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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes NELS:88 data from a dropout sample of students who were enrolled in the eighth grade in 1988 but who were not enrolled in school in 1990. The data for this analysis were collected in Spring 1990 to examine reasons for dropping out and plans for dropouts to resume their education. In both areas, differences were found on race-ethnicity and gender. Concerning reasons for dropping out, a larger percentage of white and Hispanic dropouts cited school-related factors as a cause than did African Americans; African American dropouts cited suspension and expulsion more often than any other group. A significantly larger percentage of male than female dropouts cited job-related factors; females cited family-related reasons more often than did white females. The overwhelming majority of dropouts did have plans for resuming their education, but these plans differed by race-ethnicity and gender. Both male and female white dropouts more frequently planned to take equivalency tests; Hispanic adolescents favored attending alternative high schools, and African American adolescents more often planned to return to a regular high school to earn their diplomas. Six tables. (Contains 18 references.) (Author/BJ)

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Exploring the Complexity of Early Dropout Causal Structures

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Julia Lara

James M. McPartland

Report No. 48

August 1994

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The Center

The mission of the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students (CDS) is to significantly improve the education of disadvantaged students at each level of schooling through new knowledge and practices produced by thorough scientific study and evaluation. The Center conducts its research in four program areas: The Early and Elementary Education Program, The Middle Grades and High Schools Program, the Language Minority Program, and the School, Family, and Community Connections Program.

The Early and Elementary Education Program

This program is working to develop, evaluate, and disseminate instructional programs capable of bringing disadvantaged students to high levels of achievement, particularly in the fundamental areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The goal is to expand the range of effective alternatives which schools may use under Chapter 1 and other compensatory education funding and to study issues of direct relevance to federal, state, and local policy on education of disadvantaged students.

The Middle Grades and High Schools Program

This program is conducting research syntheses, survey analyses, and field studies in middle and high schools. The three types of projects move from basic research to useful practice. Syntheses compile and analyze existing knowledge about effective education of disadvantaged students. Survey analyses identify and describe current programs, practices, and trends in middle and high schools, and allow studies of their effects. Field studies are conducted in collaboration with school staffs to develop and evaluate effective programs and practices.

The Language Minority Program

This program represents a collaborative effort. The University of California at Santa Barbara and the University of Texas at El Paso are focusing on the education of Mexican-American students in California and Texas; studies of dropout among children of recent immigrants have been conducted in San Diego and Miami by Johns Hopkins, and evaluations of learning strategies in schools serving Navajo Indians have been conducted by the University of Northern Arizona. The goal of the program is to identify, develop, and evaluate effective programs for disadvantaged Hispanic, American Indian, Southeast Asian, and other language minority children.

The School, Family, and Community Connections Program

This program is focusing on the key connections between schools and families and between schools and communities to build better educational programs for disadvantaged children and youth. Initial work is seeking to provide a research base concerning the most effective ways for schools to interact with and assist parents of disadvantaged students and interact with the community to produce effective community involvement.

Abstract

This study analyzes NELS:88 data from the dropout sample collected in Spring 1990 to examine reasons for dropout and plans for dropouts to resume their education. In both areas, differences were found on race/ethnicity and gender. Concerning reasons for dropping out, a larger percentage of white and Hispanic dropouts cited school-related factors as a cause than did African Americans; African American dropouts cited suspension/expulsion more often than any other group. A significantly larger percentage of male dropouts than female dropouts cited job-related factors; females cited family-related reasons more frequently than did males. Hispanic and African American females cited family-related reasons more often than did white females. The overwhelming majority of dropouts did have plans for resuming their education, but these plans differed by race/ethnicity and gender. Both male and female white dropouts more frequently planned to take equivalency tests; Hispanic adolescents favored attending alternative high schools, and African American adolescents more often planned to return to a regular high school to earn their diplomas.

Introduction

There has been an outgrowth of concern about the dropout crisis among middle and high school adolescents. At a time when most new job opportunities demand not only the Three *R*s, but also an ever-increasing level of technical competencies and communication skills, along with educational credentials which attest to these, dropping out of school prior to earning a diploma has serious repercussions. Recent research has centered around contrasting dropout rates across racial/ethnic and gender groups, and discovering possible determinants of dropouts (Alsalam et al., 1993; Fine, 1986). Typically, these research efforts have found that adolescents who are minorities and poor drop out more frequently than their middle class, white counterparts (General Accounting Office, 1986; Mann, 1986).

However, little educational research has investigated explicitly whether minority adolescents, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, experience greater complexity in causal structure when they drop out. That is, although we have gained some knowledge of broad patterns of dropout behavior, the research literature has not afforded much guidance in understanding how the various reasons for dropping out differ between groups. To effectively provide interventions for adolescents at risk of dropping out as well as to establish dropout recovery programs for those who have already interrupted their schooling, social science must better inform policymakers and practitioners on the complex pattern of reasons surrounding the process of dropping out.

In the present study, preliminary evidence suggests that Hispanic and African American adolescents indeed not only have higher dropout rates, but the causes of their dropping out are more complex than for whites. Moreover, African Americans, Hispanics and whites, as well as males and females, seem to differ drastically from one another regarding the underlying reasons for dropping out.

Although researchers have long engaged in identifying causes for dropping out (Cervantes, 1965; Rumberger, 1983), systematic insights are not readily available on whether and how dropouts in different racial/ethnic groups are driven by different causal processes. The lack of attention to the causal complexity issue is understandable partly because the prevailing theoretical orientation generally favors one parsimonious model that applies to all groups and partly because the usual methodological approach relies exclusively on indirect inference of separate factors. Evidence on the complexity of dropout causal structures drawn from this study will fill the knowledge gap created by these deficiencies.

In addition, there are practical implications. If African American and Hispanic adolescents are experiencing not only higher dropout rates but also significantly greater degrees of causal complexity, then the actual difficulties involved in dealing with both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the problem may have been seriously underestimated by researchers and policymakers alike. In this case, the current strategies for ameliorating the dropout crisis should certainly be reassessed and reevaluated.

The Data

The data for this study are drawn from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics. NELS:88 provides a rich source of information on the process of dropping out of school as it takes place from the eighth grade onward. These data allow us to examine school context, student engagement, aspirations, achievement and future plans, and the broader contextual factors affecting students. The NELS:88 design employed a two-stage, stratified, random sample of 25,000 eighth graders in some 1,000 schools, who are followed up at two-year intervals. In addition to the student data file, two of the respondent's teachers, the school principal, and parents of the respondents were administered detailed questionnaires. A separate dropout component was created for students who participated in the base year but were not enrolled in school in subsequent waves.

The present study analyzes data from the dropout sample collected in Spring 1990. We refer to respondents in this sample as the *early* dropouts because they left school at some point between the eighth and tenth grades as opposed to during later secondary grades. Because adolescents cannot legally drop out in many states until age 16, most of the existing research literature focuses primarily on older adolescents, those nearing the end of high school. Although most dropouts do, in fact, leave school from high school, important evidence for understanding the cumulative process of dropping out is missed when we omit younger adolescents. These younger adolescents, or early dropouts, are therefore the focus of our investigation.

The NELS:88 dropout data file contains information on 1,000 students who were sampled in the eighth-grade cohort, but were not enrolled in school in 1990. According to the user's manual, 75% of the respondents completed the full, or slightly modified, version of the dropout survey instrument, while the remaining 25% completed the abbreviated version. Only critical questions were asked in the abbreviated versions and additional weights were created to compensate for nonresponse bias.

Early Dropouts

We view dropping out of school as a cumulative process arising out of a series of events and experiences which impact on youth in their transition into adolescence. These social influences cause the adolescent to become alienated and disengaged from school, and inevitably some drop out. Thus dropping out is not an episodic event, occurring as result of short-term or whimsical displeasure with treatment in school. Nor is dropping out simply an irrational decision made as result of a combination of economic hardship and prior school failure. Although this may explain a part of the phenomenon, the process of dropping out is more complex.

Educational research has identified at least two categories of influences of dropping out -- both *push* and *pull* effects (Rumberger, 1987; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Push effects are factors located within the school itself, which negatively impact the connection adolescents make with the school's environment and cause them to reject the context of schooling. This rejection, on the part of students, may manifest in disruptive behavior, absenteeism, or a cessation of academic effort. In sanctioning this kind of behavior by suspending, failing, or issuing poor grades to students, schools sometime produce continued failure, rather than getting students on course to success as they intend.

In other words, when troubled adolescents come to realize that they have fallen into a hole that looks too deep to climb out of, many stop trying altogether. For example, if a student reaches the maximum number of absences that automatically means a failing grade, he or she may easily lose any incentive for continuing to come to school for the remainder of the term. Further, long-term absences may evolve into actual dropout through a natural progression if fail-safe mechanisms are not put in place to guard against it. In addition, students who are often suspended begin to see themselves as incapable of succeeding in school -- and the school affirms this with each new suspension. For all intents and purposes, in the worst cases, adolescents are evicted from school in that they have slipped so far behind and developed such an adversarial view of schooling that the probability of getting back on track is quite small.

Thus, internal factors, which may be structural, contextual, climate-related, and/or individualized, cause certain at-risk students to view school as an unwelcoming place, and they become alienated. Over time the degree of disengagement increases for these students, they put out less and less academic effort, and they eventually drop out.

Pull effects take into account that school is merely one aspect of the complex adolescent social milieux. Although compulsory education occupies a great deal of time and takes considerable effort on the part of the adolescent, more compelling external factors may usurp an emphasis on schooling. The family, neighborhood peer groups, community organizations, and religious, legal, and health institutions often play a critical role in the stability and development of the adolescent. Therefore, conflict between the educational objectives of schools and social forces external to the school may interfere with student success -- for example, having to care for family members, needing to hold down a job, or becoming pregnant may have a negative impact on school performance and in some instances lead to dropout.

Although the seeds of dropping out may be sown early in one's educational career, the problem is manifested in high school. NELS:88 data show that about 7% of dropouts leave school while they are in the eighth grade, which is typically the final year of middle school. However, in the ninth grade -- usually year one of high school -- 38% of the dropouts leave school. Several researchers have posited that transition years are critical points in the lives of children and adolescents (Wheelock & Dorman, 1988), and these data add empirical support. But the difficulties caused by transition and adjustment do not necessarily have an immediate impact on adolescents. As discussed above, dropping out is a process which stems from an embroidery of adolescent experiences -- as a consequence of several conditions, some adolescents become left behind in the transition from the middle grades to high school and gradually drop out. The majority of the dropouts in the present study, some 55%, departed in the tenth grade -- generally their second high school year. However, many of these adolescents may have felt alienated, disengaged, or simply unable to keep up with increasing demands during their first year and prior, but it took time for them to reach the decision to dropout.

It is difficult to say whether academic failure is symptomatic of losing interest in school and dropping out, or causes adolescents to lose interest and drop out. Educational research has not sufficiently explained the cause-and-effect relationship surrounding dropping out and school performance (Pallas, 1984). How best can we describe the sequence of events? For example,

do students first lose interest in school, become less motivated to do academic work, receive punishment or few rewards for their poor performance, receive no intervention from the school, family or community, and then drop out after falling too far behind? Or, conversely, do they first try hard to succeed in school, become discouraged because they cannot keep up academically, lose interest after they have fallen too far behind, and then drop out in despair? Perhaps both of these occur to some degree. However, we do know that most dropouts are not making the grade when they leave school (Orr, 1987; Peng, 1983). Eighty-one percent of the dropouts in our study reported that they did not pass the last grade they attended in school.

Outline of Analyses

Below we examine two aspects of the dropout crisis, as it has affected those adolescents who already left school at some point between their eighth and tenth year. First, we investigate the various *reasons* different adolescents give for dropping out. We explore patterns of differences across adolescent subgroups defined by their race/ethnicity and gender. The race/ethnicity groups compared are Hispanics, African Americans, and non-Hispanic whites. There are several steps to our analysis of reasons for dropping out. We begin the investigation by developing composite scales, or summary factors, of the different types of reasons adolescents give for leaving school. Next, we tabulate these scales by race/ethnicity and gender subgroups in order to assess differential patterns of correlates. Next, SES background is controlled in order to examine the degree to which the zero-order patterns are influenced by social class differences. Finally, we consider possible interaction effects among race/ethnicity, gender and SES.

Perhaps, the least that can be said about dropping out is that it interrupts one's schooling; however, it is not necessarily permanent, nor is it the end of the road. The second part of this study examines ethnic/racial and gender differences in the plans for further education of early dropouts. Here, we are primarily concerned with intentions of dropouts to return to school, take equivalency tests, attend alternative schools, or to not continue their formal education.

I. Popular Reasons for Leaving School

Overview of Dropout Reasons

Early dropouts were given a list of 21 reasons typically cited for leaving school and asked to select all that applied to them. These reasons covered a variety of areas, including school-related variables, peer influences, family constraints, and accelerated or adult role transitions (such as having children and/or needing to work). The reasons reflected both push and pull effects, the two notions on dropping out (which are not mutually exclusive) that have arisen to address the locus of factors influencing an adolescent's decision to quit school.

On the one hand, it is believed that the overriding causes of dropping out are located outside of the school's environment -- i.e., within the family,

community, and/or among peer groups (Rumberger, 1983). By definition, these external factors are difficult for the school to manipulate, and sometimes they are completely beyond the school's control. Thus proponents of this view tend to believe that the schools can do little to stem the tide of pervasive student departure without help from outside agencies.

On the other hand, some argue that the real causes of dropping out are inherent in the school context itself (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). These researchers assert that a broad range of structural and contextual conditions within the school often make it difficult for some students to succeed; as a consequence, schools generally do not serve all students well. These structural and contextual factors include, for example, administrative support for teachers, teacher effectiveness, morale and expectancies, student morale and academic investment, class size, parental involvement, fiscal inequities, physical appearance of facilities, and the like. Because of the dynamics of internal school conditions, many young students become alienated and disengaged from the learning process and lose interest in school. Furthermore, for these adolescents, school becomes viewed as a place where their shortcomings and failures become increasingly reinforced, both by teachers and fellow classmates. As a result of the disconnection, continual failure, and bad feelings and images of school, many students simply quit.

While both external (pull) and internal (push) factors play a role in dropping out, the verdict on which is most critical is still out. However, in the present study, within-school factors (as reported by the dropouts themselves) appear to be most important for predicting their decision to drop out. This pattern is consistent across all racial/ethnic and gender groups. Presented in Table 1 are weighted tabulations of adolescents' reasons for dropping out. Respondents were told to mark all that apply. We recoded each of these variables so that "1" indicates an item was picked, and "0" represents that it was not. Hence, the means are equivalent to weighted percentages. As shown in Table 1, the most frequently cited reasons offered by dropouts for leaving school were related to contextual factors within the school itself, as opposed to external influences. For example, the majority of students (51%) indicated that one of the reasons they dropped out was because they simply did not like school. Forty-four percent said "I was failing in school," while 34% indicated "I couldn't get along with teachers." In addition, about one-third of the respondents reported they could not keep up with their schoolwork, and one-quarter of them reported that they did not feel they belong in school.

In contrast, these data show that external based reasons for dropping out were reported much less often. Only 7% of the respondents indicated that they needed to help support their families. Six percent wanted to have a family of their own. Seventeen percent and 18%, respectively, "had to get a job" and/or "found a job." Twelve percent of the adolescent females indicated that they dropped out because of pregnancy, and 12% of all teenage dropouts cited parenthood as a reason for leaving school.

Insert Table 1 about here

Although descriptive of the various reasons adolescents give for dropping out, these percentages alone do not identify causal processes across race/ethnicity and gender. However, using various comparison techniques, which are elaborated below, our analyses suggest that causal structures that affect dropping out differ

across groups. For example, factors that influence adolescent Hispanic males to drop out are configured differently than those that influence African American males or Hispanic females. In some cases, there are severe gaps between groups; in others the differences are subtle. In addition, as alluded to earlier, the relationships between the reasons themselves are at times confounding. For example, adolescents who indicated that they could not keep up with their schoolwork conceivably grew to that point as a result of not liking school and not being able to get along with their teachers. Thus their disinterest and disengagement led to an unwillingness to put forth academic effort which, in turn, caused them to fall behind in schoolwork. This two-way process can lead to a cycle of failure which sometimes ends in total disengagement from school -- dropping out.

Some adolescents, particularly African American and Hispanic males, dropped out because their schools lacked the capacity and resources to handle their disruptive conduct. When a student is suspended or expelled, the school is sending a strong message that his or her behavior is unacceptable and has no place in school (Wheelock & Dorman, 1988). However, sanctions are sometimes internalized by adolescents to the degree that their self-concept is affected. Over time, certain students disciplined too often cannot separate the behavior being sanctioned from their core identity. These adolescents may come to believe that who they are and how they conduct themselves is incompatible with how things work in school. As a result, they grow to believe that they have no place in school. Among the NELS:88 respondents, 16% reported that one of the reasons they dropped out was because of too frequent suspensions, and 13% said that they were expelled.

Facilitating the Analyses: Scale Construction

We used the factor analysis procedure to categorize the various dropout reasons into logical measurement scales. Combining the 21 items into scales was done for various methodological and intuitive reasons -- one of which is that scales generally provide stronger, more accurate measures than single dichotomous variables. Moreover, putting together multiple items eliminates the problem of having limited dependent variables. Using varimax rotation, seven composite scales were extracted. These scales ranged in size from two items to five items. Two-item scales were kept and included in the analysis primarily to explore the full range of reasons for dropping out. The reliabilities of the scales also varied, but the mean alpha (excluding Factor 7) was roughly .60. We did not, however, discard any factors even though some reliability alpha levels were smaller than desired. The rationale for keeping all of the scales is that in most cases, the individual items fit together intuitively. Again, our primary aim here was to condense the variety of common reasons for dropping out into a smaller number of useful, stronger measures.

A summary of the factor analysis results is displayed in Table 1A. The labels we attached to the extracted factors once we created the corresponding scales were: FAMILY 1; FAMILY 2; SCHOOL; JOB; SAFETY; EXPELLED; and MOBILITY. Once we identified the individual items, a simple summative formula was used to compute the scales. The following sections describe each of these in some detail.

$$\text{Scale}_1 = \frac{(\%\text{Item}_a + \%\text{Item}_b + \ldots + \%\text{Item}_k)}{\text{N of Items}}$$

Family-Related Reasons. A confounding set of variables was extracted within the category of family-related reasons for dropping out. Based on the factor analysis statistics, it was difficult to separate reasons related to the respondent's immediate family (parents and siblings) from reasons related to their own or potential family (children and spouses). To resolve this, we combined both items having to do with the respondent's own family and his or her immediate family into a single scale. A gender-specific item was an added wrinkle in that, obviously, males were not asked whether they were pregnant. To address how this item would play out in the analysis we combined and deleted some items in order to create two new scales. The end result was the creation of two scales, one for males, the other for females, which were composites of family-related reasons for dropping out; we labeled these FAM and FAMFEM.

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insert Table 1A about here

As shown in Table 1A, FAM1 is a four-item scale comprised of F1D6G, "(For females only) I was pregnant;" F1D6H, "I became a mother/father of a baby;" F1D6I, "I had to support my family;" and F1D6N, "I had to care for a member of my family." The first two items refer strictly to the respondent's own or potential family, while the latter two can go either way. FAM2 has two items, F1D6F "I wanted to have a family," and F1D6S "I got married or planned to get married." These scales (FAM1 and FAM2) were combined and modified in order to compute two new measures of family influences sensitive to gender.

School-Related Reasons. The school scale consists of items related to the degree to which adolescents dropped out as result of feeling discontented, alienated, disengaged, or incompetent in school. Five items loaded into this scale: F1D6C, "I didn't like school;" F1D6E, "I couldn't get along with teachers;" F1D6P, "I felt I didn't belong at school;" F1D6Q, "I couldn't keep up with my schoolwork;" and F1D6R, "I was failing school." We labeled this scale SCH. Two of these items, getting along with teachers and sense of belonging, loaded less strongly into this scale than the other three. However, combined, the reliability alpha was .609.

Work-Related Reasons. In addition to family-related responsibilities, the perceived need to find work is among the key accelerated role transitions which determine dropping out of school (Pallas, 1984). The JOB scale was comprised of three items: F1D6A, "I had to get a job;" F1D6B, "I found a job;" and F1D6U, "I couldn't work and go to school at the same time." The reliability alpha was .628.

Safety, Suspensions, Mobility and Friendship Reasons. After the initial factors were extracted (i.e., family, school and job-related reasons), the reliability of subsequent scales weakened somewhat with each iteration, as is usually the case in factor analysis.

The final three scales, SAFETY, EXPELLED and MOBILITY, contained only two items each and possess borderline to small reliabilities. The size of any reliability, however, is affected by the number of items in the scale, so these results are not surprising. Notwithstanding the limited reliability alpha levels, as presented in Table 1A, the factor loadings suggest that there is indeed interrelatedness among items in the scales.

The items which make up SAFETY are: F1D6E, "I couldn't get along with other students" and F1D6K, "I did not feel safe at school." Although this scale measures respondents' reasons related to within-school peer context and climate, these two variables did not load on the school-related scale outlined earlier. The factor loadings for the components of the SAFETY scale, F1D6E and F1D6K, were .7730 and .7538, respectively. These results suggest that an adolescent's sense of security, within the context of school, can be viewed as a function of an interaction between their general sense of security and getting along with other students.

As discussed above, a number of adolescents drop out, either directly or indirectly, as result of administrative sanctions against their behavior. The most severe disciplinary measures which can be taken by a school are to suspend or expel the student. EXPELLED is an important scale, which is also related to school context. F2D6J, "I was suspended too often" and F1D6O, "I was expelled from school" are the items which comprise EXPELLED. The factor loadings for this scale are .7670 and .8214, respectively.

The final scale, MOBILITY, is a two-item scale which combines F1D6L, "I wanted to travel" and F1D6T, "I switched schools and didn't like my new school." While we know that the term "mobility" may not capture what the sum of these items is about, they each have to do with wanting or having to make physical transitions. The factor loadings are .6855 and .6608.

One item, F1D6M, "my friends had dropped out of school" did not load on any of the above scales. However, this variable is important because it is assessing the role of peer and friendship influences in the process of dropping out. Thus, in this case, we used this item as an individual dichotomous variable in the analysis and labelled it FRIENDS.

Analyses of Race/Ethnicity and Gender Differences in Reasons for Dropping Out

After constructing the above scales, we conducted a breakdown of them by race/ethnicity and gender. Table 2 displays the means and sample sizes for the various groups by each of the scales. For males and females, the scales are listed in descending order, from the most frequently cited category of reasons. One clear pattern is that across each of the racial/ethnic as well as gender groups, school-related factors are the most cited reasons for early dropout. The total mean for males is .429 and for females is .312. However, white adolescents appear more likely than African Americans or Hispanics to report school-related reasons. The mean SCH for white males was .474, as compared to .384 and .315 for Hispanics and African Americans, respectively. Females showed a similar pattern -- white female adolescents were more likely to report school-related reasons than both Hispanic and African American females.

Insert Table 2 about here

In this initial breakdown, family-related reasons for dropping out showed sizable gender differences. Females reported family reasons as a distant second to school-related reasons. Its total mean was .149. However, for males, family-related causes were cited least often. This is true particularly among white males, for whom the mean was .038. Among all groups, African American females reported family-related reasons most often, with a mean of .181.

Hispanic and white males reported job-related reasons for dropping out second to school-related reasons, with means of .241 and .233, respectively. However, for African American males, the second biggest reason was being suspended too often or expelled from school. In fact, African American males cited suspension/expulsion as one of the reasons why they dropped out of school far more often than any other group in the study. The mean for African American males was .274, as compared to Hispanics and whites, whose means were .152 and .190, respectively, and all females, whose total mean was .079. In addition, African American females were more likely than other females to cite suspension/expulsion as a reason for dropping out. The mean for African American females on EXPELLED, .146 as compared to .072 and .064 for Hispanic and white females, respectively, is surpassed only by African American and white males.

In summary, a rank ordering of the various reasons for leaving school shows that the biggest differences are gender differences. However, there are several ethnic/racial differences as well. The primary three reasons adolescent males cite for dropping out are school-related, job-related, and suspension/expulsion. For females the order is school-related factors, followed by family-related and job-related factors. There are also important ethnic/racial differences within and across each gender group. One of the more striking results is that the mean for African American males on EXPELLED was considerably higher than that of both Hispanic and white males. In addition, African American males were also more likely to report having friends who have dropped out as one of the reasons why they decided to do likewise. Similarly, among females, African American females' mean values for EXPELLED and FRIENDS were notably higher than the means of Hispanic and white females. Also, white females had higher means than Hispanics and African Americans on job-related reasons for dropping out.

Significance Tests. We conducted a series of t-tests to examine the significance of emergent patterns of the initial phase of the analysis. Again, male and female dropouts were separated and, within gender groups, we compared each of the race/ethnic groups. A summary of the t-test results are shown in Table 2A.

Insert Table 2A about here

The results of the t-tests largely affirm our earlier observations. For example, family-related reasons, for males, were cited significantly more often by Hispanics and African Americans than by whites. For the Hispanic/white comparison, t=2.25 and p<.05; for the African American/white comparison, t=2.80 and p<.01. For females, the sole significant difference on family-related influences existed between Hispanics and whites, t=1.97; p<.05 -- that is, Hispanic girls were much more likely than white girls to cite family-related reasons. Although the mean for family-related reasons for African American females was higher than for both whites and Hispanics, it was of borderline significance, p=.066.

Also, the t-test supported the earlier results that whites were more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to report school-related factors for dropping out. The largest difference in school-related reasons was between African American and white males (t=-4.43; p<.01). In addition, the Hispanic/white t statistic was -2.66, and also significant. Hispanic and African American males, however, did not differ significantly on school-related reasons for dropping

out. There was a similar pattern of results among female dropouts. Hispanic females were significantly less likely than whites to cite school-related reasons, t=-2.84 and p<.01, but there was no real statistical difference between Hispanics and African Americans. In the comparison between African American and white females, the results were t=1.94; p<.05.

Evidence from the t-tests also supports the finding that African Americans, generally, are more likely than Hispanics and whites to report suspension/expulsion as a reason for early dropout. This is true among both sexes, but the largest gap exists between African American and white girls. The t value in this comparison was 2.77; p<.01. The mean for African American females was also higher than for Hispanic females on EXPELLED, t=-1.88, and this relationship was close to significance, p=.061. A similar pattern was discovered among males in the study. The mean for African American males on EXPELLED was larger than that of both whites and Hispanics (.274, as compared to .190 and .152), and these differences, as shown in Table 2A, were statistically significant.

The African American/white females comparison showed only between-group differences in the influence of friends. African American females reported at a significantly higher rate than white females (t=2.03; p<.05) that one of the reasons they dropped out is because their friends had dropped out. Although African American females reported this reason more often than Hispanics as well, the difference between means was not statistically significant (t=1.73; .085).

Comparisons Controlling on SES. Athough the descriptive analyses discussed above cast some light on differences in reasons for dropping out across racial/ethnic and gender groups, critical background factors were not taken into account. The data used in our analyses are based on a sample of adolescents who have already dropped out of school. Previous studies have reported a connection between SES and dropping out (Rumberger, 1983, 1987) -- more specifically, that lower social class adolescents are disproportionately represented among dropouts. This finding is undergirded in the present study using NELS:88 data. We found that 82% of all early dropouts, those who left school between grades eight and ten, belong to families below the mean in SES. Table 3 depicts a breakdown of SES means by race/ethnicity and gender. The SES measure is a composite variable comprised of several items, including family income, parents' education, and parents' occupation.

Insert Table 3 about here

Not surprisingly, each racial/ethnic group of dropouts was between two-thirds to one full standard deviation below the mean SES. However, white dropouts, both males and females, were higher SES than Hispanics and African Americans. Our t-test results examining SES differences across groups are at the bottom of Table 3. Among females, no significant differences between Hispanics and African Americans were apparent. However, generally, there were significant differences in the Hispanic/white and African American/white comparisons of SES -- in each case, whites had higher means. However, given the small variances in SES between racial/ethnic groups, as discussed below, the introduction of SES into the analysis has only modest importance on the pattern of relationships outlined earlier.

The Core Analyses of Dropout Reasons

In the core analyses we used multiple regression to further examine relationships and interactions between race/ethnicity and gender on the various reasons adolescents report for dropping out. A battery of regression equations were run investigating each of the composite reasons scales, together with SES, a dichotomous variable sex, and two interaction factors (i.e., the product of race/ethnicity and sex, and the product of race/ethnicity and SES).

The regression results showed the differences independently due to race/ethnicity, gender and SES, controlling on each of the factors collectively, as well as interactions between them (Table 4). The coefficients for race/ethnicity, gender and SES were drawn from regression equations that included these three measures as predictor variables for each of the dropout reasons scales. The interaction coefficients involved running separate analyses.

Insert Table 4 about here

Summary of Results. The final results support several of the patterns discussed above and point to others that were undetected previously. As in the descriptive analysis, family-related reasons for dropping out were much more frequently cited by females than males (Table 4). In addition, African American and Hispanic males were somewhat more likely than their white counterparts to report family-related reasons for dropping out. Although the standardized regression coefficients (*betas*) were small (.078 and .092), both were at $p<.05$. There was no discernible difference, however, between Hispanic and African American dropouts in reporting family-related reasons.

Job-related reasons for dropping out also varied. The source of variation was primarily between gender and not so much between racial/ethnic groups. In each of the analyses involving JOB, males and females showed significant differences. Males were, in fact, more likely than females to report job-related reasons, even after controlling on SES. In the African American/white comparison, the beta for sex was .179, $p<.01$, and for the Hispanic/white and Hispanic/African American analyses the beta coefficients were .189 and .214 respectively, both significant.

In regard to school-related factors for dropping out (e.g., not liking school, not getting along with teachers), the patterns that emerged out of the initial descriptive analysis largely remained after background controls were added to the equation. Underscoring the evidence of the above t-tests, regression results indicated that white males cited school-related factors more often than any other group. The results comparing African Americans and Hispanics to whites (beta=-.161 and beta=-.103) both indicate that school-related factors influenced white adolescents more heavily (Table 4). In addition, the regression coefficients for sex in these same equations, .190 and .209, are each significant, indicating gender differences as well -- males, more often than females, cite school-related reasons for dropping out.

Mann (1986) found that African American adolescents were suspended three times more often than their white counterparts. Similarly, according to Garibaldi (1992), African American males are disproportionately represented among students who have poor academic performance, are retained in grade, and are suspended and expelled from school -- almost every category of "academic failure." The present study also supports the findings of these researchers. Our

results suggest that African Americans and males are significantly more likely than whites and females to report frequent suspension or expulsion as one of the reasons for dropping out. This finding, too, holds after SES is controlled (Table 4). However, although African Americans were also more likely than Hispanics to cite suspension/expulsion, the difference between these two groups was not significant.

Last, the effect of friendship circles and peer groups on the dropout problem is also a critical issue (Fine, 1986). The pattern of results showed that African Americans are slightly more likely than whites and Hispanics to report dropping out because their friends had dropped out (Table 4). Again, the regression equation for African American v. white adolescents on FRIENDS resulted in a .073 beta, along with mild significance, p=.056. The gap between Hispanics and African Americans on FRIENDS was much larger than the African American v. white difference. Here, the results were beta=-.116; p<.05. There was no significant difference between Hispanics and whites on this factor.

The Effect of SES. Because dropouts generally were concentrated well below the mean in SES, we did not expect SES to explain much of the variability in early dropout reasons beyond what is already explained by race/ethnicity and gender. It is useful, however, to observe that controlling on SES in these sets of equations does not alter the pattern of relationships discussed above (Table 4). Both the family and job-related composite variables have negative signs on SES -- meaning that dropouts who cited these reasons are among the lower SES levels. However, statistical significance is only evident for the SES differences on family-related reasons for dropping out (Table 4).

Interactions. There were few interaction effects found in our analyses. As presented in Table 4, the only significant interactions involved race/ethnicity-by-SES (for school-related reasons across AA/W and H/AA groups, on family-related reasons in the H/AA comparisons, and on suspension/expulsion in the AA/W comparisons). In each of these equations, SES was not itself significant as a main predictor variable. In view of these interaction results, we conducted an examination of cross-tabulations of SES by race/ethnicity for each of the dropout reasons which did not produce consistent and interpretable patterns. The sample sizes in many cells of this cross-tabulation were too small to give confidence to further interpretations (Table 5). We therefore conclude that the principal findings of our analyses are the ones described above for the main effects of race/ethnicity differences and sex differences on dropout reasons. Our evidence suggests that SES background and interaction effects appear to matter little in predicting and explaining the proximate reasons why adolescents drop out. However, these background and interaction variables, such as social class and the product of social class and race/ethnicity, may go a long way in making us aware of the characteristics of adolescents placed at risk of dropping out.

Insert Table 5 about here

II. Educational Plans of Early Dropouts

The decision to drop out of school is not necessarily the end of the road for adolescents. Often it is only after dropping out that many adolescents realize the economic, social and psychological consequences of their actions. In this case, some adolescents actually "stop out" and return to school to complete their education through the regular process. Others enroll in alternative education programs designed to meet their individual needs, while still others opt to take a high school equivalency test.

The second part of this study is a descriptive investigation of the various education plans of dropouts. NELS:88 respondents were asked whether they planned to earn a high school diploma, or GED, and to chose one of among five responses: 1) "yes, I plan to go back to school to get a diploma;" 2) "yes, I am enrolled or plan to enroll in an alternative school or get a GED;" 3) "yes, I plan to take an equivalency test such as the GED;" 4) "no, I do not plan to get a diploma or GED; and 5) "I already have as GED or equivalent" (Tables 6 and 6A).

Insert Tables 6 & 6A about here

Table 6 presents tabulations of the racial/ethnic and gender groups on the educational plans of dropouts. Several patterns emerged in this analysis. African Americans, both males and females, disproportionately indicated that they plan to return to regular school to earn a diploma. Forty-two percent of the African American males and 39% percent of the African American females, a larger rate than any other group, reported an intention to return to school. However, we are somewhat skeptical that these intentions might actually be carried out. Dropouts often fall so far behind their ex-classmates that catching up, or progressing at a normal rate, seldom occurs when they return. The extra help they need to be brought up to speed is often unavailable. Moreover, it is a common scenario that dropouts were struggling academically even before quitting school, as discussed above. These influences make the probability of dropouts earning high school diplomas by returning to school quite small, unless special provisions are made for them upon returning.

In contrast to regular high schools, alternative schools attempt to foster environments both supportive and sympathetic to the needs of adolescents who may have dropped out, or placed at risk of dropping out. Alternative school teachers are often given additional support and training they need in order to better serve a challenging student body. In the present study, African American females, Hispanic males, and white females reported that they plan to enroll in alternative schools, or schools designed to prepare them for the GED, at a slightly higher rate than other groups (34%, 33% and 32%, respectively, as compared to a 26.3% average among the other groups).

Perhaps the quickest and least arduous route to a high school credential for adolescents who have interrupted educational histories is via the GED. However, preliminary results suggest reluctance among some adolescents, African Americans and Hispanics in particular, to take this route. Three-quarters of the African American males and Hispanic males, 71% of Hispanic females, and 80% of African American females had no plans to take an equivalency test. However, this educational option was somewhat more popular

among white adolescents. Thirty-nine percent of the white males and 34% of white females planned to take an equivalency test.

Across all groups, only a handful of adolescents had no plans to complete a high school diploma or earn an equivalent alternative credential. Among Hispanics, 8% of the males and 7% of the females; among African Americans, 0% of the males and 1% of the females; and among whites, 5% of the males and 4% of the females did not intend to pursue further education.

In order to further examine the race/ethnicity and gender differences in educational plans we again conducted a series of t-tests. For the most part, the results discussed above were supported in the t-test analysis (Table 6A). Again, African American dropouts, generally, were found to be more likely than whites to report planning to return to school (e.g., African American/white comparison: t=3.06; p<.01). The African American males were also more likely than Hispanic males to cite a desire to return to school (t=-1.65), but this difference was not significant. Similarly, African American females were significantly more likely than white females, but not Hispanic females, to report plans of returning to school (Table 6A).

Finally, these t-test results add to earlier evidence that African American and Hispanic adolescents tend to avoid the equivalency test route to a high school diploma at a significantly higher rate than their white counterparts. For males, African American and Hispanics, although not significantly different from each other (t=.080), were significantly less likely than whites to plan to take the GED test (t=-2.55, t=-2.24; both p<.01, respectively). However, for females the sole significant difference in plans to take the GED was between African Americans and whites (t=-2.28; p< .05), where white females had a much higher rate reporting this option.

III. Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to cast light on the degree to which various common reasons for dropping out of school and the educational plans of early dropouts differ across racial/ethnic and gender groups of adolescents. Above, we have shown that there are multiple factors that operate simultaneously to precipitate the decision of racial/ethnic minority and female adolescents to drop out. The following is a summary of major findings and some preliminary implications of the findings.

School-related reasons for quitting school were cited more frequently by early dropouts than any other category of reasons, including family-related, job-related, safety, friendship influences, mobility and suspension/expulsion. The school-related scale included items such as not liking school, not liking teachers, and feelings of not belonging in school. In addition, the proportion of adolescents who cited school-related influences as contributors to dropping out differed across race/ethnicity. In general, a larger percentage of white and Hispanic dropouts cited school-related factors as reasons for leaving school than did African Americans. Further descriptive analysis of the NELS:88 data revealed that African American dropouts cited

suspension/expulsion more often than any other group. This is indicative of the difficulties that schools might be having with African American students' cultural/linguistic styles and behaviors, and merits close qualitative analysis. In addition, these results underscore others studies (e.g., Garibaldi, 1992; Mann 1986; and Willie, 1991) which have found that African Americans, particularly males, are disproportionately disciplined and labelled as having behavioral problems by schools.

Several other categories of reasons for leaving school had a differential impact across groups of dropouts. For example, a significantly larger percentage of male dropouts than female dropouts cited job-related reasons (e.g., finding a job, or keeping one) as one of the reasons for leaving school. In addition, females cited family-related reasons such as pregnancy, parenthood, or caring for a family member significantly more frequently than male adolescents. However, the family-related influences on dropping out did not affect racial/ethnic groups among females equally. Many more Hispanic and African American females cited family-related reasons for dropping out than did white females. There are perhaps a number of ways that these data can be interpreted. One explanation is that Hispanic and African American female adolescents may have more responsibility in the home; another is that they may become pregnant in their early teenage years more frequently than white female adolescents.

The influence of friendship circles also had a differential impact on dropping out. We found that dropping out because a friend had done so is more prevalent among African American adolescents than among their white or Hispanic counterparts. This was observed across gender. In this study, we statistically controlled on SES. Although 80% of the dropouts in the sample were low SES, small differences were revealed in the analysis. Generally, white dropouts were higher SES than African American and Hispanic students. In addition, the lowest SES levels generated the most dropouts who cited family and job-related reasons as a cause of their school departure. We also found that, for Hispanics, school-related factors and suspension/expulsion were reported most often by those above mid-SES levels. We also examined possible interaction effects and found that none appear to alter the earlier descriptive patterns that we found.

The final set of analyses focused on the future educational plans of early dropouts. African Americans, both males and females, were most likely to report planning to return to school and least likely to take the GED test. The pattern of results for Hispanics was similar to African Americans, but of a lesser magnitude. However, previous research has shown that African American and Hispanic students are less likely than whites to return to school and eventually earn diplomas once they drop out (General Accounting Office, 1986). Nonetheless, dropouts often come to realize, some much sooner than others, that their economic prospects are limited without a high school diploma -- i.e., only a very small number of dropouts had no intentions to complete a high school diploma or an equivalent credential.

The overwhelming majority of dropouts did plan to earn a high school level credential in the future, but they had different paths for meeting this objective, and these paths differed by race/ethnicity and gender. We found that both male and female white adolescents, as compared

to African Americans and Hispanics, planned more frequently to take equivalency tests as a means of reaching their goal. Also, generally, Hispanic adolescents favored attending alternative high schools, while African American adolescents favored going back to a regular high school and earning their diplomas. It will be important for follow-up studies on these early adolescents to learn which of these reported plans are actually realized, and to consider ways of increasing the uses of the dropout recovery routes that are found to be most successful for all groups.

Policy Implications

Although the results of this study are primarily descriptive in nature and preliminary, several policy implications are relevant. As we continue to investigate the causal complexity of dropping out, we simultaneously suggest several modifications in the current programmatic efforts to reduce the incidence of dropping out among adolescents in the middle grades and in high school. We stress, however, that further research into the process and ramifications of dropping out need to continue in order to discover workable solutions to this pressing crisis in American education. Below is a preliminary list of possible policy implications:

- Programs that build employment opportunities for adolescents while they attend school should be developed and expanded to allow a greater number of African American and Hispanic males to participate.

- Schools should develop programs and strategies to ease the burden that African American and Hispanic girls carry in terms of family responsibility. In addition to counseling, this might involve identification of affordable and accessible child care facilities for the children of adolescents. Another option is to identify social service agencies to help with care of members of the extended family. Very often poor minority females are forced to accept the responsibility of caring for younger siblings, parents that are ill, or for other members of the immediate or extended family.

- Schools might form after-school programs that target specific populations of the school. For example, if African American females are more influenced by their peers than are other adolescents, the school might strengthen its holding power by designing activities of particular interest to African American girls.

- The finding in this study that a higher number of African American students, particularly males, leave school because of suspension/expulsion is not new. School administrators must study this situation carefully to ascertain the origins of this problem, and based on this analysis develop school-wide staff development efforts that might include strengthening the cross-cultural communications of the school's staff.

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Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Dropout Students' Reasons for Leaving School

Reasons	n=1,000	Mean	S.D.
FID6A	I had to get a job	.17	.38
FID6B	I found a job	.18	.38
FID6C	I didn't like school	.51	.50
FID6D	I couldn't get along w/teachers	.34	.48
FID6E	I couldn't get along w/other students	.16	.37
FID6F	I wanted to have a family	.06	.24
FID6G	(For females only) I was pregnant	.12	.32
FID6H	I became the father/mother of a baby	.12	.32
FID6I	I had to support my family	.07	.26
FID6J	I was suspended too often	.16	.36
FID6K	I did not feel safe at school	.09	.29
FID6L	I wanted to travel	.03	.18
FID6M	My friends had dropped out of school	.12	.33
FID6N	I had to care for a member of my family	.07	.26
FID6O	I was expelled from school	.13	.33
FID6P	I felt I didn't belong at school	.25	.43
FID6Q	I couldn't keep up w/my schoolwork	.31	.46
FID6R	I was failing school	.44	.50
FID6S	I got married or planned to get married	.12	.33
FID6T	I changed schools and didn't like my new school	.11	.31
FID6U	I couldn't work and go to the school at the same time	.18	.36

Table 1A
Summary of Factor Loading on Reasons Scale

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5	FACTOR 6	FACTOR 7
FID6A				.7131			
FID6B				.7123			
FID6C			.6074				
FID6D			.3219				
FID6E					.7330		
FID6F		.8312					
FID6G	.6503						
FID6H	.7946						
FID6I	.6397						
FID6J						.7670	
FID6K					.7538		
FID6L							.6855
FID6M							
FID6N	.5862						
FID6O						.8214	
FID6P			.3729				
FID6Q			.7352				
FID6R			.7835				
FID6S		.7956					
FID6T							.6608
FID6U				.7892			
VARNAME	FAM1**	FAM2	SCH	JOB	SAFETY	EXPELLED	MOBILITY
N OF ITEMS	4	2	5	3	2	2	2
RELIABILITY	α =.631	α =.569	α =.609	α =.628	α =.472	α =.562	α =.147

**FAM_{scale} = $FAM1_{scale}$ + $FAM2_{scale}$ (α = .656)
$FAMFEM = FAM1_{scale}$ (-FID6G) + $FAM2_{scale}$ (α = .601)

Table 2
Sex and Race/Ethnicity Differences on Reasons
for Dropping Out of School

	Males			
	H	AA	W	Total
SCH	.384	.315	.474	.429
JOB	.241	.199	.233	.229
EXPELLED	.152	.274	.190	.196
FRIENDS	.124	.207	.163	.162
SAFETY	.129	.158	.134	.137
MOBILITY	.077	.104	.065	.068
FAM	.072	.085	.038	.053
SAMPLE SIZE	105	82	306	493

	Females			
	H	AA	W	Total
SCH	.265	.272	.343	.312
FAM FEM	.174	.181	.129	.149
JOB	.114	.092	.131	.120
SAFETY	.122	.125	.115	.118
EXPELLED	.072	.146	.064	079
FRIENDS	.063	.139	.065	.077
MOBILITY	.059	.083	.064	.066
SAMPLE SIZE	111	72	260	443

Table 2A
T-Test of Significance on Race/Ethnic Differences

	MALES							FEMALES						
	H/W		AA/W		H/AA			H/W		AA/W		H/AA		
	t	α	t	α	t	α		t	α	t	α	t	α	
SCH	-2.66	(.008)	-4.43	(.000)	1.62	(.106)	SCH	-2.48	(.014)	-1.94	(.054)	-0.18	(.860)	
JOB	0.23	(.820)	-0.87	(.385)	0.94	(.347)	FAM FEM	1.97	(.049)	1.85	(.066)	-0.20	(.839)	
EXPELLED	-1.06	(.291)	2.30	(.043)	-2.45	(.015)	JOB	-0.58	(.560)	-1.17	(.243)	0.58	(.562)	
FRIENDS	-0.97	(.332)	0.93	(.351)	-1.55	(.124)	SAFETY	0.20	(.838)	0.28	(.782)	-0 08	(.938)	
SAFETY	-0.18	(.860)	0.74	(.460)	-0.75	(.452)	EXPELLED	0.38	(.708)	2.77	(.006)	-1.88	(.061)	
MOBILITY	-0.90	(.369)	1.61	(.107)	-2.09	(.038)	FRIENDS	- .08	(.934)	2.03	(.044)	-1.73	(.085)	
FAM	2.25	(.025)	2.80	(.005)	-0.51	(.614)	MOBILITY	-0.26	(.798)	0.81	(.419)	-0.87	(.384)	

Table 3
Sex and Race/Ethnicity Differences in Family Socioeconomic Status for Student Dropouts

	MALES			FEMALES		
	Hisp	Afr Amer	White	Hisp	Afr Amer	White
mean	−0.903	−0.835	−0.658	−1.023	−0.952	−0.672
std. dev.	.598	.673	.668	.580	.686	.684
n	98	83	305	118	73	262

		t statistic	α
t - test	Hispanic vs. Afr Amer	-0.74	.462
Female	Hispanic vs. White	−5.15	.000
	Afr Amer vs. White	−3.08	.003
Male	Hispanic vs. Afr Amer	−0.72	.474
	Hispanic vs. White	−3.24	.001
	Afr Amer vs. White	−2.13	.035

Table 4
Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses of Student Dropout Reasons on Race/Ethnicity, Sex, and Socioeconomic Status

		AA/W			H/W			H/AA		
		Beta	t	α	Beta	t	α	Beta	t	α
FAM	Race	.092	2.47	.012	.078	2.17	.030	-.012	-0.23	.817
	SES	-.038	-1.01	.311	-.090	-2.49	.013	-.017	-0.31	.751
	Sex	-.207	-5.59	.000	-.222	-6.29	.000	-.193	-3.66	.000
	RXSex			.648			.937			.641
	RXSES			.117			.406			.045
	R		.233			.265			.195	
FAM FEM	Race	.083	1.50	.135	.070	1.32	.188	-.015	-0.20	.845
	SES	-.104	-1.88	.061	-.131	-2.45	.015	.006	.07	.941
	RXSES			.180			.428			.501
	R		.145			.163			.016	
JOB	Race	-.054	-1.44	.150	-.014	-0.39	.699	.059	1.13	.258
	SES	-.024	-0.64	.521	-.055	-1.51	.132	-.018	-0.35	.728
	Sex	.179	4.80	.000	.189	5.26	.000	.214	4.08	.000
	RXSex			.917			.603			.765
	RXSES			.318			.928			.223
	R		.187			.195			.218	
SCH	Race	-.161	-4.36	.000	-.103	-2.87	.004	.061	1.15	.251
	SES	.031	0.84	.102	.094	2.64	.009	.042	.80	.423
	Sex	.190	5.18	.000	.209	5.95	.000	.149	2.82	.005
	RXSex			.086			.657			.226
	RXSES			.020			.263			.010
	R		.256			.269			.166	
SAFETY	Race	.030	0 78	.438	.003	0 07	.944	-.028	-0.53	.597
	SES	.017	0.44	.659	.007	0.19	.850	.022	0.41	.685
	Sex	.041	1.08	.282	.028	0.77	.440	.030	0.55	.580
	RXSex			.773			.750			.659
	RXSES			.841			.625			.527
	R		.052			.029			.050	
EXPELLED	Race	.123	3.31	.001	-.002	-0.42	.967	-.114	-1.52	.123
	SES	.054	1.45	.148	.091	2.50	.013	.006	.124	.902
	Sex	.211	5.73	.000	.206	5 77	.000	.206	2.54	.012
	RXSex			.981			.220			.450
	RXSES			052			.716			.256
	R		.247			.229			.232	
MOBILITY	Race	.072	1.87	.062	-.013	-0 35	.729	-.108	-2 03	.043
	SES	.049	1.28	.200	.083	-0.26	.026	.007	.124	.901
	Sex	.014	0.38	.706	-.008	2.23	.822	003	.053	.957
	RXSex			.629			.585			.442
	RXSES			.212			.939			.184
	R		.082			.087			.109	
FRIENDS	Race	.073	1.92	056	-.017	-0.45	.653	-.116	-2.19	.029
	SES	.018	0.48	.632	.053	1.45	.148	.000	.004	.997
	Sex	.135	3.60	.000	.137	3.79	.000	.094	1.76	.079
	RXSex			.610			.404			.905
	RXSES			096			.870			.281
	R		.153			.153			.154	

Table 5
Interaction Effects on
Selected Student Dropout Reasons

REASON		MALE			FEMALE		
		H	AA	W	H	AA	W
SCH	SES LO	.349 (70)	.334 (55)	.499 (165)	.248 (84)	.285 (49)	.312 (143)
	SES HI	.469 (26)	.296 (23)	.461 (128)	.344 (25)	.248 (21)	.386 (113)
EXPELLED	SES LO	.150 (70)	.300 (55)	.164 (165)	.060 (84)	.133 (49)	.042 (143)
	SES HI	.154 (26)	.239 (23)	.195 (128)	.120 (25)	.190 (21)	.093 (113)
FAM	SES LO	.091 (70)	.073 (55)	.029 (165)	.171 (84)	.176 (49)	.133 (143)
	SES HI	.038 (26)	.130 (23)	.044 (128)	.096 (25)	.095 (21)	.085 (113)

Table 6
Educational Plans of High School Dropouts by Ethnicity and Gender

	MALES			FEMALES		
	H	AA	W	H	AA	W
Back to School	31% (107)	42% (85)	25% (317)	32% (116)	39% (74)	26% (261)
Enroll in Alternate School/GED	33% (107)	25% (85)	25% (317)	28% (116)	34% (74)	32% (261)
Take Equivalency Test/GED	25% (107)	25% (85)	39% (317)	29% (116)	20% (74)	34% (261)
No plans to take GED	8% (107)	0% (85)	5% (317)	7% (116)	1% (74)	4% (261)
Already had GED	2% (107)	8% (85)	4% (317)	2% (116)	5% (74)	3% (261)

Table 6A
Significance Tests of Race-Ethnicity Differences

	MALES						FEMALES					
	H/W		AA/W		H/AA		H/W		AA/W		H/AA	
	t	α	t	α	t	α	t	α	t	α	t	α
Back to School	1.07	(.287)	3.06	(.002)	-1.65	(.100)	1.09	(.278)	2.14	(.033)	-1.03	(.306)
Enroll in alt/GED	1.44	(.152)	-.16	(.874)	1.21	(.228)	-.65	(.516)	.32	(.748)	-.78	(.439)
Take GED test	-2.55	(.011)	-2.42	(.016)	.08	(.934)	-.91	(.361)	-2.28	(.023)	1.39	(.167)
No plans for GED	1.00	(.318)	-2.26	(.025)	2.78	(.006)	1.23	(.218)	-1.28	(.203)	1.94	(.054)
Have GED	-0.73	(.463)	1.41	(.161)	-1.69	(.093)	-.25	(.799)	.95	(.340)	-1.00	(.317)