

THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PROBLEM,
COUNSELING, AND RELATED ATTITUDES

by *8589*

DALE PHILIP MANN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1969

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

Approved by:

Herbert E. Kaiser
Major Professor

LD
2668
R4
1970
M355
C.2

P R E F A C E

The following report grew out of a desire to become better acquainted with all aspects of the dropout problem and to ascertain the relevance of counseling in this area. The intent to look at this subject was spurred on because of a personal involvement in an experimental summer program for potential dropouts. The belief that counseling is relevant for these kinds of students has always been the writer's personal bias. The effort to substantiate this belief is found in the following report.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. Herbert E. Kaiser for his guidance when constructing the following report. Appreciation is also expressed to Shirley Anderson for her patience and support when typing the report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	ii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION: THE DROPOUT	1
NEED FOR CONCERN	1
Presenting the problem	2
Defining the problem	3
EXISTENCE OF THE DROPOUT	3
Extrinsic factors	4
Value of a diploma	5
National influence	7
2. PRECIPITATING CAUSES OF THE DROPOUT	9
IDENTIFYING THE DROPOUT	9
REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT	10
Failure	11
Family	12
Economic status	12
Peer group	13
Compulsory attendance	14
Irrelevance	14
3. DEALING WITH THE CAUSES	17
PROGRAMS FOR THE POTENTIAL DROPOUT	18
Counseling is being utilized	18

Creative programs are needed	20
Components of future programs	21
GUIDANCE SERVICES AND THE DROPOUT	23
Counselor time is often limited	23
Counselor is important to the dropout.	25
THE COUNSELOR CAN HELP THE	26
DROPOUT IN MANY WAYS	
Using professional knowledge	28
Becoming a participating staff member.	28
Helping the teacher develop	28
relationships	
Working with families	30
Utilizing the peer group	30
Indicating the need for elementary	31
guidance	
Being a good person	32
4. SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS	33
REASONING FOR CONCERN	33
LIMITATIONS OF DEFINITION	34
RELEVANT FACTORS FOR EDUCATION	34
IMPORTANCE OF THE CHANGE AGENT	35
COUNSELING SHOULD REMAIN	37
5. SUMMING UP	39
REFERENCES CITED	42

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE DROPOUT

The school dropout problem looms as one of the top national concerns of today's modern world. Among the crucial issues confronting the public, the dropout problem assumes a subservient position with regard to such social and cultural issues as civil rights, inflation, and war. However, the fact is evident that these issues closely parallel that of the dropout and have been very influential in producing much anxiety among today's bureaucracy. A continuing concern has been voiced by several responsible people regarding the impact that the school dropout is having on the nation's economy and stability. Prominent leaders in education, labor and business are beginning to observe the immediate nature of the problem and are expressing the need for positive action.

Need For Concern

Modern society has begun to recognize the complexity of the dropout problem and implications that accompany it. The urgency to alleviate the problem is demonstrated by the fact that two Presidents of the United States found it necessary to call Congress' attention to the situation. President John F. Kennedy in his 1963 State of the Union

Message to Congress stated: (16:Dedication)

"The future of any country which is dependent on the will and wisdom of its citizens is damaged, and irreparably damaged, whenever any of its children is not educated to the fullest extent of his capacity, from grade school through graduate school. Today, an estimated four out of every ten students in the fifth grade will not even finish high school and that is a waste we cannot afford."

President Lyndon B. Johnson also added his thoughts on education in a message to Congress in 1965. "In our 15 largest cities, 60 percent of tenth grade students from poverty neighborhoods drop out before finishing high school. The cost of this neglect runs high both for youth and the Nation (12:6)." He could have added that another ten percent never reach the tenth grade.

Presenting the problem. Consideration of the scope and the implications of the dropout problem and how these relate to counseling and interpersonal communication were given in this report. Since numerous research studies dealing with dropouts have been conducted and several references are available, a concise picture of the dropout problem, who it involves, and why it is in existence today was presented. To limit the scope of the paper and make the review more relevant, no generalizations were made as to what society and schools should do, but rather, what counseling and guidance related attitudes could do. The latter part of the report was directed toward analyzing the current problem and the need for dealing with it on

a very personal basis. By following this format it is hoped that this report will serve a realistic and useful purpose.

Defining the Problem. Further clarification of the dropout appears warranted before proceeding further. The dropout is defined in an experimental study by Gibson and others (7:19) as "a student who leaves school before completing grade 12 for any reason other than the following: illness, death, transferring to another school in or out of the state, commitment to a correctional institution, expulsion, or inability to meet state standards for slow learning programs. Paul Goodman (16:46) adds another element to the definition by including the "stay-in-school" dropout. This is the student who "drops out internally through day-dreaming" and inattention.

Existence of the Dropout

The dropout has always been with us and is not new to educators. Almost 100 years ago, in 1872, a paper titled "The Early Withdrawal of Pupils from Schools: Its Causes and Its Remedies" was presented to the annual convention of the National Education Association (14). The dropout around 1900 consisted of about 93 to 94 percent of all students in the ninth grade who failed to complete high school. During the school year 1939-1940, approximately fifty percent of the seventeen year old age group graduated from high school, and by 1963 this figure

increased to seventy percent (3). "It is the problem, not the fact that is new and contemporary (16)."

The extent and magnitude of the problem is represented by the sheer weight of numbers. It has been estimated that 7.5 million students can be expected to drop out of school during the 1960's. Approximately 2.5 million of that figure will never finish the eighth grade. A further component of the problem involves the 375,000 students each year who possess the potential to complete post-high school vocational-technical preparation and never finish school. Another 150,000 students per year, who have I.Q.'s, between 80 and 89, will drop out with little or no vocational education to assist them. The significance of the large numbers of dropouts is not nearly as relevant as the fact that "the world to which contemporary dropouts seek entrance has a diminishing place for them (16)."

Extrinsic Factors. The dropout problem has become more pressing today because of a multiplicity of factors which are largely extrinsic to the school and peculiar to our time. Some of them are: (14)

- (1) The high rate of youth unemployment, which is sometimes four times greater than the national average unemployment rate.
- (2) The continuous rise in delinquency and crime among youths although large sums of money are being spent to counteract this development.
- (3) Large-scale migration from rural and farm areas to urban centers.
- (4) The population explosion--approximately 3.8

million youths are reaching age 18 each year. This is a million more than reached age 18 in 1964 and previous years.

- (5) The increase in the number of welfare families, especially in large cities, further heightened by a marked increase in the total cost of public assistance. (The projected welfare budget for New York City for the 1969 fiscal year is \$1 billion.)
- (6) The elimination of unskilled jobs through automation and the increased use of technology in farming, resulting in unemployment.
- (7) The racial riots in the cities, in which the participants are overwhelmingly the unemployed out-of-school youths of the area.

Value of a Diploma. The authors of the National Education Association's dropout study in 1964 found the high school diploma assuming the function of both a certificate of employability and a carte d' entree to occupations less susceptible to unemployment (16). A later study by Waldman (18) in 1967 indicated a changing trend. Particularly noticeable was the small difference which existed between unemployed dropouts and graduates--the figures being 17.4 percent and 14 percent respectively. Also notable among male dropouts and graduates were the identical percentages compiled from the unemployed and the labor force (50 percent in each case). Differences were noted when the kind of employment, the race of the individual, and the age of the individual were specified. Just being a dropout did not equal being unemployed.

The differences in annual salaries between the high school dropout and the graduate indicate little

significance. The diploma trend is still prevalent today, however, the major difference which now exists is the gap in salary between those who possess a college degree and those who do not. The importance of remaining in high school, as a stepping stone to college, becomes important when viewed in this context.

In spite of this trend, the unemployment problem still stands as a prime sponsor of the dropout problem. A definite correlation exists between education and occupational status at the lower levels. In Elizabeth Waldman's study mentioned earlier, she confirms the basic trend of the decade: jobs requiring less skill and less pay are primarily filled by those with a lesser education. One out of nine dropouts are farm laborers, while one out of twenty-five graduates can be found in this type of work. Twenty-five percent of the graduates are employed in white collar jobs compared to only eight percent of the dropouts (18).

When one considers that low skill jobs are vanishing in an age of automation and technological development, it is evident that "these aspirant workers are not unemployed because they are dropouts, but rather because the kinds of jobs for which their preparation--or lack of it--qualifies them are . . . rapidly disappearing (16:2-3). A recent government study indicated 15 percent of the high school students in one area went on to college, but 100 percent of the students in the high school were

taking college preparatory training. The 85 percent that did not go on to college were unprepared for anything else (2).

National Influence. Some not so evident aspects are also beneficial for understanding the current importance placed by some on reducing the dropout rate. Today's society usually sees education for all the youth as necessary to the success of a democracy. Many thousands of workers are employed to run the various agencies of the government and the very effectiveness of this organization is dependent on the supply of skilled workers furnished by the nation's school systems. Many students will themselves become elected officials at all levels of government. Not only are educated officials required to hold office, but an educated electorate must have the skill to select them on a relevant basis. Without these elements a democracy is sure to fail.

National survival to a great extent depends on the quality of our educational system. The great emphasis placed on science education in recent years was due, in part, to the Russian space achievements. The demands of the technological advances made during the cold war period required both soldiers and civilians to man and develop defense systems. The need for educated leaders and intelligent followers in the areas of international relations is self evident. Aside from the pure defense aspects, the tremendous growth of industry and the need for skilled

workers makes the dropout problem seem more like a crime than an event.

Chapter 2

PRECIPITATING CAUSES OF THE DROPOUT

Identifying the Dropout

Numerous attempts have been made to pinpoint the exact nature of the dropout, but no general statement has ever proven itself to be functional. By incorporating several studies a general profile of the dropout can be developed. He is usually just past his 16th birthday, has average or slightly below average intelligence, and is more likely to be a boy than a girl. He is functioning below his potential; he is below grade level in reading; and academically he is in the lowest quartile. He is slightly over age for his grade, having been held back once in the elementary or junior high school grades. He has not been in trouble with the law, although he does take-up an inordinate amount of the school administrator's time because of truancy and discipline. He seldom participates in extracurricular activities; he feels rejected by the school and, in turn, rejects the school. His parents were school dropouts, as were his older brother and sister. He says that he is leaving school because of lack of interest but that he will get a high school diploma, in some way or another, because without it he cannot get a good job. He knows the reception that awaits him in the outside world,

yet believes that it cannot be worse than remaining in school (14:6).

Trying to identify the dropout is a multitudinous problem in itself and the description just presented is by no means contemporary and should not be considered as such. There are glaring exceptions to almost any profile and different kinds of instruments have been devised to help facilitate the problem of identification of the dropout. One such instrument composed of a useful check list is contained in the Gibson study (7). The profile reviewed in the foregoing paragraphs was presented solely to get a feel for some of the factors which might constitute a dropout. The important concept to remember is that the potential dropout could be any one of a number of students in today's school setting.

Reasons For Dropping Out

The reasons for students dropping out of school are also numerous, complex, and not universal. The age bracket of the dropout generally runs from 15 to 18 years of age, and interestingly enough, coincides rather well with the age of cognitive development and sexual maturity (1). At this age period the individual is trying to understand himself; to find out who he is and where he is going. He explores numerous social roles--accepting some and rejecting others. He is faced with important decisions affecting his life; those of selecting a vocation and

considering possible marriage. These decisions require cognitive thinking, rational planning, problem solving, and some degree of maturity. Frequently, the dropout has not reached this stage of development and needs help to get there. Paul Goodman emphasizes the sexual aspect: " . . . one has to be blind not to see that the dissidence from school is importnatly sexual, especially from the onset of puberty. Theoretically, the junior high school was introduced precisely to fit this change of life, yet astoundingly it is sexless (16:48).

Failure. Failure in school has been listed by numerous authors as a cause of dropping out of school. Bent and Kronenbert (3:98-99) list low intelligence, lack of interest, subject irrelevance, poor study habits, low reading ability, frequent absences, poor family attitude, ill health, and others as a cause of failure. A not so frequently discussed cause of failure is failure itself. The current trend of grading students against students should be subjected to criticism. Most children who drop out of school have a history of failure. For any or all of the reasons listed above the child begins to receive low grades early in school. He takes intelligence tests to prove he makes low grades and he does exactly that. This confirms the teacher's suspicion that he was not very bright. So the problem is solved; his teacher knows it, his parents know it, and his peers know it.

Through all of their efforts to prove it, he knows it. The student begins to associate with others in the same situation. Together they confirm each other's values and become more convinced that they don't have it and can't make it, so why try? When he finally reaches the legal leaving age he announces his plans to do just exactly that--leave. Now he is going to be told by some what a tragic mistake he is making. He still fails to see any aspects of the educational system which will be worthwhile for him. Failure breeds failure.

Family. The effect of family socioeconomic status on school children has been pointed out by Elizabeth Waldman (18). Her study showed that students from low income families were more prone to drop out of school before completing high school. Six out of ten children who dropped out came from families with an annual income of less than \$3,000, while only one in six dropped out from families earning over \$7,500. Waldman, however, pointed out that the basic cause was rooted elsewhere. Low income families had high incidences of broken homes, low educational aspiration of parents for their children, and parents who had very little education and worked in low skill, low pay jobs. The study indicated that 30 percent of the dropouts and only 10 percent of the graduates came from low income families.

Economic Status. While public schools proclaim

a free education they are not exactly free. A study by Wanda Walker in 1953 calculated the cost of attending a public school twelfth grade class at \$89.60. Another study in Oregon, during the school year 1959-60, found the average cost per pupil to be \$238.46 (3). With rising costs of living, it could be assumed that the cost today is considerably higher. To a low income family these costs may be prohibitive.

Peer Group. Peer relationships seem to be among the biggest cause of the dropout. The adolescent is dependent on others to develop his self-image. It is very seldom that the youth will risk ostracism by his group and rarely will he defy teenage mores. Being accepted by his group is more important to him than anything else. He has not yet learned how to plan independently and he has not established an overriding philosophy of life to give him directedness. His lack of sense-of-self makes him dependent on the values held by the peer group. When the youth finally does develop the ability to make knowledgeable value judgments he is well on his way to maturity. Until that time the peer group will be the directing force.

Many elements of the environment help shape the values of the peer group. Members of low income families tend to group together as do ethnic minority groups. Middle class society may not always conform to the values

they want taught, but they still want the school to teach them. Often these values are in direct conflict with the values held by groups in the lower classes.

They make their own: (10:311)

"What makes the ghetto hustler yet more dangerous is his 'glamor' image to the school-dropout youth in the ghetto. These ghetto teenagers see the hell caught by their parents struggling to get somewhere, or see that they have given up struggling in the prejudiced, intolerant white man's world. The ghetto teenagers make up their own minds they would rather be like the hustlers whom they see dressed 'sharp' and flashing money and displaying no respect for anybody or anything. So ghetto youth become attracted to the hustler worlds of dope, thievery, prostitution, and general crime and immorality."

Malcolm X

Compulsory Attendance. The stay in school dropout poses a contemporary problem. Formally, if a child was not desirous of remaining in school he left. Today he stays in school because the law says he stays in school. Compulsory attendance laws in thirty-six states require school attendance until age 16, five states to the age of 17, and five more to the age of 18. As a result these laws are instrumental in holding pupils to the high level but not through it (3). The students are not allowed to drop out physically so they drop out internally. They are usually passed on from grade to grade or retained in one or more grades. Both cases work toward the detriment of the individual.

Irrelevance. The dropout usually finds school irrelevant and sees no reason to study. He may be task-

involved in some areas, is rarely self-involved, and usually is not involved at all. It is reasonably well established that the more a student is involved the more he can learn and will want to learn. In a recent Life poll, it was interesting to note that while 52 percent of the students polled felt that English was the most important subject, 39 percent felt it was the most boring or the most irrelevant. Similiar splits of opinion were found with mathamatics and science. It was also interesting to note that history was voted the most irrelevant subject (8). This was in a conventional high school.

The crux of the irrelevant problem was the collision course in the high schools on which parents, teachers and students were heading a recent Life poll stated: (8:34)

"If the Life poll makes one thing clear, it is that most parents are thoroughly unsympathetic with their children's aspirations for participation and involvement in determining the role and function of their schools. Reduced to its simplest terms, the generations disagree on the most fundamental question of all: What is education for?

"Suddenly, that traditional function of the American high school--to absorb all and sundry into a comfortable middle-class democratic pattern--is being challenged by intellectuals and ghetto dwellers alike; today, both want to see education used as an instrument for bringing about radical social change. Since this is probably the last thing the rest of the school's constituents want from it, it leaves the educator with an interesting balancing act; how to serve the goals of quality and equality simultaneously. That is, how do you run a prestige school that can get a kid into college, and how, at the same time offer something for everyone else, too."

These are some of the questions being asked by

students in public schools today. Immediate solutions to the questions are not readily available because there are no specific answers to many of them and, consequently, they are shifted out of the picture. By not dealing with these kinds of questions, students often become bored and the potential dropout begins to emerge.

Chapter 3

DEALING WITH THE CAUSES

Many programs have been developed to deal specifically with the dropout problem but essentially they are rear guard actions and are not really getting at the roots of the problem. Most new programs, important as they are, are limited in scope and at best corrective. The critical elements associated with success or failure seem to be rooted in the dropout causes themselves rather than in the program. It is also apparent that causal factors such as the parents' employment, per annum income, and educational level typically found in dropout prediction and identification programs are of value in prognosticating, but tell us very little about what kind of program is needed for prevention.

Intertwined with all these programs is the belief that lack of guidance and counseling has contributed to the severity of the problem and that more and better guidance and counseling will greatly improve youth's chances to achieve meaningful success in school and in adult life (15).

Russell (13), in a recent effort to ascertain basic factors associated with the dropout program and to relate these to school programs, found certain characteristics

and considerations constantly in the fore. These fell into three significant categories. The first included youngsters who presented difficulties in the school setting but who fit adequately into the world of work. He felt dropout programs should attempt primarily to assure acceptance and a place for these students in the school setting, since there is no reason for these youngsters to change in order to fit into jobs and society. The second category included individuals who have trouble adjusting to both school and society. He suggested that basic attitudes need to be changed here. The students in the third category included those who may require special treatment within the school and sometimes help from outside the school. For these students he suggests that school staff come to know their individual students well in terms of the variables accompanying this group in order to provide proper and inclusive prevention and remediation.

Programs for the Potential Dropout

Counseling is being utilized. Several programs have begun to utilize counseling skills to a much greater degree and have found them to be highly successful. A gleaming example was "Project Re-Entry," a program supported by the bureau of guidance of the New York State education department (14). The program, designed to support the summer efforts of guidance counselors in local school districts, used intensive guidance and counseling

of both parents and pupils to encourage potential and actual dropouts to return to school in the fall. It also sought to encourage participating schools to reappraise current programs for these pupils.

Similar programs have also utilized counseling in various capacities. These were reported in an article entitled, "Dropout Programs Around the Nation," contained in the June, 1968, issue of American Education. Some of the programs and their locations reported:

Wasco, California, uses group counseling and teacher exchange programs to develop unity of students and community within a large rural community of mixed Anglo and Mexican-Americans.

The schools in Orange County, California, operate a summer program with a major purpose of preparing selected high school dropouts to re-enter the regular school system. Small classes, counseling, flexible scheduling, and other practices employed successfully in the program have been emulated by schools across the country as dropout preventive measures.

The center for Vocational Arts in Norwalk, Connecticut has a guidance-oriented program for dropouts and potential dropouts. Youngsters attend school three hours a day and work four hours. Seventy-six industries in and around Norwalk participate in the program.

Boston's Center for Opportunity Progress in Education (COPE) helps dropouts return to school and also helps low-income youngsters get into college. Staff members counsel high school students and their parents about educational, welfare, and scholarship matters.

Los Angeles has a school-industry cooperative program that provides exploratory work experience for 11th and 12th grades. For a whole semester, students work for the industries, spending three weeks at one station and then moving on to another. Los Angeles also have evening and summer guidance centers that have been models in the national dropout effort and regional occupational centers

serving both adults and 16 and 17 year-old dropouts.

The School To Aid Youth (STAY) program in Washington, D.C., encourages dropouts to finish high school. Young men and women between 16 and 21 do regular course work in the normal school setting, but participate in a special accelerated program offered in the late afternoon and evening. Intensive counseling and job conditioning are featured in both the regular school year and summer terms.

A very recent program which took a radically new approach to the problem was an experiment conducted by Dr. Newman Walker in the Paducah, Kentucky, school system (19). The theme of the approach centered around changing the school to fit the child's needs, instead of trying to change the child to fit the convenience of the school. The approach is working and is being viewed as a model by school administrators all across the nation.

Creative programs are needed. The need for creativity and innovation in the field of dropout prevention becomes apparent over and over again. Much is known about the causes but we have only begun to scratch the surface on cures. A study of dropout rates in 131 large cities, recently conducted by Dentler and Warshauer (13) of the New York Center for Urban Education, concluded that only broad, all-inclusive programs can stem the dropout tide. Such programs have to be considered within the realm of practicality. The point to consider is that these programs might be so inclusive and comprehensive as to virtually guarantee success, yet be so expensive as to price themselves out of reach of the average school district.

Components of future programs. Russell (13),

after considering all the available evidence in the literature, suggested eight basic elements that should be contained in dropout prevention programs of the future. Of particular significance was the inclusion of related elements of counseling in each of the programs. They were as follows:

- (1) The assurance of closer personal contact between students and significant adults. The use of subprofessionals, discussion groups, tutoring, and increased group and individual counseling will probably become central in any dropout program.
- (2) A system for evaluating academic progress that does not destroy the student's self-esteem or stymie his critical, analytical, and divergent thought processes. Non-graded classes may be one but not the only way of accomplishing this purpose.
- (3) Allowance for flexible scheduling. Making the necessary adaptations in procedure will present administrative and sometimes even legal problems. But traditional 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. schooldays and 50-minute periods may have to change.
- (4) Gearing the educational program to personality and motivational aspects as well as intellectual capacity. Education must be made relevant to the world of work as it will probably exist for each individual. Such a program will tax guidance and other pupil personnel workers severely and they will be turning to computers for assistance. School systems across the country are giving attention to individualized instruction. Programs such as The Utah Instructional Systems Program, for instance, gear education to the personality, motivation, and intellectual capacity of each student.
- (5) Provision of outlets for frustrations. School is a highly frustrating experience for many youngsters, who in some cases bring frustrations from home. Social and recreational programs should include all students, even if

sometimes the program is very unusual. A few years ago, a creative physical education teacher in the West invented a ball game that served this purpose. The idea of his game was to throw a ball at an opponent and hit him as hard as possible. The ball was constructed so as not to injure the youngsters. The game proved popular with adolescents who seldom participated in traditional sports.

- (6) Assurance of remedial work for students who need it, but with the "unsatisfactory" stigma removed. Most of us have seen students who were unable to meet school academic standards suffer from a downward spiraling self-concept throughout their school careers. At a very early age children can accurately pick out the brightest and the dullest students among them, but they do not attach a stigma to the evaluation. Then the school system gradually manages to convince the youngsters that the performance of the dullest students is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Later in the world of work these "dull" students, if they do a job well, may receive considerable recognition from their employers, earn appreciation, and throw off the label of unsatisfactory. Then their self-concept begins an upward spiral.
- (7) Provision of inservice training for the school staff. In the final analysis, the enthusiasm and the competence with which a program is carried out are more important than elements of the program itself.
- (8) Requirement and assurance of total community involvement. Allen Kassof writes in his recent book, The Soviet Youth Program, that Russia attributes the success of its youth programs to total involvement. And A. I. Rabin in his book Growing Up In the Kibbutz, observes that a highly controlled community environment can result in more adaptable, more mature individuals.

The most notable characteristic of past programs and suggested future programs is the varying approaches by which counseling was fused into each one of them. The immediate question is how some of these adaptations can be incorporated into the school counseling framework as it

presently stands and how they might be implemented if this is not presently feasible.

Guidance Services and the Dropout

Counseling in an educational setting is a relatively new field and is undergoing severe growing pains. Several interpretations have been made as to what the counselor should be doing and how he should go about doing it. Each educational setting demands something different from the counselor and he is often forced to work within those demands. However, most counselors work traditionally from six areas. These include personal inventories, testing, placement in and out of school, follow-up and research studies, in-service training, and educational and occupational information. These traditional guidance services are clustered around a core counseling service. The counseling service may be defined as a process in which an experienced and trained person assists a second person to understand himself and his opportunities, make appropriate adjustments and decisions, accept responsibility for his choices, and to follow a course of action in harmony with his choice.

Counselor time is often limited. Considering the pupil-counselor ratio of 1-250,300, recommended by Conant (6), and the vast areas in which a counselor works, K. B. Hoyt (9:31) proposed an order of priority for the limited counselor times available. The order proposed was:

- (1) Seniors with respect to post high school plans.
- (2) Ninth graders with respect to senior high school plans.
- (3) New students with respect to orientation interviews.
- (4) Students who have voluntarily sought the counselor's assistance.
- (5) Students referred to the counselor by teachers.
- (6) Students experiencing academic difficulties as evidenced by failure or underachievement.
- (7) Attendance or discipline problems.
- (8) Students exhibiting serious personality problems.

One special program in New York City (4) illustrates how difficult it is for the counselor to make a dent on dropout rates in slum schools. In this project, the school officials considered themselves fortunate to be assigned one counselor per 125 students. Even though these services were considered lavish by city-wide standards, there were simply not enough counselors to establish frequent, prolonged contact with the pupils showing signs of early withdrawal from school. Nor was there enough time to reach the parents and solicit their close support. Instead, the counselors were involved mostly in collecting test data, making programatic adaptations to fit the ability and interest levels of the dropout-prone, finding part-time work for them, and exchanging correspondence with local social agencies. As might be expected little of substance was accomplished.

Counselor is important to the dropout. The need for large-scale, well-coordinated counseling services in order to achieve success in slum schools was dramatically illustrated by the contrasting results obtained in the P.S. 43 demonstration program in New York City and its derivative Higher Horizons Program. The essential difference in services between the two programs were quantitative rather than qualitative. At P.S. 43, the counseling and remedial education staffs were sharply augmented to provide a high concentration of supplementary aid to pupils in a single depressed area school. Added services were also available to these pupils when they continued on to the local high school. The staff had no magical formula for obtaining results; they effected better school performance and better retention rates purely by hard compensatory work over a long period of time. The eventual payoff was highly dramatic. Of the 105 children tested at the beginning of the project and three years later, 78 of them showed an increase in I.Q., 40 of them gained more than ten points, and 13 gained more than 20 points. The dropout rate from high school for these children prior to the project was around 40 percent the rate for the project children was less than 20 percent (17).

Moore (11) reported some evidence to show the success of intensive guidance programs in reducing dropout rates. These programs were effective where potential dropouts were identified early, where total faculties contributed

their efforts in coordinated fashion, where schedules allowed for additional counseling time, where the dropout prone could receive work readiness, and where close contact with parents could be achieved. In most schools, however, especially those in depressed areas where the dropout problem is severest such coordinated, intensive efforts are difficult to achieve. It is perhaps for this reason that counseling programs have not been dramatically successful in depressed areas.

The Counselor Can Help the Dropout In Many Ways

The key to implementation of new programs, similar to the ones formerly presented, and within the practical realm of the counselor, seems to be in the philosophy discussed some years ago by Wrenn (20:139-142). He validated the continuing usefulness of "guidance" as a term and saw it as a point of view appropriate to all educational workers--teachers and administrators included. The crucial consideration was not whether the help provided for students was termed "guidance" or "counseling," but rather, the need for implementation of this point of view among all educational staff in future dropout programs. It also changed the role of the counselor and directed him toward concerns which would benefit a greater number of school students, especially the potential dropout.

Wrenn (16:192-193) delineated three areas that the school counselor could provide help for the school dropout.

These included: (a) influencing others to provide a more meaningful environment, both school and nonschool; (b) modifying others' perceptions of the dropout in the direction of better identification and understanding; (c) modifying the self-perception of the dropout so that he may be able to relate better to others and also to know how to make more adequate use of whatever environmental resources are available to him. These will be discussed in varying forms throughout the remainder of the chapter.

It is well to remember that the counselor cannot solve all problems, but can work in various capacities to provide resources for the students so they might be able to solve their own problems. Many of the potential causes of the dropout do not fall directly under the responsibility of the counselor, however, this does not mean that the counselor might not be able to indirectly influence the potential dropout in such a manner that could help him to overcome obstacles not part of the school setting. In fact, many of the causes which are extrinsic to the school might be considered as relevant factors for keeping students in school. It might be that the motivation and enthusiasm which evolve from these factors will produce the spark which could eventually result in a meaningful education for the individual. In this context, motivation could be achieved by several sources both in and out of school, because of the freedom to utilize means and instrumentality, rather than goals and finality.

Using professional knowledge. The counselor, more than any of the other school personnel, is in a position to help the potential dropout. By virtue of his experience and professional training, he should be knowledgeable in methods of student appraisal, understanding student behavior, and providing a helping relationship to facilitate individual growth and development. Whether or not the counselor can provide the types of experiences necessary for students depends on the counselor's willingness and ability to continually evaluate and rethink his role and responsibilities in guiding all children.

Becoming a participating staff member. The counselor, by properly establishing himself as a team member of the school staff, can exert an influence over others who have a direct responsibility. He can be the "expert" in areas requiring research and making recommendations to the school administrator. He can be familiar with how other schools have solved similar problems through work-study programs and the development of meaningful curriculums. As a participating staff member the counselor can also work with teachers and administrators. He can express strong convictions relating to causes of the dropout problem and explain what needs to be modified if the school is going to provide the best possible education and reduce the dropout rate.

Helping the teacher develop relationships. The

counselor can help others recognize that the major potential for carrying out the goals of a guidance program rest with the classroom teacher. Through them vocational investigations and employment skills courses can be offered. Through the counselor the teachers can come to see what mass testing can do to an already psychologically bloodied underachiever and potential dropout; or the effect of school discipline regulations that do not allow for an adjustment between middle-class and lower-class mores. He can help teachers understand that in order to reach, encourage, and nurture the potentialities of the dropout from whatever social class, they must accept their language, their dress, and their values as a point of departure for disciplined exploration. . . . not as a trick but as a way of helping them to explore the meaning of their own lives (16).

The counselor can help teachers by offering to assist in solving problems of pupil - teacher relations and improve academic achievement by explaining some of the possible reasons for deviant student behavior. He may through this process explain the importance of self-involvement as a prerequisite to learning anything. He can also help them see the positive aspects of reward and the negative results of punishment. The counselor can in the same way help teachers interact with parents. Parents who are called in to see the teacher have been there before. The child has been bad or failed repeatedly to

turn in assignments, etc. The parent expects to be punished by the teacher and knows he will be asked to do something about the child. The parent in turn either punishes the child or sides with him further, turning him against the teacher and the school. The results might be different if the teacher told the parent how well her son was doing in some subject or how polite he was in school (16).

Working with families. Time consuming as it may be, the counselor should contact individual families. As a start, the counselor might talk about the child's positive attributes. Perhaps the parents contribution to these favorable aspects could be recognized. The counselor should show an interest and listen to the troubles presented by the parents. They may need someone who even briefly understands. If nothing else this would provide at least one favorable contact with the school--perhaps the first one. Some of this may even rub off on the potential dropout (16).

Utilizing the peer group. A great source which can also be utilized by the counselor is that of the peer group. Since this group has one of the greatest influences on the adolescent it might be used to modify some of the peer group attitudes and values. This could be done by including group counseling and group guidance skills. This might also be a solution to the problem of limited counselor time. Because group counseling is in an infant stage and

relatively little is known about the potentials of such procedures, the implications for its usage are great but they should be implemented after careful consideration by the counselor.

Indicating the need for elementary guidance. When the counselor is finally presented with a dropout problem it is usually too late for him to be of help. Most counselors agree that their work has little value after the pupil has made up his mind to leave school. Many feel that a full counseling staff should be provided at the elementary level because potential dropouts can be more easily identified at this age period. This affords a clearer picture of the pupil's personal development, and provides an opportunity to reach the potential dropout long before he is legally able to withdraw (17).

Cervantes (5), in his study of the dropout, states that the damage has already been done to the child even before he has entered first grade. The triad of typical dropout problems, including a weak self-image, weak communication skills, and inability to get along with others, is established before one enters school, not after. With these factors in mind, Daniel Schreiber offered the following conclusion: (5:201-202)

Over the long haul, programs in the nursery and kindergarten areas will probably be most beneficial in preventing dropouts. The various approaches include summer kindergartens and centers at which four and five year olds get educational experiences they would otherwise miss.

Being a good person. One final element is crucial to all of the concepts mentioned in this chapter. It simply states that the counselor must be a strong person, and should possess certain attitudes if he can ever create a working relationship with potential dropouts. The counselor must be able to provide the elements of a helping relationship (12) when working with students, staff, or anyone. He must be able to communicate these feelings without trying to straighten out or change the student. This will enable him to work with any feelings of hostility, depression, worthlessness, frustration, and failure. Throughout all of the sessions he must allow the student to feel that he didn't really need the counselor, after all. The thoughts just presented are certainly not all-inclusive or in-depth, however, the basic concepts are necessary for almost any interpersonal relationship. Anyone working with students in the school setting should allow himself to experience and understand these attitudes as they affect both him and the student because that's where it's at.

Chapter 4

SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS

Without a doubt, the dropout is a problem which is crucial to all Americans. The degree of the concern is often difficult to assess because of the wide variance of percentages reported within geographic areas. Statistics do not always provide the total picture, especially for a social concern such as this. They do tell us there is a tremendous need to alleviate the dropout problem, however, the context of the concern is not always evident.

Reasoning For Concern

The reasoning behind most of those expressing concern for the dropout very likely takes a different view than that of a purely humanistic gesture. It would seem relevant to openly express some of the underlying motives such as selfish gain, political advancement, and economic need so their importance can be discussed or determined. It seems that far too often these types of things hinder the real purpose of any of the new programs. If those involved in new programs would consider these factors to be present in most endeavors, but only as secondary to one common goal -helping the dropout-then possibly more good might be reaped from the programs. Until that point can be reached in every new program, each participant and promoter will

continue to focus entirely on his individual needs and the entire program will suffer.

Limitations of Definition

Another element comes to mind which seems to follow the initial remarks of chapter two. This pertains to the attempts made to define and identify the dropout and how these affect each individual's perception of the dropout. When a general definition is thrown out as a guideline and a dropout profile is presented, there is often a tendency to formulate a stereotype, whether it is recognized by the person or not. This flaunts a tendency for many to over-extend themselves in such a manner that they become overly sympathetic toward any students having problems. Without knowing it they single out the potential dropout by making exceptions for him and cause him to feel smaller yet. This is not what he wants. In fact, the favors that have been done for him are among the factors that contribute to his poor self-concept. Just remember the potential dropout is human, too and he wants to be treated the same as anyone else.

Relevant Factors for Education

Many of the factors relative to potential dropouts are also felt by the so called normal student, but somehow he is able to "gut it out," until he gets his diploma. So it stands to reason that the suggestions for dropout programs are also applicable to education in general. If

these concepts were incorporated into the regular curriculum because of their relevance to education, rather than as a means for dealing with the dropout, then education would begin to provide meaningful learning for students and there might not be any dropout concern.

Importance of the Change Agent

A great deal of lip service has been directed toward education and the potential dropout. Unfortunately, this seems to be about the same amount of service that is provided for the dropout. Suggestions for new programs appear to be very favorable and they should be explored. This is often an extremely difficult task because of the operating forces from all directions and the ambiguity which is a part of change. But this is precisely the crucial element that is needed and which must exist if anything is to be done. Educators must be willing to take risks because of the changing pace of the modern world and the personal satisfaction which is gained from efforts aimed toward improvement of human beings. The feeling representative of such a venture will enable those involved to become freer persons and to live a more meaningful life. They will be less apt to become swallowed up in the so called rat race because they will be a part of what is happening at the moment. They will be better able to do those things that they are truly desirous of doing, instead of spending their lives laboring for some mirage which can be seen and

felt, but never grasped.

It must be remembered that change does not come easy and the feelings that are a part of it are not all rosy. Some of the frustrations, anxieties, and depressions which are involved with any new and innovative programs will probably extend beyond the imagination of what was going to happen before becoming involved. But the truly crucial moments are those which go beyond any original perceptions. They can be frightening but only if the people involved are unaware of the possibility of them happening. They are not wrong or bad, but are real and should be expressed as such. These feelings and the situations which induce them are examples of real growth taking place. Both the change agent and the recipient of the change will be a part of this growth. The result will be beneficial to all with the continuing effect of reaping personal profit from change and constantly growing as a person.

Thus the stage is set for future confrontations with the dropout problem. It is strongly felt that the previous factors related to change are necessitated before any positive action will be initiated for the dropout. Any program designs or suggestions for improvement will not succeed, regardless of their magnitude, until the promoters and the participants investigate the element of change and view it as the top priority of the program. This means they must not push the panic button and should be ready to deal with the chaos which might accompany this type of a

program.

Some of the programs are doing this now but much more is needed. Universal implementation of the change factor should be exploited. More needs to be accomplished than the replication of traditional programs which are in operation, but have little carryover value. Programs need to incorporate more training sessions which help the participants become sensitized to the change factor. Critical reports and studies of dropout programs should constantly review the factor of change when observing behavior. Future programs should use these devices of new programs as guidelines, not emulation procedures, to be used as valuable knowledge which can be applied to their own particular situation.

Counseling Should Remain

The emphasis on counseling attitudes and interpersonal communication should also be continued and expanded. There is no doubt that these are relevant and assume an important role in any dropout program. The methods of incorporating these should be explored. The need for structure and tangible reinforcement are factors which should be considered. The rate that these become fused with the ambiguity of the program needs careful consideration for training purposes. All of these factors require critical evaluation because of the dictating role they assume with respect to the success or failure of all dropout programs.

Finally, the entire role of the high school counselor should be reviewed. This is especially crucial because of the impact he can have on so many students. This goes back to selection, training, and education procedures of the high school counselor. The blueprint which provides the high school counselor should be given a critical look and revamped. More emphasis needs to be placed on personal attitudes and a sensitivity to these. The ego strength of the counselor should be given a very close look. This is the ultimate goal, because for the counselor to be effective at all, he must be a good person, feel good about himself, and be constantly in touch with himself and others from day to day.

Chapter 5

Summing Up

The focus of this report has been the potential high school dropout and what can be done to help him. The problem has been stamped as a national concern because of the vast number of students who continue to drop out each year. Factors outside of the school have caused even a greater concern for the dropout. Dropouts are unable to obtain jobs because of the value placed on the high school diploma. The unemployment of these young people is creating a possible burden on the economic stability of the United States. The effect of the dropout in varying ways at all different levels is beginning to be felt and the need for action is being expressed.

An attempt was made to describe the potential dropout, however, it was presented solely to get an idea of his overall structure. There are several exceptions to almost any dropout profile which indicates the problem presented when trying to identify him. Instruments for identification have been constructed which help to supplement the task of identification.

Several of the reasons for students dropping out of school were also presented. These were found to be comprehensive and not always apparent. Several studies have ascertained various factors and many of these were reviewed

and discussed. Some of the factors included latent development, failure in school, deflated self-image, socioeconomic status, peer relationships, irrelevance of school, and the lack of meaningful learning. These were some of the factors which appeared on the surface and contributed to the development of the potential dropout.

Some of the programs which were developed to deal with the potential dropout were discussed. Their structure varied a great deal and each approached the problem somewhat differently. The need for new and better programs was voiced by several of the authorities. It was also felt that the incorporation of counseling and related attitudes would be very beneficial.

Many of the successful programs were presented along with their general make-up. Each of the programs utilized some form of counseling skills within the general framework. Suggestions for future programs included counseling and interpersonal communication as extremely important factors which should be given top priority.

The counseling framework offered by the school was presented and the role of the high school counselor was also discussed. The importance of the high school counselor was substantiated by some important studies. The number of services the counselor provided and the many ways he could help the potential school dropout were explored. Some of these included working closely with staff, administrators, parents, and subprofessionals so they could help to develop some of the attitudes

necessary for creating meaningful relationships. The basic characteristics which should be a part of the counselor in order for him to provide productive helping relationships were presented. The importance of these attitudes was stressed and emphasized for inclusion with all students.

Some final thoughts were added concerning the magnitude of the dropout problem and how this varied in certain areas. The stereotype image of the dropout and the feeling which comes with this was also discussed. The major topic of discussion involved the element of change needed for creative new programs and the growth which comes about for individuals involved with the change. The final thought supported the importance of the high school counselor and encouraged greater sensitivity training in the formal education of the high school counselor.

REFERENCES CITED

1. Allport, Gordon. Pattern and Growth in Personality. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
2. Asbell, Bernard. New Directions in Vocational Education. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.
3. Bent, Rudyard K. and Henry H. Kronenburg. The Principles of Secondary Education. 5th Ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1966.
4. Board of Education of the City of New York. Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance. Experiment in Guidance of Early School Leavers. New York: The Board, May, 1956.
5. Cervantes, Lucius F. The Dropout: Causes and Cures. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965.
6. Conant, James B. The American High School Today. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964.
7. Gibson, Robert L. (Dir.). The High School Dropout: Can He Succeed in College? Results of an experimental project, 1963-64. Toledo: The University of Toledo, 1965.
8. Harris, Louis. "What People Think About Their High Schools," Life, May 16, 1969.
9. Hoyt, Kenneth B. "What the School Has a Right To Expect of Its Counselor." In Counseling and Guidance A Summary View. New York: McMillan, Co., 1965.
10. Malcom X. The Autobiography of Malcolm X. As told to Alex Haley. New York: Graves Press, Inc., 1965.
11. Moore, J.W. Reducing the School Dropout Rate--Report On the Holding Power Project. Albany: University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Bureau of Guidance, 1963.
12. Rogers, Carl. On Becoming A Person. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961.

13. Russell, Kenneth. "Stay In School," American Education, June, 1968. pp. 9-13.
14. Schreiber, Daniel. "700,000 Dropouts," American Education, June, 1968. pp. 5-8.
15. Schreiber, Daniel. "The School Dropout--A Profile," Education Digest, March, 1960, pp. 10-13.
16. Schreiber, Daniel (Ed.). The School Dropout. NEA Project: School Dropouts. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association of the United States, 1964.
17. Tannenbaum, Abraham, J. The School Dropout Today. Paper presented at Conference on Curriculum and Teaching in Depressed Areas. New York: Columbia University, 1966.
18. Waldman, Elizabeth. "Employment of High School Dropouts and Graduates in 1966," Monthly Labor Review, July, 1967. pp. 15-21.
19. Walker, Newman. "Reaching the 'Unreachable' at School," included in the Kentucky State Crime Commission Report and submitted to Reader's Digest, September, 1968, Louisville, Kentucky.
20. Wrenn, C. Gilbert. The Counselor In A Changing World. Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1962.

THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PROBLEM
COUNSELING, AND RELATED ATTITUDES

by

DALE PHILIP MANN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1969

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

The high school dropout problem has been stamped as a national concern because of several factors which have caused a vast number of students to continually drop out each year. The unemployment of these young people creates a possible burden on the economic stability of the United States. The effect of the dropout in varying ways at all different levels is beginning to be felt and the need for action is being expressed.

The potential dropout was described to get a general idea of his overall structure. Several of the reasons for dropping out of school were also presented. These included latent development, failure in school, deflated self-image, socioeconomic status, peer relationships, irrelevance of school, and lack of meaningful learning.

Programs developed to deal with the potential dropout were discussed. Many of the successful programs were presented along with their general make-up. Each of the programs utilized some form of counseling skills within the general framework. Several authorities voiced the need for new and better programs. Suggestions for future programs included counseling and interpersonal communication as extremely important factors which should be given top priority.

The counseling framework offered by the school was presented and the role of the high school counselor was discussed. The importance of the high school counselor

was substantiated by some important studies. The number of services the counselor provided and the many ways he could help the potential school dropout were explored. Some of these included working closely with staff, administrators, parents, and subprofessionals so they could help to develop some of the attitudes necessary for creating meaningful relationships. The basic characteristics which should be a part of the counselor in order for him to provide productive helping relationships were presented. The importance of these attitudes was stressed and emphasized for inclusion with all students.

Some final thoughts were added concerning the magnitude of the dropout problem and how this varied in certain areas. The stereotype image of the dropout and the feeling which comes with this was also discussed. The major topic of discussion involved the element of change needed for creative new programs and the growth which comes about for individuals involved with the change. The final thought supported the importance of the high school counselor and encouraged greater sensitivity training in the formal education of the high school counselor.