phases of the outlined plan.<sup>2</sup>

The incentive of the study was the disclosure in 1947 of statistics showing that out of every one hundred boys and girls who were attending elementary grades in West Virginia, twenty were permanently quitting prior to the eighth grade; thirty-three before reaching high school; approximately one-half before the tenth grade; and fifty-eight before entering the eleventh grade. Finally, only thirty-five out of every one hundred graduated. Statistics also showed that a high elimination rate was not peculiar to West Virginia, for even in the state with the best record, 27 per cent failed to finish high school and fourteen states had lower holding power than West Virginia.

Many findings of the study by Lambert were enlightening. Workers in one county who compiled individual case-study reports on over one hundred pupils who quit over a two-year period found that only a small percentage was unable to cope with school work. It was reported from two counties that fully 50 per cent of the drop-outs had little or no interest in school work, and from another, that only 9 per cent of those who left had discipline trouble. Seventy per cent of the families of withdrawing students were financially able to keep their children in school.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> National Education Association Journal, 39 (December, 1953), 664-666.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Among the pertinent ideas expressed in the report were two which would appear to be of particular interest to school pupils. It was found that the experience in conducting the interviews was of inestimable value to the teachers who participated. They not only learned something about important social and economic problems of the community, but as they listened to first-hand accounts of ill feeling toward the school, they were able to correct many misunderstandings and modify much of the accumulated resentment and ill will felt toward the school.<sup>4</sup>

Of considerable interest was the fact that many children failed to enter high school because of a fear complex built by members of their families, their friends, or even elementary teachers. The person who says, "You'd better learn this or you'll fail in high school", is contributing to the potential elimination of children from school.<sup>5</sup>

Delaney found that, in Chicago alone, during the full four-year term from 1946 to 1950, of the 17,592 freshmen who entered high school only 10,415 merited diplomas while 7,177 students dropped out - a total of 41 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Delaney, "The Vacant High School Seat," American School Board Journal, 121 (November, 1950), 22-23.



Pertinent findings included the facts that:

1. Repeated absence from school is a common symptom of school leaving.
2. Twenty per cent of the drop-outs left high school during the freshman year, 40 per cent during the second year, 30 per cent during the third year; and 10 per cent during the final year.
3. Schools in underprivileged areas reported 73 per cent of the drop-outs.
4. Only 19 per cent had a fair record of scholarship at the time of leaving. The others were failing in many or all subjects.
5. Health records indicated many cases of family vision, hearing defects and other health factors tending toward retardation of the drop-outs.
6. Twenty-six per cent of the drop-outs were rated on mental tests as having average or better than average ability. Some, however, were definitely handicapped.
7. Few of the drop-outs participated in extra-curricular activities.
8. The number reporting employment as a reason for school leaving was so small that it was considered negligible.
9. Frequent absence appeared to have had its beginning in the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school.<sup>7</sup>

Concentration on that vacant high school seat by close checking of attendance records and early diagnosis of signs of withdrawal are recommended. Full use of in-service training in modern counseling methods, cumulative records, and curriculum modifications are suggested to help keep that vacant seat filled. More effective methods

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



for having "exit interviews" with the student when he is leaving are also recommended if proper counseling is to be done.<sup>8</sup>

A comprehensive study of out-of-school youth, made in Louisville, Kentucky, revealed that the absence of skills, information and goals on the part of fourteen and fifteen year old children who had left school for work was glaringly apparent, with the older children practically as ill-prepared. Many did not know what they wanted nor, when they did, how to attain it.<sup>9</sup>

Factors emphasized in this study were considered in having handicapped the success of these 524 boys and girls in Louisville were their meager educational backgrounds and their immature, irresponsible attitudes toward work. Few of them knew what kind of jobs were available, what they wanted or could do, or how to get the available work. As a result the majority accepted idleness and were not actively looking for a job. When questioned, only 7 per cent of the 524 minors interviewed regarded the school as the primary source of assistance in their vocational planning.<sup>10</sup>

Of the forty-one employers, only seven said they thought it desirable to hire young people under eighteen. Many stated flatly that there was no advantage to hiring minors under eighteen except that they could get them for less pay. Most of the employers thought

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>9</sup>Miriam Keeler and Caroline E. Legg, Hunting A Career, A Study of Out-Of-School Youth in Louisville, Kentucky, Bulletin No. 115, 1949, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



that educational qualifications would be increasingly important for most jobs in the future. The opinion prevailed that the better educated youth were the better adjusted youth and that the importance of having completed a goal mattered greatly when considering an employee.<sup>11</sup>

Thirty-one of the forty-one employers found that young people needed more supervision, and a high proportion stated they needed on-the-job training more than adults.

In Louisville, it was found that 46 per cent of the fourteen and fifteen year old, out-of-school youth were idle; 36 per cent of the sixteen and seventeen year old group were unemployed; and 21 per cent of the eighteen and nineteen year old group were without work.

Some dissatisfaction with school itself - courses, teachers, or discipline - was given as the primary reason for the withdrawal of nearly half of the children from school. Discouragement over their own lack of progress or lack of ability to adjust was another contributing factor. An additional 184 others gave dissatisfaction with school as a contributory reason for leaving, thus bringing the total group who were dissatisfied with school to 293.

Young workers under eighteen were found to be more likely to get hurt than adult workers. A survey made by the United States Department of Labor for 1945, showed that in the manufacturing industry as a whole the injury frequency rate was one-half times as high for youth under eighteen as for older workers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 123.



In the early follow-up study made of 434 school graduates and non-graduates who had left La Grange, Indiana, High School between 1925 and 1940, Warstler stated that the reasons for leaving school, listed in order of number of times reported, were: graduation, lack of interest, marriage, sickness, and inadequate finances. None of the pupils who had failed to finish high school reported having taken any advanced training beyond that which they had received in high school. Enlightening and significant was their unrealistic attitude toward their individual occupational goals while in high school. Apparently the 37 per cent of the girls who wanted to secure employment in office work were the only ones who either knew their own potentialities or took training for a specific job. Twenty-eight reported receiving employment in this desired area. Other girls who proved less aware of their opportunities were those who desired to enter the professions. Only one-fourth of them attained their goal. Twenty-one of the girls reported as laborers and operators although none desired this type of employment. About five times as many boys desired professional work as actually entered it. Thirty-four of the boys were working as laborers and operators although none had wished to do so.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>A. R. Warstler, "Long-Term Follow-up of School Leavers". *Occupations*, 20 (January, 1942), 284-285.



Concerning the occupational goals of pupils, Warstler believes:

The general tendency was for individuals to expect too much in making their occupational plans. Too many were thinking only in terms of the high positions and failed to receive or ignored realistic vocational guidance directing them to jobs that were available and for which they were qualified.<sup>14</sup>

Acute and applicable today as they were when drawn are the author's pertinent conclusions.

The need for vocational guidance, placement, and follow-up is evident, and the school should no longer neglect this responsibility. In order to keep pace with modern trends and the needs of the world of work, consideration must constantly be given to the modification of the curriculum and the addition of courses of study. The school should note that its responsibility lies largely with the 80 per cent who do not receive any additional scholastic training. A continuous and tactful effort is needed to guide students to a more realistic thinking about their future occupational status. On the other hand, hasty judgment must not be passed on any pupil because numerous exceptions were noted in the comparison<sup>15</sup> between scholastic records and later occupational achievements.

Concerning early signs of the intentions of the future drop-outs, Dillon reported a marked degree of increase in irregular attendance during the junior high school days of the drop-outs and again as they began high school. It was suggested that the reduction in the percentage of attendance is evidence of individual dissatisfaction and a manifestation of maladjustment.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>16</sup> Harold J. Dillon, Early School Leavers, (New York: National Labor Committee, 1949), p. 40.



Dillon also found:

...that there is a general decline in scholarship among early school leavers as they progress from elementary to junior and senior high school and that the decline in senior high school as compared with junior high is particularly striking.<sup>17</sup>

The research of Dillon revealed that 70 per cent of the more than thirteen hundred drop-outs studied had failed on the elementary level. As trouble signs, it was found that irregular attendance and poor scholarship can be recognized and dealt with through some program of adjustment.

Another apparent characteristic pattern followed by the early school leaver is failure to take part in extra-curricular programs. He is in need of interest stimulus and also in need of a feeling of belonging, both of which could be developed through active interest in extra-curricular activities.<sup>18</sup>

In addition Dillon has reported:

As might be expected, grade failure was more frequent among those of limited intelligence. Fifty-eight per cent of the early school leavers who repeated grades had IQ's below 95, though there were about 40 per cent of this IQ range who did not repeat any grades. On the other hand, approximately 30 per cent of the grade repeaters had IQ's over 105.<sup>19</sup>

As given by themselves as a reflection of their mental and emotional attitudes toward leaving school, reasons for early withdrawal reflecting dissatisfaction or difficulty in school occurred, 1,948 times or approximately 63 per cent of the cases. Financial reasons were given

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 46.



by 26 per cent of the students, and personal reasons by 11 per cent. Dillon found that the most frequent suggestion for the improvement of the services rendered students by the schools was the availability of a guidance counselor. Approximately 13 per cent commented on the need for better teacher-student relationships

In Texas the legislature showed evidence of its concern about school attendance by passing the following attendance laws:

**ARTICLE 2890. Attendance Requirements.** --Every child in the State who is seven years and not more than sixteen years of age shall be required to attend the public schools in the district or its residence, or in some other district to which it may be transferred as provided by law, for a period of not less than one hundred and twenty days. The period of compulsory school attendance of each school term unless otherwise authorized by the district school trustees and notice given by such trustees prior, to the beginning of such school term provided that no child shall be required to attend school for a longer period than the maximum term of the public school in the district where such child resides.

**ARTICLE 2893. Exemptions.** --The following classes of children are exempt from the requirements of this law:

1. Any child in attendance upon a private or parochial school which shall include in its course a study of good citizenship and shall make the English language the bases of instruction in all subjects.

2. Any child whose bodily or mental condition is such as to render attendance inadvisable, and who holds definite certificate of reputable physician specifying this condition and covering the period of absence.

3. Any child who is blind, deaf, dumb or feeble-minded, for the instruction of whom no adequate provision has been made by the school district.

4. Any child living more than two and one-half miles by direct and traveled road from the nearest public school supported for the children of the same race and color of such child and with no fee transportation provided.



5. Any child more than sixteen (16) years of age who has satisfactorily completed the work of the ninth grade, and whose services are needed in support of a parent or other person standing in parental relation to the child may, on presentation of proper evidence to the county superintendent, be exempted from further attendance at school.<sup>20</sup>

Personal observation and experiences support the idea that the passage of the compulsory attendance law was a tremendous stride forward in the educational situation in Texas. However, there were other facets to the problem of non-attendance. It cannot be assumed that even through strict enforcement of these laws can the problem of non-attendance be solved. As in the case of Mexican migratory families, the family must make a choice between eating regularly and sending children who are considered old enough to work or to school.

These laws have not been enforced effectively as will be shown in the data obtained with regards to non-attendance of the pupils used in this study.

Many studies have been made concerning the effect of irregular attendance on the pupil's progress. Some of these are included here as they appear to be pertinent for showing effects of irregular attendance which usually precedes non-attendance.

Hoke in an early study presented data which substantiate the prevalent idea that regularity of attendance is important for achievement in school.<sup>21</sup> "The factor which contributes most to the failure of pupils is absence from school. Of the 150 failing grades recorded

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<sup>20</sup>Texas State Department of Education, Public School Laws of the State of Texas, pp. 193-194.

<sup>21</sup>H. J. Hoke, Placement of Children in the Elementary Grades. U.S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 3, Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1916, p. 93.



for the first semester, absence is a contributing factor in 35 per cent of the cases!"<sup>22</sup>

The facts that many as 50 percent of non-promoted pupils were absent over two-fifths of the school term, and that 70 per cent of these pupils were absent 30 days in half a year, in cases studied by Shallow, give further support to the common sense view that attendance and successful school work go hand in hand. Though no use is made of accurate measures, and though there are no elaborate analyses of findings, the evidence presented is worthy of consideration as a check upon the more recent and the more scientifically executed studies.<sup>23</sup>

Lund made a comparison of attendance and retardation in the schools of Benson County, North Dakota. He found that in the eight year period following 1908 - 1909, pupils improved in both percentage of attendance and in a lesser degree of retardation. The gain is quite positive and as accurately stated as the nature of the measures used will permit. The results of this investigation lead the author to say, "The relation of promotion to attendance is close and constant."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>23</sup> Edward B. Shallow, "Does Strict Enforcement of the Compulsory Education Law Assist Teachers and Supervisors in Their Work?" National Education Association, *Proceedings*, Vol. 54, pp. 1094-1099. Washington, D. C.; National Education Association, 1916.

<sup>24</sup> Alice Henryetta Lund, "A Study of Attendance in the Elementary Schools of Benson County, North Dakota," Abstract of unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1918, p. 8.



Abbott and Breckenridge personally investigated 1,158 cases of non-attendance in the Chicago Schools. Their study revealed that many withdrawals are first discovered as habitual absentees. The following is a summary of their findings: Out of 607 boys and 522 girls, the reasons given for absence showed sickness as the chief reason and work at home, lack of clothing and truancy as the main others. The reasons given above were cited by 46 per cent, 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. Other reasons were cited by only one or two out of the group and were not deemed significant.<sup>25</sup>

Peterson's conclusions do not quite agree with the Chicago study in regard to non-attendance. Basically, however, his findings differ very little from them. Peterson's reasons for absences are broad statements and are not found on the child's excuse when brought from home. Peterson's causes for non-attendance are:

1. Illness - pupil or member of family
2. Dissatisfaction with the school program
3. Dislike of individual teacher
4. Death in the immediate family
5. Inadequate family income - requiring pupil to work
6. Broken homes
7. Slow progress in school
8. Undesirable companions <sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckenridge, *Truancy and Non-Attendance in the Chicago Schools*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), pp. 128-147.

<sup>26</sup>Raymond Peterson, "Administration of Attendance," *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, (April, 1945), pp. 105-109.



Miller in his study of absentees found that the lack of good health causes the greatest number of absences. To this effect, statements made by parents as to causes of pupil's absences were obtained. Illness was classified under the following headings: colds, measles, chicken pox, headaches, natural or severe menstruation pains, pneumonia, sick (when the cause of illness was not known), sickness in the home, fever, appendicitis, dental work, scarlet fever, injuries, sore eyes, sick stomach, "flu" and other illness.<sup>27</sup>

Cunningham, in connection with an overall health program in the Waco, Texas, schools investigated causes of absences in relation to socio-economic status by obtaining statements on reasons for absence from parents. She attempted to determine economic status by the use of a questionnaire.<sup>28</sup>

The social factors in connection with non-attendance were investigated by Sullenger. This was done by checking the Social Service Exchange in the City of Omaha, Nebraska, to determine if families of non-attending children were registered and had received material aid. He also associated truancy with the mental status of the child by studying the findings of the school psychologist.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Homer Lee Miller, "An Analysis of Causes of Absence from School," Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas, August, 1948, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret R. Cunningham, A Study of Causes of Absence in Relation to Socio-Economic Status (Austin: Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Texas, 1940), p. 110.

<sup>29</sup> T. E. Sullenger, "Some Social Factors in School Attendance," School and Society, Vol. 41 (February 16, 1935), pp. 238-40.



Heck pointed out that several authors have considered the significance of social problems as causes for non-attendance. Typical social "causes" found for non-attendance were:

1. Parental neglect or home conditions
2. Type of people that make up the population
3. Type of school
4. Non-cooperation of parents
5. Kind of legislation
6. Enforcement of attendance legislation
7. Efficiency of attendance service.<sup>30</sup>

Scott found that in Norview High School, Norfolk, Virginia, the greatest number of pupils left school in September and January. Two-thirds of those leaving in January had failed one or more subjects. The number of freshmen leaving in September 1949 as compared with the number in 1942 was reduced by one-third through personal counseling.<sup>31</sup>

Harrower advocated the idea that adjusting the curriculum content and method to individual needs by ability grouping in a differential program, as a means of solving the drop-out problem in Hornell, New York.<sup>32</sup> She further implied that good guidance and adequate testing should precede the grouping. Homerooms should be placed on an equal

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<sup>30</sup> Arch O. Heck, "School Attendance", Review of Educational Research, Vol. 6 (April, 1936), pp. 157-63.

<sup>31</sup> Marigold Scott, "The Convention in Brief", Occupations, Vol. 28, (May, 1950), p. 536.

<sup>32</sup> Jan Harrower, "The Convention in Brief", Occupations, Vol. 28 (May, 1950), p. 536.



basis, and some subjects--general shop, art, music--should be opened to all. The work of the slow group should be made just as challenging as the work for the academic group and not just, "busy work".

Pollock draws the conclusion that a majority of America's high schools are falling down because their courses are out of step with the times. He thinks that an out-dated emphasis on academic subjects and white-collar job training bores students without helping them. As one solution to the drop-out problem, a planned program has been developed by the Life Adjustment Education Commission. Pollock in his article quotes Hull of the Division of Secondary Education, United States Office of Education. Hull describes this program as being neither college preparatory nor vocational education, but as a combination of the best features of both. "It supplements the usual formal high school courses with training and guidance which help your child live a fuller, happier, better rounded life."<sup>33</sup>

In many cases a broken home is the general reason for poor attendance, truancy, poor grades or drop-outs, according to Hicker. The early school leaver, by all evidence, comes from homes which are typical for all youths fourteen to seventeen years of age in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jack Harrison Pollock, "Why Kids Quit School," This Week Magazine (August 14, 1949), pp. 4-5, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Hecker, "Early School Leavers", Education Digest, Vol. 19 (May, 1954), pp. 5-7.



Deering substantiates this statement in that he emphasized the idea that the values and appreciation of education must be developed in the home, whether it is a closely knit family or a so-called broken home. A concomitant result of this development would be regular and consistent school attendance. Whenever educational values are set out as desirable goals--goals that can be attained in a pleasurable manner and that offer a sense of accomplishment--then specific factor of school attendance assumes its proper place as giving satisfaction to one's self and to others. <sup>35</sup>

Rock emphasized the necessity of a change in the attitude and philosophy of all staff members in relationship to drop-outs from school by placing them on special study committees to investigate the problems. These staff members should then be allowed to plan a corrective program. <sup>36</sup>

Hecker further implies in his study of early school leavers in secondary schools of Kentucky that there was no evidence of many pupils who withdrew from school prior to graduation and had experienced frequent grade failures and retention in the elementary school. The data presented in the study also emphasized the regression in scholarship evidenced by early school leavers as they progress from elementary to junior and then to senior high. <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> E. P. Deering, "The Effect of Environmental Factors on School Attendance", California Journal of Elementary Education, Vol. 22 (May, 1954), pp. 207-210.

<sup>36</sup> Walter J. Rock, "The Convention in Brief", Occupations, Vol. 28 (May, 1950), 537.

<sup>37</sup> Hecker, op. cit., pp. 5-7.



## SUMMARY

It was found that there have been studies made which are in agreement and which substantiate that attendance is a very important factor in school achievement. There are few studies, however, concerning the individual himself and the causes and results of his non-attendance. The problem incident to drop-outs is recognized for its seriousness, and that in spite of the fact that studies have been made and are no doubt still being made, the attendance problem is yet unsolved. The schools will be able to do something to interest boys and girls enough to want them to stay, but there is little they can do about altering the students' financial shortcomings.

Absences due to broken homes can take on a disguise such as need to work, need to stay home with younger children or illness (emotional upset). Frequent absence is sometimes followed by a withdrawal, therefore, withdrawals were included in this study. The problems of drop-outs and of habitual absentees have much in common.



## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### Procedures Employed in Making the Analysis

The sources of data which are analyzed in this chapter are:

(1) School attendance records, and (2) tabulation of information received from questionnaires and personal interviews. The questionnaire was prepared and answers obtained from fourteen pupils who had withdrawn from Bohner School and twenty pupils now attending Bohner School. Those pupils now attending Bohner School who were used as subjects for the investigation have attendance records which show them to be irregular attenders.

Consideration was given to the following factors in the construction of the questionnaire in order that the validity of the questionnaire might be improved.

1. An attempt was made to avoid ambiguity.
2. The questions were phrased so as to avoid any measure of suggestion.
3. Questions which were not reasonable and concrete were eliminated.
4. An attempt was made to adapt the questions to the type of respondents, i. e. Bohner School pupils.

Parts of the questionnaire were asked orally, but the check list of reasons for withdrawal and other questions involving the child's emotional reactions rather than factual material were answered in writing by the



child. An effort was made throughout the interview to establish rapport with the interviewed child and to enlist his assistance in finding a solution to the problems involved in dropping out of school or in being habitually absent. The interview was conducted in the home of the child where the interviewer made mental notes that could be used later to supplement and verify the oral and written information which had been secured.

The procedures used in making an analysis of the data received from questionnaires and personal interviews with the thirty-four subjects are summarized as follows:

1. Before the tabulation was begun, the tables for the summarization of the data were drawn up.
2. A preliminary tabulation of the data from ten questionnaires was made to ascertain whether these included responses which would warrant significant conclusions.
3. The data from the remaining questionnaires were tabulated by hand.
4. The tabulation of data from each questionnaire was checked carefully for possible mathematical errors.
5. Percentages and totals required by the tables were obtained.
6. Interpretation of the findings was made, and a list of recommendations based on these findings was made.



## Analysis and Interpretation

The data are presented under the following headings:

- (1) School Attendance Records of Drop-Outs and Irregular Attenders,
- (2) Scholastic Records and Intelligence Quotients, (3) Grades and Ages of Boys and Girls at Withdrawal, (4) Occupational and Family Status of Parents of Drop-Outs and Irregular Attenders, (5) School Grade Completed by Parents of Withdrawing Children and Irregular Attenders,
- (6) Number of Siblings and Place of Drop-Outs and Irregular Attenders in the Family, (7) Grades at Which Siblings of Drop-Outs Withdrew from School, (8) Reasons Given for Withdrawal and Irregular Attendance,
- (9) Parental Attitude Toward Withdrawal and Irregular Attendance,
- (10) Personal Attitude of Withdrawing Students Toward School, and
- (11) Work Experience of Drop-Outs.

### School Attendance Records

The attendance records of Bohner School for the school years 1952-53, 1953-54, 1954-55, 1955-56, 1956-57 were examined in order to secure information about the drop-outs. An analysis of the enrollment and attendance for the school years 1952-1957 was made. A summary of the enrollment and attendance is given in Table I.



TABLE I  
ANALYSIS OF THE ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE  
FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS, 1952-57

Year	Enrollment	Aggregate Attendance	Agg. Abs.	Agg. Mem.	No With-drawal	Per Cent Withdrawal
1952-53	64	11198	1220	12418	20	31.2
1953-54	99	12794	3002	15796	30	25
1954-55	159	15263	3133	18396	52	32.7
1955-56	121	11912	1782	13694	39	32.2
1956-57	123	12613	1618	14231	44	35.8
Totals	566	62780	10755	73535	185	32.9

A total of 185 pupils withdrew during the five year period 1952-57. Of this number 171 could not be located. Therefore, the fourteen who were available for interview were used for the investigation.

An examination of the individual attendance records of the fourteen drop-outs revealed that in all cases these pupils had been habitually absent before the final withdrawal. Therefore, the questionnaire was filled out by twenty pupils who have records showing habitual absenteeism. The section which asked for reasons for withdrawal was changed for the absentees to one which asked for reasons for absences. It may be noted



on the summary of school attendance that the absences of the twenty pupils used for the investigation accounted for a decrease in the average daily attendance. This always has an effect on the budgetary considerations for the school.

### Scholastic Records and Intelligence Quotients

Examination of school records showed that the I. Q. of the drop-outs and irregular attenders ranged from 103 to 50. Among the drop-outs, six had I. Q. 's below 70; three had I. Q.'s between 70-80. There were no drop-outs with an I. Q. above 90 and the other five had I. Q. 's ranging from 82-90.

The implications from the above tabulations indicate that if the testing results of the intelligence tests administered are valid, the majority of the pupils who have dropped out may be classified as "retarded" and would need a program of special education to meet their needs.

Among the irregular attenders, ten had I. Q. 's below 70, and nine had I. Q. 's between 70 and 80, making a total of nineteen with I. Q. 's between 50 and 80. Only one irregular attender had an I. Q. of 103. The implications here also would indicate that if the test results can be considered valid, the majority of those with records of irregular attendance may not be receiving the kind of training most feasible for them.

The scholastic achievement of the groups studied is presented in Table II. Eight drop-outs had failures in the elementary grades, seven



had failed after leaving the elementary grades, and six were failing at the time of withdrawal. Nine pupils who attended irregularly had no record of failures, eleven had failures in the elementary school, and eleven had failures after leaving the elementary school.

**TABLE II**  
**SCHOLASTIC RECORD OF FOURTEEN DROP-OUTS**  
**AND TWENTY IRREGULAR ATTENDERS**

	No. Drop-Outs	Per Cent	No. Irregular Attendees	Per Cent
No record of failure	6	42.86	9	45
Record with past failures	8	57.1	11	55
Complete failures	1	7.1	-	
Failing school record upon withdrawal	6	42.86	-	
Passing school record upon withdrawal	7	50	-	
Record of failure after leaving the elementary grades	7	50	11	55

The result of past failure and poor attendance, together with low intelligent quotients for some of the pupils were shown clearly in the pronounced retardation at the time of withdrawal. This retardation is shown in Table III.



**TABLE III**  
**GRADES AND AGES OF BOYS AND GIRLS AT**  
**WITHDRAWAL**

Age	Grade											
	6		7		8		9		10		11	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	B	G	B	G	B	G	Boys	Girls
22												
21												
20					1	1	2				1	
19							1					
18	1				1			1				1
17			1	2								
13		1										
Total	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	1			1	1
Median Age	15.5		17	18.5	19.7		18	20				
Median age of boys			- 18.4									
Median age of girls			- 18.4									
Median grade of boys			- 8.1									
Median grade of girls			- 8.5									



The median age for withdrawal for both boys and girls was 18.4, while the median grade for boys was 8.1 and the median grade for girls was 8.5. These figures show a retardation of five years in school work. Those who withdrew in the eight and ninth grades showed the greatest retardation. The median age of the four who withdrew from the eighth grade was 18.5, with ages of seventeen, eighteen, and twenty-one.

Dillon found in his study of early school leavers that 70 per cent of the students had failed on the elementary school level, three-fourths had failed on the high grade levels,<sup>38</sup> and only 60 per cent were in regular attendance during junior high school enrollment.<sup>39</sup> He assumed that these facts were indicative of vulnerability to early school leaving. The records of marks, poor attendance, and grade retardation of his group as a whole seem to indicate that here, too, they could be used as symptoms of predicting possible withdrawal from school. Certainly they are danger signals indicating the presence of maladjustment to the school situation as it exists for a particular child.

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<sup>38</sup> Dillon, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 31.



## Occupational and Family Status

The fact that few years of formal education was completed by the parents is shown in Table IV. The occupations of employed parents as given by each of the drop-outs and irregular attenders showed farming as the only occupation of the fathers and domestic work the only occupation of the mothers.

TABLE IV

JOBS HELD BY EMPLOYED PARENTS OF DROP-OUTS  
AND IRREGULAR ATTENDERS

Type of Job	Number	Per Cent
Farmer	30	94
Laborer	2	6
Unemployed mothers	31	91
Employed mothers	3	9

The mothers not employed outside of the home represent 91.2 per cent of the total group with thirty-one mothers not employed outside of the home. Only three of 8.8 per cent of the mothers were employed outside of the home, although three cases indicated that the father was deceased and the mother employed. The occupations of farming



and domestic work require little or no education nor do they require prolonged periods of preparation.

#### School Grade Completed By Parents Of Withdrawing Children and Irregular Attenders

Of the twenty-eight families investigated five fathers and eight mothers withdrew from school at the completion of the third grade, six fathers and nine mothers at the completion of the fifth, three fathers at the completion of the seventh. Only five parents of the twenty-eight families completed the tenth grade as shown in Table V.

TABLE V

#### SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED BY PARENTS OF WITHDRAWING CHILDREN AND IRREGULAR ATTENDERS

Grade	Withdrawal		Irregular Attendance	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
3	2	4	6	1
4	4	3	5	3
5	4	3	4	8
6	3	1	2	2
7	0	1	0	5
10	3	0	1	1
	16	12	18	20

These examples of occupation and little training, while testifying to lack of initiative and ambition are not conclusive enough to predict trends, but a picture of an uninspiring home emerges in many instances as data are reviewed.



In Table VI, the family status of both groups of pupils showed that the greatest per cent lived with both parents.

TABLE VI  
FAMILY STATUS OF WITHDRAWING STUDENTS  
AND IRREGULAR ATTENDERS

Status	Number Drop-Outs	Per Cent	Number Irregular Attenders	Per Cent
Living with both parents	7	50	17	85
Living with one parent	2	14.28	3	15
Married and living with husband	4	28.57	0	0
Other relatives	1	7.14	0	0

There were four girls who were married and lived with their husbands; twenty-four lived with both parents; one with a relative other than a parent. The two who lived with one parent did so because the other parent was deceased. Therefore, burdened homes were not a factor in non-attendance or irregular attendance in the Bohner School.



**Place of Drop-Outs and Irregular Attenders  
in Family**

Table VII shows the Place of Drop-Outs and Irregular Attenders in the Family. Fifteen of the families of the thirty-four pupils studied were large with an average of eleven. Thirteen were the eldest children, five were middle children and several had younger brothers and sisters at home. The mean number of children per family is no indication of the probability of early withdrawal, nor does it seem to indicate probability of irregular attendance.

**TABLE VII**  
**PLACE OF DROP-OUT AND IRREGULAR**  
**ATTENDER IN FAMILY**

Place in Family	Drop-out Number	Irregular Attender
First	8	5
Second	3	4
Third	1	5
Fourth	2	3
Fifth	-	1
Sixth	-	1
Seventh	-	1



Tables VIII and IX show fourteen drop-outs studied had a total of ninety-one brothers and sisters of whom fourteen were out of school and seventy-seven either still in school or too young to attend. Table IX shows that of the fourteen out of school only two completed the tenth grade. The mean grade for withdrawal from school for these siblings was 8.1. This is only .2 less than that of the drop-outs which was 8.3.

TABLE VIII  
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS OF DROP-OUTS

Number of Siblings	Number of Drop-Outs
One	-
Two	3
Four	-
Five	2
Six Six	2
Seven	3
Nine	3
Fifteen	1



**TABLE IX**  
**GRADES AT WHICH SIBLINGS WITHDREW FROM SCHOOL**

Grade at Withdrawal	Number
4	2
7	1
8	4
9	4
10	1
11	2

**Reasons Given for Withdrawing From  
School**

Students who had withdrawn from school were asked to indicate the reason for withdrawal in the order of their importance. Three levels could have been checked for each reason given on the check list as being the most vital, vital or least vital. Table X shows the ratings given to each of the items on the check list by the fourteen drop-outs.



TABLE X  
REASONS GIVEN FOR WITHDRAWING FROM  
SCHOOL

Reason	Most Vital	Rating, Per Cent	
		Vital	Least Vital
Bored	85.71	14.29	0
Low grades	71.42	21.42	7.14
Family in need of financial help	78.57	14.29	7.14
Parents wanted child to stop	85.71	7.14	7.14
No friends in school	14.29	21.42	64.29
No time to study	42.86	50.00	7.14
Unhappy	14.29	21.42	64.29

It is obvious that boredom is regarded by the largest number of drop-outs as being the most vital reason for leaving school. However low grades and the family's need of financial help seem nearly as vital. The influence of parents on withdrawal was checked also twelve times as being most vital as a reason for withdrawal. Reasons for withdrawal considered as being least vital on the list were: no friends in school, no time to study, and unhappy at home.



The implication of boredom by twelve out of fourteen drop-outs cannot be overlooked by those responsible for shaping the curriculum offered to these children, nor can the influence of low grades be overlooked. It would appear that these two factors may have relationship which requires an evaluation of the curriculum.

The implication of the lack of interest on the part of the parents also appears to require real consideration. The family's need for financial help may be as valid need in some cases, but the fact that many parents of these fourteen drop-outs do not put the right value on school attendance might imply a need for counseling and guidance being made available for the parents.

#### Parental Attitude Toward Withdrawal

Parental attitudes, of course, influenced several of the drop-outs to withdraw from school. However, reactions noted during the personal interview appear to suggest that if the pupil's attitude toward school had been more pleasant a larger number of parents would have objected to their withdrawal as shown in Table XI.

TABLE XI

#### PARENTAL ATTITUDE TOWARD WITHDRAWAL

Attitude	Number	Per Cent
Parents wanted child to stop	8	57.15
Parents neither objected nor encouraged	4	28.57
Parents objected to withdrawal	2	14.26



Eight parents wanted the child to withdraw, four parents neither objected nor encouraged, and two parents objected to the withdrawal.

It seems that many parents are prone to follow the line of least resistance. As a whole this seemed to be the case with the majority of children interviewed. They had painted a picture of dissatisfaction with school and in some cases parents were trying to satisfy the children, because they had no special interest in the school anyway.

#### Personal Attitude of Withdrawing Students Toward School

It appeared evident that after withdrawal, some of the drop-outs had a feeling of inadequacy when nine parents of drop-outs answered "yes" to the question "Do you want your children to have more schooling than you have?" Nine drop-outs are as happy out as in; two are not as happy out as in; one was not completely happy out; and two had no comment to make. Table XII shows that 64.29 per cent still have somewhat negative attitude toward school.



TABLE XII  
 PERSONAL ATTITUDE OF WITHDRAWING STUDENTS  
 TOWARD SCHOOL

Attitude	Number	Per Cent
As happy out as in	9	64.29
Not as happy out as in	2	14.29
Not happy all the time out	1	7.14
No comment	2	14.29
 <b>Question:</b>		
Do you want your children to have more schooling than you have?		
a. Yes	10	71.43
b. Don't care	1	7.14
c. Not sure	1	7.14
d. No comment	2	14.29



### Work Experience of Withdrawing Students

All but five of the fourteen drop-outs had worked at some job since leaving school. Due to an unexplained reluctance on the part of the interviewees to give specific answers to questions concerning their work experience as to kinds of jobs held and duration of employment, no conclusions could be drawn concerning their success or lack of success. However, the interviews gave the impression that the group as a whole has a very unrealistic view of the world of work and the demands which will be made upon the individual. It appeared that the school had made little impression on the drop-outs so far as the preparation necessary for securing the kinds of employment mentioned by some as being the life's work they wished to do.

TABLE XIII  
WORK EXPERIENCE OF WITHDRAWING  
STUDENTS

	Number	Per Cent
Have worked at something since	9	64.29
Have not worked at anything	4	28.57
Keeping house for husband	1	7.14

The conclusions drawn from the investigation and recommendations for improving the attendance at Bohner School are given in Chapter IV.



## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purposes of this study were: (1) to explore the philosophy and factors involved in school attendance, (2) to ascertain the probable cause of non-attendance in the Bohner School, Olton, Texas, and (3) to use the findings to make recommendations for possible improvement in attendance. Data were obtained from two sources: the school attendance records, questionnaires and personal interviews. A total of fourteen drop-outs and twenty irregular attenders were used as the subjects for the investigation.

While the total of thirty-four cases studied is an insufficient number to establish trends that are of value statistically; certain patterns are fairly distinct.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of the drop-outs had difficulty in school because of their inability to cope with the subject matter. This could be due to retardation.
2. Parents of the drop-outs have very little interest in the education of their children, probably because the parents had very little training and ambition.
3. Because of the difficulty of keeping up with regular class work, the drop-outs accrued failures and became bored with school.



4. No indication of pride, appreciation, or loyalty to the school was shown by the drop-outs.
5. Irregular attendance seems to lead in the majority of cases to withdrawal.
6. The drop-outs have not made a satisfactory adjustment since withdrawal.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Early drop-out signs should be recognized and steps taken to remedy the cause for maladjustment.
2. The school should make a definite effort through testing, curriculum adjustment, and special education to meet the needs of potential drop-outs.
3. The school should also make a definite effort to obtain closer rapport with the parents of all of the children and through counseling help to encourage their cooperation with attendance.
4. It is recommended that further study of attendance problems be made.



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