

4-1980

A Descriptive Study of the Problems Reported by Selected Students on Academic Probation at Western Kentucky University

James Somers Jr.
Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Somers, James Jr., "A Descriptive Study of the Problems Reported by Selected Students on Academic Probation at Western Kentucky University" (1980). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 2873.
<https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2873>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Somers,

James Robert, Jr.

1980

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS
REPORTED BY SELECTED STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC
PROBATION AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Leadership
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Educational Specialist Degree

by
James Robert Somers, Jr.

April, 1980

AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF THESIS

Permission is hereby

granted to the Western Kentucky University Library to make, or allow to be made photocopies, microfilm or other copies of this thesis for appropriate research or scholarly purposes.

reserved to the author for the making of any copies of this thesis except for brief sections for research or scholarly purposes.

Signed

James R. Somers

Date

2 MAY 1980

Please place an "X" in the appropriate box.

This form will be filed with the original of the thesis and will control future use of the thesis.

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS
REPORTED BY SELECTED STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC
PROBATION AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Recommended April 24 1980
(Date)

Rich M. Allen
Director of Project

Joseph R. Stearns

Ketla E. Poe

Approved May 2, 1980
(Date)

Elmer Gray
Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the chairperson of my Project Committee, Dr. Richard Greer, and to the Committee members, Dr. Retta Poe and Dr. Jerry Wilder. Their patience, encouragement, and guidance was greatly appreciated.

I am also indebted to my fellow workers in the Center of Academic Advisement, Career Planning and Placement for their help and understanding, and to Mrs. Marla Williams who skillfully typed the project.

Finally, I owe a special appreciation to my wife, Pamela Jean Somers, who understood and appreciated the work I was doing and was supportive and encouraging during the project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Introduction	1
II. Review of Related Literature	7
Family Background.	7
Individual Characteristics	12
Past Educational Experiences	17
Goal Commitment.	19
III. Methodology.	24
Subjects	24
Instrumentation.	25
Procedures	26
Data Presentation.	27
IV. Findings and Discussion.	28
V. Summary and Conclusions.	51
Appendix A	60
Appendix B	62
Appendix C	64
References	71

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check List Scores for Freshman Sample	29
2. Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check List Scores for Sophomore Sample.	33
3. Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check List Scores for Junior Sample	36
4. Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check List Scores for Senior Sample	40
5. Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check List Scores for Total Sample.	44

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS
REPORTED BY SELECTED STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC
PROBATION AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

James Robert Somers, Jr. April, 1980

74 pages

Directed by: Richard M. Greer, Retta E. Poe, and Jerry R. Wilder

Department of Educational Leadership

Western Kentucky University

With colleges and universities faced with the possibility of declining enrollments during the decade of the 1980's, student enrollment is becoming an increasing concern in higher education. Efforts to retain students are attracting more attention by college and university personnel. Reasons for dropping out of college have ranged from financial concerns to diverse personality factors. It has been estimated that of the fifteen million students who entered colleges and universities for the first time during the 1970's, five to six million would never earn degrees. College and university dropouts are generally classified into two groups: those students who are forced to leave college because of poor grades, and those who leave voluntarily.

The problems reported by selected academic probation students, as assessed by the Mooney Problem Check List, were examined in this study. The sample of academic probation students was studied as a total group and by separate academic class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). The purpose of this study was to discover the types of problems reported by academic probation students at Western Kentucky University. Tables presented the ranking of problems checked by subjects as assessed by the Mooney Problem Check List for each group reported and for the sample as a whole.

The findings of this study revealed that the various problems encountered by students on academic probation appeared to be similar to the problems encountered by students in general. Probation students appeared to face developmental, economic, educational, vocational, and psychological problems.

Implications for additional research have been identified for further study. It has been suggested that researchers may wish to determine those factors which influence failure so that the necessary assistance can be provided for the student on academic probation.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

According to Cope and Hannah (1975), during the 1960's approximately 10 million students were enrolled in more than 2,500 two-year and four-year colleges and universities. In spite of the fact that most of the students had intentions of earning degrees, fewer than 50 percent earned degrees, and research results suggest that 30 to 40 percent probably never would. Fifteen million students were projected to enter 3,000 colleges and universities during the 1970's; 50 percent of them were predicted to graduate on schedule. Cope and Hannah estimated that five to six million college students would not earn degrees during the decade of the 1970's. According to Pitcher and Blaushild (1970) approximately 380,000 students were failing out of colleges and universities each year. It would seem, then, that institutions of higher education need to begin looking at the educational, financial, social and personal factors which contribute to academic difficulty and then to begin developing programs which would lessen the resulting attrition.

In the 1970's there was a move in American higher education toward open admissions (i.e., an egalitarian philosophy which opened the doors of higher education to those who had not been considered "college material") which resulted in a significant increase of "new students" (Chickering, 1974; Cross, 1971). Recently educators have described the new students (sometimes referred to as nontraditional students) as all students who were previously not well represented in higher education:

students from lower socioeconomic levels, ethnic minorities, women, and older adults (Cross, 1976). Cross (1971) describes new students as first generation college students whose parents never attended college. Over fifty percent of these students are Caucasians, about 25 percent are black, and about 15 percent are other minorities.

According to Cross (1971), the majority of high school graduates ranking in the lowest academic one-third were white. About two-thirds of the blacks who entered two-year colleges were among the lowest academic one-third of entering students. About one-fourth of low-achieving students entering "open-door" colleges were from homes where the fathers attended college. Moore (in Chickering, 1974) described the meaning of the term open-door as follows:

Too often the term 'open door' is hypocritical rhetoric. It is a catch phrase which implies every student can be enrolled in the college. Open door means more than the idea that every student with a high school diploma can go to college. It also means that the student, regardless of his level of achievement, will receive the best education possible in the college commensurate with his needs, efforts, motivation, and abilities (p.5).

Contemporary educators are generally in favor of equal educational opportunity as long as it does not conflict with basic educational values (Cross, 1976). The dilemma now appears to be how to offer equal educational opportunity to students whose lack of educational background threatens the values of academic excellence. Many of today's professors made their professional commitment to education when academic excellence was the goal of reputable institutions of higher education. Thus, the call for equal educational opportunity presents a potential clash of values.

According to the experts who have examined the attrition problem in higher education, there has been little change in the college dropout

rates over the past 30 to 40 years (Pervin, 1965; Newman, 1971). However, it is believed that the primary reasons contributing to the dropout problem among college students have changed. In recent years there have been fewer academic failures and more voluntary dropouts, with student dissatisfaction and general disillusionment playing an increasing role.

Astin (1975) defined dropouts as those students who either leave college voluntarily or leave due to poor grades or for disciplinary reasons. Astin cautioned that in many instances it is difficult to distinguish between the two groups since some students may voluntarily leave in anticipation of receiving grades that would subject them to dismissal. Others let their grades drop to the failure level because they have already decided to leave college for other reasons. Astin reported that the most frequent reasons for dropping out were: boredom with courses, financial problems, dissatisfaction with regulations or requirements, and modification of career interests. Some sex differences in reasons for dropping out were noted; women cited marriage and family responsibilities as primary reasons for leaving college, whereas men indicated poor grades. Astin found in his research that 22 percent of the students gave academic difficulties as the reason for dropping out of school. In samples taken from 12 private colleges, approximately 38 percent of the students who dropped out were experiencing failure or near failure in their course work (Cope & Hannah, 1975).

Palladino and Tryon (1978) used the Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL) to compare problems encountered by students enrolled in 1969 with problems encountered by entering freshmen in 1976. The purpose of the

study was to determine if the problems of entering freshmen had changed from the 1960's to the 1970's. The results suggested that students entering college in 1976 did differ in several problem categories as assessed by the MPCL from those entering in 1969. The categories on the MPCL in which the 1976 freshmen reported significantly more problems were: 1) finances, living conditions, and employment; 2) the future: vocational and educational; 3) curriculum and teaching procedures; 4) adjustment to college work; and 5) home and family. The authors suggested that rising educational costs coupled with inflation have heightened student concerns about finances and employment. With the student concerns about these two areas, it is not surprising that the 1976 freshmen were also concerned with curricular offerings and teaching excellence. It appears from these findings that today's students want to get optimum results from their money. Palladino and Tryon further reported that student concerns about finances and adjustments to college work have not displaced personal and interpersonal problems but rather have moved up in the rankings of problems.

Steele (1978) sought to determine which aspects of student life correlated with retention. To accomplish this objective, he compared returning and nonreturning students' attitudes toward various facets of the university environment. The research revealed that students' perceptions of progress toward academic and career goals had the highest correlation with retention. Forty-five percent of the nonpersisting students expressed dissatisfaction with their academic progress, while only sixteen percent of the persisting students were dissatisfied. The same general pattern of responses occurred for faculty-related variables (quality of faculty, availability for consultation, quality of courses,

and involvement outside class); that is, nonpersisting students tended to express more dissatisfaction with faculty than persisting students. Steel's findings suggest that students' perceptions of their progress toward the accomplishment of academic and career goals might be influenced by their levels of academic performance. Students who are academically borderline or below tend to be dissatisfied with their levels of academic progress. Another possible cause given for students' dissatisfaction with their academic progress involves the nature of their academic goals. The students may not have clearly defined goals or have chosen inappropriate goals. Steel indicates that possibly some of the nonpersisting students' dissatisfaction with their instructors was related to dissatisfaction with their academic goals.

According to Chickering (1969), current college student personnel practices are based on the long standing assumption that students are confronted during their college years with certain identifiable developmental needs. While there may be a common set of student needs, there is evidence to suggest that their priority may shift with changes in age, experience, and social trends (Fullerton & Potkay, 1973; Yankelevich & Clark, 1974). A growing number of authors (e.g., Hurst & Ivey, 1971; Morrill & Hurst, 1971) emphasize the need for student personnel administrators to sample student concerns, usages and satisfactions with student services in order to make more knowledgeable decisions about the type and quality of their programs.

The purpose of this study was to address the need for sampling of college students by generating recent information which could potentially serve as a base for student personnel programming. This investigation was an attempt to assess the types of problems encountered by college students who were on academic probation. Answers to the following

questions were sought:

- 1) What problem areas, as assessed by the Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL), are reported by freshmen (those students who have earned 1-29 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 2) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by sophomores (those students who have earned 30-59 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 3) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by juniors (those students who have earned 60-89 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 4) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by seniors (those students who have earned 90 or more semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 5) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by students on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

With student enrollment increasingly becoming a concern in higher education, there has been a growing interest in the college dropout and in other factors that contribute to attrition. Research by Cope & Hannah (1975) reveals that the postulated reasons for attrition range from concrete circumstances unique to an individual or an institution to abstract factors stemming from personality research. Despite the abundance of professional literature on college dropouts, much remains unknown about the dropout process (Tinto, 1975).

The literature review which follows presents information pertaining to those individual characteristics shown to be related to dropping out of college. More specifically, the research reviewed will pertain to the characteristics of the dropout's family, the characteristics of the individual student, the dropout's educational experiences prior to college entry, and the dropout's expectations concerning future educational attainments.

Family Background

As has been true in other areas of educational performance, the likelihood of a student's dropping out of college has been shown to be related to the characteristics of the family of the dropout student (Tinto, 1975).

Sewell and Shaw (1967) studied a random selection of high school seniors over a seven-year period. Results of the study revealed that

3

both socioeconomic status and intelligence were related to planning to go to college, college attendance, and college graduation for both sexes. When intelligence was controlled in multivariate analyses, socioeconomic status was positively, monotonically, and significantly related to students' plans to attend college, college attendance, and college graduation for both sexes. Similarly, when socioeconomic status was controlled, intelligence was positively, monotonically, and significantly related to planning on college, college attendance, and college graduation for both sexes. In general the authors found that the relative effect of socioeconomic status was greater than was the effect of intelligence for females, while the relative effect of intelligence was greater than was the effect of socioeconomic status for males.

Panos & Astin (1968) reported similar findings. They concluded from their research that the entering students who were most likely not to complete their degree objectives within four years of matriculation were those who came from relatively low socioeconomic backgrounds, had relatively low grades in high school, did not plan at the time of college entrance to pursue graduate or professional degrees, and were more likely to have been married when beginning college.

Research findings that reveal a positive relationship between family background and matriculation in college also cite particular family attributes as being related to students' persistence in college. It appears that college persisters more likely come from families whose parents are more educated, urbane and affluent (Tinto, 1975).

With the current federal and state commitment to the expansion of student financial aid programs, the income level of college students' parents has become an area of great concern (Astin, 1975). Findings by Astin and other researchers suggest a negative correlation between

parental income and college attrition particularly when other variables are ignored; that is, as income goes up, attrition goes down. When family income is compared with other measures of family background, student ability and motivation, it fails to add anything to the contribution of these other variables. Astin reports that the relationship between family income and college attrition seems to be mediated by factors such as student ability, parental education, and student concern about finances. The greater number of students who drop out are from low-income families whose parents are less educated, have lesser ability and lower motivation, and greater concern about finances. The evidence also suggests that women, more so than men, let financial considerations influence their decisions to remain in or leave college.

Research findings on the educational levels of parents of college students reveal that this variable (educational level) can be used as a predictor of college attrition (Astin, 1975; Astin & Panos, 1969; Cope, 1970). Such findings offer as one reason the likelihood that more educated parents exert stronger pressure on their offspring to remain in college than do less educated parents.

Research studies have revealed other factors associated with family background that are also important to the student's educational attainment and academic performance in college. The most important of these factors appears to be the quality of the relationship within the family as well as the interest and expectations parents have for their children's education (Congdon, 1964; Hackman & Dysinger, 1970).

With regard to the quality of the relationship within the family, college persisters tend to have parents who exhibit more open, democratic, supportive, less conflicting relationships with their children. Congdon (1964) provides supportive evidence for this notion from data he

collected from a group of homogeneous students according to sex (male), age, acceptability to a university college of technology, and middle class socioeconomic background. Congdon's findings suggested that the more adequately functioning students were moderately similar to their parents. One possibility might be that students who perceived themselves as unusually different from their parents may have suffered from lack of confidence and feelings of rebelliousness which contributed to their impaired functioning. Another possibility might be that students may likewise suffer from being too much like their parents, a condition which resulted in a constricted, impaired level of functioning.

Congdon points out that students who showed the most impaired functioning, even though they had positive attitudes, were more likely to be suspended from the university because of academic failures and were the ones who showed the greatest need for warmth and affection from a mother figure. Also, students who indicated sharp disruptions in their vocational thinking by voluntarily leaving the university revealed similar needs for maternal warmth and affection.

The data Congdon (1964) gathered from the parents were consistent with the data gathered from the students. Students who were functioning adequately were, for the most part, individuals whose parental relationships were characterized as accepting and demanding, or accepting and casual. Students who failed to follow-through on their vocational choices tended to have parents who were over-protecting and over-demanding.

Congdon concluded that parents who were essentially accepting toward their sons were more likely to communicate to the son a feeling of confidence and adequacy. Such feelings, when internalized, led to positive self-expectancies and adequate functioning. On the other hand, parents who showed the intensity and excessive concern associated with being

over-protective and over-demanding were likely to communicate their own anxiety and a fear that the son would not measure up. These feelings, when internalized by the son, led to a feeling of inadequacy and impaired functioning.

With regard to the interest and expectations parents have for their children's education, it appears that parental levels of expectation may have as much influence upon the student's persistence in college as the student's own expectations. Research conducted by Hackman and Dysinger (1970) provide support for the hypothesis that a student's commitment to a college education is an important determinant as to who actually remains in college and who withdraws. The level of commitment of each student was assessed by responses to a set of questionnaire items included: 1) the students' plans for graduation, 2) the time at which the decision for college became clear, 3) the importance attributed to higher education in the home, and 4) global judgments by parents of the commitment of their offspring.

Hackman's and Dysinger's results suggested that a student's home and family may be an important factor in determining his/her reaction to the college experience. Students whose parents had more education tended to be committed to college, as were students who expressed positive relationships with their parents. In addition, the more parents indicated that they believed their offspring would perform well in college, the stronger the measured commitment of the offspring. Finally, when students or parents indicated that college attendance had always been expected, commitment tended to be even higher. To the authors, findings leave little doubt that the parents' commitment to their child's education (and their perception of his or her commitment) is significant in understanding who does and who does not persist in college.

Individual Characteristics

As important as the family is in determining the student's educational performance in college, it is apparent that the student's own ability is even more important (Sewell & Shaw, 1967). A substantial body of research reveals that the student's academic performance in high school can be used as a valid predictor of college attrition. The scholastic measures used in most studies include the student's grade point average, rank in graduating class, and academic ability as measured by admissions test scores (Astin, 1975).

Burton (1976) analyzed selected student background characteristics in order to determine their effectiveness as predictors of college success as measured by grade point averages. Graduating seniors were asked to provide a wide range of data to include college majors, college grades, high school grades, SAT scores, ages, sex, race, independence, number of children, colleges attended, discipline, materialism, family incomes, parental educational levels, and size of home towns. For the total sample, college grade point averages showed significantly (beyond .05 level) positive correlations with five background factors: high school grades, SAT scores, number of colleges attended, independence, and community activities. Significant negative correlations (beyond .05 level) were found between college grades and five other background factors: discipline, materialism, social activities, father's education, and home town size.

Astin (1972) reports that measures of ability, as obtained from standardized tests and as reflected in high school academic performance, represent different aspects of student competence. Past academic performance tends to be a better predictor of college success as it corresponds more closely with the student's ability to achieve within

an educational setting. Contributing to such predictions is the fact that social and academic requirements in high school are not too different from those in college.

Ability, however measured, is but one of several individual characteristics found to be associated with college persistence. The role of personality variables in attrition has received increasing attention. Research has been conducted in an attempt to distinguish the personality differentials between college nonpersisters and persisters (Albina, 1973; Hannah, 1971; Kowalski & Cangemi, 1974; Morgan, 1974; Pandley, 1973; Rose & Elton, 1966; and Suezek & Alfert, 1966). Though inconclusive, there appear to be some consistencies running through these studies. For instance, persisters are students who 1) aspire to accomplish difficult tasks, 2) are able to work toward long range goals, 3) do not particularly seek out or enjoy exciting activities, and 4) tend to be more introverted than their counterparts. In contrast, students who drop out of college exhibit a greater enjoyment of new and different experiences and adapt more readily to changes in their environment. Their test scores suggest that they are spontaneous, impetuous, impulsive, but also require sympathy and reassurance from others and feel alienated and singled out if reassurance is not forthcoming. Suezek and Alfert (1966) in their study at the University of California at Berkeley concluded that students who remain in college are more conventional and submissive to authority than students who withdraw. The study also indicated that students who voluntarily withdrew tended to be more sophisticated, complex, and philosophical than did other students. Hannah's (1971) findings in a similar study of students from thirteen small private colleges were consistent with studies from the large universities. His findings indicated that nonpersisters when compared

to persisters were more complex, more impulsive, more anxious, less personally integrated, less altruistic, and less willing to exert an effort to make a good impression on either their peers or their instructors. Persisters were described as individuals who have less tolerance for diverse thinking, are more conforming, have a greater tendency to accept authority, are less apt to express hostility and aggression, have lower anxiety levels, and tend to be more cautious.

The literature on personality variables describes the nonpersister as significantly more maladjusted. The nonpersisting student is more aloof, self-centered, impulsive, and assertive than the college persister. Rose and Elton (1966) found that dropouts from the University of Kentucky were clearly distinct from other groups studied. Nonpersisters were more maladjusted and had less interest in literature, art, and philosophy. Also, they were more illogical, irrational, and uncritical; they also disliked reflective and abstract thought.

Hannah (1971) concludes from his personality-related studies that college dropouts have less settled personalities. Emotionally, Hannah claims, the college dropout has a restless unpredictable spirit. They are deep thinkers who act on feelings rather than on measured consequences, are anxious about their environments and themselves, sense a need for independence and seek ways to test that need. Finally, because of their uncertainty, confusion, and lack of direction, they withdraw from contact.

Vaughan (1968) points out the need to distinguish carefully between college dropouts who are academic failures and those who are voluntary withdrawals. Vaughan's findings revealed that the students who were dismissed for academic reasons and the students who withdrew voluntarily had different personality characteristics. The dismissed students

evidenced more emotional disturbance and manifested more pathology than did the persisting students. They also appeared to be more impulsive, lacking in any deep emotional commitment to education, and unable to profit from past educational experiences. In addition, the dismissed students had a tendency to be unstable, overly active, and restless. Vaughan concluded that all these characteristics can militate against effectiveness in academic achievement. Students who withdrew from college for non-academic reasons failed to demonstrate these characteristics to the same degree as did the persisting students. The students did, however, manifest suspiciousness, over-sensitivity, and egotism, all of which could have been contributing factors in their decisions to leave college.

Sex of the college student also appears to be related to persistence in college as evidenced by the fact that a higher proportion of men finish their degree objectives than do women (Astin, 1972; Cope, 1971). Astin (1975) surveyed male and female students to determine the reasons why they dropped out of college. The most frequent reasons cited by both men and women were boredom with courses, financial difficulties, dissatisfaction with requirements or regulations, and change in career goals. Women cited marriage, pregnancy, and other family responsibilities as the primary reasons for dropping out of college (this item was eighth in importance for men). Poor grades ranked fourth by men and seventh by women as contributing reasons for their decisions to drop out of college. Astin concluded that since "some other reason" was checked so frequently, there must be one or more important reasons missing from the list (i.e., personal or emotional problems).

Astin's (1975) finding that women are three times more likely than men to list marriage as a reason for dropping out of college supports an

earlier study by Bayer (1969). Bayer gathered data from a national sample of 4,000 high school students to study the possible independent influence exerted by marital plans on educational aspirations. The findings indicated that aptitude, socioeconomic background, and marital plans exerted a strong independent influence on educational aspirations of both male and female high school seniors. The influence of marital plans on educational aspirations was reported to be especially marked for girls.

Closely related to the marriage-related factor is the role of children among college nonpersisters. Does the number of children influence the dropout's tendency to give marriage, pregnancy, or other family responsibilities as reasons for leaving college? To answer this question, Astin (1975) classified married dropouts by the number of children they had prior to their dropping out of college. The percentage that gave marriage as a reason for leaving college was determined for each group. The results clearly indicated that having children increased the dropout's chances of giving marriage as a reason for leaving college. The number of children bore little or no relationship to the students' chances of giving marriage as a reason for leaving college. The major difference was between college students who had no children as compared to those who had one or more. Even though having children greatly increased the married students' tendency to give marriage as a reason for leaving college, 45 percent of the married women with no children, compared with 16 percent of the men with no children, gave marriage as a reason for leaving. This suggests that marriage is a greater factor for women's leaving college than it is for men.

Past Educational Experiences

Although past educational experiences have not been explicitly referred to as directly related to the college dropout problem, it is clear that performance in high school, as measured by either grade point average or rank in class has been shown to be an important predictor of future college performance. Astin (1971) gathered data from 19,524 male students and 17,057 female students by inviting them to complete a questionnaire during their freshman orientation in college. Each of the more than 36,000 students was asked to report their average grades in high school. Findings revealed a relationship between students' grades in high school and their freshman college grades. For example, males who had earned "A" averages in high school earned grade point averages during the freshmen year that were more than one full letter grade above the freshman grade point averages earned by males who had "C" averages. A similar difference in college grade point averages was observed between females with "A" averages and those with "C" averages in high school.

Astin also examined the relationship between high school and college grades to determine the students' chances of earning a particular college grade point average. The college letter grade of "B" or better (grade point average of 2.50 or higher) was selected to represent a moderate level of academic progress. Astin found that approximately three-fourths of the men who had earned "A" averages in high school achieved at least a "B" average as college freshmen, whereas only 10 percent of the men who had earned "C" averages in high school achieved a "B" average or better in college. The findings further indicated that regardless of the level of average high school grades, female college students received higher freshmen grades than did male students. Astin implies that the superior academic performance of the college freshmen

women cannot be completely due to their superior academic performance in high school. Stated differently, even when men and women were comparably matched in their scholastic achievements, the women still performed slightly better in college. The differences in college achievement was somewhat more significant among men and women who had earned higher grade point averages in high school than those at the lower levels.

The students' perception of the quality of their high school educational experiences appeared to have an effect on their persistence in college. Astin (1975) reported that the students' rating of the academic quality of their high schools correlated positively with the accuracy of estimating the nonpersistence of white men, white women, blacks (male and female) in black colleges and blacks (male and female) in white colleges. In all four cases, dropping out of college was determined to be associated with a relatively low high school rating.

It is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions from studies designed to relate high school size to achievement. Cope (1972) suggests that the important aspects of a school or community may serve as a meaningful force if related to factors such as: levels of socioeconomic status, differences in facilities, teacher salaries, class size, available curricula, and other pervasive differences in the community. Research conducted by Cope compared data relative to high school and home town size with persistence and nonpersistence at a large midwest university. The results from the investigation revealed that the size of the high school or community is related to academic persistence. Cope points out that the relationship relative to high school size may only be positive in the case where the student finds himself or herself in a college or university environment that is substantially different from that to which the student was accustomed. The degree of

incongruence between the social and academic environments of high school and college may require personal adjustments that are beyond the ability of some students.

In his review of research on college dropouts, Tinto (1975) concludes that the characteristics of the high school are important since they directly and indirectly affect the individual's aspirations and motivations for a college education. The ability level of students in the school and the social status composition of the school affect not only the individual's perception of his or her own ability but also his or her expectations for future college education. Tinto suggests, therefore, that expectations for future college education affect the individual's commitment to the goal of college completion.

Goal Commitment

After the individual's ability is taken into account, the commitment to the goal of college completion appears to be the most influential variable in determining college persistence. Whether measured in terms of educational plans, educational expectations, or career expectations, the higher the level of plans, the more likely the individual is to remain in college (Tinto, 1975). In the above, Cope (1978) contended that the individual characteristics described by Tinto are products of a multidimensional process where family expectations condition personal expectations, which are then tested in a college environment and shaped by social expectations. These characteristics interact in ways that are not well understood.

Sewell and Shaw (1967) found that the most critical factor in the obtaining of a college education was the individual's decision to attend college. Their research revealed that over one-fourth of the high ability males studied and approximately one-half of the high ability

females did not make plans to attend college and hence did not enroll. Socioeconomic origins had an impact on the decisions of the high ability youth of both sexes; approximately 52 percent of the high ability males of low socioeconomic status enrolled in college in comparison with slightly over 90 percent of the males of high socioeconomic status of equal ability. For females the corresponding percentages were 28 and 76 respectively. The number of college graduates from high ability males was only 20 percent from low socioeconomic status origins in comparison with 64 percent from those with high socioeconomic status backgrounds. For females, the proportion of college graduates from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds were 14 and 51 percent respectively.

The Hackman and Dysinger (1970) study discussed above (in the section of Family Background) is particularly relevant in that its authors proposed that the commitment of a student (and of the student's parents) to obtaining a college education was a significant factor in determining whether or not the student withdrew from college during the freshman year. They gathered data from 1,407 students enrolled in three midwestern liberal arts colleges and from the parents of 1,331 of these students. The results of their investigation revealed that that commitment of a student and his or her parents to obtaining a college education (as measured prior to enrollment in college) relate significantly to whether or not the student persists beyond the freshman year. The authors concluded that commitment to obtaining a college education and academic competence interact in determining persistence and withdrawal. The data revealed that college persisters had the highest level of commitment, that academic dismissals and transfers/returnees were next, and that voluntary withdrawals (students who left on their own volition

and did not transfer or re-enroll) were lowest in measured commitment. In an analysis of measures of academic competence among the same students, a different ordering occurred: persisters were highest in academic competence, transfers/returnees were a very close second, voluntary withdrawals were third, and academic dismissals were fourth.

Demitroff (1974) conducted a study to determine why students withdraw from a university. The procedures developed to gather data included exit interviews. The counselors conducting the interviews were allotted enough time to be able to study the students' academic records prior to convening with the students. During each interview, the counselor solicited information from the student relative to his/her reason(s) for withdrawing, the student's educational plans, and what the university could have done to have precluded the problem that led to the decision to withdraw.

Data from the students who withdrew from the university and from a control group of persisters were compared to determine what attitudinal differences existed between the two groups. The major differences between the two groups were that the students who withdrew reported:

- a) less satisfaction with their academic majors
- b) less certainty about their educational plans
- c) less satisfaction with their vocational plans
- d) less assertion that their study habits were good
- e) less motivation to study their academic subjects
- f) more attendance at University athletic events
- g) more agreement that outside activities are valuable to students (Demitroff, 1974, p. 560)

In defining the typical student who withdrew, Demitroff concluded that the student would likely be a freshman who was undecided about his or her academic major and who had no specific vocational plans. The typical withdrawing student was one who lacked motivation, lacked confidence in the effectiveness of his or her study habits, and lacked

confidence in his or her ability to complete the baccalaureate degree requirements. The author pointed out that most of the students who withdrew expressed intentions of returning to college; only 17 percent indicated that they would not return to school or were unsure of their future plans.

Astin (1973) suggested that with respect to stated degree plans at the time of first enrollment, the students who vow they do not want to get a bachelors degree have less chance of getting a bachelors degree than students who indicate that they do want to get a bachelors degree. In research where students who did not aspire to at least a bachelors degree, Astin (1975) found that individuals who aspire to a doctorate or professional degree are the least likely to withdraw from college, while students who aspire to a bachelors or "other" degree have the greatest chance of withdrawing.

Astin further illustrated the relative importance of degree plans by contrasting the regression weights of various degrees in terms of what they add to the student's probability of dropping out of college. For white males, aspiring to a masters degree rather than a doctoral or professional degree adds approximately 5 percent to the chances of dropping out. Among white male students, aspiring to a bachelors degree adds another 7 percent and aspiring to "other" degree adds another 12 percent. In other words, the difference in chances for dropping out between aspiring for a doctorate or professional degree and aspiring for the degree category labeled "other" is approximately 24 percent. There is a pattern for white females, except that aspiring to a bachelors rather than a doctoral or professional degree adds only about 4 percent to the dropout chances, and aspiring to a masters degree is associated

with a lower probability of dropping out (approximately 3 percent less) than aspiring to a doctorate or professional degree.

Pantages and Creedon (1978) concluded from their extensive review of research on college dropouts that attrition is the result of an extremely intricate interplay among a multitude of variables. As such, attempts to isolate single causal factors or "major" determinants are misguided and ultimately futile for the practical concerns of individual colleges. Factors which predict an individual's chances of persisting at a particular college generally account for half of the variance. The authors recommend that colleges shift their attention from prediction to the prevention of attrition. If colleges hope to minimize the likelihood of attrition among their students, they should design and implement effective intervention programs. One of the activities recommended by Pantages and Creedon (1978) is described as follows:

College researchers and administrators should make far greater use of existing college environment assessment devices to identify those aspects of the environment that create student dissatisfaction, which in turn increases the likelihood of dropping out (p. 95).

The present investigation of problem areas reported by potential dropouts is an effort to respond to the challenge issued by Pantages and Creedon.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects. Selected undergraduate students at Western Kentucky University during the Fall, 1977, semester served as subjects in the present study. Students selected as subjects were those who were on academic probation prior to the start of the semester and who then failed to earn at least a 2.00 grade point average during the semester. According to the academic regulations of the university, students who met both criteria were subject to academic dismissal at the end of the Fall, 1977, semester.

Students selected for this study were mailed "Conference Letters" (Appendix A) by the Center for Academic Advisement, Career Planning and Placement. Conference letters are routinely mailed to academic probation students subject to academic dismissal who have a cumulative grade point average between 1.50-1.99. The conference letter notifies the student of his or her scheduled appointment with a University Academic Probation Committee. The purpose of the scheduled appointment is to determine the student's eligibility to enroll during the subsequent semester. Two-hundred and fifty-seven students were mailed conference letters.

One-hundred and fifty-one students responded to the conference letters by attending the scheduled meetings with the University Academic Probation Committee. After an audit of transcripts, two subjects were determined to have a grade point average of 2.00 or more and their data

was determined to be invalid for this study. The final sample, therefore, consisted of 149 probation students. A breakdown by academic class revealed that there were 13 freshmen (those students who had earned 1-29 semester hours), 67 sophomores (those students who had earned 30-59 semester hours), 52 juniors (those students who had earned 60-89 semester hours), and 17 seniors (those students who had earned 90 or more semester hours).

Instrumentation. The focus of this study required the selection of an instrument designed to assess student problems. The instrument chosen was the Mooney Problem Check List--College Form, 1950 Revision (Mooney & Gordon, 1950). The Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL) "is designed to reflect the problems which a student senses and is willing to express at a given time" (Mooney & Gordon, 1950, p. 9). The MPCL is a self-administered inventory of problems. The college form contains 330 items, with 30 items in each of 11 categories as follows:

1. Health and Physical Development (HPD)
2. Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)
3. Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)
4. Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)
5. Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)
6. Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)
7. Home and Family (HF)
8. Morals and Religion (MR)
9. Adjustment to College Work (ACW)
10. The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)
11. Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)

The respondent is instructed to underline items of concern, then circle items of greatest concern. To score the MPCL, a count is made of the circled items and then added to the count of underlined items. Each circled item is equal to a score of one, and each underlined item is equal to a score of one. A total score (circled items added to underlined items) is determined for each of the 11 problem areas. The authors do not report validity and reliability coefficients for the MPCL. Rather they suggest that the instrument can be used for a variety of purposes and is so constructed that the data must be considered in the light of many factors (Mooney & Gordon, 1950). Several general uses for the check list are mentioned in the manual, and for each the data should be studied in terms of particular people in specific situations.

Procedures. At the completion of the Fall, 1977, semester the Center for Academic Advisement, Career Planning and Placement mailed conference letters to 257 students who were on academic probation and subject to academic dismissal. The letter informed the students of their scheduled appointment with the University Academic Probation Committee. The Mooney Problem Check List and an appropriate cover letter (Appendix B) were included with the conference letters. The purpose of the cover letter was to introduce the study, to solicit the cooperation of the respondents, and to provide instructions for the completion and return of the check list. All participants were informed of the importance of the study and that their response to the MPCL would be kept confidential. The participating students returned their completed Mooney Problem Check Lists prior to meeting with the University Academic Probation Committee. Each of the subjects met with a University Academic Probation Committee.

Data Presentation. Because this was a descriptive study, no statistical comparisons among groups were made. Therefore, the data are presented in tabular form. The tables present the proportion of problems checked by students as assessed by the Mooney Problem Check List (Health and Physical Development (HPD); Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE); Social and Recreational Activities (SRA); Social-Psychological Relations (SPR); Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR); Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM); Home and Family (HF); Morals and Religion (MR); Adjustment to College Work (ACW); The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE); and Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP) for each group reported (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) and for the sample as a whole.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to discover the types of problems reported by selected students on academic probation. The Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL) was used to define the problem types. Subjects were classified by class (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior), and MPCL scores were computed for each class and for all four classes combined.

This study sought to answer five research questions. The first question was:

What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by freshmen (those students who have earned 1-29 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

Mean scores and ranks are reported for freshmen in Table 1. The mean score for the total number of problems reported by the 13 freshmen in the study was 23.39. The highest ranked problem area was Adjustment to College Work (ACW) with a mean score of 7.08. The second ranked problem area was Home and Family (HF) with a mean score of 2.31. The third ranked problem area was Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) with a mean score of 2.15. Due to the small size of the freshman sample, conclusions of a substantive nature must be drawn with some caution. However, some trends are to be noted, and some hypotheses do seem warranted.

The total score (items circled added to the items underlined) for freshmen in the ACW problem area was 92. Items in the ACW problem area

Table 1
 Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check
 List Scores for Freshmen Sample

Problem Area	Mean	Rank
Health and Physical Development (HPD)	1.62	7
Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)	2.15	3
Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)	1.54	8
Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)	1.38	9
Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)	1.77	5.5
Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)	1.00	10
Home and Family (HF)	2.31	2
Morals and Religion (MR)	.69	11
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	7.08	1
The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)	2.08	4
Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)	1.77	5.5
Total	23.39	

which received the highest scores for freshmen were: "Not spending enough time in study" with a score of 10; "Getting low grades" with a score of 8; "Slow in mathematics;" "Worrying about examinations;" "Having a poor background for some subjects;" and "Not knowing how to study effectively," each with a score of 7.

The items ranked highest by freshmen in the ACW problem area "Not spending enough time in study," and "Worrying about examinations" may be closely related. It would seem that if a student does not devote sufficient time studying, the tendency to worry about examinations would follow. Several of the problems reported by freshmen in the ACW category seem to be related to factors that are outside the control of students. For example, when students report not having a background for some subjects, being weak in grammar or spelling, and being slow in mathematics, they could be saying that their previous educational experiences did not adequately prepare them for college course work.

The total score for freshmen in the Home and Family (HF) problem area was 30. Items in the HF problem area which received the highest scores for freshmen were: "Parents separated or divorced" and "Parents having a hard time of it" with scores of 4; and "Being criticized by my parents" and "Mother" with scores of 3.

Since college students throughout higher education typically experience their first extended periods of time away from home during their freshman year, such is presumed with those studied at Western Kentucky University. Experiencing problems with parents' being separated or divorced, parents' encountering difficult times, and being criticized by parents tend to make students sensitive about their relationship with the family. Perhaps the student's role in the family is undergoing redefinition. This redefinition process could result in some internal

conflict for the student, as well as some conflict with his/her parents. These assumptions may partly explain the responses of freshmen subjects in the HF problem area.

The total score for freshmen in the Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) problem area was 28. Items in the FLE problem area which received the highest scores for freshmen subjects were: "Needing a part-time job now;" "Needing to watch every penny I spend;" "Disliking financial dependence on others;" "Working late on a job;" and "No steady income." Each of these items received a score of 3.

The items chosen by freshmen in the FLE problem area appear to reflect concerns of an immediate nature. Financial problems encountered by freshmen during their first year of college may explain the need expressed by some subjects to secure part-time employment. A further observation applicable to the FLE problem area is that the student's living condition does not appear to be a serious problem.

In summary, the MPCL problem areas that were ranked highest for freshmen were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW); Home and Family (HF); and Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). The items selected in the problem areas appear to represent typical freshmen problems. Most freshmen experience problems associated with making an adjustment to college work, being away from home for an extended period of time for the first time, and having insufficient financial resources to meet college expenses.

The second research question this study sought to answer was:

What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by sophomores (those students who have earned 30-59 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

Mean scores and ranks are reported for sophomores in Table 2. The mean number of problems reported by the 67 sophomore subjects in this study was 38.26. For sophomores the highest ranked problem areas were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW) with a mean score of 8.94; Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) with a mean score of 4.21; and The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE) and Curriculum and Teaching Procedures (CTP) both with mean scores of 3.97.

The total score for sophomore subjects in the Adjustment to College Work (ACW) problem area was 599. Items in the ACW problem area which received the highest scores for sophomores were: "Getting low grades" with a score of 62; "Not knowing how to study effectively" with a score of 51; "Not spending enough time in study" with a score of 50; and "Having a poor background for some subjects" with a score of 49.

Based upon the data presented above, it is safe to assume that earning low grades was of concern to sophomore students who were on academic probation. Contributing to the significance of this concern was the University's decision relative to the students' eligibility or ineligibility for continuous enrollment. The University's Scholastic Regulations stipulate that a student on academic probation must earn the minimum of a "C" average (2.00) in order to re-enroll. Students who earn less than a C average must petition the Academic Probation Committee for permission to enroll.

For the sophomores participating in the study there appeared to be some concern that their past educational experiences had not adequately prepared them for some of the courses they had attempted in college. These students also reported problems with their study habits (not spending enough time and/or not knowing how to study). They were therefore accepting some of the responsibility for their marginal academic performance.

Table 2
Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check
List Scores for Sophomore Sample

Problem Area	Mean	Rank
Health and Physical Development (HPD)	2.13	9
Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)	3.96	5
Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)	2.45	7
Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)	2.04	8
Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)	4.21	2
Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)	1.22	11
Home and Family (HF)	3.52	6
Morals and Religion (MR)	1.85	10
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	8.94	1
The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)	3.97	3.5
Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)	3.97	3.5
Total	38.26	

The total score for sophomore subjects in the Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) problem area was 282. Items in the PPR problem area which received the highest scores for sophomores were: "Worrying about unimportant things" with a score of 19; "Nervousness" with a score of 17; "Taking things too seriously" and "Finding it difficult to relax," with scores of 16; and "Too easily discouraged" with a score of 15.

The scores for sophomores on items in the PPR problem area seem to suggest that some of the students were experiencing some degree of anxiety. It is difficult to know whether the worrying, tension, and discouragement were present prior to academic difficulties or were the result of academic performance. The reported psychological concerns did not seem to be pathological in that suicide thoughts, bad dreams, etc. were infrequently reported.

The total score for sophomore subjects in the problem area of The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE) was 266. Items in the FVE problem area which received the highest scores were: "Wanting a part-time experience in my field: with a score of 23; and "Wondering if I'll be a success in life" and "Not knowing what I really want" with scores of 22.

The responses to the items in the FVE problem area suggest that some of the students had made tentative choices concerning their vocations, whereas others were indecisive. Perhaps the sophomore subjects were at a point in their educational program where they were feeling some pressure to make a commitment to an academic major and/or a vocation.

The total score for sophomore subjects in the Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP) problem area was 266. Items in the CTP problem area which received the highest scores for sophomores were: "Hard to

study in living quarters" with a score of 30; "Forced to take courses I don't like" with a score of 24; and, "Not having a good college advisor" and "Grades unfair as measures of ability" both with scores of 18.

The responses to the various items in the CTP problem area suggest problems that the subjects viewed as being outside their control. Problems such as being required to take undesirable courses, receiving less than adequate advising from their advisors, and being graded unfairly were situations over which the students felt they had little or no control. Also, they may have been expressing some defensiveness due to their failures.

In summary, the MPCL problem areas that were ranked highest for sophomores were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW); Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR); The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE); and Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP). Items selected in these problem areas revealed that sophomores were expressing concerns with low grades, poor study habits and uncertainty about their future. They also reported that they were facing situations which they felt they could not control and that they were experiencing varying degrees of anxiety. The sophomores were less optimistic about their college experiences and futures than were freshmen. This difference is supported by the fact that sophomores' mean score for total number of problems was approximately 65 percent greater than was the freshmen.

The third research question this study sought to answer was:

What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by juniors (those students who have earned 60-89 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee:

Mean scores and ranks are reported for juniors in Table 3. The mean score for the total number of problems reported by the 52 junior

Table 3
 Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check
 List Scores for Junior Sample

Problem Area	Mean	Rank
Health and Physical Development (HPD)	2.65	8
Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)	5.29	2
Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)	2.85	7
Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)	2.31	9
Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)	4.94	3
Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)	1.79	10
Home and Family (HF)	3.21	6
Morals and Religion (MR)	1.77	11
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	10.23	1
The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)	3.96	5
Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)	4.10	4
Total	43.10	

probation students was 43.10. The highest ranked problem area was Adjustment to College Work (ACW) with a mean score of 10.23. Ranked second was Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) with a mean score of 5.29. The third ranked problem area was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) with a mean score of 4.94.

The total score for junior subjects in the Adjustment to College Work (ACW) problem area was 532. Items in the ACW problem area which received the highest scores for juniors were: "Getting low grades" with a score of 50; "Not spending enough time in study" with a score of 40; "Not knowing how to study effectively" with a score of 37; and "Easily distracted from my work" with a score of 36.

The responses to the items in the ACW problem area confirmed student problems relative to effective study habits. Factors that appeared to interfere with productive studying were, 1) lack of concentration, 2) not devoting the necessary time, and 3) not knowing how to study. If the subjects could have remedied the problems related to their study habits, possibly their concerns about examinations and grades would likewise have been resolved.

The total score for junior subjects in the Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) problem area was 275. Items in the FLE problem area which received the highest scores were: "Disliking financial dependence on others" and "Going through school on too little money," both with scores of 21; "Unsure of my future financial support" with a score of 18; "Too many financial problems" with a score of 17; and "Needing a part-time job now," "Going in debt for college expenses," and "Needing to watch every penny I spend," each with a score of 16.

The items of most concern in the FLE problem area related to finances. The data revealed that selected college students reported going into debt and, moreover, their plans for obtaining the needed financial support to continue their education were unclear. This was particularly applicable to students who were relying on other sources (i.e., loans, grants, relatives) for financial support.

The total score for junior subjects in the Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) problem area was 257. Items in the PPR problem area which received the highest scores for junior subjects were: "Nervousness" with a score of 20; "Moodiness, 'having the blues'" with a score of 19; "Daydreaming" with a score of 18; and "Worrying about unimportant things" and "Being lazy," both with scores of 15.

The responses to the various items comprising the PPR problem area suggest that these students were experiencing some degree of anxiety. This is supported by the fact that certain items chosen reflected problems with nervousness and depression. It appeared that these symptoms were not extreme enough to be classified as pathological. Problems related to laziness and daydreaming among junior students may have caused their guilt feelings and contributed to their having the "blues" and worrying. If what was reported was also true behaviorally, then the laziness and daydreaming were probably contributing to the poor academic performance.

In summary, the highest ranking problem areas for junior subjects were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW); Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR); and Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). Items selected in these areas revealed that juniors were concerned with low grades, ineffective study habits, mild anxieties, and not having

enough money to meet basic expenses. The increase in the mean score for total number of problems reported by juniors was only approximately 4.5 percent. This modest increase, particularly when compared to other underclassmen, would indicate a leveling off of problems reported.

The fourth research question this study sought to answer was:

What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by seniors (those students who have earned 90 or more semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

Mean scores and ranks are reported for seniors in Table 4. The mean score for the total number of problems reported by the 17 senior probation students was 50.12. The highest ranked problem area was Adjustment to College Work (ACW) with a mean score of 10.12. Ranked second was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) with a mean score of 7.29. The third ranked problem area was Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP) with a mean score of 5.71. Due to the small size of the senior sample, conclusions of a substantive nature must be drawn with some caution. However, some trends are to be noted, and some hypotheses do seem to be warranted.

The total score for seniors in the Adjustment to College Work (ACW) problem area was 172. Items in the ACW problem area which received the highest scores were: "Getting low grades" with a score of 18; "Worrying about examinations" with a score of 14; and "Easily distracted from my work" and "Not spending enough time in study," both with scores of 12.

The seniors' major concern was making low grades. Since these students had cumulative grade point averages less than the university's minimum requirements for graduation, it was not surprising that these subjects viewed low grades as a problem. For students of senior

Table 4
 Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check
 List Scores for Senior Sample

Problem Area	Mean	Rank
Health and Physical Development (HPD)	3.06	9
Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)	3.76	6
Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)	3.29	7
Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)	4.35	5
Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)	7.29	2
Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)	2.24	11
Home and Family (HF)	2.59	10
Morals and Religion (MR)	3.18	8
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	10.12	1
The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)	4.53	4
Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)	5.71	3
Total	50.12	

classification, the inability to maintain a 2.00 cumulative grade point average would lengthen the amount of time required to meet the minimum academic standards for graduation.

ACW items cited by seniors related to not spending enough time studying and being easily distracted from their homework may partially account for their academic probationary status. The problem of worrying about examinations may have been associated with study problems.

The total score for senior subjects in the Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) problem area was 124. Items in the PPR problem area which received the highest scores for senior subjects were: "Nervousness" and "Failing in so many things I try to do," both with scores of 9; "Worrying about unimportant things" with a score of 8; and "Having bad luck" with a score of 7.

The PPR responses indicate that some seniors felt that they had been failures at some things they had attempted to do. The data suggest that some students did not accept responsibility for their failure but rather attributed it to external forces. The frequent response to the PPR item "Having bad luck" strongly suggests that the student perceived his/her lack of success in many situations to be controlled by external forces. In this case, the external force would be luck or chance.

Other responses by seniors to PPR items reflect problems with fear of making mistakes, worrying about things that were unimportant, nervousness, difficulty in relaxing, and taking things too seriously. These types of problems imply that seniors had feelings of anxiety. The data suggest that the students did not feel that their situation was bad enough to manifest thoughts of suicide or thoughts of insanity.

The total score for senior subjects in the Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP) problem area was 97. Items in the CTP problem area which received the highest scores were: "Grades unfair as measures of ability" with a score of 10; "Some courses poorly organized" with a score of 9; "Forced to take courses I don't like: with a score of 7; and "Dull classes" with a score of 6.

The CTP problem items cited suggested that the seniors were not willing to assume responsibility for their low levels of academic achievement. Further, the data revealed that some seniors perceived that they had been victims of the system in that they had been forced to take undesirable courses (some of which were considered dull and poorly organized), they were being assigned too much work in selected courses, and they were being graded unfairly.

In summary, the MPCL problem areas which ranked highest for seniors were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW); Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR); and Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP). Items selected in these problem areas revealed that seniors were concerned about receiving low grades, having difficulty with studying, experiencing anxiety, and feeling a lack of control over their academic situation. Seniors also appeared to be dissatisfied with the courses they had been advised to take and with their instructors' grading practices. Further, several of the recurring items suggested that the seniors perceived that they had little or no control over external factors.

The fifth research question this study sought to answer was:

What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by students on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

Mean scores and ranks are reported for the total group (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) in Table 5. The mean number of problems reported by the 149 students in this was 40.00. For the total group of probation students, the highest ranked problem areas were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW) with a mean score of 9.36; Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) with a mean score of 4.60; and Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) with a mean score of 4.24.

The total score for probation students on the Adjustment to College Work (ACW) problem area was 1395. Items in the ACW problem area which received the highest scores were: "Getting low grades" with a score of 138; "Not spending enough time in study" with a score of 112; "Not knowing how to study effectively" with a score of 103; and "Having a poor background for some subjects" with a score of 95.

ACW problem area items revealed that the participating students were concerned about getting low grades. This problem item received the highest score of the items in ACW. This high score was anticipated since each of the subjects was on academic probation and subject to dismissal from the university.

Other ACW problem area responses suggest possible reasons for subjects' earning grade point averages below the required level to be in good academic standing. One reason could be the lack of effective study habits. Subjects reported problems with not knowing how to study effectively as well as not spending enough time studying. Another factor that could have contributed to the subjects' having ineffective study habits was the problem of being easily distracted from their work. If the students were referring to studying, then possibly students were choosing poor places in which to study.

Table 5
Mean and Rank of Mooney Problem Check
List Scores for Total Sample

Problem Area	Mean	Rank
Health and Physical Development (HPD)	2.38	8
Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE)	4.24	3
Social and Recreational Activities (SRA)	2.60	7
Social-Psychological Relations (SPR)	2.34	9
Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR)	4.60	2
Courtship, Sex, and Marriage (CSM)	1.52	11
Home and Family (HF)	3.20	6
Morals and Religion (MR)	1.87	10
Adjustment to College Work (ACW)	9.36	1
The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE)	3.87	5
Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP)	4.02	4
Total	40.00	

Another possible reason contributing to the students' marginal levels of academic performance could have been their inadequate background for certain courses. If this were the case, then one could wonder why the student did not withdraw from the course(s) with a "W" rather than receiving a "D" or "F".

The total score for probation subjects in the Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR) problem area was 686. Items in the PPR problem area which received the highest scores were: "Nervousness" with a score of 46; "Moodiness, 'Having the blues'" with a score of 38; and "Daydreaming" with a score of 37.

The problems reported in the PPR area did not seem to be pathological in that suicide thoughts, bad dreams, etc. were infrequently reported. The types of concerns reported tended to be more neurotic in nature. The problem items chosen imply that some of the students had experienced tension, worry and some depression. These types of reactions by the subjects are probably not unusual, considering the students' uncertainty about their futures in college.

The total score for probation students in the Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE) problem area was 632. Items in the FLE problem area which received the highest scores were: "Disliking financial dependence on others" with a score of 52; "Going through school on too little money" with a score of 51; "Needing a part-time job now" with a score of 45; and "Too many financial problems" with a score of 37.

It is implied from the various responses of the students in the FLE problem area that some students were relying on others for financial assistance. This situation was apparently creating some conflict for those students. Possibly for some students there was a minimum grade

point average required in order to receive additional financial support (i.e., students qualifying for grants or loans). For students who were receiving financial assistance from their families, a variety of pressures both internal and external, possibly contributed to the students' feelings of ambiguity, anxiety, depression, etc.

For some of the subjects the amount of money they had for expenses while going through school was a problem. Evidently there were some subjects who felt they were going through school on too little money. This problem may have accounted for the responses to two other items which had high scores in FLE: "Needing a part-time job now" and "Needing to watch every penny I spend."

The MPCL problem areas that were ranked highest for the total group of probation students were: Adjustment to College Work (ACW); Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR); and, Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). Items selected in these problem areas revealed that probation students expressed concerns about receiving low grades, having difficulty with studying, experiencing some level of anxiety, and having financial difficulties.

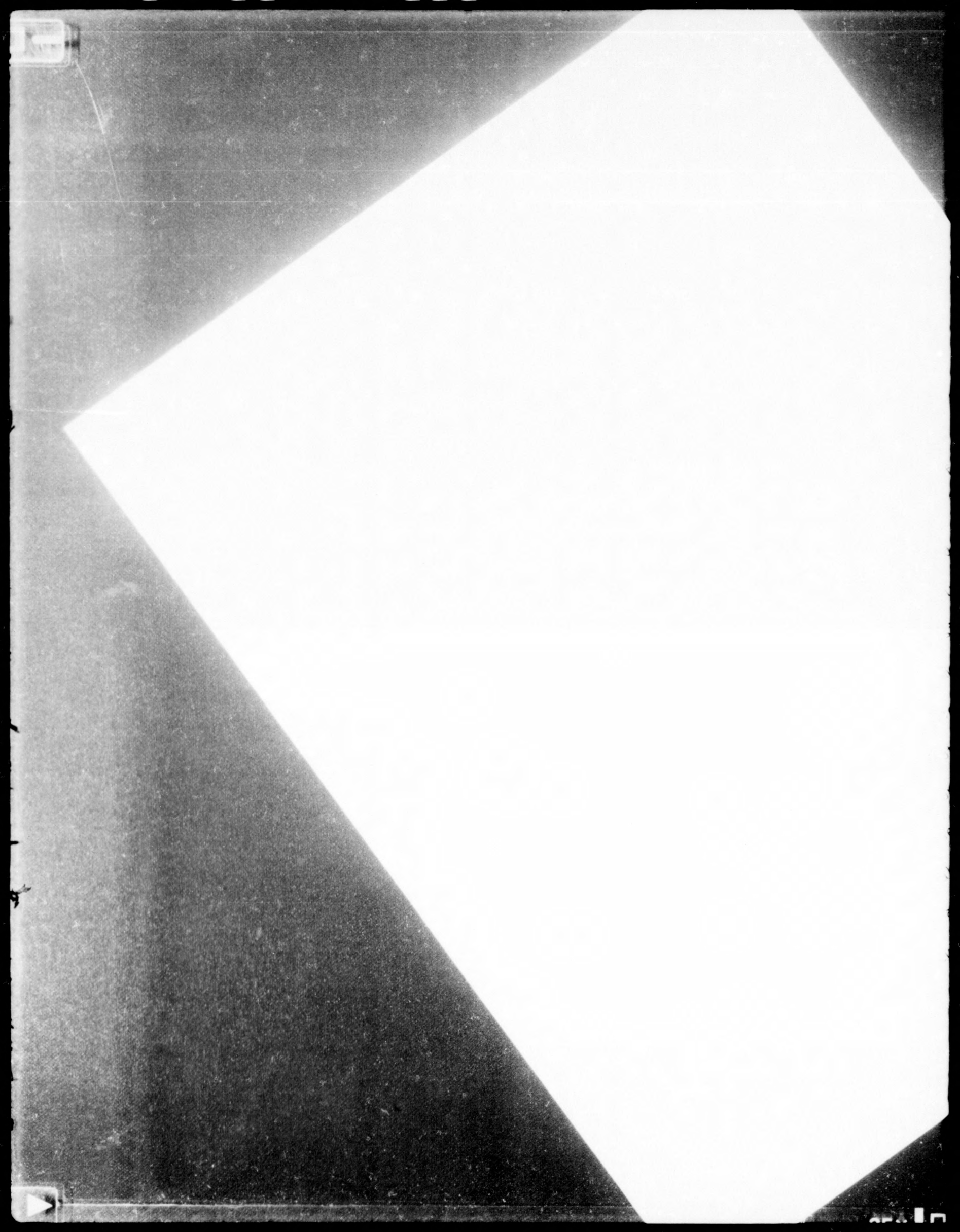
In summary, the data revealed that there were some MPCL response similarities among the groups studied. The highest scoring problem area for all groups (freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors) was Adjustment to College Work (ACW). Another similarity in the individual items selected by members of each group in the ACW problem area was "Getting low grades." This was the highest scoring item in each of the four groups. The remaining high scoring items among the participating groups indicated poor study habits.

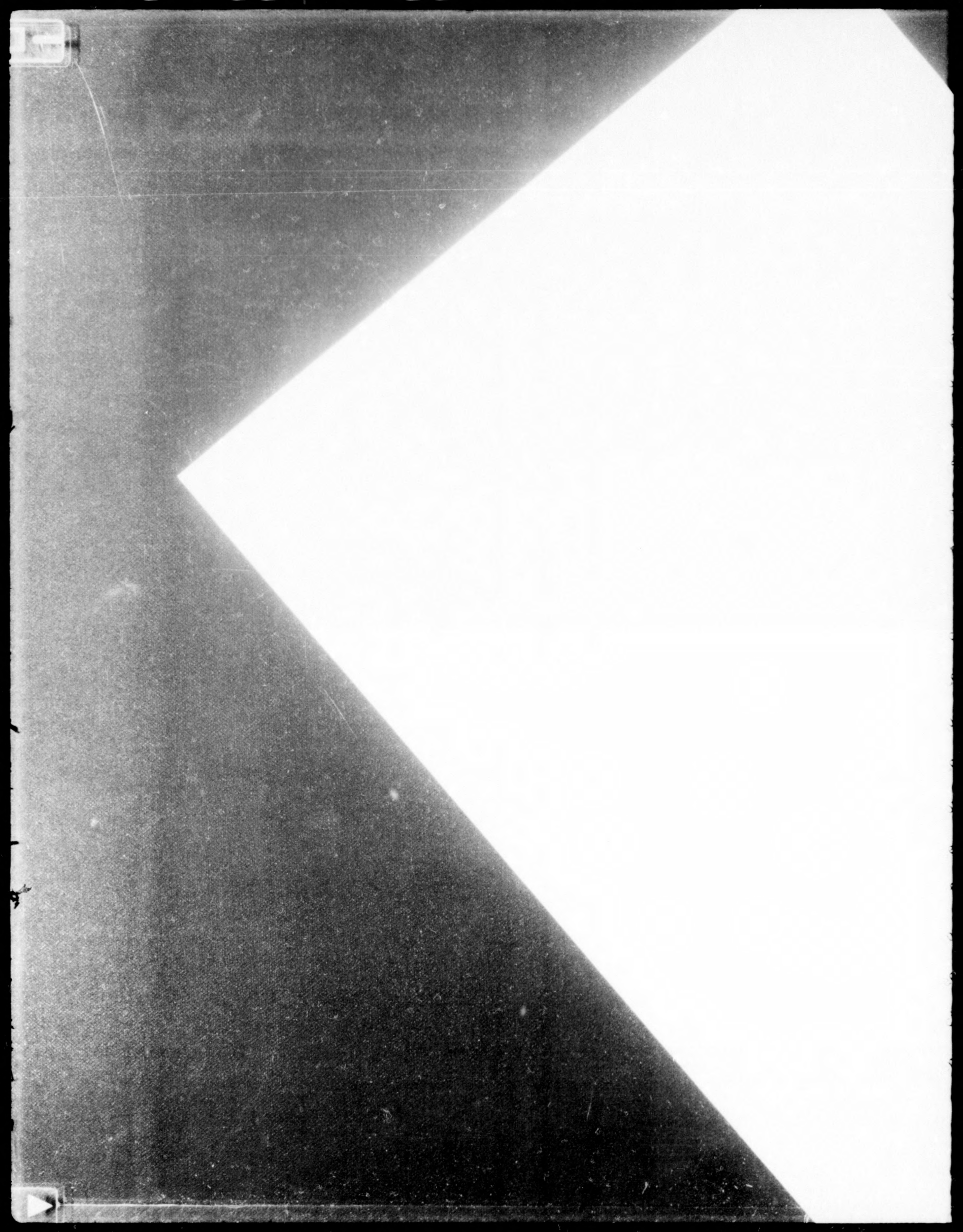
Although the mean scores for the total number of problems increased with each upward classification, most of the concerns for all classes were grouped in 5 of 11 problem categories (i.e., ACW, PPR, FLE, CTP, FVE). Moreover, it appears that whether the student was a freshman, sophomore, junior, or a senior, the student experienced difficulty in taking control of his/her academic situation.

The responses of freshmen academic probation students suggested that they encountered problems that were similar to those encountered by their peers throughout higher education. The second ranked problem area for freshmen subjects was Home and Family (HF). The responses to the HF problem area suggested that these students experienced some difficulty making the transition from the home and family environment to the college environment. However, resolution of the parent/child relationship is a concern of all freshmen, whether on probation or not (Coons, 1974).

The results of the study suggest that freshmen tended to feel positively about how they would function in college. The positive feelings of freshmen would appear to be supported by their mean scores for the total number of problems reported when compared to the mean score for sophomores. The mean scores for the freshmen and sophomores were 23.39 and 38.36 respectively. These scores reflect a 65 percent increase in the total mean number of problems reported for sophomores. This increase may be partially explained by the fact that sometime during the course of the sophomore year, the freshman optimism is replaced with sophomore reality.

Personal-Psychological Relations; The Future: Vocational and Educational; and, Curriculum and Teaching Procedure were ranked second and third, respectively, for sophomore students. Sophomores appear to





be doing some re-evaluating which may have led to doubts about their future. Also, there seemed to be the realization that there are "here and now" events in their lives that were affecting their level of academic performance.

Some situations which tend to be common for all sophomores (both on probation and not on probation) pursuing four-year degrees are: 1) general education requirements are typically completed or nearly completed, and 2) a decision concerning a major course of study is being confirmed. In order to complete general education requirements some students may have to take courses less appealing to them than those taken during the freshman year. This is especially likely to be true among students who, as freshmen, selected courses they liked and put off (until the sophomore year) the less enjoyable courses. This may partially explain why the CTP (i.e., "Forced to take courses I don't like," etc.) problem area was ranked among the top problem areas for sophomores.

In many cases, a general education course is a required course for a particular major. The lack of success by the student in such a course or courses may cause him/her to question his/her decision about an academic major. In response to this situation, some sophomores would rule out choices for a major based on their performance in a particular general education course and would choose another major. Other students continue with their first choice of a major regardless of how poorly they performed in the first major course they attempted. The result of the latter decision by a student could result in the student's being both deficient in quality points and knowledge of the subject matter in his/her pursuit of that particular major course of study.

The sophomore year appears to be a critical time in the student's college career as the reality of the present and implications for the future become apparent to the student for the first time. The sophomore year also seems to be a time when academic and career decisions are being made. The importance of such decision-making processes should not be underestimated. Therefore, the university needs to be aware of and to respond to the need to provide academic-support services which are designed to assist the individual student in coping with such decisions.

By the junior year in college, most students have started concentrating their studies in their major and minor courses. Juniors who are on academic probation are not different from non-probation juniors in this respect. It logically follows that major and minor courses may be of more interest to the student than general education courses and, therefore, may be perceived to be important. The junior students may consider themselves at a pivotal point in their college careers (opportunity to "turn things around" academically), thus resulting in some degree of optimism. This premise is supported by the likelihood that juniors were enrolled in major and/or minor courses--courses that were both interesting and considered to be important.

By the time a college student becomes a senior, he/she usually begins formulating and implementing plans for getting started with life after college. The senior begins to finish what few academic requirements are left. The senior who is on academic probation is usually faced with at least one difficult requirement to complete: getting and maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 2.00. Not only does the graduating student have to maintain a cumulative grade point

average of 2.00, the student must have a 2.00 grade point average in the major(s) and/or minor(s). It may be that some seniors on academic probation have not done well academically in their majors and may have grade point averages below 2.00 in their majors. If this were the situation for the senior probation students studied, then it would seem likely they would have a negative view of their interaction within the academic setting. It is suggested that these events, to a large part, account for items selected in the CTP problem area.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the decade of the 1980's colleges and universities face the possibility of a decline in student enrollments (Steele, 1978). With student enrollment becoming an increasing concern in higher education, efforts to retain students are attracting more attention from college and university personnel. Cope and Hannah (1975) reported that there are numerous reasons for college attrition, ranging from concrete circumstances, such as financial problems, to abstract factors, such as personality traits. The authors further contended that of the fifteen million students who entered college for the first time during the decade of the 1970's, five to six million will never earn a degree.

Students who drop out of colleges and universities can be classified into two groups: those students who must leave college because of poor grades, and those who leave voluntarily. With enrollments predicted to decline during the 1980's, efforts to understand better the concerns of those students who drop out of college would be desirable if retention programs are to be developed by colleges and universities. The purpose of this study, then, was to discover the types of problems reported by selected students on academic probation.

Answers were sought to the following questions:

- 1) What problem areas, as assessed by the Mooney Problem Check List (MPCL), are reported by freshmen (those students who have earned 1-29 semester hours) on

academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

- 2) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by sophomores (those students who have earned 30-59 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 3) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by juniors (those students who have earned 60-89 semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 4) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by seniors (those students who have earned 90 or more semester hours) on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?
- 5) What problem areas, as assessed by the MPCL, are reported by students on academic probation (subject to academic dismissal from the university) who appear before an academic probation committee?

Based on a review of the problems reported by freshmen probation students who were subject to dismissal from the university, the following observations were made:

- 1) The problem area on the MPCL that ranked first was Adjustment to College Work (ACW). The ACW items most frequently selected suggested concerns with not having effective study habits, making low grades, and not having an adequate academic background for some subjects attempted.
- 2) The second ranked problem area on the MPCL was Home and Family (HF). HF items chosen by the freshmen subjects implied some difficulty in resolving the parent/child conflict, which Coons (1974) suggests is a task of most freshmen college students.
- 3) The third ranked problem area on the MPCL was Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). Problem items selected in the

FLE category reflected more concerns (not having enough money to go to college and disliking financial dependence on others) than concerns with living conditions and employment.

Based on a review of the problems reported by sophomore probation students who were subject to dismissal from the university, the following observations were made:

- 1) The MPCL problem area ranked first was Adjustment to College Work (ACW). Items chosen in the ACW category reflected a concern with receiving low grades, not having an adequate background for some subjects attempted, and not knowing how to study effectively. The subjects seemed to be accepting some of the responsibility for their lack of academic success.
- 2) The MPCL problem area ranked second was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR). The PPR items chosen suggested that these students were experiencing some degree of anxiety (i.e., worry, tension, and discouragement). However, the reported psychological concerns did not seem to be severe in that suicidal thoughts, bad dreams, etc. were infrequently reported.
- 3) Two MPCL areas tied for third and fourth: The Future: Vocational and Educational (FVE) and Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP). The FVE items selected suggested that some subjects were unsure about their future (wondering if they would be successful and not knowing what they wanted to do). Other students expressed a desire to gain some part-time experience in their chosen fields. The data suggested that the sophomores studied were expressing a need for assistance in making career related decisions. Problems reflected in

the CTP items chosen were: being required to take undesirable courses, receiving inadequate academic advisement, and being graded unfairly. The responses of the subjects suggested that they did not feel in control of their academic environment.

Based on a review of the problems reported by junior probation students who were subject to dismissal from the university, the following observations were made:

- 1) The MPCL problem area that was ranked first was Adjustment to College Work (ACW). The ACW items chosen revealed problems associated with ineffective study habits (lack of concentration, not spending enough time in study, etc.) and low grades.
- 2) The MPCL problem area that was ranked second was Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). Students reported concerns about going in debt for college and about being able to obtain future support for educational expenses. As did the freshmen, juniors reported more concern with financial matters than with living conditions and employment.
- 3) The MPCL problem area that was ranked third was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR). Responses to PPR items suggested that some of the subjects were experiencing some degree of anxiety such as nervousness and mild depression.

Based on a review of the problems reported by senior probation students who were subject to dismissal from the university, the following observations were made:

- 1) The MPCL problem area ranked first was Adjustment to College Work. Seniors expressed concerns with making low grades and with not being able to study effectively.

- 2) The MPCL problem area ranked second was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR). One interpretation of the PPR items selected by seniors is that some were experiencing feelings of failure. The data suggested that the students may have perceived their lack of success in many situations to have been caused by external forces rather than due to their own lack of skill or effort.
- 3) The MPCL problem area ranked third was Curriculum and Teaching Procedure (CTP). Seniors selected items indicating concern that they were being forced to take courses they did not like, were being required to do too much work in some courses, and were being graded unfairly.

Based on a review of the problems reported by all students on academic probation (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) who were subject to dismissal from the university, the following observations were made:

- 1) The highest ranked MPCL problem area was Adjustment to College Work (ACW). ACW items selected indicated that the subjects had concerns about receiving low grades, having inadequate study techniques, and having a poor academic background for some of the courses they were attempting.
- 2) The MPCL problem area ranked second was Personal-Psychological Relations (PPR). PPR items chosen revealed that some of the subjects reported concerns regarding tension, worry, and mild depression. The psychological concerns reported did not suggest any problems of a pathological nature.

- 3) The third ranked problem area was Finances, Living Conditions, and Employment (FLE). The FLE items selected indicated that some subjects were concerned about being financially dependent on others. Also, some reported concerns about insufficient funds to pursue their educational goals.

It should be emphasized that the data from this study were gathered from academic probation students that: 1) had a cumulative grade point average between 1.50 and 1.99, 2) had been in college for at least two semesters, 3) wanted to re-enroll for another semester of course work at Western Kentucky University, and 4) anticipated meeting with the University Academic Probation Committee. It should be pointed out that these students knew that they would be meeting with the University Academic Probation Committee, and their responses to the Mooney Problem Check List items may have reflected their awareness that they would be meeting with a probation committee. The findings of this study do, however, seem to warrant and suggest several conclusions.

First, the findings of this study suggest that the problems reported by students on academic probation do not appear to be vastly different from the types of problems experienced by students in general. Probation students, compared to non-probation students, appear to face similar developmental, economic, educational, vocational, and psychological problems.

Second, the total mean scores for problems reported increased with academic class (i.e., the total mean score for seniors was larger than for freshmen). The largest increase (65 percent) in the mean scores for total number of problems reported occurred from the freshman year to the sophomore year. From the sophomore year to the junior year the

increase was 13 percent and from the junior year to the senior year the increase was 16 percent. One possible explanation is that when students reach the sophomore year in college, much of the optimism about college may have disappeared, and they begin to cope with more of the reality of the college experience.

Third, for the freshmen group, the second highest ranked problem area was Home and Family. The problems reported in this area lend support to Coon's (1974) suggestion that a task of all freshmen is the resolution of the parent/child conflict.

Fourth, the Curriculum and Teaching Procedure problem area was highly ranked for both sophomore and senior probation students. This problem area was not among the top three ranking problem areas for freshmen and juniors. A possible explanation for this difference between classes is that with respect to completing course requirements, sophomores and seniors are faced with similar situations. At Western Kentucky University baccalaureate candidates are, in a sense, faced with completing two phases of college. The first phase consists of taking general education courses (a 52-54 semester hour requirement), and the second phase consists of taking courses in the student's major and minor areas of study (50 or more semester hours). If sophomores studied were at the end of the first phase and thus were attempting to complete their general education course requirements, they may have been faced with having to take courses in which they had little or no interest. Likewise, seniors, who were nearing the end of the second phase, may have been faced with having to enroll in courses in which they had little or no interest in order to complete the requirements for their majors and minors. Therefore, sophomores and seniors may have reported similar

Curriculum and Teaching Procedure concerns because they faced similar academic constraints.

Finally, a finding that appeared to be unique to the seniors studied was that some of them reported feelings of failure in many tasks they had attempted. It may have been that these seniors were perceiving their lack of success in many situations as resulting from the influence(s) of external factors (luck, chance, etc.) rather than internal factors (their own skill, ability, etc.).

The findings of this study, then, have stimulated several ideas for further research. First, since the sample of the present study consisted only of students on academic probation, subsequent investigations might focus on comparing problems reported by students on academic probation with the problems reported by students who are in good academic standing. A study of this nature could provide some useful information regarding the problems which are unique to the student who is on academic probation.

Secondly, future researchers might wish to study the problems probation students report at the beginning of the semester as well as between semesters. The responses of the subjects may reveal different problem area rankings at different points in the semester. This information could make possible timely and appropriate student services programming for probation students.

Finally, there are some general research questions which other researchers may wish to investigate:

- 1) the sex of the student as it relates to the types of problems reported by students on academic probation,

- 2) the types of problems reported by probation students who live off campus compared to the types of problems reported by probation students who live on campus,
- 3) the differences in the types of problems reported by students on academic probation in various majors,
- 4) the probation students' awareness of the services available on campus to assist students with their concerns and the degree to which these services are utilized,
- 5) the conditions on campus (e.g., living quarters, study facilities, academic advisement) which contribute to the poor academic performance of some students.

Finally, if the dropout rate due to academic failure from colleges and universities is to be reduced in order to help counterbalance the effects of the predicted enrollment decline, it would seem that an effort by the total university community (professional staff, faculty, and administrators) is needed in order to reduce this dropout rate. More than the present research is needed to advance the study of the types of concerns that academically marginal students experience. Research must be carried out to determine those factors which influence academic failure so that the necessary assistance can be provided for these students.

APPENDIX A
Conference Letter



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Center for
Academic Advisement, Career Planning
and Placement

The scholastic standards required of students to be eligible for registering continuously are outlined on pages 54-55 of the 1978 Western Kentucky University Bulletin. Based on a review of your grades for the spring semester and your cumulative grade point average, the University Academic Probation Committee has requested that I advise you that it will be necessary for you to come to campus for a conference to discuss your eligibility to enroll for the 1978 spring semester.

An appointment for you has been scheduled in the Center for Academic Advisement, Career Planning and Placement, Wetherby Administration Building at 2:00 pm on January 10. Should you feel that any members of your family can make a contribution and/or provide relevant supportive information regarding your admissions status, please encourage them to make every effort to reach a decision that will be in your best interest with respect to your educational and career objectives. You are requested to report to the Center at least fifteen minutes prior to your scheduled conference.

If you are unable to keep this appointment, you are requested to contact the office immediately (502/745-2691) so that an alternate schedule can be arranged. If you fail to keep this appointment, it will be assumed that you do not desire to enroll in the spring of 1978.

If you feel that a mistake has been made regarding your point standing or if you have other questions concerning the conference, do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

Jerry R. Wilder
Director

JRW:mgd

APPENDIX B
Cover Letter



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Center for
Academic Advisement, Career Planning
and Placement

December 28, 1977

Dear Student:

Western Kentucky University, like most institutions of higher education, is very sensitive to the needs of those undergraduate students who encounter problems of an academic and/or personal nature. Western, through the efforts of the Center for Academic Advisement, Career Planning and Placement and the University Counseling Services Center, has implemented a variety of programs to assist those students who encounter such difficulties.

In our efforts to further develop programming to assist those students, it is necessary for us to be able to identify the most prevalent problems facing Western students. Therefore, you are requested to fill out the attached Mooney Problem Check List and bring it with you to Room 336, Grise Hall, at the time of your appointment with the University Academic Probation Committee. The information you provide on the Mooney Problem Check List will be treated confidentially. The University Academic Probation Committee will not have access to this information.

Before you work through the Mooney Problem Check List, fill out all the information on the front page. Be sure to include your name on this page. After providing the necessary information asked for on the first page, read the directions carefully, then work through the check list.

Once again, be sure to bring the completed Mooney Problem Check List with you on the day of your appointment. A member of the Center's staff will be in Room 336, Grise Hall, to collect the check list.

Sincerely,

Bob Somers
Advisor

BS/mw

APPENDIX C
MOONEY PROBLEM CHECK LIST

**1950
REVISION**

MOONEY PROBLEM CHECK LIST

ROSS L. MOONEY

Assisted by **LEONARD V. GORDON**

Bureau of Educational Research
Ohio State University

**C COLLEGE
FORM**

Age..... Date of birth..... Sex.....

Class in college..... Marital status.....
(Freshman, Sophomore, etc.) (Single, married, etc.)

Curriculum in which you are enrolled.....
(Electrical Engineering, Teacher Education, Liberal Arts, etc.)

Name of the counselor, course or agency
for whom you are marking this check list.....

Your name or other identification,
if desired.....

Date.....

DIRECTIONS

This is not a test. It is a list of troublesome problems which often face students in college—problems of health, money, social life, relations with people, religion, studying, selecting courses, and the like. You are to go through the list, pick out the particular problems which are of concern to you, indicate those which are of most concern, and make a summary interpretation in your own words. More specifically, you are to take these three steps.

First Step: Read the list slowly, pause at each item, and if it suggests something which is troubling you, underline it, thus "34. Sickness in the family." Go through the whole list, underlining the items which suggest troubles (difficulties, worries) of concern to you.

Second Step: After completing the first step, look back over the items you have underlined and circle the numbers in front of the items which are of *most concern* to you, thus,

" (34.) Sickness in the family."

Third Step: After completing the first and second steps, answer the summarizing questions on pages 5 and 6.



Copyright 1950 by The Psychological Corporation.

All rights reserved. No part of this check list may be reproduced in any form of printing or by any other means, electronic or mechanical, including, but not limited to, photocopying, audiovisual recording and transmission, and portrayal or duplication in any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

66-231T The Psychological Corporation, 304 East 45th Street, New York, N. Y. 10017

Printed in U.S.A.

Cir.	Tot.
	HPD
	FLE
	SRA
	SPR
	PPR
	CSM
	HF
	MR
	ACW
	FVE
	CTP
TOTAL . . .	

1. Feeling tired much of the time
2. Being underweight
3. Being overweight
4. Not getting enough exercise
5. Not getting enough sleep

6. Too little money for clothes
7. Receiving too little help from home
8. Having less money than my friends
9. Managing my finances poorly
10. Needing a part-time job now

11. Not enough time for recreation
12. Too little chance to get into sports
13. Too little chance to enjoy art or music
14. Too little chance to enjoy radio or television
15. Too little time to myself

16. Being timid or shy
17. Being too easily embarrassed
18. Being ill at ease with other people
19. Having no close friends in college
20. Missing someone back home

21. Taking things too seriously
22. Worrying about unimportant things
23. Nervousness
24. Getting excited too easily
25. Finding it difficult to relax

26. Too few dates
27. Not meeting anyone I like to date
28. No suitable places to go on dates
29. Deciding whether to go steady
30. Going with someone my family won't accept

31. Being criticized by my parents
32. Mother
33. Father
34. Sickness in the family
35. Parents sacrificing too much for me

36. Not going to church often enough
37. Dissatisfied with church services
38. Having beliefs that differ from my church
39. Losing my earlier religious faith
40. Doubting the value of worship and prayer

41. Not knowing how to study effectively
42. Easily distracted from my work
43. Not planning my work ahead
44. Having a poor background for some subjects
45. Inadequate high school training

46. Restless at delay in starting life work
47. Doubting wisdom of my vocational choice
48. Family opposing my choice of vocation
49. Purpose in going to college not clear
50. Doubting the value of a college degree

51. Hard to study in living quarters
52. No suitable place to study on campus
53. Teachers too hard to understand
54. Textbooks too hard to understand
55. Difficulty in getting required books

56. Not as strong and healthy as I should be
57. Allergies (hay fever, asthma, hives, etc.)
58. Occasional pressure and pain in my head
59. Gradually losing weight
60. Not getting enough outdoor air and sunshine

61. Going in debt for college expenses
62. Going through school on too little money
63. Graduation threatened by lack of funds
64. Needing money for graduate training
65. Too many financial problems

66. Not living a well-rounded life
67. Not using my leisure time well
68. Wanting to improve myself culturally
69. Wanting to improve my mind
70. Wanting more chance for self-expression

71. Wanting a more pleasing personality
72. Losing friends
73. Wanting to be more popular
74. Being left out of things
75. Having feelings of extreme loneliness

76. Moodiness, "having the blues"
77. Failing in so many things I try to do
78. Too easily discouraged
79. Having bad luck
80. Sometimes wishing I'd never been born

81. Afraid of losing the one I love
82. Loving someone who doesn't love me
83. Too inhibited in sex matters
84. Afraid of close contact with the opposite sex
85. Wondering if I'll ever find a suitable mate

86. Parents separated or divorced
87. Parents having a hard time of it
88. Worried about a member of my family
89. Father or mother not living
90. Feeling I don't really have a home

91. Differing from my family in religious beliefs
92. Failing to see the relation of religion to life
93. Don't know what to believe about God
94. Science conflicting with my religion
95. Needing a philosophy of life

96. Forgetting things I've learned in school
97. Getting low grades
98. Weak in writing
99. Weak in spelling or grammar
100. Slow in reading

101. Unable to enter desired vocation
102. Enrolled in the wrong curriculum
103. Wanting to change to another college
104. Wanting part-time experience in my field
105. Doubting college prepares me for working

106. College too indifferent to student needs
107. Dull classes
108. Too many poor teachers
109. Teachers lacking grasp of subject matter
110. Teachers lacking personality

111. Poor posture
 112. Poor complexion or skin trouble
 113. Too short
 114. Too tall
 115. Not very attractive physically
116. Needing money for better health care
 117. Needing to watch every penny I spend
 118. Family worried about finances
 119. Disliking financial dependence on others
 120. Financially unable to get married
121. Awkward in meeting people
 122. Awkward in making a date
 123. Slow in getting acquainted with people
 124. In too few student activities
 125. Boring weekends
126. Feelings too easily hurt
 127. Being talked about
 128. Being watched by other people
 129. Worrying how I impress people
 130. Feeling inferior
131. Unhappy too much of the time
 132. *Having memories of an unhappy childhood*
 133. Daydreaming
 134. Forgetting things
 135. Having a certain nervous habit
136. Being in love
 137. *Deciding whether I'm in love*
 138. *Deciding whether to become engaged*
 139. *Wondering if I really know my prospective mate*
 140. Being in love with someone I can't marry
141. Friends not welcomed at home
 142. Home life unhappy
 143. Family quarrels
 144. Not getting along with a member of my family
 145. Irritated by habits of a member of my family
146. Parents old-fashioned in their ideas
 147. Missing spiritual elements in college life
 148. Troubled by lack of religion in others
 149. Affected by racial or religious prejudice
 150. In love with someone of a different race or religion
151. Not spending enough time in study
 152. Having too many outside interests
 153. Trouble organizing term papers
 154. Trouble in outlining or note-taking
 155. Trouble with oral reports
156. Wondering if I'll be successful in life
 157. Needing to plan ahead for the future
 158. Not knowing what I really want
 159. Trying to combine marriage and a career
 160. Concerned about military service
161. Not having a good college adviser
 162. Not getting individual help from teachers
 163. Not enough chances to talk to teachers
 164. Teachers lacking interest in students
 165. Teachers not considerate of students' feelings
166. Frequent sore throat
 167. Frequent colds
 168. Nose or sinus trouble
 169. Speech handicap (stuttering, etc.)
 170. Weak eyes
171. Working late at night on a job
 172. Living in an inconvenient location
 173. Transportation or commuting difficulty
 174. Lacking privacy in living quarters
 175. Having no place to entertain friends
176. Wanting to learn how to dance
 177. Wanting to learn how to entertain
 178. Wanting to improve my appearance
 179. Wanting to improve my manners or etiquette
 180. Trouble in keeping a conversation going
181. Being too envious or jealous
 182. Being stubborn or obstinate
 183. Getting into arguments
 184. Speaking or acting without thinking
 185. Sometimes acting childish or immature
186. Losing my temper
 187. Being careless
 188. Being lazy
 189. Tending to exaggerate too much
 190. Not taking things seriously enough
191. Embarrassed by talk about sex
 192. Disturbed by ideas of sexual acts
 193. Needing information about sex matters
 194. Sexual needs unsatisfied
 195. Wondering how far to go with the opposite sex
196. Unable to discuss certain problems at home
 197. Clash of opinion between me and parents
 198. Talking back to my parents
 199. Parents expecting too much of me
 200. Carrying heavy home responsibilities
201. Wanting more chances for religious worship
 202. Wanting to understand more about the Bible
 203. Wanting to feel close to God
 204. Confused in some of my religious beliefs
 205. Confused on some moral questions
206. Not getting studies done on time
 207. Unable to concentrate well
 208. Unable to express myself well in words
 209. Vocabulary too limited
 210. Afraid to speak up in class discussions
211. Wondering whether further education is worthwhile
 212. Not knowing where I belong in the world
 213. Needing to decide on an occupation
 214. Needing information about occupations
 215. Needing to know my vocational abilities
216. Classes too large
 217. Not enough class discussion
 218. Classes run too much like high school
 219. Too much work required in some courses
 220. Teachers too theoretical

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>221. Frequent headaches
 222. Menstrual or female disorders
 223. Sometimes feeling faint or dizzy
 224. Trouble with digestion or elimination
 225. Glandular disorders (thyroid, lymph, etc.)</p> <p>226. Not getting satisfactory diet
 227. Tiring of the same meals all the time
 228. Too little money for recreation
 229. No steady income
 230. Unsure of my future financial support</p> <p>231. Lacking skill in sports and games
 232. Too little chance to enjoy nature
 233. Too little chance to pursue a hobby
 234. Too little chance to read what I like
 235. Wanting more worthwhile discussions with people</p> <p>236. Disliking someone
 237. Being disliked by someone
 238. Feeling that no one understands me
 239. Having no one to tell my troubles to
 240. Finding it hard to talk about my troubles</p> <p>241. Afraid of making mistakes
 242. Can't make up my mind about things
 243. Lacking self-confidence
 244. Can't forget an unpleasant experience
 245. Feeling life has given me a "raw deal"</p> <p>246. Disappointment in a love affair
 247. Girl friend
 248. Boy friend
 249. Breaking up a love affair
 250. Wondering if I'll ever get married</p> <p>251. Not telling parents everything
 252. Being treated like a child at home
 253. Being an only child
 254. Parents making too many decisions for me
 255. Wanting more freedom at home</p> <p>256. Sometimes lying without meaning to
 257. Pretending to be something I'm not
 258. Having a certain bad habit
 259. Unable to break a bad habit
 260. Getting into serious trouble</p> <p>261. Worrying about examinations
 262. Slow with theories and abstractions
 263. Weak in logical reasoning
 264. Not smart enough in scholastic ways
 265. Fearing failure in college</p> <p>266. Deciding whether to leave college for a job
 267. Doubting I can get a job in my chosen vocation
 268. Wanting advice on next steps after college
 269. Choosing course to take next term
 270. Choosing best courses to prepare for a job</p> <p>271. Some courses poorly organized
 272. Courses too unrelated to each other
 273. Too many rules and regulations
 274. Unable to take courses I want
 275. Forced to take courses I don't like</p> | <p>276. Having considerable trouble with my teeth
 277. Trouble with my hearing
 278. Trouble with my feet
 279. Bothered by a physical handicap
 280. Needing medical advice</p> <p>281. Needing a job during vacations
 282. Working for all my expenses
 283. Doing more outside work than is good for me
 284. Getting low wages
 285. Dissatisfied with my present job</p> <p>286. Too little chance to do what I want to do
 287. Too little social life
 288. Too much social life
 289. Nothing interesting to do in vacations
 290. Wanting very much to travel</p> <p>291. Too self-centered
 292. Hurting other people's feelings
 293. Avoiding someone I don't like
 294. Too easily led by other people
 295. Lacking leadership ability</p> <p>296. Too many personal problems
 297. Too easily moved to tears
 298. Bothered by bad dreams
 299. Sometimes bothered by thoughts of insanity
 300. Thoughts of suicide</p> <p>301. Thinking too much about sex matters
 302. Too easily aroused sexually
 303. Having to wait too long to get married
 304. Needing advice about marriage
 305. Wondering if my marriage will succeed</p> <p>306. Wanting love and affection
 307. Getting home too seldom
 308. Living at home, or too close to home
 309. Relatives interfering with family affairs
 310. Wishing I had a different family background</p> <p>311. Sometimes not being as honest as I should be
 312. Having a troubled or guilty conscience
 313. Can't forget some mistakes I've made
 314. Giving in to temptations
 315. Lacking self-control</p> <p>316. Not having a well-planned college program
 317. Not really interested in books
 318. Poor memory
 319. Slow in mathematics
 320. Needing a vacation from school</p> <p>321. Afraid of unemployment after graduation
 322. Not knowing how to look for a job
 323. Lacking necessary experience for a job
 324. Not reaching the goal I've set for myself
 325. Wanting to quit college</p> <p>326. Grades unfair as measures of ability
 327. Unfair tests
 328. Campus activities poorly co-ordinated
 329. Campus lacking in school spirit
 330. Campus lacking in recreational facilities</p> |
|--|--|

Cir.	Tot.
HPD	
FLE	
SRA	
SPR	
PPR	
CSM	
HF	
MR	
ACW	
FVE	
CTP	
TOTAL . . .	

Second Step: Look back over the items you have underlined and circle the numbers in front of the problems which are troubling you most.

Third Step: Pages 5 and 6

Third Step: Answer the following four questions.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel that the items you have marked on the list give a well-rounded picture of your problems?
.....Yes.No. If any additional items or explanations are desired, please indicate them here.

2. How would you summarize your chief problems in your own words? Write a brief summary.

3. Whether you have or have not enjoyed filling out the list, do you think it has been worth doing?
.....Yes.No. Could you explain your reaction?

4. If the opportunity were offered, would you like to talk over any of these problems with someone on the college staff?Yes.No. If so, do you know the particular person(s) with whom you would like to have these talks?Yes.No.

REFERENCES

- Albina, J. E. The motive to avoid success and problems reported by male and female students withdrawing from the University of Texas at Austin. Dissertation Abstracts International, 1973, 34, 2375A-2376A. (University Microfilms No. 73-25, 197)
- Algier, A. S. A new approach to academic rehabilitation. Educational Record, 1972, 53, 80-84.
- Astin, A. W., & Panos, R. Attrition among college students. American Educational Research Journal, 1968, 5, 57-72.
- Astin, A. W. Predicting academic performance in college. New York: Free Press, 1971.
- Astin, A. W. College dropouts: A national profile. ACE Research Reports, 1972, 1, 1-71.
- Astin, A. W. Student persistence: Some stay, some don't--why? College and University, 1973, 48, 298-306.
- Astin, A. W. Preventing students from dropping out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975.
- Burton, G. E. Prediction of college grades from selected background factors. College Student Journal, 1976, 10, 10-14.
- Chickering, A. W. Education and identity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969.
- Chickering, A. W. Commuting versus resident students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.

- Choi, J. W., & Malak, J. F. Faculty perception of poor academic performance of students. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1975, 16, 317-318.
- Congdon, J. E. Personality factors and capacity to meet curriculum demands. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1964, 42, 767-775.
- Coons, F. W. The developmental tasks of the college student. In D. A. DeCoster & P. Mable (Eds.), Student development and education in college residence halls. Washington, D. C.: American College Personnel Association, 1974.
- Cope, R. G. Sex-related factors and attrition among college women. Journal of the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors, 1970, 33, 118-124.
- Cope, R. G. Are students more likely to drop out of large colleges? College Student Journal, 1972, 6, 92-97.
- Cope, R. G., & Hannah, W. Revolving college doors. John Wiley & Sons, 1975.
- Cope, R. G. Why students stay, why they leave. In L. Noel (Ed.), Reducing the dropout rate. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978.
- Cross, K. P. Beyond the open door. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971.
- Cross, K. P. Accent on learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976.
- Demitroff, J. F. Student persistence. College and University, 1974, 49, 553-567.
- Fullerton, J. S., & Potkay, C. R. Student perceptions of pressures, helps, and psychological services. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1973, 14, 355-361.

- Hackman, J. R., & Dysinger, W. S. Research notes: Commitment to college as a factor in student attrition. Sociology of Education, 1970, 43, 311-324.
- Hannah, W. Personality differentials between lower division dropouts and stay-ins, project on student development in small colleges, Plainfield, Vermont. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1971, 12, 16-19.
- Hitchcock, J. The new vocationalism. Change, 1973, 5, 46-50.
- Hurst, J. C., & Ivey, A. E. Toward a radicalization of student personnel. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1971, 12, 165-168.
- Kowalski, C. J., & Cangemi, J. P. Higher education: Its development and impact--a brief review of the literature. College Student Journal Monograph, 1974, 8, 1-26.
- Mooney, R. L., & Gordon, L. V. The mooney problem check list manual. New York: Psychological Corporation, 1950.
- Morgan, M. K. Attrition: A discriminant analysis. Research in Higher Education, 1974, 2, 281-289.
- Morrill, W. H., & Hurst, J. C. A preventive and developmental role for the college counselor. Counseling Psychologist, 1971, 2, 90-95.
- Newman, F. Report on higher education. Washington, D. C.: Office of Education, 1971.
- Palladino, J. J., & Tryon, G. S. Have the problems of entering freshmen changed? Journal of College Student Personnel, 1978, 19, 313-316.
- Pandey, R. E. A comparative study of dropout at an integrated university: The 16 personality factor test. Journal of Negro Education, 1973, 42, 447-451.

- Panos, R., & Astin, A. W. Attrition among college students. American Educational Research Journal, 1968, 5, 57-72.
- Pantages, T. J., & Creedon, C. F. College attrition. Review of Educational Research, 1978, 48, 49-101.
- Pervin, L. A. Counseling the college dropout. Journal of College Placement, 1965, 26, 30-31.
- Pitcher, R. W., & Blaushild, B. Why college students fail. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970.
- Rose, H. A., & Elton, C. F. Another look at the college dropout. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1966, 13, 242-245.
- Sewell, W., & Shaw, V. Socioeconomic status, intelligence, and attainment of higher education. Sociology of Education, 1967, 40, 1-23.
- Steele, M. W. Correlates of undergraduate retention at the University of Miami. Journal of College Student Personnel, 1978, 19, 349-352.
- Suezek, R. F., & Alfert, E. Personality characteristics of college dropouts. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 1967.
(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 010 101)
- Tinto, V. Dropouts from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. Review of Educational Research, 1975, 45, 89-125.
- Vaughan, R. College dropouts: Dismissed vs. withdrew. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1968, 46, 685-689.
- Wilson, J. D. Student "failures". Educational Review, 1972, 25, 21-23.
- Yankelovich, D., & Clark, R. College and noncollege youth values. Change, 1974, 6, 45-46.

B7, F5