STRESSFUL SITUATIONS OF POTENTIAL DROPOUTS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

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A thesis
submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work in the School of Social Work
Fresno State College
June, 1968
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Professor V. Edward Bates, I wish to express my gratitude for patience, guidance and encouragement, given during the writing of this thesis.

I am grateful to the other members of my thesis committee, Professor Erving Ruhl and Professor Frank M. Boolsen for their constructive suggestions and warm cooperation.

Also, I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. John Solo, Principal of Thomas A. Edison High School whose cooperation made this study possible; and to all the students that participated in the study.

Finally, without the cooperation and invaluable help of Mr. Charles Day, counselor-teacher in charge of the special program at Thomas A. Edison High School and Mr. Donald H. Grady, guidance counselor, the completion of this study would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a progressive society, the importance of utilizing all available resources is recognized. One of a society's most important resources is its children. It is through the children that progress and expansion is continued. Education is the instrument which aids society in preparing its children for their future vocational roles. The social institution entrusted with this task is, in large measure, the school.

Connor states that:

Education today is a dynamic social process. Its responsibility to our society is to protect, strengthen, and extend democracy and to preserve, rebuild and fortify human and natural resources. Our schools must provide a program to meet the educational needs of all children. Whenever necessary, they should provide supplementary help for children so that they may use their school experiences to the best of their abilities. ¹

The educational and social needs of those children who have been given a poor start in achieving adult competence should be of particular concern to a democratic society. Such children often suffer deprivations in all aspects of their environments. To fulfill the school's task of helping its children utilize their full potential

requires the combined efforts of a variety of social institutions.

The concern of the school in helping all children to achieve self-realization is consistent with the goal of social work. The goal of social work is the enhancement of social functioning whenever the need for such enhancement is either socially or individually perceived. The social worker in a school setting, therefore, should be concerned with all programs in the school that are directed toward this goal.

**Theoretical Formulation**

Consistent with the school's goal of providing programs to meet the educational needs of all children is the introduction of dropout prevention programs in recent years. These school dropout prevention programs are aimed at improving the academic and social performance of youngsters from low socioeconomic backgrounds who show records of retardation in basic academic skills, excessive tardiness, truancy, and disruptive classroom behavior. Altmeyer suggests that the school's primary purpose and responsibility is to educate, but education and responsibility cannot be carried on in an emotional vacuum, and the educational process must go forward together with those processes which contribute to

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emotional health. If this statement is true, then what of the role of the social worker from the standpoint of intervention?

The concept of intervention has recently received considerable attention in social work literature. It is based on the theory that the promotion of the capacity of individuals and their families to cope with life crises can best be done through anticipatory guidance and preventive intervention. The social work profession, it appears, has increasingly focused on intervening on behalf of the total family, especially in time of crisis. It has not considered, to any extent, the potential dropout's specific problems as revealed in the school. The potential dropout is more often found in schools having a disproportionate number of children from depressed areas. With respect to social work intervention in such areas, Cohen points out that in spite of our increased attention to the problem of poverty in efforts to effect change, our intervention leaves much to be desired.

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The school is one of the most significant institutions in which the child functions. Just as important, is the role of the child in the family setting. Poor family relationships can affect a child's performance in the school setting. Rabichow points out that children who are disturbed by traumatic occurrences at home have difficulty concentrating in school. Such children often expend considerable energy in coping with emotions aroused by stressful home situations and have no motivation for study.¹

Because of the impact of the school and family on the child, there should be a closer relationship between the two. The school social worker should serve as a link between these two institutions by intervening when it appears that the child is experiencing difficult external pressures. Boehm believes that social intervention from outside to assist the individual in his struggle for adaptation to stress is one of the major functions of social casework.² It would appear that identification of the nature and origin of stressful situations affecting children who struggle to remain in school should facilitate the effectiveness of outside intervention. Knowledge and understanding of the types of stresses encountered in the environments of disadvantaged youths should serve as one of the guidelines to effect


²Boehm, op. cit., p. 110.
intervention by the social worker. It should not be assumed that children in multiproblem families are in a chronic state of stress. Bernard believes that life stresses fall differently on different persons and segments in a population. Both people and the incidence of stress among them are different.¹

In consideration of the foregoing concepts, this study was designed to compare some of the similarities and differences in children primarily from multiproblem families. As a result, some of the specific stresses and problems of these children as related to school were revealed.

**Purpose**

In the course of every day living, individuals experience a wide variety of situations that precipitate acute dislocations. These disturbing experiences are often reflected in lowered levels of social functioning and higher levels of anxiety and personal distress.² Kaplan states that the problems created by stressful events have not, for the most part, received the clinical attention or the importance that they deserve, although they are often

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forerunners of serious chronic problems.¹

Central to the theoretical formulation of this study is the concept of stressful situations and the relationship of these to the performance of those youngsters who maintain a precarious identification with the school world. It is the purpose of this study to determine whether or not there is a significant difference in the degree that stressful situations distinguish potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program at Edison High School, Fresno, California, from those potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful. In addition, this study may be of assistance in emphasizing the importance of the multidisciplinary and interventive-preventive approaches in schools having a disproportionate number of students from multiproblem families.

In the formulation of this study, consideration was also given to the problem which motivated its undertaking. The problem of this study served not only to underscore the essential concepts, but also to point up the need for research in this area.

### Problem

If the validity of this study or even its partial validity is accepted, what are the implications for social work? A survey of social work literature dealing with multiproblem families and the

¹Ibid.
educationally disadvantaged indicated two major concerns. The first is the need for more effective reaching out techniques and communication on the part of the social worker in relating to the disadvantaged group. The second is a need for strengthening the working relationship between social work and education.

Within the central complex of many major cities reside the children from multiproblem families, low socioeconomic families and the culturally disadvantaged. 1 At least two-thirds of them are Negro, Puerto Rican, Mexican American or members of some other minority group. 2 A study of the effectiveness of social workers with such families caused Dick and Strnad to conclude that the social work profession must bring its skills to bear in a logical and structured manner in helping such families with their problems. 3 One of the most crucial problems in this group in which social work could utilize its skills is the problem of adequate education for the children. According to Lornell, the social work profession has a large task ahead of it in this area. Techniques have not been refined

1 The terms "multiproblem," "culturally deprived," "disadvantaged," "educationally deprived," "deprived," "underprivileged," "lower class," "low socioeconomic group," are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.


enough to really be effective in helping the culturally deprived child. It would appear that the school social worker in particular can be a valuable partner in helping teachers and principals create new methods which might enhance the learning experience of the culturally deprived child.¹

Boehm states that research in the area of investigating stress responses that affect role performance should be one of the tasks of researchers in casework. There is a need for research which would take into consideration such variables as location of stress (physiological, psychological, and sociological). Boehm also suggests that research on stress responses could possibly contribute to the modification of the factors producing stress in the individual.²

According to Rowen, the recent federal laws providing funds for resolving educational problems of the poor should have a direct bearing upon the manner in which the social worker functions in the schools. The laws encourage the social worker to get involved more directly in treatment, which is a primary task for which the social worker is trained.³ Hoyt points out that inasmuch as the child attends school thirty hours a week, year after year, the importance

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²Boehm, _op. cit._, pp. 109, 110 and 113.

of the school in a treatment program cannot be overstressed.\(^1\)

However, there is considerable evidence in the literature that social workers in child-oriented institutions, guidance clinics, residential treatment centers and nonsocial work settings such as the school tend to work in isolation and even at cross purpose with the school.\(^2\)

In order to explore the foregoing questions and assumptions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. **Working**: The degree of stressful situations experienced in the environments of those potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were nonsuccessful in a dropout prevention program at Edison High School will be greater than the degree of stressful situations experienced by those potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were successful.

2. **Null**: There is no difference, beyond that attributable to chance, in the degree to which those potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program at Edison High School experienced stressful situations in their environments from those potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were nonsuccessful.


3. Statistical: A greater proportion of those potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were nonsuccessful in a dropout prevention program at Edison High School will rate significantly higher in having experienced stressful situations in their environments than will those potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds who were successful in the program.

If the null hypothesis was rejected, it would indicate that the degree to which the students in the program experienced stressful situations was a significant factor in their being successful in the program. If this is found to be so, it would support Hill's hypothesis that there is a relationship between stressors and the definition one makes of the situation. This finding would also suggest that despite the status of potential dropout, such respondents enjoy relatively stress-free environments. There may be a high degree of harmony and role satisfaction in their home environments, for example.

If the null hypothesis was sustained, the findings would indicate that the degree to which the respondents experience stressful situations may be an important factor in making a satisfactory adolescent adjustment overall, but may not affect the success or nonsuccess in a dropout prevention program. On the other hand, it is possible that the methods of selecting and/or testing the population may affect the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study sample may be too small for difference to be detected. Finally, it may

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indicate that further research is needed to establish what other factors may significantly influence the study sample's success or nonsuccess in the program.

In addition to testing the above hypotheses, this study was also designed to obtain answers to the following basic questions:

1. What does the literature reveal about the degrees and types of stressful situations experienced by potential dropouts?

2. What are the baseline characteristics? Do the baseline characteristics significantly differentiate seventeen Edison High School potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program from sixteen Edison High School potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful?

3. What are the findings when the data are analyzed? Do the stressful situations significantly differentiate seventeen Edison High School potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program from sixteen Edison High School potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful?

Before the above questions could be answered, it was necessary to select a sample for the study. The following section describes the methodology used to carry out this objective.

**Methods and Procedures**

In order to test the degrees of stressful situations among the two groups comprising the study sample, information for the baseline characteristics was obtained from the student records and personal interviews with the counselor-teacher in charge of the
program.\textsuperscript{1,2} The information comprising the baseline characteristics included age, number of siblings, ordinal position of respondent, living arrangements, source of income and length of time at present address.

Personal interviews with twenty-one members in the study sample were conducted to obtain a measurement of the degrees of stressful situations experienced. Because of inaccessibility at the time of scheduling interview appointments, it was not possible to conduct personal interviews with twelve members in the study sample. Consequently, information for the degrees of stressful situations experienced by these twelve members was secured from the counselor-teacher. The counselor-teacher had personally visited the homes of these boys and had held an average of six individual counseling sessions with each member in the study sample.

An interview schedule was used as a guide to structure the interviews in as nearly similar a manner as was possible with each respondent personally interviewed.\textsuperscript{3} The counselor-teacher also filled out questionnaires on each of the twelve members not available for personal interviews. Each questionnaire contained the same

\textsuperscript{1}See Appendix A for schedule of baseline characteristics.

\textsuperscript{2}See Appendix B for copy of school record form.

\textsuperscript{3}See Appendix C for interview schedule.
questions which appeared on the interview schedule. ¹

The principal of Thomas A. Edison High School was contacted and permission was granted to conduct the study at the school. Arrangements were subsequently made with the counselor-teacher to hold personal interviews with as many students as possible in the study sample as well as extract data from each student's school record. Thomas A. Edison High School was selected because of its accessibility. The assumption was that the students participating in the dropout prevention program were basically similar to students participating in dropout prevention programs at other schools in the country.

During the month of December, 1967, the personal interviews were held and the data for the baseline characteristics were extracted from the records. The personal interviews were conducted in the counseling office at the school. The interviews lasted about forty-five minutes and they consisted of open-ended questions. The questions were designed to elicit the respondents' accounts of any stressful situations experienced, to determine the effects upon respondents of the stressful situations experienced, and to elicit respondents' reactions to the stressful situations experienced.

Forty-eight students who had participated in the program since Fall, 1966, were selected to be studied. However, the actual

¹See Appendix D for questionnaire.
number studied was thirty-three. Of this number, four were Mexican-American and twenty-nine were Negro. All of the respondents were adolescent boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. No other ethnic group had participated in the program, and only three girls had been identified with the program since its inception.

The criterion for successful and nonsuccessful participation was based on the counselor-teacher's grading of the students at the completion of the term. For purposes of this study, those students who had been returned to regular class because of improvement in grades and/or school adjustment were categorized as successful participants. Those students who had been retained in the program because of lack of improvement in grades and/or school adjustment were categorized as nonsuccessful participants.

After the data were collected, a profile of each member in the study sample was compiled. The individual profiles contained the information received in the personal interviews and the questionnaires filled out by the counselor-teacher.

In order that confidence could be placed in the classification of the stressful situations as indicated in the individual profiles, three members of the School of Social Work faculty, Fresno State

1See Flow Chart showing shrinkage in the study sample, on page 15.
Population
48

Met Study
Requirements

Terminal
Sample

Dichotomized
Sample

48 students in
Program since
Fall 1966

45 boys in
Program

33 students
Interviewed

17 Successful

16 Nonsuccessful

Shrinkage
of 3 students
due to:
Study Requirements
Female students
excluded from study

Shrinkage
1 - Classified as middle class
2 - Counselor Returned Questionnaires--
   Insufficient contact
   1 - Placed in Program by mistake--
      Educationally Mentally Retarded Class
3 - Not enough information in student records,
   unable to contact, irregular attendance
2 - Students refused to cooperate
3 - Records transferred
College individually rated each of the thirty-three profiles on the following scale:

Slightly Stressful
Moderately Stressful
Very Stressful

Each judge was personally given separate folders containing exact copies of the individual profiles of the thirty-three members in the study sample. The judges were asked to individually consider whether each of the thirty-three respondents had experienced "No or Few Stressful Situations" (Slightly Stressful), "Frequent Stressful Situations" (Moderately Stressful), or "Many or Daily Stressful Situations" (Very Stressful), and rate the respondents accordingly.

There was almost perfect agreement by the three judges. The three judges agreed on 91 per cent of the ratings. As a control, the judges were asked to individually give an overall rating to each of the thirty-three members in the study sample. There was 100 per cent agreement by two of the three judges on the overall ratings.

The high percentage of compatibility among the three judges was considered satisfactory validity to permit use of the full study sample.

The unit of analysis in this study was stressful situations.

The dichotomized sample was cross-tabulated by five baseline characteristics which are shown on the schedule. Summary tables were utilized to show proportions, percentages and the computed
chi square with the accompanying probability value for the significance of the difference. The responses obtained from the interview items were analyzed by percentages and proportions. The data were then submitted to the chi square test for the significance of the difference between the expected and the obtained frequencies beyond that which was attributable to chance. The formula used for the chi square test was $\chi^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$.¹

It has been stated that the purpose of this study was to determine if there is a difference in the degree of stressful situations experienced by those potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program and those potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful. For purposes of clarification, the following are definitions of the major terms used in this study.

Stressful situations will be defined in this study as any occurrence documented in the records and/or described by the counselor-teacher, teaching staff and/or any member in the study sample as having caused strain, pressure or inconvenience to respondent and which is perceived as having affected respondent's performance in a dropout prevention program at Edison High School and/or overall social functioning.

Dropout prevention program will be defined as a program conducted at Edison High School, Fresno, California, for those boys who show a record of poor grades, excessive tardiness and truancy, disruptive classroom behavior and/or poor citizenship.

Potential dropout will be defined as any student who has been assigned to the dropout program at Edison High School by a regular teacher because of poor grades, excessive tardiness and truancy, disruptive classroom behavior and/or poor citizenship.

Successful potential dropout will be defined as one who has been evaluated by the counselor-teacher in charge of the program and documented in the school records as having progressed in the program well enough to be returned to regular classes.

Nonsuccessful potential dropout will be defined as one who has been evaluated by the counselor-teacher in charge of the program and documented in the school records as having been retained in the program due to lack of progress and/or who is no longer attending school.

Environment will be defined as the sum of the external conditions and factors potentially capable of influencing any member in the sample. ¹

In this chapter, the introduction has served to present the basic concepts of this study in terms of the goals of a progressive society and society's responsibility to its children. These concepts were described in the theoretical formulation and related to the role of the social worker. The purpose of this study was defined as an effort to determine if stressful situations differentiated successful participants in a school dropout prevention program from nonsuccessful participants. The problem was presented along with statements concerning the need for research in this area, and the methods and procedures employed in the execution of this study were described in detail.

In Chapter II, a review of the literature relevant to the study is presented followed by a description of the agency setting and a description of the baseline characteristics of the study sample. The responses to stressful situations in the study sample are analyzed in Chapter III, and the findings and interpretations of this study are presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature applicable to this study is presented in this chapter. Descriptive information related to the high school at which this study was conducted, as well as the community in which the school is located, is also given. The study sample is described in terms of the six baseline items selected for investigation. Following this, the study sample is dichotomized by "successful" and "nonsuccessful" participation in the school dropout prevention program. The similarities and differences between the two subsamples are also discussed. Finally, a summary of the study findings regarding the baseline items concludes the chapter.

The school dropout problem has been recognized and investigated by sociologists, social workers, and educators. Considerable research data have been accumulated in this area.¹ The greatest emphasis has traditionally been placed upon the investigation of why the youngster dropped out of school, rather than an

investigation of some of the environmental problems the youngster encounters before "adapting" by dropping out of school. No published research was found which assessed the potential dropout's perception of stressful situations experienced, and the relation of these situations to the potential dropout's "success" or "nonsuccess" in a dropout prevention program.

The underlying premise of this study is that individuals in the lower socioeconomic group often encounter differential degrees of stressful situations. Hardships which are the nemeses of some are easily weathered by others, and often serve as stimuli to the development of new strengths and capacities.  

1 With this premise in focus, a review of the literature revealed the following pertinent information.

Vinter conducted a study in which the characteristics of pupils and the patterns of the schools associated with malperformance were assessed. Two features of the schools were found to have a negative affect on pupil performance: (1) the teacher's tendency to punish the student through low grades, and (2) the teacher's perception of the malperformer as being uncommitted to educational objectives, lacking incentive to study, and being unwilling to learn.

However, the study findings revealed high levels of commitment to long-term educational and community goals among the pupils. The implications of the study findings indicated that, in some cases the teacher and the school precipitate stress in their pupils. Vinter concluded that information from the pupils manifesting difficulties indicated that most of the youngsters were deficient in the social skills needed for positive relations within the classroom. The youngsters tended to misinterpret instructions, and could tolerate little stress.  

Gurin and Epps examined the motivations and environmental influences of a group of severely impoverished Negro students who, despite severe obstacles, were attending college. These students had experienced broken homes, grown up in female-headed households or in homes where the father had less influence potential, lived through the meaning of unemployment, and had parents with almost negligible education. The success of these students, according to Gurin and Epps, cast some doubt upon the overriding emphasis increasingly given to family structure and early socialization practices in research and action. The study findings indicated that nonfamily figures, particularly the high school teacher, can be important and perhaps compensatory influences upon the aspirations

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of severe poverty students. 1

Stott conducted a comparative study between delinquents from intact and broken homes in an effort to determine some of the types of family situations conducive to emotional maladjustment. Stott hypothesized that juvenile delinquency as a form of behavior disturbance is an irrational attempt to break out from an emotionally intolerable family situation. The study findings indicated that family structure cannot necessarily be regarded as an important factor predisposing a child to delinquency. 2

Stott concluded that:

... comparatively severe stresses may be tolerated provided the family offers the child a reliable and permanent human setting in which to grow, and this may be ensured by one reliable parent... . The criterion for breakdown would thus appear to be total deprivation of security rather than the presence of any one factor. 3

Stott's findings are in line with those revealed in the McCords' further analysis of the "Cambridge Sommerville Youth Center Study." The McCords also found little significant difference in the crime rate of those boys rejected by one parent when compared to


3Ibid., p. 15.
those boys whose parents were both loving. When the mother was loving, the crime rate rose only slightly. When the father was loving, the attitude of the mother did not make a significant difference.  

The concept of the insulated boy, as conceptualized by Reckless, merits examination here. Reckless defined the insulated boy as one handicapped by home background, area of residence, deviant companions and the many so-called causes of delinquency, who nevertheless manages to steer a course away from delinquent behavior. The study findings revealed that the nondelinquent boy in the high delinquency area tended to perceive in terms of being conventional and law-abiding. The nondelinquent boy was also the recipient of close maternal supervision in a harmonious family setting.  

Reckless' study findings presented important implications for further study. The study left unanswered, according to Reckless, the question as to whether the boys were representative of nondelinquents generally. The question was raised as to whether sociologists tended to over emphasize the lack of cohesiveness in lower class family life. Finally, Reckless wondered if studies of...  

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similar "insulated" white and Negro boys in other and even more highly disorganized areas would reveal comparable degrees of maternal supervision, satisfactory interpersonal relationships and isolation from non-deviant norms.  

Bell investigated lower class Negro mothers' aspirations for their children. The study findings indicated significant differences in the aspirational values the mothers transmitted to their children. Bell concluded that the differences found between the subgroups, at least in aspirations, suggests a range of beliefs and values in the Negro lower class.  

A perceptual study by Cervantes of high school dropouts and high school graduates found that the most stressful influences acting on the nonachiever are the lack of harmony in the home and the lack of deep intercommunication and personal satisfaction derived from being in the family circle.  

Finally, Mannino's study of family factors related to school persistence is also pertinent. Mannino formulated that the lower socio-economic factor is not the entire explanation for the dropout

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1Ibid., p. 25.


rate in the lower class group. Despite the presence of strong "dropout forces" in operation, many children of lower socioeconomic status remain in school.\(^1\) Mannino's implications for further study indicated the need for more intense investigations of the more subtle and intricate issues involved in family life. In this study, the means of encouragement used by the mothers was found to be an important factor in school persistence.\(^2\)

In summary, it can be generalized that delinquency and poor school performance are two essential characteristics of the potential dropout. The link between the stresses of youths as related to their social functioning in the school, family and the general community has been indicated. The aim of this study has been placed in perspective. A description of the potential dropouts selected to explore the hypothesis postulated in the study follows the description below of the agency setting.

**Description of the Agency Setting**

The study was conducted at Edison High School, Fresno, California. The school is located on what is locally referred to as the "West Side" of Fresno. The school was built in 1923. At that

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\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 194-202.
time, the West Side was a predominantly Caucasian community, highly populated with the Italian and German ethnic groups. Orientals were considered to be the smaller ethnic group on the West Side. With the advent of World War II, a large number of Negroes and Mexican-Americans moved into the area. By the end of World War II, the community had progressed to the state of a community in transition. The ethnic composition of the community continued to change until today, wherein the West Side is predominantly Negro and Mexican-American.

Thomas A. Edison High School is situated in a rapidly deteriorating area of the community. However, the student body at the school appears to cut across class lines. There are approximately 1,045 students enrolled at the school. Approximately 75 percent of the students are Negro and 16 percent are Mexican-American. There is one Caucasian student in the school. Sixty teachers and five counselors serve the students. Approximately five of the teachers and one of the counselors are Negro. There are four Mexican-American teachers and no Mexican-American counselors on the staff.

Thomas A. Edison High School is one of the few high schools in Fresno that has taken advantage of recent federal legislation offering schools assistance in providing supplementary education for their pupils. The dropout prevention program, which is funded by
the federal government, was instituted two years ago. The objective of the program is to help students having academic and other problems associated with behavior and school identification adjust to the school setting. The aim of the program is preventive, and the intent is to increase the holding power of the school on as many of its pupils as possible. The population that constitutes the sample of this study was selected from the school's dropout prevention program. A description of the population follows, and will conclude this chapter.

**Description of the Study Sample**

**by Six Baseline Items**

The six baseline characteristics gathered concerning the thirty-three respondents making up the study sample were age, number of siblings, grade in school, living arrangements and length of time at present address. These baseline characteristics are presented in Table 1, page 29. From the tabulated data, it may be seen that two respondents constituting 6.1 per cent of the study sample, were 14 years of age; ten (30.3%) were 15 years of age; eight (24.3%) were 16 years of age; ten (30.3%) were 17 years of age and three (9.0%) were 18 years of age. These findings indicate that of the total sample, most of the respondents fell in the middle adolescent years. Over four-fifths (84.9%) were between 15 and 17 years of age.
## TABLE 1

### THE STUDY OF FIVE BASELINE ITEMS

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<tr>
<td><strong>Living Arrangements</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Father and/or Relative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Other or in Foster Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother Only Employed</td>
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<td><strong>Length of Time at Present Address</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months to 2 years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 months to 3 years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 months to 4 years</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The study sample included students from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. The respondents were almost evenly divided in these grades. Twelve (36.4%) were in the ninth grade; eleven (33.3%) were in the tenth grade and ten (30.3%) were in the eleventh grade. When these figures are compared to the age levels of the respondents, it is noted that the respondents were in grades generally comparable to their respective ages. It may be noted that the ninth graders, (6.1%) in the 14 years of age category, were somewhat ahead of the norm for boys in this grade. Only three respondents (9.0%) were somewhat below the norm for boys. These boys were 18 years of age, and they were in the eleventh grade. These figures indicate that the respondents had been getting promoted consistently. These figures also suggest that possibly, for the majority of the respondents, their problems were not specifically poor grades.

With respect to the number of siblings category, three respondents, (9.0%) of the study sample, had one or two siblings; eight (24.3%) had three or four siblings; ten (30.3%) had six or seven siblings; nine (27.4%) had eight or nine siblings and three (9.0%) had ten or more siblings. An examination of these findings reveals that most of the respondents came from large families. Over one-half (57%) had between six and nine siblings. There was, however, a slight tendency toward two extremes: the small family, comprising less than three siblings, constituted 9.0 per cent of the study sample
and the very large family, comprising ten or more siblings, also constituted 9.0 per cent of the study sample.

Nearly one-third (30.3%) of the respondents lived with both parents. However, two of these two-parent homes contained step-fathers as heads of the household. Almost one-half (48.5%) of the respondents lived in female-headed households. Of the remaining one-fourth (21.2%), one of the respondents lived with the father only, three lived with other relatives, and two lived in foster homes. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents in the study sample were from what is generally defined as broken homes.

Of the ten male-headed households, seven (21.2%) of the fathers were steadily employed. All of the employed fathers were unskilled workers. Two of the remaining fathers were ill and one was retired. Of the female-headed household, almost one-half (21.2%) of the mothers were employed. Fifteen (45.4%) of the respondents' families were receiving welfare assistance. Four (12.2%) of the respondents' families received income from other sources. Of this number, one of the respondents worked eight hours at night to support a disabled father; one respondent's family was supported by the retired father's Social Security Benefits, and one respondent was supported by the divorced father. The remaining respondent was supported by a relative with whom he lived. As can be seen, one-half of the mothers in the female-headed households
identified with the work world. Almost one-half of the study sample was receiving welfare assistance. This finding indicates that there may be a difference in the actual characteristics of poor families and the impressions the general public has of such families. The assumption in most cases is that the female-head in the lower socio-economic group prefers welfare assistance to gainful employment. Generally, this was not found to be the case with one-half of the female-headed households in this study sample.

The majority of the respondents, ten, or 30.3 per cent of the study sample, had lived at their present addresses twelve months to two years. Eight respondents (24.3%) had lived at their present addresses less than one year, while seven respondents (21.2%) had lived at their present addresses twenty-five months to four years. The remaining eight respondents, or 24.3 per cent had lived at their present addresses five years or more. Of this number, several respondents were born in the homes in which they lived. In considering the fact that one-half of the study sample had lived in their present homes twenty-five months to three years, and one-fourth of these respondents had lived in their homes five years or more, the respondents represented a fairly stable study sample. This finding indicates that, for the most part, the respondents were fairly well situated in the local community.
In looking at the study sample as a whole, it can be concluded that it is a highly homogenous one. Also, it may be generalized that the majority of the study sample were between 15 and 17 years of age, and were in appropriate corresponding grades. The majority of the study sample were from nonintact homes and a part of large families. The families of the study sample indicated a good degree of residential stability, and one-half of the study sample came from working families.

The study sample was dichotomized by "successful" and "nonsuccessful" participation in the dropout prevention program. Those students who had been graded as improved and returned to regular classes were placed in the successful category and those students who had been retained in the program because of lack of improvement were placed in the nonsuccessful category. For purposes of analysis and to determine the extent of the difference between the two subsamples when cross-tabulated by the five baseline characteristics the chi square test for the significance of the difference was computed for five of the six descriptive items. The distribution of these data is shown in Table 2, page 34. None of the five characteristics significantly differentiated the two subsamples from each other.

1Number of Siblings was not computed for the chi square because of the obvious similarity between the two groups in this category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Items</th>
<th>Successful (N=17) Proportion</th>
<th>Nonsuccessful (N=16) Proportion</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>Probability</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>.188</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.70 &gt; P &gt; .50</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.80 &gt; P &gt; .70</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.80 &gt; P &gt; .70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>.80 &gt; P &gt; .70</td>
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<td>.250</td>
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<td>.80 &gt; P &gt; .70</td>
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<td>.313</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>With Father Only and/or Relative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>With Other Relative or Foster Home</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.112</td>
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### Source of Income

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Value 1</th>
<th>Value 2</th>
<th>Value 3</th>
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<td>0.235</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Only Employed</td>
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<td>0.235</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Assistance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.353</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.563</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.175</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.063</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Length of Time at Present Address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time at Present Address</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Value 1</th>
<th>Value 2</th>
<th>Value 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 months to 2 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 months to 3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 months to 4 years</td>
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<td>0.000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a, b, c* These figures were collapsed for purposes of computing the chi square.
Despite the fact that the baseline characteristics did not significantly differentiate between the two groups, some trends were noted in comparing the two groups in the subsamples. The item "age" revealed that there was a greater proportion of respondents 15 years of age (.583) among the nonsuccessful subsample than among the successful subsample (.294). The proportion (.294) included the respondents 14 years of age and the respondents 15 years of age among the successful subsample. There was also a greater proportion of respondents 17 years of age (.375) among the nonsuccessful subsample than among the successful subsample. Among the successful group, the proportion for the combined number of respondents 17 years of age (4) and 18 years of age (3) was .412. No respondents 18 years of age were among the nonsuccessful group. These findings indicate that the respondents in the nonsuccessful subsample were younger, and were in grades which corresponded to their ages. There was a greater proportion of nonsuccessful respondents in the ninth (.375) and tenth (.375) grades than of successful respondents. The proportion of successful respondents in the ninth grade was .353. The proportion of "successful" respondents in the tenth grade was .291. A greater proportion of successful respondents (.353) than nonsuccessful respondents (.250) was found in the eleventh grade, however.
With respect to living arrangements, a greater proportion of the nonsuccessful respondents (.313) lived with a mother and father than did the successful respondents (.291). The proportion of nonsuccessful respondents living with the mother only was greater (.500) than the proportion of successful respondents (.471) living with the mother only. A greater proportion of successful respondents (.235) than nonsuccessful respondents lived with the father only or another relative. None of the nonsuccessful respondents lived with the father only. However, among the nonsuccessful subsample, .188 of the respondents lived with another relative or in a foster home.

The proportions with respect to those families receiving welfare assistance varied appreciably between the two subsamples. The proportion of nonsuccessful respondents' families receiving welfare assistance was .563 compared to .353 for the successful respondents. The successful subsample also had a greater proportion of "other" sources of income (.175) than did the nonsuccessful subsample (.063).

The item, "Length of time at present address," designed to determine if residential stability differentiated the two subsamples, also revealed interesting results. The nonsuccessful subsample showed greater proportions when compared to the successful subsample in all of the categories studied but one. The proportion of nonsuccessful respondents who had lived at their present addresses
less than one year was greater (.250) than the proportion of successful respondents (.235) who had lived at their present addresses the same length of time. Proportionately, there were also more non-successful respondents (.312) who had lived at their present addresses twelve months to two years than there were successful respondents (.294). However, the proportion of successful respondents who had lived at their present addresses twenty-five months to three years was greater (.294) than the proportion of non-successful respondents (.125) in this category. In comparing the proportion of non-successful respondents who had lived at their present addresses five years or more, it was found that the non-successful subsample indicated a greater degree of residential stability than the successful subsample. The proportion of non-successful respondents in this category was .312 compared to .176 for the successful respondents.

In summary, a review of the literature showed a lack of empirical knowledge concerning the specific stressful situations experienced by high school potential dropouts. A number of studies were described which indicated a relationship between family stresses, delinquency and school identification, particularly with respect to the school dropout. Several other studies conducted with lower class groups were described which related to social functioning and school success. None of the studies in the latter group found any appreciable significant differences in the demographic data studied. What
CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

A profile of the responses in the study sample to the open-ended questions in the interview schedule is presented as the first part of this chapter. Following this, descriptive analysis of the types and incidences of moderately and very stressful situations experienced by the respondents is presented and discussed.

Profile of Responses on Stressful Situations

In order to determine the difference in the degrees of stressful situations experienced by the study sample, a schedule was developed to assess the degrees of stressful situations experienced in the school, family, community and evening employment. The items about the school, family, and community were submitted to the chi square test for the significance of the difference between the expected and the observed frequencies. The fourth item, "evening employment," was not submitted to the chi square test because of the small number of responses from the study sample.

Referring to Table 3, page 41, it is observed that there is a significant difference in the degree to which the successful and non-successful subsamples experienced stressful situations in the school
TABLE 3
RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW ITEMS BY DEGREES OF STRESSFUL SITUATIONS EXPERIENCED
AND BY SUCCESSFUL AND NONSUCCESSFUL: CHI SQUARE AND PROBABILITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Categories</th>
<th>Successful N=17</th>
<th>Nonsuccessful N=16</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>Probability</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion</td>
<td>Proportion</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slightly Stressful</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td></td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>.235</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.875</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Family Relations</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Slightly Stressful</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td></td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>.118</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>.500</td>
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<td>.176</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderately Stressful</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Stressful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.125</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[a, b, c\] The figures in the brackets were collapsed for the purpose of computing the chi square test for the significance of the difference.

\[1\] See page 45 regarding the employment category.
A greater proportion of nonsuccessful respondents (.875) experienced either moderately stressful situations (5) or very stressful situations (9) in the school setting than did successful respondents. Four successful respondents experienced moderately stressful situations in the school setting for a proportion of .235. The school records of the boys in the very stressful situation classification contained frequent conduct referrals from their regular teachers. The teachers reported that the boys tended to defy authority in the classroom, that they displayed a lack of effort, and that they were not cooperative. An examination of the responses by these boys to the questions regarding their classroom experiences indicated that they perceived of their teachers as being rejecting and hostile toward them.

As can be seen, none of the successful respondents encountered any very stressful situations in the school setting. A greater proportion of successful respondents (.765) experienced slightly stressful situations than did nonsuccessful respondents (.125). These findings indicate that the majority of the youngsters in the

1 Chi square = 13.604, 1 d.f., .01 > P > .001.

2 "Regular teacher" is distinguished from the counselor-teacher in charge of the program. The assignment of students to the dropout prevention program was the decision of the regular teacher. After being placed in the special program, the boys were still required to take some of their classes under the regular teaching staff. They were not considered to be a part of the regular school program, however.
successful subsample were enjoying relatively stress-free relationships in the school setting.

It is observed, in Table 3, that there is a significant difference in the degrees of stressful situations experienced in the family setting by the two subsamples. A greater proportion of non-successful respondents (.938) experienced moderately stressful situations (4) and very stressful situations (11) in the family setting than did successful respondents. The proportion of successful respondents that experienced moderately stressful situations was .291. There were no incidences of very stressful situations in the home among the successful subsample. The proportion of successful respondents that experienced slightly stressful situations in the home was .705. For the nonsuccessful subsample the proportion was .063.

The pattern indicated in this study sample is now placed in clearer focus. The study findings indicate that the proportion of youngsters who experienced moderately stressful or very stressful situations in the home approximates the proportion of youngsters who experienced the same degree of stressful situations in the school. On the other hand, the proportion of youngsters who enjoyed relatively harmonious relationships in the home approximates the proportion of youngsters who enjoyed relatively stress-free relations

\[ \text{Chi square} = 14.290, \ 1 \text{ d.f.}, \ 0.01 > P > 0.001. \]
in the school. These findings suggest that pressures in the family setting seem to be carried over to authority figures outside the home.¹

With respect to community relations, it is observed in Table 3 that there is a significant difference between the successful and nonsuccessful subsamples in this category.² A proportion of .500 of the nonsuccessful boys experienced moderately stressful (3) and very stressful (5) situations involving contacts with the police and detentions at Juvenile Hall. None of the boys in the successful group encountered any very stressful situations in this category. However, a proportion of .122 of the successful subsample experienced moderately stressful situations involving contacts with the police and detentions at Juvenile Hall. The proportion of successful respondents in the slightly stressful classification (.382) was significantly greater than the proportion of nonsuccessful respondents (.500) under the community relations category.

A careful examination of these findings revealed that a greater proportion of nonsuccessful respondents experienced slightly stressful situations under the community relations category than under the previously discussed family and school subsections. It


²Chi square = 5.705, 1 d.f., P >.001.
was interesting to note that one-half of the nonsuccessful subsample had managed to avoid any serious encounters with police authorities. It may also be remembered that a greater proportion of residential stability was found among the nonsuccessful subsample.

In regard to evening employment, a greater proportion of the nonsuccessful respondents (.250) was employed than were successful respondents (.176). An examination of some of the boys' responses regarding their employment revealed that the youngsters believed they had to work to help supply the physical needs of the family and themselves. The employed successful respondents did not perceive of their employment as being stressful. It was noted that, on the average, the nonsuccessful youngsters worked shorter hours. The one respondent who was employed the longest hours evenings (six hours) in the successful group did not consider the employment as stressful. This youngster believed employment was necessary to finance future educational goals. The findings in this study indicate that a few of the nonsuccessful respondents have assumed early employment responsibility in the family before the completion of their student roles.
Summary of Incidences, Types and Degrees of Stressful Situations

Because the information collected for this study was gathered through open-ended interview questions which yielded a multiplicity of responses, it was not possible to present the numerous responses of each member in the study sample in this text. Therefore, for purposes of this study, an assessment of all the responses to the questions in the interview schedule by each member in the study sample was made. From the assessment of these data, a typology of the most frequently occurring incidences of stressful situations among the members in the study sample was constructed. This information is presented in Table 4, page 47.

In analyzing the data presented in this section, those respondents who experienced slightly stressful situations are not subjected to analysis. The data in this section are concerned with the incidences, types and degrees of stressful situations experienced by the population beyond those which would normally be expected to occur. The data in Table 4 were not subjected to the chi square test for the significance of the difference because it has already been established that there is a significant difference between the degrees of stressful situations experienced by the successful and nonsuccessful subsamples.¹

¹See Table 3, page 41.
### TABLE 4

**INCIDENCES, TYPES AND DEGREES OF STRESSFUL SITUATIONS BY SUCCESSFUL AND NONSUCCESSFUL**

<p>| Types and Degrees of Stressful Situations | Successful | | | | | Nonsuccessful | | | |
|------------------------------------------|------------|---|---|---|---|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                          | Number     | Proportion | Number     | Proportion | | | | | | | | |
|                                          | Incidences | | Incidences | | | | | | | | | |
| <strong>Classroom Disturbances</strong>               |            |             |            |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Slightly stressful                       | 15         | .882        | 8          | .500        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 1          | .059        | 1          | .062        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 1          | .059        | 7          | .438        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <strong>Verbal Conflicts with Teachers</strong>       |            |             |            |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Slightly stressful                       | 16         | .941        | 8          | .500        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 0          | .000        | 1          | .062        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 1          | .059        | 7          | .438        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <strong>Verbal and/or Physical Conflicts with Classmates</strong> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Slightly stressful                       | 16         | .941        | 13         | .812        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 1          | .059        | 0          | .000        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 0          | .000        | 3          | .188        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <strong>Tense, Hostile, Bored, Angry in Classroom</strong> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Slightly stressful                       | 16         | .941        | 3          | .188        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 0          | .000        | 5          | .312        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 1          | .059        | 8          | .500        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <strong>Inadequacy and Frustration</strong>           |            |             |            |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Slightly stressful                       | 16         | .941        | 11         | .687        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 1          | .059        | 3          | .188        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 0          | .000        | 2          | .125        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| <strong>Indifferent and Rejecting Mother</strong>      |            |             |            |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Slightly stressful                       | 15         | .882        | 8          | .500        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Moderately stressful                     | 1          | .059        | 2          | .125        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Very stressful                           | 1          | .059        | 6          | .375        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types and Degrees of Stressful Situations</th>
<th>Successful Incidences</th>
<th>Successful Proportion</th>
<th>Nonsuccessful Incidences</th>
<th>Nonsuccessful Proportion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Domineering and Authoritative Father</td>
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<td>Slightly stressful</td>
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<td>Very stressful</td>
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<td>Extreme Poverty Situation Aggravated by Overpopulated Home</td>
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<td>Slightly stressful</td>
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<td>Very stressful</td>
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Six questions in the interview schedule were designed to elicit the perceptions of members of the study sample regarding incidences of stressful situations in the school. The results showed that the nonsuccessful subsample experienced a higher number of moderately and very stressful situations in the school setting than did the successful subsample.

There were eight incidences of very stressful, and one of moderately stressful, situations involving classroom disturbances among the nonsuccessful boys. One successful respondent experienced a very stressful situation, and one successful respondent experienced a moderately stressful situation involving classroom disturbances. The boys in the nonsuccessful group indicated seven incidences of very stressful situations and one moderately stressful situation involving conflicts with teachers. There was one indication of a moderately stressful situation in the successful subsample involving a respondent and teachers. These findings indicate the possibility of a lack of effective communication between some of the teachers and the boys involved in the conflicts.

Regarding verbal and/or physical conflicts with classmates, there were three incidences of very stressful situations involving the boys in the nonsuccessful group compared to one moderately stressful situation in the successful subsample. Thirteen respondents in the nonsuccessful group were tense, bored, angry and
generally stressful in the classroom. One respondent in the successful subsample indicated unusual stress in this regard.

Reckless' findings regarding the "insulated boy" tends to hold true for the successful group. However, for the boys in the non-successful group, the findings in this study indicate that perhaps a number of these boys were underachievers because of being overwhelmed by stressful interpersonal relations in the home and school. As Cervantes points out, a youth who is having long-term interpersonal problems in the home quite probably mirrors the troubled home situation in a troubled school situation. A youth who is seriously unhappy is probably unable to be an academic achiever.²

Five respondents in the nonsuccessful group expressed feelings of inadequacy and frustration precipitated by difficulty in comprehension in the classroom. One respondent in the successful group also expressed feelings of inadequacy and frustration in the classroom.

The same general pattern of incidences of stressful situations among the subsamples held true in the family relations category. Six questions under this item were designed to elicit the respondents' perceptions of stressful situations experienced in the family setting. The incidences of stressful situations involving separation from

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¹Reckless, op. cit., p. 18.
²Cervantes, op. cit., p. 218.
parent and/or siblings were the same in both groups. There were
two incidences of very stressful situations in the nonsuccessful sub-
sample as well as two incidences of moderately stressful situations
in the successful subsample. Other than this similarity, the two
subsamples were differentiated. In the nonsuccessful group, there
were three incidences of very stressful situations involving verbal
conflicts with parents. There were three incidences of very stress-
ful situations involving physical altercations between the male heads
and respondents and five incidences of very stressful situations
involving verbal and/or physical conflicts with siblings. An assess-
ment of the responses by the boys in the successful subsample did
not reveal any incidences of stressful situations in these categories.

The incidences of stressful situations involving a rejecting
mother, a domineering father, and a mentally ill or incapacitated
parent were also higher among the nonsuccessful boys in the study
sample. There were two moderately stressful situations and six
very stressful situations involving an indifferent or rejecting mother.
In the successful group, one moderately stressful situation and one
very stressful situation were identified.

An examination of the responses regarding a rejecting or
indifferent mother revealed that most of the respondents described
their mothers as displaying a total lack of concern for their welfare.
According to the perceptions of the respondents, these mothers
tended to ignore the disturbing conflicts between some of the boys and their fathers. The families moved frequently, and the mothers generally left the youngsters to shift for themselves.

In the nonsuccessful group, there were two incidences of moderately stressful situations and two incidences of very stressful situations involving domineering and authoritative fathers. The boys described their fathers as imposing unreasonable restrictions upon them. The boys considered themselves the scapegoats of their fathers. The youngsters believed that they were unable to measure up to their fathers' expectations. None of the boys in the successful group described their fathers as domineering and authoritative.

Regarding a mentally ill or disabled parent, the nonsuccessful subsample indicated three incidences of very stressful situations and one moderately stressful situation. There was one very stressful situation identified in the successful group.

The incidences of disorganization with lapse of moral standards in the nonsuccessful subsample were two very stressful situations. There were no such stressful situations indicated in the successful group. The incidences of extreme poverty situations were high among the nonsuccessful boys. There were five very stressful situations and one moderately stressful situation. One very stressful situation was indicated in the successful group.
Three questions in the interview schedule were designed to elicit information concerning stressful situations encountered in the area of community relations—more specifically contacts with police and detainments at Juvenile Hall. The nonsuccessful subsample revealed eight incidences of moderately or very stressful situations involving contacts with police. Nine of the youngsters in the nonsuccessful subsample had been detained at Juvenile Hall while in the program. Regarding the successful group, there were two incidences of moderately stressful situations with the police: one involving reckless driving and the other involving suspicion of a felony. Two of the boys in the successful group had been detained at Juvenile Hall overnight for curfew, but the detainments were rated as slightly stressful situations. The offenses committed by the nonsuccessful respondents invariably involved burglary, theft and vandalism. An assessment of these particular responses by the respondents indicated that those youngsters who had serious juvenile delinquency records were occasionally questioned by the police on suspicion of felonies. These particular boys also expressed more antipathy against authority figures.

In summary, an analysis of the data in this chapter indicated a statistically significant difference in the degrees of stressful situations experienced in the school, family and the community by the two subsamples. The study findings revealed an association between
the incidences, type and degrees of stressful situations experienced by the nonsuccessful group and school performance, as well as the students' perceptions of their regular classroom teachers, parents and police authorities.

In Chapter IV, the findings and interpretations of the study will be presented and discussed in relation to the hypotheses and basic questions stated in Chapter I. The limitations of the study, together with the implications for social work, will conclude the chapter.
The purpose of this study was to investigate some of the environmental problems encountered by adolescent boys in the school, family and community. It was hypothesized that there would be differences in the extent to which those boys who had successfully adjusted to the school setting experienced difficulties in their environments and the extent to which those boys who were encountering problems in school.

In addition to testing the hypothesis, three basic questions relating to the hypothesis were asked. The first question was:

What did the literature reveal about the degrees and types of stressful situations experienced by potential dropouts?

A review of the available literature revealed that no direct studies had been conducted dealing with the problems of high school potential dropouts from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A number of the studies reviewed indicated an association between family stresses, delinquent behavior, and school identification. These variables were found to be meaningful in the present study. The nonsuccessful youngsters had more difficulties in the school, family and with police authorities. It was noted, however, that this group, as a whole, encountered fewer problems with police authorities than
they did in family and school settings.

A few of the studies reviewed found that nonfamily figures, particularly the high school teacher, can be important influences on the disadvantaged student. It was found in the present study that the attitudes, responsiveness and perceptiveness of the high school classroom teacher are important factors in the school adjustment and the internalization of appropriate social skills of the student who is overwhelmed by a stressful environment.

Several other studies conducted with the lower class group found that the families within this group are highly similar in demographic characteristics. However, these study findings indicate differences in values, interpersonal relationships, and goals among the families. It was revealed in the present study that those boys who come from so-called multiproblem families within the lower class group, experience differential degrees of stress in their environments. The findings of this study also support previous study findings that there are differences in the behavior, intrafamily relationships, and perceptions of self and others among the boys in the lower class stratum.

The second question posed was:

What are the baseline characteristics? Do the baseline characteristics significantly differentiate seventeen Edison High School potential dropouts who were successful in a dropout prevention program from sixteen Edison High School potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful?
The baseline characteristics revealed no significant differences between the two groups. The similarities between the subsamples were, in fact, much more striking than the differences noted. The fact that the groups were similar in the demographic characteristics substantiate the assumption that there are subtle and more intricate variables acting upon the boys from multiproblem families in the lower socioeconomic group that stimulate the differential degrees of stressful situations experienced by these boys. The findings in this study suggest that family structure may be less important than types of intrafamily interactions, that overpopulated homes may be less important than the attitude of the child toward his circumstances, and that the lack of adequate income may be less important than the role the boy assumes in the family.

The third question the study sought to answer was:

What are the findings when the data are analyzed? Do the stressful situations significantly differentiate seventeen Edison High School potential dropouts who were successful in the dropout prevention program from sixteen Edison High School potential dropouts who were nonsuccessful?

The third basic question can be answered in the affirmative. The two groups were found to be differentiated significantly by the items designed to determine the degrees of stressful situations experienced by the study sample in the school, family and community. As a result of these findings, the hypothesis of no difference (null) can be rejected.
The study findings indicate that poor communication between teacher and student is possibly at the core of the conflicts encountered by the boys in the classroom. The stressful situations centered around three major items in the school category. These items were (a) classroom disturbances; (b) feelings of tenseness, boredom, anger, and frustration in the classroom; and (c) conflicts with teachers. Approximately one-half of the nonsuccessful youngsters expressed feelings of hostility and rejection by their regular classroom teachers. Class-cutting, conduct referrals, and suspensions were high among the boys experiencing stressful situations in the classroom. There is indication that stimulating the disadvantaged student in a constructive way may be less important to the regular teacher than tranquility in the classroom.

Kvaraceus makes an important and timely point when he states that:

The fact is that many teachers today seem to be fearful, anxious, or angry. This is especially manifest in the teacher's relationship with the reluctant and recalcitrant learners in the big cities. The frequent cry heard for sterner and harsher measures in dealing with these pupils and for their removal from the regular classroom or exclusion from school would indicate that too many educators are now more concerned with the academic reputation of their school than with the welfare and well-being of the nonachieving and nonconforming students.  

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It may be that the relationship between the regular classroom teacher in the school and the pupil needs reexamination. It is possible that, in some cases, the teacher unconsciously fears the disturbing student and resents the presence of that student in the classroom. On the other hand, it may be frustrating for the middle class teacher, perhaps the Caucasian teacher, in particular, to have to cope repeatedly with the resistant student.

It should be important that four-fifths of the nonsuccessful study sample experienced feelings of boredom, tenseness, anger, and frustration in the classroom. An interesting question is raised as to whether or not this factor may be related to the student's inability to identify with the content of the classroom program. This finding encourages the speculation that when there is a lack of objective and constructive instruction in the historical background and cultural contributions of the ethnic group being taught; frustration, boredom, and anger are natural results. It is also speculated that an absence of a representative number of teachers and counselors of the same ethnic group as the predominant student body who could serve as role models, could create tension and dissatisfaction among the student body. It has been reported by Deutsch that only during Negro History week did the majority of the Negro students under observation appear to be making a real effort to learn, and in some classrooms this was the only time at which some
semblance of order was achieved and maintained for any length of time. It is possible that the frustration, boredom, anger, and tenseness experienced by the members of the study sample may, in part, be the defenses of these students against an educational system that consistently ignores the quality of their existence.

As has been previously stated, the baseline characteristics did not differentiate the two groups investigated. There was a high degree of similarity in the youngsters' family structure, number of siblings and source of income. Nevertheless, the successful group indicated a significant degree of familial harmony and acceptance. These boys, on the whole, perceived of their home situations differently. The successful boys also suffered a minimum of stress associated with extreme poverty and an overpopulated home. These youngsters were able to adjust to the school setting and effect positive relationships and attitudes toward the school and teacher.

Some of the important differences between the compared groups of boys in this study may lie in the manner in which the youngsters perceived of their own roles and those of others, whether

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or not they were able to identify satisfactorily with family members, the definitions they attached to their life experiences, and the methods they used in coping with their environments. The differences between these two groups are best illustrated by quoting from two of the interviews with the boys in the successful group. The first excerpt is as follows:

I get along all right with my teachers. My problem was getting to school on time. My father has a heart condition and can't work, so I work nights to help out at home. I get along fine with my parents and brothers and sisters. I don't find working a problem. I have younger brothers and sisters at home that need clothes and things. My counselor helps me a lot and he's encouraging me to go to college. Working after school is the only way I can save money for college and help out at home. I don't have time to disagree with anybody.

The second excerpt, though phrased somewhat differently, is quite similar:

I do my best to get along with my teachers. I need my credits to graduate. I requested to be placed in the guidance program to catch up. I got into a lot of trouble last year. I couldn't get along with my stepfather. He and my mother divorced and he later died. If I can stay out of trouble for five years, I can have my record burned up. I do have trouble getting to school on time. I have five younger brothers and three sisters so I have to fix breakfast for them and help them get dressed in the mornings. I help my mother as much as I can and I try to obey her. She has a hard time. I am not working, but I am looking for a job. We are on welfare.

In contrast, the following illustration rather typifies the feelings that were expressed by the boys in the nonsuccessful group:

I have a lot of trouble with my teachers and classmates. The teachers don't care about the students. I think about it a lot at home. I've had one or two fights this year. I talk to the counselors often because I get so "shook up," angry and
confused. I hate metal shop, I find it boring, and I get angry a lot in the class. I seldom argued with my mother, but she died in July. I am in my second foster home. I get along better with these foster parents, but sometimes I get angry with them. I stay out all night once or twice a month and "get loaded." I have been in Juvenile Hall about seven times mostly for theft and burglary. When my mother was alive we had no money--she was a chronic alcoholic. I feel I have a lot of problems.

The second excerpt, though stated differently, is also representative of the nonsuccessful group:

I guess I am getting along all right in school except for grades. I don't pay attention and I get tired of sitting up in class. I had a fight with my stepfather around three months ago and my aunt had me arrested. My mother didn't do anything about it. She took his side. I don't talk to my stepfather. I get angry about twice a week with my parents. Sometimes I go to bed angry. I can't study.

These illustrations appear to point out an important though subtle difference in the manner in which these boys adjusted to their environmental experiences. The successful boys utilized a method of cooperating in the family unit and accepting the problems of the family as their problems. The distinguishing factors, however, seem to be the approval and support of a parental figure, and a need on the part of the boys to reciprocate. The successful boys portrayed a feeling of acceptance by their parents. More importantly, the boys were able to accept the parental figure and respond positively.

In the nonsuccessful group, two types of stressors dominated the group. There were the boys who suffered as a result of rejection by a parent in the home, and the boys who suffered because of
separation from parental figures as a result of court decisions, death, divorce or abandonment (includes the boys in foster homes and those who were living with a relative and had little contact with parents). In any case, all of these boys portrayed a sense of total emotional deprivation by their behavior, demeanor, and expressions. The boys' frustrations were also reflected in their behavior in the school setting. The lack of understanding of these youngsters' difficulties by some of their teachers tended to accentuate the youngsters' feelings of alienation and hostility.

The above illustrations and study findings suggest that when there is a lack of approval and support by a "significant other" and when the channels of reciprocating and cooperating in the family unit are blocked or cut off, children become highly vulnerable to stressful situations and may utilize negative coping devices.

The findings in this study suggest important implications for social workers in a variety of settings. These social workers' objectives should be to initiate measures to assist these boys in achieving a degree of harmony with their environments. The caseworker in a public welfare setting should be in a position to reach out to these boys.

As previously pointed out, one-half of the study sample's families were welfare recipients. It would appear that a good number of boys experiencing the types of problems indicated by the
youngsters in this study sample are already among the caseloads of some caseworkers in public welfare settings. Individual intervention by the caseworker could assist in helping these boys effectively cope with their problems.

It was noted in the study findings that the nonsuccessful group's need to talk with supportive figures was strong. The majority of the boys in this group stated that they talked to the counselor-teacher voluntarily about their problems on an average of every two weeks. The relationship between these youngsters and the counselor-teacher appears to be their strongest link with the school.

It should be important to those social workers who work in family service agencies that some of the boys in the study sample were victims of anxieties precipitated by stresses in the home. The most dominant characteristics of these youngsters' family profiles were the incidences of maternal deprivation and intrafamily conflicts with parental authorities and siblings. It is possible that these adolescent boys were trying to cope with their stresses without adequate defenses—defenses which should have been developed in the family circle and reinforced by the school. It may be that what is often depicted in the literature as the aggressive delinquent, is in some cases, the hurt, frightened or disturbed boy. Perhaps more attention should be given to the internal struggles of families
plagued by unemployment and health problems. Timely intervention by the family social worker could probably help such families improve their social functioning.

As a matter of fact, in considering the plight of these boys, the need for more collaboration between the education and social work disciplines appears imminent. Inasmuch as federal funds are now available to the schools to improve their social services to children, the social work profession should be stimulated to encourage more schools to use school social workers as part of their organization. The use of social workers on a consultant basis could positively assist the teacher in dealing with those problem students who disturb the classroom and use up the teacher's valuable classroom time. Finally, it should be considered that programs designed to improve the academic level of problem students can be even more successful if short-term social casework services are provided for those students in the program who are overwhelmed by problems.

It is hoped that the findings in this study will emphasize to the education and social work professions that working with the total individual demands the cooperation and collaboration of all the disciplines involved in helping the individual move toward improved social functioning.

As to the limitations of this study, the major limitation is the small study sample. The size of the study sample invites
speculation as to whether the group studied was atypical or representative of the population. It is possible that a comparative study between the students in the dropout prevention program and a sample of students in the regular school would yield more pertinent information. Another limitation of this study was the exclusion of the teachers' views as to the problems encountered with the youngsters in the study sample. Interviews with the regular classroom teachers probably would have placed in clearer perspective the communication problems between the teachers and students indicated in this study. It is hoped that future research studies will give some attention to these omissions.

In conclusion, the major findings in this study indicate that there are significant differences among the boys usually characterized as being from multiproblem families. The study findings also suggest that there is an association between stressful situations and the definitions the recipient attaches to the situations encountered. The illustrations presented in this study suggest that despite the status of potential dropout, some of the boys in this group have formulated definite future expectations, and are making an effort to maintain some stability in their environments. Therefore, the question is raised as to the overriding emphasis placed upon the concepts of a lack of direction among the boys in the lower socio-economic group, and especially among those youngsters who come
from so-called multiproblem families. Perhaps caution should be used in arbitrarily categorizing the boys in this group. The evidence in recent literature and in these study findings suggest that to be poor and "deprived" does not necessarily stifle the desire to attach meaning and continuity to one's life. The social worker can be an important influence in helping these boys to utilize their full potentials. It is significant that the majority of the boys in the total study sample were favorable toward the dropout prevention program. In regard to the desire for education by the culturally deprived, Riessman states that:

Education is desired by the culturally deprived more than is generally recognized. Different segments probably want education for different reasons . . . The difficulty in the school system arises because the school stresses education for its own sake and as a means for the development of self-expression--orientations which the culturally deprived do not share.  


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