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A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF THE 1967  
MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

by

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B. S., College of the Ozarks, 1967

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

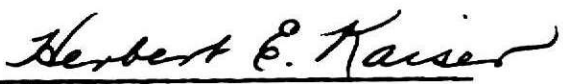
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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Educational evaluation should be considered a vital part of a school to see if the objectives and the philosophy of the school are being met. This includes the areas of guidance services, the academic subjects, the extra class activities, and all other phases of the total school program.

One of the sources of information in a program of evaluation is a follow-up study of students who have passed through the school. It is important to remember that follow-up implies the collection of data about something which has already taken place. It should be remembered that follow-up studies are not the complete answer for evaluating educational systems. They are but one important component of a larger design for evaluating the educational endeavors. A regular program of follow-up and evaluation should be a part of the school's program of complete educational evaluation.

The Problem. It was the purpose of this study to follow-up the graduating seniors of the class of 1967 of the Manhattan, Kansas High School. The information obtained will be valuable to the school for future use in educational evaluation and possibly for improving the present school program for the students still in school.

The specific objectives of this follow-up study are listed below:

1. TO obtain former students' opinions about the adequacy of the curriculum.
2. TO determine what academic classes were most beneficial to them.
3. TO find out if the former graduates felt that they were adequately prepared for their chosen vocation.

4. TO determine what types of vocational classes were most beneficial.

5. TO obtain the students' opinions and feelings about services provided them by the counseling department.

6. TO determine ways in which the educational and counseling services provided them by the counseling department.

Limitations of this follow-up study are listed as follows:

Drop-outs were not included

Only 66 percent of the questionnaires were returned

The information is based on the perceptions of former students

This study was restricted to Manhattan High School graduates of 1967.

Importance of the Study. At the present time Manhattan High School does not have a regular program of follow-up of students who have graduated or who have dropped-out of high school before completion.

For at least five reasons, it is evident that more firmly defined follow-up procedures are needed in the Manhattan Senior High School: (1) increasing enrollments make it less likely that staff members will be aware of the post-high school progress of the majority of students, (2) recent state and national studies provide evidence of diverse positive values of follow-up programs, (3) current opinions of both lay and professional people throughout the United States endorse the continuing evaluation of educational programs, (4) widespread changes in occupational skills and opportunities denote the importance of training and job placement for youth, and (5) evidence has accrued that in the future a smaller proportion of local graduates will attend college and that, therefore, follow-up will

doubtlessly be more difficult.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to get such a program started, a follow-up study of the class mentioned above was made with an emphasis on the student's feelings on how well he thought Manhattan High School prepared him for what he is now doing. The information asked for included present location and activity, opinions and feelings about the academic subjects taken, and the extra-class activities in which the student participated while in high school, and opinions and feelings about the guidance services of the school. The information obtained should prove to be valuable to the school in any future program of evaluation it may undertake.

Procedure. A limited review of literature pertaining to follow-up procedures comprise the first section of this report. This is followed by a survey of literature on follow-up studies about high school graduates. These are followed by detailed examination of the procedures and results of the questionnaires, comments made by respondents, and conclusions and recommendations based on the replies received.

The information obtained was gathered through the use of a questionnaire sent to 95 graduates of Manhattan High School from the class of 1967. The replies were tabulated when the form was returned. The conclusions and recommendations were based on the answers given by those graduates who completed and returned the questionnaire.

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<sup>1</sup>Louise M. Langford, "A Proposed Plan for Improving Follow-Up Procedures at Manhattan High School" (unpublished report in Organizations and Administration of the Guidance Services Program class, Kansas State University, 1965), p. 12.



## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### A Limited Review of Literature Pertaining to Follow-Up Procedures

If one accepts the position advanced by behavioral counselors that outcomes rather than processes are the legitimate focus for evaluations of guidance, then follow-up activities would become the method of evaluation of guidance programs. Follow-up is generally recognized as a means of evaluating guidance programs and of providing information which can be the basis for program improvement. However, follow-up studies can become investigations of process rather than outcome despite the timing.<sup>2</sup>

Follow-up has been labeled the "Wednesday's Child" of the guidance program by Bernard and Fullmer. Unlike the placement service there is little debate concerning the necessity of follow-up in a successful guidance program as evidenced by Humphries, Traxler, and North's contention that without follow-up counseling is incomplete.<sup>3</sup>

The counselor can use returns from follow-up studies to help the school's former students as well as his present counselees. In studying the returns the counselor will discover former students who are in need of guidance services. He may arrange to have these services provided by the school or by other institution, agencies, or organizations within the community.

A high school can obtain a great deal of useful information by

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<sup>2</sup>R. H. Pate, Jr., "Placement and Follow-Up; What Role in the Guidance Program," High School Journal, 1971, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 291.

finding out from colleges what grades were earned by the school's graduates in their college freshman year. Such information is useful in enabling the high school to learn how its graduates fared. In addition, such data accumulated over a period of time help a high school to determine the kinds of colleges for which a student's secondary school preparation can best fit him.

Assume that through a follow-up study a counselor has definite knowledge of the successes of former students who entered certain other training institutions or who entered certain kinds of jobs. The counselor can use such knowledge effectively in advising his present students. Next, the counselor can probe beneath the surface of the information provided by former students. He can try to uncover the factors that appeared to cause these students to succeed or fail.

In addition to the information collected through follow-up studies of former students, a school can compile useful local occupational information by means of surveys. Thus, over a period of time the school becomes better acquainted with the occupational opportunities for the school leavers in the local community.

The follow-up of the future will be a study of the total secondary school effort. That prediction is based on the current trend toward educational accountability. If that trend continues, the total school effort will be assessed by follow-up studies designed to determine if long range objectives have been met. In such a situation, the relationship of the guidance program to the total school effort will need to be determined.

The typical follow-up technique employs one or more of the following techniques: interview, postcard survey, or questionnaire.

Each approach has certain advantages and disadvantages. The questionnaire is the method which requires the least time, but the interview method usually results in more valid responses. The combination method of a detailed questionnaire sent to the entire group and a structured interview with a selected sample seems to be most satisfactory if enough interviewers are available to carry out the procedure. However, a detailed questionnaire with an appropriate introduction will usually be quite satisfactory. It must be recognized, however, that certain individuals are less prone to return questionnaires. Many of those who feel that they have done poorly in life, have certain resentments toward the school, or have been drop-outs may not report by the questionnaire method. Most schools that have a continuous follow-up service use the postcard survey, and the students are made aware of this while still in school and are more likely to return a postcard.

The popularity of the follow-up technique may sometimes obscure its limitations. The judgments of former students regarding the program, although interesting and valuable, should be balanced by the judgments of professional educators and by other citizens in the school district. The opinion of former students, by itself, is not a sufficient basis from which to make program revisions.

A second limitation comes from the nature of the questionnaires. Often these forms are long, dull, or limited and discourage the student to answer them.

A final limitation is inherent in the methodology of follow-up studies. In many follow-up studies, there is only about 50 percent return. There is evidence that those who return questionnaires of this type differ in important respects from those who do not. It

should not be concluded then that the returns received represent the opinion of all former students.

During September, 1968, the Directory of Illinois Schools published by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Institution was entered with the aid of a table of random numbers and 100 high schools outside the city of Chicago (listed separately in the directory) were thus selected. A brief questionnaire was mailed to each of these 100 schools and the telephone was used to obtain results from those who did not respond in writing with the result that 100 percent returns were obtained.

Each respondent was asked if his school had engaged in a formal follow-up study (as opposed to the "I talk with a few graduates each year" type) during the past five school years. The results showed that only about one-third of the schools had engaged in a formal follow-up study.

It is interesting to note that, in general, the larger the size of the high school, the greater the probability that a follow-up study will be conducted. Perhaps this indicates that the larger schools are more affluent and, therefore, have more time, help, and money than do the smaller schools.

#### SURVEY OF LITERATURE ON FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

Young people who leave school, either by graduation or by dropping out, are followed up for one or more of three main purposes. First, there is the altruistic desire to help the individual with problems of vocational, educational, and social adjustment after he goes from the school and while he is getting himself established elsewhere.

A second purpose of follow-up studies is to gather data for use in evaluating the instructional and guidance programs of the local school. This is an extremely important purpose. For instance, Patterson and Fotiu (40) followed up 155 cases to determine the effectiveness of counseling by the Highland Park, Michigan, Guidance Center and concluded that advisement was generally... "successful in assisting students in selecting educational or vocational programs which can be pursued by them with satisfactory progress."<sup>4</sup>

More recently, Brown (9) reported that the Highland Park, Illinois, High School had surveyed its graduates who had gone on to college to find out how well the school had prepared them. This follow-up was used to strengthen the school's curriculum and guidance program for college bound students. More than 600 students distributed among 178 colleges cooperated in the study. English and study habits were very frequently mentioned as needing special attention. The follow-up program subsequently was expanded to include graduates who went directly into the work force.

A third purpose of follow-up studies of school-leavers is to gather information of general interest concerning those who have left. Rothney, in concluding a report of a follow-up of members of the 1951 graduating classes of four Wisconsin High Schools, suggested... "that the figures we have given, and the extent to which school people are

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<sup>4</sup>Robert North and A. E. Traxler, Purpose and Nature of Follow-Up School Leavers (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1966) p. 292.

aware of them, may assist us in keeping at least one foot on the ground in the planning of education for Wisconsin youth".<sup>5</sup> (44:10)

An essential aspect of any agency offering counseling services is self-evaluation. Questionnaires, used with adequate mailing techniques, have come to be recognized as one of the more fruitful of the evaluation techniques. It is, however, a technique that can produce deceptive data. Calahan and Meier (1939) were among the first to recognize the differential effect that particular mailing procedures have on responses to questionnaires. Research by Suchman and McCandless (1940) suggested that mail survey techniques also significantly effect those who return the questionnaire. One of their most important conclusions was that an increase in the number of responses was directly related to a decrease in the bias of the resulting data. This finding was supported by Benson (1946), who listed the danger of a small number of returns producing a biased response as being the most serious disadvantage of surveys of this type. As a result of these findings, methods of increasing response percentage have been sought through the years and have ranged from varying the color of postage stamps to financial inducements.<sup>6</sup>

The cover letter or letter of transmittal, for a questionnaire should be developed to solicit the cooperation of individuals in providing the information requested. The purpose of the study should be stated frankly and concisely to allay suspicion on the part of the respondent

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Hurst, J. C., and W. H. Morrill, Personal Versus General Requests for Client Feedback in Evaluating Counseling Services, Journal of College Student Personnel: American College Personnel Association, 1971.

concerning any hidden or ulterior purposes.<sup>7</sup>

It should reveal the nature of the study and why the respondent's assistance is needed. The best form for the covering letter is the personal letter, individually typed, and signed in ink. Frequently, the offer to send copies of the survey results to the participants will elicit their participation. It should be remembered, though, that this is expensive and not always desirable.<sup>8</sup>

If the offer is made, it is mandatory that the researcher carry through with his promise at the end of the study. If he does not, many of the cooperating respondents may be prejudiced against further research efforts using this technique. If anonymity is a vital factor in the response, it should be so stated. However, the researcher should not use this in an attempt to get replies. It is recommended that the respondents generally be asked to sign their returns.<sup>9</sup>

Since most human beings, including teachers and research investigators, are liable to make serious or simple mistakes, it is always advisable, before mimeographing or printing, to check the questionnaire for adequacy. Spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors should be eliminated. It is also advisable to have other interested persons read the questionnaire and to raise questions when they do not understand the vocabulary or the meaning of various questions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J. Francis Rummel, An Introduction to Research Procedures in Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 99.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Justman, Irving Robbins, and J. Wayne Wrightstone, Evaluation in Modern Education, (New York: American Book Co., 1956), p. 146.

Sletto (1940) found that the nature of the appeal for assistance made in the cover letter affected the rate of return, with the most effective for his group of former college students being an appeal to help improve education for others. Moore (1941) found that a typewritten letter of transmittal increased the return rate significantly over a duplicated letter. Others have suggested that neatness rather than the actual method of reproduction is the important factor. Gerberich and Mason (1948) found that whether or not a subject was asked to sign the questionnaire made little difference in the item response. Others have pointed out that the nature of the material being investigated would possibly affect the returns rate of confidential versus non-confidential questionnaires.

Robinson and Agisin (1951) and Longworth (1958) emphasized the effectiveness of a personal plea to respond to the questionnaire. The Longworth study used a number of different techniques for increasing response and found that a personal letter followed by a personal phone call produced the highest return.

In a Wisconsin study with a 46.9 percent response, it was discovered that 78 percent of the former students in the top percentile of their class returned the questionnaire, while only 23 percent from the bottom percentile returned questionnaires. In a study in Arkansas, five rural schools conducting mail surveys did not receive any completed questionnaires from former students who had left school prior to graduation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Floyd L. McKinney and Charles Oglesby, Determining and Conducting Follow-Up Studies of Former Students, (University of Kentucky, 1971) p. 9.



The probability of a questionnaire being returned was found to be significantly related to the sex of the subject. With an overall return rate (at the end of the four week study period) of 54.0 percent, 60.2 percent of the females had responded versus 41.8 percent of the males.<sup>12</sup>

Scott (1961) in an extensive study for the British Government Social Survey, investigated the effects: (A) stamped versus business reply envelopes, (B) official sponsorship, (C) personalizing the cover letter, (D) a letterhead, (E) colored paper, and a number of other factors. He found stamped envelopes and official sponsorship to be effective. Reporting on response to Project Talent questionnaires, Orr and Neyman (1965) found the average cost for handling and mailing the questionnaire to be 58.6 cents per respondent using a total of four mailings and achieving some 69.7 percent response from an original 88,000 subjects. They also found that the length of the questionnaire affected the return rate, with approximately 37 percent response for a four page questionnaire versus approximately 30 percent for an eight page questionnaire 35 days after first mailing. They further reported that the peak return rate occurred 12 days after mailing and that response rate was positively correlated with aptitude scores.<sup>13</sup>

Although a large response percentage is desirable in order to reduce the possibility of bias, it is also important to recognize the danger of influencing data with techniques designed to elicit

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<sup>12</sup>David J. Pucel, Questionnaire Follow-Up Returns as a Function of Incentives and Responder Characteristics (University of Minnesota, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

the larger response. This consideration appears to be especially important for agencies offering therapeutic services who choose to use mailed questionnaires for purposes of evaluation. Will a personal plea from the potential respondent's counselor or therapist increase the likelihood that the questionnaire will be returned, but in so doing influence what the respondent says? A survey of literature reveals no research designed to answer this and related questions important in evaluation procedures via mailed questionnaires by agencies offering psychological counseling.

The researcher should not be content with fragmentary returns, but should attempt to increase his returns by improving his questions, his follow-up procedures, and his sponsorship. It is desirable to get 90 to 100 percent returns to be assured of good representation of the group sampled.<sup>14</sup> Conclusions based upon small percentages of returns are often suspected of bias, although this is not necessarily so. If the sampling is well done, that is, if it is representative of the individuals in the population, the percentage of returns is not particularly meaningful in itself. The most important factor in the analysis of data is to have an adequate number of representative returns rather than any given percentage of the number of questionnaires originally distributed.

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<sup>14</sup>J. Francis Rummel, An Introduction to Research Procedures in Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 108.

## Chapter III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study encompasses a group of high school graduates who have been out of school for a period of five years. The questionnaire technique was found to be both appropriate and necessary for this study. The only possible way to reach a random selection of these graduates in that time was through correspondence, because many of these people have now left Manhattan to work, to establish new homes, or to continue their education. The opinions and feelings of these students were desired, and only through the questionnaire technique was there the possibility of obtaining the desired information.

The first step in this study was to obtain the names and addresses of the members of the 1967 class of Manhattan High School. The names of the graduates were copied from the commencement exercise roster of 1967. Ninety-five names were selected from this roster at random or selection of every sixth name, of which 321 was the total.

Addresses of the students were obtained from counselors at the high school, graduates of the class of 1967, information cards in the counseling department, Kansas State University Student Personnel Directory, and by contacting students' parents by telephone.

A rough draft of the questionnaire was prepared. The specific aims and purposes of this questionnaire were to gather information of educational nature for school personnel to use in future curriculum planning. The replies of these graduates will not be the sole determining factors in curriculum planning, for instance, but they will be included in any evaluation undertaken by the school in these areas.

Dr. Herb Kaiser, College of Education, Kansas State University, gave the writer valuable assistance in selection of the questions to use and information for the cover letter. The final draft of the questionnaire, Appendix B, was prepared and taken to the Manhattan Area Vocational Technical School where ninety-six personally type-written cover letters and questionnaires were completed.

Questionnaires were then mailed to fifty-five boys and forty girls who were basically residents of five states, Alaska, California, Oregon, Kansas and Missouri. After twelve days had elapsed, telephone calls were made to most of the non-respondents and personal contacts were made when it was possible.

A copy of the cover letter used in this report can be found in Appendix A. The first three paragraphs gave an explanation of why this study was conducted and attempted to show why a study of this nature is important and why the graduate should take the time to fill out and return the accompanying questionnaire.

The last part of the questionnaire assured the graduate, that is, those who were included in the study, that the answers would be kept in confidence, and revealed the inclusion of a stamped, self-addressed envelope for ease in returning the material. Each cover letter was signed in an attempt to add a personal feeling to each one.

The questionnaire was to be answered by all former students who received a copy. General information was requested concerning present address, satisfaction from high school course in relation to abilities, interests, and needs, a rating of high school subjects and extra-class activities, a rating of help received from the school

on certain problems, and an opportunity to list classes which the graduate wished they had taken but did not or were not offered. This information was requested especially for use in an evaluation of the educational or academic program and the extra-class activities that are offered.

An attempt was made to arrange the questions of the rating scale variety in such an order that they would not follow each other, so that the respondents would not develop the tendency to rate things consistently high or consistently low.

All respondents were given an opportunity to state in any way or ways that the high school guidance services could have been more helpful to them.

The three pages of the questionnaires and the various questions included on each page seem to be adequate and in their most appropriate position.

The type of items used for the make-up of this questionnaire include multiple-choice items, free-response items, short answer items, and rating scales. An example of the free-response question is item eleven where respondents had an opportunity to state how the guidance services could have been more helpful. The short answer item was question six, where the graduate was asked to briefly list the courses which he wished he had been able to take, but which were not offered.

The majority of questions used were of the multiple choice and rating scale types. The multiple choice items were questions eight and ten. The respondent needed only check the appropriate answer from a list of answers given for him. Because the opinions and feelings about school and subjects taken by the former students

were of utmost importance, many rating scales were included. There were four graphical rating scales and three numerical rating scales.

This is a brief description of the questionnaire used for this study. The questionnaire is not perfect; it has several flaws, yet it was also felt that the questionnaire was adequate and performed its function in this study by obtaining the opinions and feelings of the former students. The results and tabulations of the questionnaire are in the following section.