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Date August 13, 1975

REASONS GIVEN BY CHICANO ADULTS FOR BEING SCHOOL DROPOUTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was an investigation to identify the reasons Chicanos give for dropping out of school. There was a need for this study since it was shown that the dropout rate among Chicanos was higher than for non-Chicanos.

The review of the literature revealed that the reasons for dropping out of school are varied and complex. In recent years national attention and funding has been given to dropout prevention programs. Title VIII has been a federal source of funding to help develop innovative projects to help keep potential dropouts in school.

The population that was sampled consisted of adult Chicano dropouts now residing in Billings, Montana. To assist in identifying reasons that Chicanos drop out of school, personal interviews were conducted with thirty-one adult Chicano dropouts living in Billings.

Of the thirty-one participants, eighteen were male and thirteen were female. The mean grade completed was 8.9 and the average age at quitting school was 16.0 years. The participants were arbitrarily divided into those under thirty years old (younger), and those over thirty years old (older). In comparing the older and the younger group, it was found that the younger Chicanos attended school an average 2.7 grades longer with an age increase of only 1.7 years.

Twenty of the participants attended at least one school in Billings. Of the eleven who did not attend any school in Billings, ten belonged to the older group.

The six most often cited reasons for quitting school were; got a job, no real part for Chicanos in school, failing grades, racial slams, being hurried, and a feeling that Chicanos were not good students. In comparing the reasons for dropping out between the younger and the older Chicanos, the younger Chicanos are not quitting as often to go to work, but quitting more often because of failing grades and feelings of not belonging or being a real part of school.

Twenty-eight participants responded to the question on whether or not they believed a Mexican American teacher or counselor would have helped them to stay in school. Fifteen participants responded yes, and of these fifteen, ten were male. Nine participants checked no, it would not have helped, and four said that it would depend on the Mexican American person.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

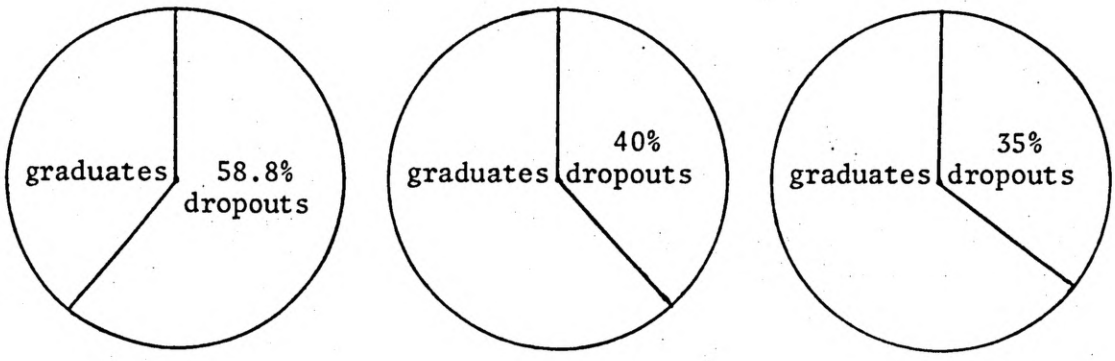
School dropouts are a concern for educators throughout the nation. According to the 1970 United States Census Reports, 58.8 percent of all adults twenty-five years old or older did not graduate from high school. In Montana the percentage of adults twenty-five years old or older that did not graduate from high school is 40 percent, while this same figure for Yellowstone County is 35 percent.

Table 1 is a graphic illustration of adult dropouts aged twenty-five or over, in the United States, in Montana, and in Yellowstone County.

Table 1

Percentage of dropouts and graduates, 25 years old or older

1970 Census



United States Montana Yellowstone County

These are alarming proportions! Over half, 58.8 percent, of the adults twenty-five or over in the United States did not graduate from high school! Montana students fare some what better than the national average, with six graduates for every four dropouts (40 percent). In Yellowstone County the dropouts are slightly less (35 percent).

The eighteen years old or over group merits closer scrutiny since the legal age for adult status is eighteen years of age. According to the Montana Adult Education Needs Data from the 1970 Census, 39 percent of all adults aged eighteen or over did not graduate from high school. In Yellowstone County 33 percent of the eighteen or over group are not high school graduates.

This data, graphically represented in Table 2, means that one out of every three adults in Yellowstone County is a school dropout.

The individual certainly suffers the greatest loss by dropping out, but costs of an inadequate or an incomplete education are also borne by society (United States Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, 1972:3). Studies have shown that the undereducated are more mobile (Neisser, 1965:5), (United States Senate Select Committee on Equal Education Opportunity, 1972:6). Thus dropouts of any one part of the United States may show up in any other part of the United States, e.g.; the results of under-education in the southwestern United States may well show up in the northern States.

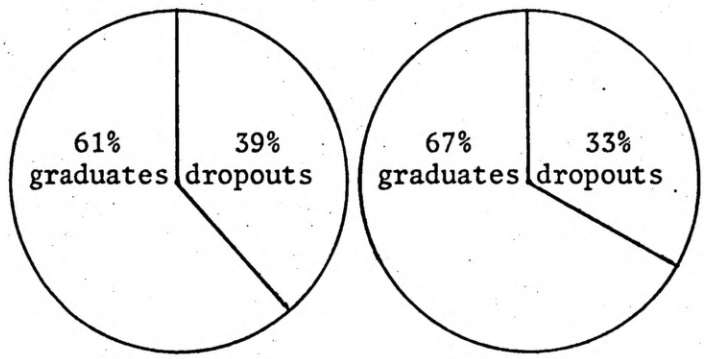
Chicano dropouts residing in Billings, Montana are therefore a

national concern, making findings from this study important to other parts of the United States.

Table 2

Percentage of dropouts and graduates, 18 years old or older

1970 Census



Montana Yellowstone County

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to identify the reasons Chicano adults give for dropping out of school. That is, what will Chicano adults now residing in Billings consider important reasons for leaving school before graduating from the twelfth grade.

Need for the Study

This study was important because the percentage of Chicano graduates is disproportionately low, as will be demonstrated by the following charts and comparisons. It is necessary to determine why

this is so before meaningful and effective programs can be developed which will help the Mexican American student remain in school.

Table 3 gives the distribution of students in the elementary school in School District #2 as of October, 1973, and the distribution of students in secondary schools as of October, 1974. The percentage of the total was calculated for each group at each grade level. This percentage is listed to the right of each number in the grade columns.

Table 3

Distribution of students in School District #2, 1973 and 1974

Research Department, School District #2

Groups	Grades					
	(1973) 1-6	% of Total	(1974) 7-9	% of Total	(1974) 10-12	% of Total
White	7403 -	92.39%	4316 -	94.67%	4472 -	97.34%
Negro	32 -	.40%	12 -	.26%	15 -	.33%
American Indian	236 -	2.95%	72 -	1.58%	29 -	.63%
Spanish surnamed	300 -	3.74%	141 -	3.09%	70 -	1.52%
Other	42 -	.52%	18 -	.39%	8 -	.17%
Total	8013		4559		4594	

A 1966 distribution of students in School District #2 is given in Table 4 to further substantiate the premise that Chicanos are

dropping out of school at a higher rate than non-Chicanos. The percentages of the total were found, as in the 1973, 1974 distribution, for comparison purposes. If Chicanos are dropping out of school at the

Table 4

Distribution of students in School District #2, 1966

Research Department, School District #2

	Grades					
	1-6	% of Total	7-9	% of Total	10-12	% of Total
White	8446	95.23%	3745	96.87%	3424	98.02%
Negro	25	.28%	11	.28%	4	.11%
American Indian	102	1.15%	8	.21%	10	.29%
Spanish American	265	2.99%	94	2.43%	52	1.49%
Oriental	31	.35%	8	.21%	3	.09%
Total	8869		3866		3493	

same rate as are non-Chicanos, then it is expected that the percentage of Chicanos at each grade level would remain approximately the same. However, scrutiny of the percentage distributions in the two tables shows that the Spanish surnamed percentage of the total at the high school level is about half of the percentage of the total at the elementary level. But this does not say that half of the Spanish surnamed students

graduate, only that half make it to the high school.

The final information that needs to be examined is the number of Chicanos graduating. Of the 1360 graduates in School District #2 in June of 1975, taken from the commencement programs from Billings Senior High and Billings West High, thirteen were Spanish surnamed. This means that of the 1974-75 graduating class, 0.95 percent were Spanish surnamed. This is about one-fourth to one-third of the percentage of the total in grades 1-6.

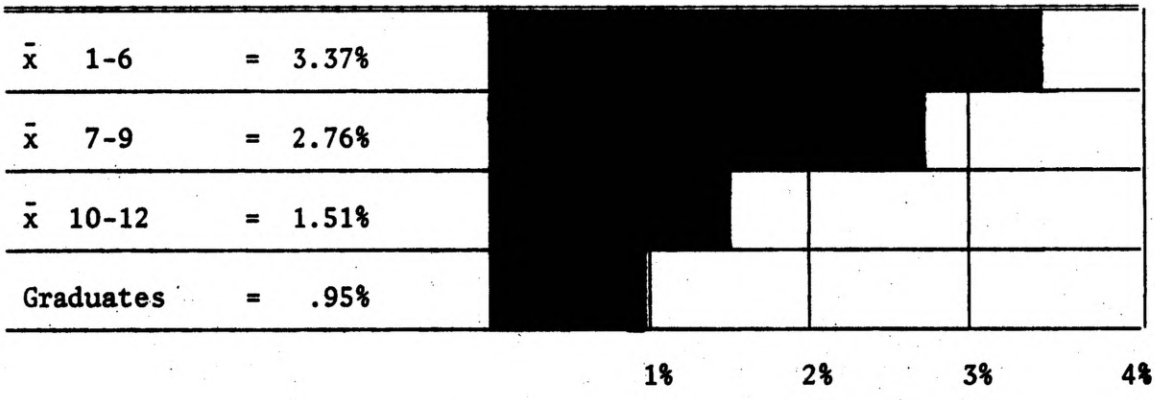
Table 5 is a graphic presentation of the Spanish surnamed child as a percentage of the total.

Table 5

Spanish surnamed students as a percentage of the total

$\bar{x}$ of 1966 and 1973, 1974

Graduates, 1975



In any interpretation of the data in Table 5 the following variables need to be kept in mind:

(1) In the data from School District #2, the actual count of Mexican Americans may be higher at all the grade levels because some non-Spanish surnamed students may have been missed, i.e.; Michelle (Vallejo) Cormier, Carmen (Gonzales) Smith, etc.

(2) Data available spans nine years rather than the ideal of twelve years.

(3) Spanish surnamed students moving in or out of School District #2.

The usefulness of this chart is to give a general idea of what is happening to the Chicano child in school. Keeping the aforementioned variables in mind, general statements implied from this chart about the percentage of Chicanos in the schools are:

1. Most make it to junior high schools.
2. About half make it to the high schools.
3. About one-third to one-fourth graduate, which means that about two-thirds to three-fourths drop out.

These figures stress the need for undertaking this study.

Questions to be Answered

General questions that were answered are:

1. What reasons are given by Chicanos for dropping out of school?

   a. Do these reasons vary according to their sex?

   b. Do these reasons vary according to their age group?

2. What was the average grade completed?

3. What was the average age at the time the Chicano child dropped out of school?

4. What types of school related activities, events, or people were liked or disliked by the Chicano child?

5. Does the Chicano adult consider it important to have Chicano teachers and counselors in the school? Why or why not?

General Procedure

An interview instrument was designed to identify reasons the Chicano drops out of school. Precautions taken in designing this instrument were as follows:

1. Since bilingualism could conceivably influence English written or verbal fluency, two forms of the instrument were developed; one in English and one in Spanish.

2. A former student (a high school graduate) and the President of the CONCILIO MEJICANO were asked to check both forms for clarity and readability and especially in the Spanish form, for correct form and phrasing.

3. To guard against the possibility that a dropout might have

a lower reading level than a graduate, the instrument was designed with a reading level of 6.7, using the Fog Index.

This interview instrument required the participating adult Chicano dropout to give general information regarding sex, age, school attendance in Billings, last grade completed, and age at which he quit school. He was asked to check the most important reasons that applied to his leaving school. The participant was also asked to list his likes and dislikes concerning school-related subjects, people, activities, or events. The last question asked the participant if he thought having a Mexican American teacher or counselor would have helped him stay in school, and his reasons as to why or why not.

After completing the instrument the participant was encouraged to continue expressing his views by questions such as "How did you feel about going to school?", and "What did you feel like, being in school?".

Limitations

Limitations of this study were:

1. The population was limited to Chicano dropouts now residing in Billings, Montana.

2. The sample was not a random sample.

3. Two interviewers were involved, one male and one female.

4. The number of participants involved in the study, 31, was relatively small.

Definition of terms

The following are terms and definitions as they apply to this study.

Mexican American. Refers to persons who (a) were born in Mexico and now hold United States citizenship, or (b) whose parents or remote ancestors immigrated to the United States from Mexico, or (c) can trace their lineage to Hispanic or Indo-Hispanic forbears who resided within Spanish or Mexican Territory that is now part of the Southwestern United States (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974:ix).

Chicano. A Mexican American. In recent years this term has gained wide acceptance among many persons of Mexican ancestry and reflects a group identity and pride in Mexican American culture and heritage (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974:ix). In this study "Chicano", "Mexican American", and "Spanish American" are used interchangeably.

Ethnic/cultural. Relating to the customs, characteristics, language, and beliefs, of a person's ancestry.

Adult. Any person eighteen years of age or older.

Dropout. A person who withdraws from school before graduating from the twelfth grade. In this study "dropout", "non-graduate", and "early school leaver" were used interchangeably.

Summary

School dropouts are a concern for educators throughout the nation. Over half of the nation's adults aged twenty-five and over did not graduate from high school. The twenty-five or over group fare somewhat better in Montana and Yellowstone County, with about four out of ten dropping out. In the eighteen or over group in Montana and Yellowstone County the rate of dropouts is about one out of three.

Two kinds of information from School District #2 were examined; the distribution of students, and commencement programs. From this examination broad tentative statements drawn about the percentage of Chicanos to the total student population were:

1. Most make it to the junior highs.
2. About half make it to the high schools.
3. About one-third to one-fourth graduate, which means that two-thirds to three-fourths drop out. These figures stress the need for undertaking this study.

An interview instrument was developed to identify the reasons Chicanos drop out of school. Two forms were developed, one in English and one in Spanish, and the participant could choose to use an oral or a written form in either language. This instrument was designed to have a fairly low reading level of 6.7, found by using the Fog Index for readability.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years, the problem of the school dropout has received national attention. In the Kennedy and Johnson Administration and in the beginning of the Nixon Administration, dropouts were a high priority. But as the controversy over busing and desegregation has taken over the educational spotlight, little has been heard of the dropout (National School Public Relations Association, 1972:1). Reasons for this are not altogether clear, but certainly a major reason would be funding. Although the federal government maintains an appreciable level of funding for various dropout prevention and rehabilitation programs, especially in the field of career education, it has shown no inclination to expand it drastically (National School Public Relations Association, 1972:2).

Dropout prevention programs at all educational levels should have top priority at all times because they are actually a savings to the nation. A 1969 study (United States Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, 1972:xi) showed that the sacrifice in national income from inadequate education over the lifetime of twenty-five to thirty-four year old males was about $200 billion greater than the investment required to alleviate this condition. Other than the obvious loss in federal, state, and local revenues, the nation loses because of costs in welfare programs, costs of crime, reduction in

political participation, and poorer levels of health.

Literature concerning dropouts falls into two categories: (a) those exploring the characteristics of and reason for dropouts, and (b) those dealing with preventive programs. For ease in review, this chapter is broken into these two categories, and focuses in on those concerning minorities.

Characteristics of and Reasons for Dropouts

The dropout, as an individual, has unique characteristics, problems, and personal history. Cervantes (Cervantes, 1966:198) acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual and that no single category or solution is available, while at the same time noting that common characteristics exist. One of the central problems in working with dropouts is determining what these common characteristics are.

The characteristics of the dropout can be categorized in general or specific terms. The type of categorizing that uses the broad, general terms to identify the dropout points to low socio-economic environment, cultural deprivation and cultural incompatibility (Gumpper, 1966, 1).

The other method of categorizing the dropout is by identifying specific characteristics. Cervantes lists twenty characteristics which are commonly found among actual or potential dropouts.

DROPOUT PREDICTION TABLE

School

1. Two years behind in reading or arithmetic at seventh grade level. Majority of grades are below average.
2. Failure of one or more school years (1st, 2nd, 8th, 9th grades most commonly failed; 85% of dropouts behind one year; 53% two or more years).
3. Irregular attendance and frequent tardiness. Ill-defined sickness given as reason.
4. Performance consistently below potential.
5. No participation in extracurricular activities.
6. Frequent change of schools.
7. Behavior problems requiring disciplinary measures.
8. Feeling of "not belonging" (because of size, speech, personality development, nationality, social class, family disgrace, retardation in school, dress, lack of friends among schoolmates or staff, etc.).

Family

9. More children than parents can readily control (e.g., only child for divorced and working mother; five or more for non-divorced and working mother of blue and lower white-collar class).
10. Parents inconsistent in affection and discipline
11. Unhappy family situation (common acceptance, communication, and pleasurable experiences lacking; family solidarity minimal).
12. Father figure weak or absent.
13. Education of parents at eighth grade level.
14. Few family friends; among these few many problem units (divorced, deserted, delinquents, dropouts).

Peers

15. Friends not approved by parents.
16. Friends not school oriented.
17. Friends much older or much younger.

TAT (Psychological orientation)

18. Resentful of all authority (home, school, police, job, church).
19. Deferred gratification pattern weak.
20. Weak self-image.

Cervantes goes on to say that the greater the number of negative factors working to the disadvantage of the pupil, the greater will be the chance of his dropping out of school. (Cervantes, 1966:199).

Other authors and school districts agree with the need to identify potential dropouts, as dropout prediction charts and tables abound. The Colorado Department of Education, for example, has developed an index of individual student dropout potential. The index considers such variables as: (1) low or failing grades; (2) high absenteeism; (3) nonparticipation in school activities; (4) high discipline incident record; (5) fewer than two natural parents in the home; (6) other siblings who have dropped out of school; (7) education level of parents; and (8) lower quartile on socio-economic scale (U. S. Department of Health Education, and Welfare, 1973:14). Other school systems, such as the Paducah Public Schools in Paducah, Kentucky include another variable that is more relative to the present time; drugs so frequently used as to impede the student's educational progress (U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973:26).

Research on the dropout indicates a variety of reasons for leaving school. These reasons include lack of interest in school, failing grades,

couldn't get along with teachers or other students, negative attitudes toward school, wanted to find a job, wanted to get married, pregnancy, enlistment in the army, and being asked to leave (Thornburg, 1975:181).

Studies continually show that minority groups have a higher dropout rate than the general populace (Kaufman, Lewis, 1968:6), (U. S. Select Committee, 1972:15). Some districts such as Hartford, Connecticut report a 60 percent to 90 percent dropout rate among their minority groups (U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973:19). The high dropout rate among minorities is usually attributed to their low socio-economic level and/or to their being culturally deprived (Kaufman, Lewis, 1968:98), (Gumpper, 1966:4).

A study comparing Mexican American and Anglo eleventh graders from lower and middle socio-economic classes indicated that social class rather than racial group was the critical factor in (a) achieving academically, (b) educational aspirations, and (c) belief in one's ability to control his environment. (Bender and Ruiz, 1974:51)

Preventive Programs

In 1968 the Congress amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to include Title VIII, section 807 - Dropout Prevention Projects. This new program allowed nineteen public local educational agencies to develop innovative and educational programs that would interest and allow the potential dropout to stay in school

and to increase his or her capacity to be a productive citizen upon graduating from high school (U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973:iii). A description of twelve of the programs which were considered "some of the successful educational practices operating" by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, were printed in a report titled Positive Approaches to Dropout Prevention. Of these projects, all twelve were aimed at the high school, six put special emphasis on the junior high, and three included elementary students. Nine projects mentioned a concentration of minorities in the target population, and two included components in their programs to include bilingual staff.

Five of these programs which relate to this study becasue of the concentration of minorities in the program will be briefly summarized.

1. Project STAY - St. Louis, Missouri

Approximately 40 percent of the residents are Black, with a small number of other minority groups. The largest component of this project was a work-study program in which students attended school for half a day and worked the other half, earning a $3.00 stipend. Work-study programs were available to the student in these areas: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Sinclair Oil Company, Horticulture (Missouri Botanical Garden), House Trades, Sales Services, Hospitals, Professional Aides, Child Care. A variety of jobs within each area were available

to the student. A follow-up study showed an 81.3 percent success rate, with 29.3 percent employed, and 52 percent in education programs.

2. Project MAS (More Alternatives for Student) Hartford, Connecticut

Hartford Connecticut's population is 76 percent non-white, mostly Black and Puerto-Rican. The project implemented these innovations: Spanish Bilingual Program, totally individualized programs of study, no-failure system, the Saturday Reading Clinic, Continuing Education program, Accelerated Academic Program, Summer Work-Study Program, and a District Reception Center. A summer workshop to involve junior high teachers in the target schools covered the following topics: Achievement Motivation, Individualization of Instruction, Teaching Reading in the Content Areas, Constructing Individual Case Studies, and Classroom Climate. Attendance was up by 3.3 percent and the dropout rate was down by 3.8 percent.

This was a very apt project title becasue literally translated "mas" in Spanish means "more".

3. Project OUTREACH - Sheridan Colorado.

Approximately 30 percent of the school aged population are minority group members but the dropout rate is much greater than that of Anglo students. A separate three unit facility was used for the sixty potential and actual dropouts. The goal was one of generating "internal fate control" or a feeling of confidence that one can intervene and change one's coarse and life outcomes. This was accomplished

by relaxation of stress and traditional student/teacher barriars, and by sharing the decisionmaking, responsibility, and credit for the program with the student. Learning sections stressed were listening and speaking skills and coping skills. Activities were positively viewed by 94 percent of those students who completed rating instruments.

4. Adult Attitude and Student Retention Program-Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

The Pine Ridge Reservation is a community of 12,000 Oglala Sioux and a minority of non-Indians and non-Oglalas, mainly employed by the various Federal programs or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The program hopes to create long-lasting positive change by involving parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members. Thus the main thrust of the program is aimed at adults upon the basic premise that if the adults will change and utilize all resources available in the most effective manner, it will be more beneficial and longer lasting for the student attending that institution. There was a slight increase of .51 percent in the dropout rate.

5. Project MACK (More Advanced Careers and Knowledge) Oakland, California.

More than 90 percent of the target population was black; the approach here was to design career clusters by providing a wide range of curriculum alternatives with the support and resources of the business community. Although there was a 15 percent reduction in class-cutting there was a slight increase of 2.1 percent in dropout rate.

A study that was closely related to Project MACK in Oakland,

California was a year-long study by Kaufman and Lewis to investigate a major issue concerning dropouts; whether it was better to give young people who have withdrawn from school specific skill training or general academic preparation. Therefore, one phase of the program offered skill training in one of three occupational areas; the other offered courses leading to a high school diploma. There were major differences in the relative success of the two programs as measured by retention rates, tests, questionnaires, and interview; by all of these measures the diploma program was more successful. The skill training course had been fully expected to be the most successful one. Failure of the skill training program was interpreted as failure on the part of the administrator and staff. It was found that in general the administrator and teachers in the diploma program provided an empathetic, supportive atmosphere for the student, while those in the skill training program did not.

Summary

In recent years the problem of the school dropout has received national attention and funding. Dropout prevention programs, rather than being a cost to the nation, are shown to be a savings in terms of federal, state, and local revenues on a graduates added earnings, as well as a savings in costs in welfare programs, costs of crime, and contributing to better health levels.

Studies dealing with dropouts fall into two categories. Those exploring the characteristics of and reasons for dropouts are concerned primarily with identifying the common characteristics of the dropout. Those dealing with preventive programs are attempts to identify the dropout and help him in school.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

Since the purpose of this study was primarily investigative, information was gathered directly from the adult Chicano dropout concerning his beliefs and feelings about his dropping out of school. Adults eighteen or over were chosen as participants for this study in the belief that the time separating them from their dropping out of school would be an advantage in expressing their views.

Methods used in the collection, organization and interpretation of the information gathered will be presented in this chapter. To facilitate this presentation this chapter will contain these sections:

1. Population description and sampling procedures.
2. Method of collecting data.
3. Method of organizing data.
4. Method of analysis of data.
5. Precautions taken for accuracy.
6. Summary

Population Description and Sampling Procedure

The population for this study was the total number of adult Chicano non-graduates now residing in Billings, Montana. Samples for this study were drawn from four sources.

1. This writer's former students from the Adult Learning Center in Billings, Montana, located at 120 South 32nd. The Adult

Learning Center has students who attend (a) for their own personal growth, (b) to study for and earn their GED, General Equivalency Diploma, (c) to gain skills to enter or re-enter the job market, (d) or to upgrade basic skills to facilitate their entry to another school, or their work in another school.

2. Referrals from the CONCILIO MEJICANO DE MONTANA. The CONCILIO is a non-profit organization open to any individual residing in Montana who is interested in helping the Mexican and other Spanish-speaking descent people. The first purpose listed in the by-laws speaks of providing a system of referral, advocacy and service in problem areas which include housing, education, health and employment.

3. Spanish surnamed adults listed in the phone book.

4. Referral from Chicano adults contacted through the above three sources.

A list of dropouts from the School District #2 was not available. The central office keeps records of dropouts but only as numbers of dropouts and percentages.

Five participants were drawn from the first three categories; the rest were referrals from these first contact persons. In the first two cases the participants were acquaintances of the interviewers drawn from attendance at school or meetings.

Participants from the phone book were drawn by opening the phone book and calling numbers listed under Spanish surnames. If a

graduate answered he was asked for names of non-graduates that could be contacted. When contact was made with an adult Chicano dropout, a time was arranged to go to their house right away whenever possible. Consecutive appointments were not set up as a single interview might take from fifteen minutes to three hours. An approximate average for each interview was one hour and fifteen minutes.

Method of Collecting Data

The data was collected over a period of three weeks by two interviewers, one female and one male. Similarities in the two interviewers were:

1. Both Mexican American.
2. Both bilingual.
3. Approximately the same age; male, 29, female, 30.
4. Both college graduates, with either a major or a minor in Spanish.

The adult was contacted and told of the survey and its purpose, and then asked if he would consent to answer a few questions. Upon agreeing, the participant was asked whether he preferred to use an English form, Appendix A, or a Spanish form, Appendix B. Only two of the thirty-one forms used were in Spanish. The English form was chosen over the Spanish form even when in this investigator's opinion (based on the participant's lack of English fluency and preference for using

Spanish while conversing) he would have had a more fluid experience by using the Spanish form.

Method of Organizing Data

The information was organized into five major categories:

1. General information, which included the total number of participants by sex and age group.

2. Grade and age when participants quit.

3. Attendance in Billings' schools.

4. Reasons for quitting school, including the school-related likes and dislikes.

5. Mexican American teachers and counselor in the school, would they have helped retain Chicano students.

Method of Analysis of Data

The information collected from the thirty-one participants was tallied, and then grouped and examined using appropriate methods. Methods used in each of the five categories included:

1. General information. The total number of participants by sex and age group was reported. The participants were arbitrarily grouped into those under thirty years of age, called the "younger" group, and those over thirty years of age, called the "older" group.

2. Grade and age when quit. The participants composed of the four categories of men, women, younger, and older were combined into

sub-groups. For each sub-group the mean average of the last grade completed and the age at which each quit school was calculated, arrayed in a table, and reported.

3. Attendance in Billings' schools. Percentages were found on whether the participants (a) attended all of their schools in Billings, (b) attended some schools in Billings, or (c) didn't attend any school in Billings.

4. Reasons for quitting school. After being tallied the reasons for quitting school were rank ordered and reported by sex and age group. The school related likes and dislikes were subjectively discussed and compared with the given reasons for quitting school.

5. Chicano teachers or counselors in the school. The participants favoring Mexican American teachers and counselors in the school were grouped by sex and age group. The percentage of each group as well as that of the totals was calculated and reported.

Precautions Taken for Accuracy

Precautions taken for accuracy in this study were:

1. All tallying of information from the interview instrument was double-checked.

2. All arithmetic computations were done on a calculator and double-checked.

Summary

Information was gathered directly from the adult Chicano dropout. The population was all Chicano dropouts now residing in Billings. The sample was drawn from (a) former students at the Adult Learning Center in Billings, (b) referral from the CONCILIO MEJICANO in Billings, (c) the phone book, and (d) referral from the participants drawn from the first three sources.

The data was collected over a period of three weeks by two interviewers. The two interviewers were different sexes, but similar by both being Mexican American, bilingual, approximately the same age, and both college graduates with studies in Spanish.

The data was organized into five categories of (a) general information, (b) Grade and Age when quit, (c) attendance in Billings' schools, (d) reasons for quitting school, and (e) Mexican American teachers and counselors in the school. Methods used to analyze these categories of information were averages, percentages, and rank ordering.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

All data was collected via an instrument developed for this study. Precautions taken to substantiate the validity of this instrument were; (a) two forms were developed; one in English and one in Spanish, and (b) the reading level was at the 6.7 level, using the Fog Index for readability.

The information from the thirty-one instruments was tallied and arrayed in frequency distributions. Whenever appropriate, methods of rank-ordering, averages and percentages were employed. To facilitate the discussion of the analysis of data, these five categories of the data are used:

1. General information.
2. Grade and age when participants quit.
3. Attendance in Billings schools.
4. Reasons given for quitting school.
5. Mexican American teachers and counselors in the school.
6. Summary.

General Information

There were a total of thirty-one participants in this study. General information regarding these thirty-one participants includes:

1. Eighteen were men.

2. Thirteen were women.
3. Seventeen participants were under thirty years of age.
4. Fourteen participants were thirty years of age or over.
5. The mean average of the men's age was 34.6 years.
6. The mean average of the women's age was 29.8 years.

Grade and Age When Participants Quit

The participants were arbitrarily divided into two age groups; those under thirty years of age, called the "younger" group, and those thirty years of age and over, called the "older" group. From the four categories of men, women, younger, and older were formed the sub-groups to be examined in Table 6. For each of these sub-groups the mean average was found for the last grade they completed, and the age at which they quit.

Table 6

Mean averages of grade and age when participants quit school

	last grade completed		age at which quit	
all participants	8.9		16.0	
all men	8.9		16.2	
all women	8.9		15.7	
younger men	10.3	10.1	17.0	16.7
younger women	9.9		16.4	
older men	7.4	7.4	15.3	15.0
older women	7.4		14.6	

(1) The average last grade completed for all thirty-one participants was 8.9, not quite the ninth grade, at 16.0 years old. This does not seem surprising since the mandatory attendance is legally over at age sixteen.

(2) The average grade completed was the same for men as it was for women; 8.9. The average age of the men and women varied only slightly from the mean with the men at 16.2 and the women at 15.7.

(3) The older men and women both completed an average grade of 7.4 at about age fifteen. The men were older than the women at the time they quit, by .5 of a year.

(4) The younger men and women attended school to an average grade of 10.1 and quit at an average age of 16.7. Again the men were older than the women when they quit by an average of .6 of a year, but they were further along in school, by .4 of a grade.

(5) In comparing the younger group to the older group it is apparent that the younger group is staying in school longer and completing more grades. More specifically, younger Chicanos are attending school an average of 2.7 grades more than the older Chicanos, while remaining in school 1.7 years longer. It seems apparent, then, that younger chicanos are being retained less.

Attendance in Billings Schools

The thirty-one participants were asked if they had attended

elementary, junior high or high school in Billings. From their answers the following information was collected:

17 (54.8%) attended all their schools in Billings.

3 (9.7%) attended some schools in Billings.

11 (35.5%) did not attend any schools in Billings.

There were twenty participants, about two-thirds of the sample, that attended schools in Billings. Of the eleven participants that did not attend any school in Billings, ten were in the older group. This data further substantiates the stability of the Chicanos in Billings, especially of the younger group; they are not as mobile as those in the older group.

Reasons Given for Quitting School

Although the participants were asked to check the five most important reasons for quitting school, there were from one to six reasons given per participant. This stands to reason; each participant checked as many or as few reasons as applied to him.

The reasons listed on the instruments (Appendix A and Appendix B) are listed below, in rank orders. Also included is the number of times each reason was given. A more detailed breakdown of reasons by sex and age group are included in Appendix C.

13 got a job

10 no part in school for Chicanos

7 failing grades

6 racial slams

5 "hurry"

5 Chicanos not good students

4 have a baby

4 told not to speak Spanish

3 asked to leave

3 not asked to join clubs

1 military service

0 friends wanted me to quit

16 other reasons

The reason most often given by Chicanos was that of getting a job. The thirteen checks were comprised of two older females, seven older males, and four younger males. It was interesting to note the many comments during the conversation that mentioned having to help support the family. Their primary reason was not to earn money for clothes or a car. Since there were only four in the younger group who checked this reason, quitting school to go to work seems to be a lessening factor in the Chicano dropout rate.

Feeling as though they had no real part in school was more prevalent in the men, as it was checked four times by women and six times by men. It was checked equally as often by the older and the younger group. Specific examples mentioned were "the white kids always got called on for answers", "we weren't chosen for parts in plays", and

"the white kids were always chosen to run errands".

Failing grades was checked three times by younger males, three times by younger females, and once by an older female. Perhaps older Chicanos just quit school to go to work before they had a chance to fail, since grades are first given in the seventh grade and the mean average of the last grade completed for the older Chicanos was 7.4.

Being called ethnic/cultural names, a sense of always having to hurry, and a feeling that Chicanos were not good students all ranked about equally as reasons for leaving school. These reasons were checked by ten females and six males. A difference was noted in that these three reasons were checked almost twice as often by the younger group, ten times, as by the older group, six times. Thus the younger group seems to be more susceptible to these types of reasons, especially the females.

It was interesting to note that only four people checked being told not to speak Spanish as a reason for quitting school. All four belonged to the older group; two men and two women. At least four other older participants mentioned they were told not to speak Spanish at school, but they did not feel that it was a reason they quit. However, they wanted to make sure their kids spoke and thought in English, therefore they spoke English to them. The result is that of the children present (approximately twenty) of the older group being interviewed, none, by their or their parents admission, knew Spanish well enough to

speak it.

There were sixteen other reasons given, seven by females and nine by males. Two of these reasons were to get married, by females that were not pregnant. Four were negative comments about teachers, and two were negative about school in general. One young male mentioned drugs and women. Another young male wrote down being psyched out, pushed out, and prejudice. An older male who quit in the eighth grade at age seventeen filled in that he was getting old, and a reason given by an older female was that her mother was hospitalized for an extended period of time.

The school related likes and dislikes were similar to the reasons given for quitting. Five groups of comments mentioned that were not covered by the checklist were:

1. Sixteen specific classes were mentioned, twelve were liked, and four were disliked.

2. Fourteen comments were teacher related, three were positive and eleven were negative. The negative comments were not always that they disliked the teacher, but that the teacher ignored them or was indifferent to them.

3. Making friends and being with people was mentioned eight times.

4. School being boring or irrelevant was mentioned four times.

5. Two younger females liked dressing up to go to school, and

one disliked dressing up.

Mexican American Teachers and Counselors in the School

When asked if they thought a Mexican American teacher or counselor would have helped keep them in school, the responses were as follows:

15 (48%) yes

9 (29%) no

4 (13%) depends

3 (10%) no response

Grouping the yes respondents by age, 60 percent were in the older group, and 40 percent in the younger. Grouping them by sex, 67 percent were male and 33 percent were female. Thus, the males feel a greater need for Mexican American teachers and counselors in school. Reasons given by the yes respondents were; someone to speak for us, someone sympathetic, someone to talk to, wouldn't be ashamed to speak Spanish, fair or even grading, and wouldn't feel so alone.

Of the no respondents, five gave reasons. Two were older males that had to quit to go to work anyway, and three mentioned that they (the Mexican American in school) would be a part of the system and do the same thing and just teach.

The four that indicated "depends" said it depended if the Mexican American teacher or counselor had a sincere interest, was objective, and related to the student.

An interesting comparison is that 67 percent of the males feel that having a Mexican American teacher or counselor in the school would have helped them stay in school, but only 45 percent gave reasons for quitting that were ethnic/cultural related.

Summary

The data was collected via an instrument developed for this study. For ease in discussion the data was discussed in these five groups:

1. General information. Of the thirty-one participants eighteen were men and thirteen were women. The mean average age was 34.6 years for the men and 29.8 years for the women: There were seventeen participants under thirty years old, and fourteen that were thirty years old or older.
2. Grade and age when participants quit. The mean average of the last grade completed was 8.9 and of the age at quitting was 16.0 years old. The men and women as groups differed slightly from the group mean. The younger group was found to go 2.7 grades further in 1.7 years more than the older group, implying the younger group is being retained less.
3. Attendance in Billings Schools. It was found that twenty participants attended all or some schools in Billings. Of the eleven who did not attend any school in Billings, ten

were from the older group. The younger group is not as mobile as the older group.

4. Reasons for quitting school. The most often given reason for quitting school was to get a job, mostly by the older group. Not feeling a real part of school was checked more by men than women, but equally among the older and younger group. Failing grades, being called names, a sense of always hurrying, and a feeling that Chicanos were not good students all ranked about the same as reasons for quitting. All four reasons were given almost twice as often by those in the younger group. Although more older participants mentioned being told not to speak Spanish in school, only four checked it as a reason for quitting. Other reasons given included marriage, teachers, getting old, drugs, and the opposite sex.

   School related likes and dislikes were similar to the reasons given for quitting. Some additional comments were on classes (mostly positive), teachers (mostly negative), and being with and making friends.

5. Mexican American teachers and counselors. Of the twenty-eight who responded to this question, fifteen said yes, nine said no and four said it depended on the Mexican American. Grouping the yes respondents by age, 60 percent

were in the older group, and grouping by sex, 67 percent were male.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation attempted to identify reasons that Chicanos give for dropping out of school. The population of this study was the adult Chicano dropout now residing in Billings, Montana.

Summary

School droputs are a concern for educators throughout the nation. In recent years, the problem of the school dropout has received national attention and funding. One source of funding, Title VIII - section 807, has been earmarked toward the development of innovative dropout prevention programs. Since 1970, nineteen separate projects have been developed that would interest and allow the potential dropout to stay in school.

Montana's rate of dropouts was shown to be less than that of the nation. Limiting the population to Billings, however, the Chicano dropout rate was found to be higher than the non-Chicano dropout rate. To assist in the identification of reasons that Chicanos give for dropping out of school, an instrument was developed in alternate forms, English and Spanish, with a 6.7 reading level.

Of the thirty-one Chicanos participating in the study, eighteen were men and thirteen were women. The participants were arbitrarily divided into two age groups. One group consisted of the participants

under thirty years old, called the younger group, and the other group consisted of the participants over thirty years old, and were referred to as the older group. There were seventeen participants in the younger group, and fourteen in the older group. The mean grade completed was 8.9 with a mean age of 16.0 years. A comparison of the younger group and the older group showed that the younger group attended school an average 2.7 grades longer with an age increase of only 1.7 years.

Twenty of the participants attended at least one school in Billings. Eleven did not attend any school in Billings, and of these eleven, ten belonged to the older group.

Of the thirteen participants that gave getting a job as a reason for quitting school, nine belonged to the older group. The next five reasons that were given, were; Chicanos didn't have a real part in school, failing grades, racial slams, being hurried, and a feeling that Chicanos were not good students. Of the thirty-three times these five reasons were given, twenty-one came from the younger group. The participants were asked to give two things they liked and two things they disliked about school. Most often cited as being liked were specific classes and activities. Most often cited as being disliked were teachers or teacher attitudes.

Twenty-eight participants responded to the question on whether or not they believed a Mexican American teacher or counselor would have helped them to stay in school. Fifteen participants responded yes,

and they gave reasons that meant better communication. Of the fifteen that responded yes, ten were male. Nine checked no, it would not have helped. Four said it would depend on if the Mexican American teacher or counselor had a sincere interest, was objective, and related to the student.

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the data that the dropout rate among Chicano students in Billings is too high. Why do they drop out? In comparing the younger Chicanos and the older Chicanos, it appears that the younger Chicanos are quitting less often to go to work, but more often because of failing grades and feelings of not belonging or being a real part of school.

A review of the literature showed that most dropout prevention programs are concentrated in the high schools. Of the twelve Title VIII programs reviewed, only six included the junior high in their programs, and of these six, only three reached down to the elementary schools with math and reading assistance. Herein lies a great fallibility of these programs because the mean average grade completed by dropouts in this study was 8.9 for the total group and 10.1 for the younger goup. Thus most dropouts are gone by the end of the ninth or tenth grade. Surely if a dropout is at least two grade levels behind as a teen-age dropout, he was already behind while in the elementary and junior high school. Thus it was a precarious conclusion drawn by

Bender and Ruiz in their study comparing Mexican American and Anglo eleventh graders from lower and middle socio-economic classes. His conclusion was that social class rather than racial group was the critical factor in academic achievement, educational aspirations, and belief in one's ability to control his environment. Since this study substantiates that most Chicanos drop out of school before the eleventh grade, the Mexican American students in the Bender-Ruiz study were not typical Chicano students. Perhaps this difference was in their subduing, compromising, or conquering any conflicting ethnic/cultural differences.

Two other studies that expressed like end results were those dealing with giving potential dropouts vocational skills training. The two projects referred to were Project MACK in Oakland, California and the Year-long study by Kaufman and Lewis. Both showed doubtful or negative results; the skills or vocational training was not a definite success. One reason for this may be that having to take vocational classes is often viewed as being for the less-than-able student. A comment by an older female participant summarized many of the feelings heard. She said, "We just want our kids to be able to compete."

Recommendations

Further research in the area of Chicano dropouts is warranted by the results of this study. Questions that might be answered by

additional research are:

1. How do Chicano high school graduates feel about having Mexican American teachers or counselors in the schools? How do they feel five years later?

2. What are the differences and similarities in attitudes toward school between Chicano dropouts and non-Chicano dropouts?

3. Is it a hindrance to a child's educational progress to learn to speak two languages at the same time?

4. Is a Chicano child further ahead by learning to think in English at all times, or by being helped to develop his Spanish language competencies at the same time?

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT: ENGLISH FORM

I am trying to find out why Chicanos quit school.

Do not put your name on this paper. I want to know what you think and how you feel, but I will not need or use your name anywhere.

Answer each part the best you can. Be sure to ask me about any part if you do not understand what to do.

When there is one space, fill it in with a word or number.

When there are two spaces, put a check in only one.

---

1. I am a _____male.

   _____female.

2. I am _____years old.

3. I went to grade school in Billings. _____Yes

   _____No

4. I went to junior high in Billings. _____Yes

   _____No

5. I went to high school in Billings. _____Yes

   _____No

6. The last grade I completed was the _____grade.

7. I was _____years old when I quit.

8. Put a check mark in front of the five most important reasons why you quit going to school.

____I was going to have a baby.

____My friends who had already quit wanted me to quit.

____I was told not to speak Spanish at school.

____Kids made racial slams about me being Mexican American.

____Everything was always "hurry".

____I was asked to leave.

____Mexican Americans aren't asked to join clubs.

____I was getting failing grades.

____I was made to feel like Chicanos were not good students.

____I got a job.

____I felt like Chicanos didn't have a real part in school.

____I joined the military service.

____Other reason _____

9. What two things did you like the best about school?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

10. What two things did you dislike the most about school?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

11. Would it have helped you to stay in school if there had been a Mexican American teacher or counselor at school? _____Yes

_____No

(a) If you answered yes, why or how would it have helped? _____

_____

_____

(b) If you answered no, what would have been the disadvantages?

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT: SPANISH FORM

Quiero saber por qué Chicanos dejan de ir a la escuela.

No ponga su nombre en este papel. Quiro saber lo que piensa y lo que siente, pero no voy a usar su nombre.

Responda a cada parte lo mejor que pueda. Pregunteme sobre cualquier parte si no entienda lo que se ha de hacer.

Cuando hay un espacio, escriba una palabra o un numero.

Cuando hay dos espacios, marke nomás uno.

---

1. Yo soy _____mujer.

   _____ hombre.

2. Tengo_____años.

3. Atendí a la escuela primaria en Billings. _____sí

   _____no

4. Atendí a una junior high en Billings. _____sí

   _____no

5. Atendí a una high school en Billings. _____sí

   _____no

6. El último grado que completí fue el _____grado.

7. Tenía _____años cuando dejé de ir a la escuela.

8. Ponga una marka en frente de las cinco razones mas importantes por haber dejado de ir a la escuela.

____Iba a tener un hijo.

____Amigos que habían dejado la escuela querían que yo dejara de ir.

____Me dijeron que no podía hablar Espanol en la escuela.

____Chicos me llamaban nombres por ser Mexicano.

____Todo siempre era "aprisa".

____Me invitaron a retirarme de la escuela.

____No invitan Mexicanos a los clubs.

____No estaba pasando mis clases.

____Me hicieron sentir que Chicanos no eran buenos estudiantes.

____Me fuí a un trabajo.

____Sentía que Chicanos no tenían verdadera parte en la escuela.

____Me fuí al servicio militar.

____Otra razon _____

9. ¿Cuales dos cosas le gustó mas en la escuela?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

10. ¿Cuales dos cosas le disgustaron en la escuela?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

11. ¿Le hubiera ayudado quedarse en la escuala si hubiera habido un profesor o consejero Mexicano en la escuela?

_____sí

_____no

(a) Si respondió que sí.

¿Por qué o cómo le hubiera ayudado? _____

_____

_____

(b) Si respondió que no.

¿Por qué piensa que hubiera sido desventaje? _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

AN ENUMERATION OF REASONS GIVEN BY THE PARTICIPANTS FOR QUITTING SCHOOL.

An enumeration of reasons given by the participants for quitting school.

younger female	older female	younger male	older male	reason
0	2	4	7	I got a job
2	2	3	3	No real part in school for Chicanos
3	1	3	0	I was getting failing grades
1	2	2	1	Kids made racial slams
2	1	2	0	Every thing was "hurry"
3	1	0	1	Chicanos not good students feeling
4	0	0	0	I was going to have a baby
0	2	2	0	Told not to speak Spanish at school
0	0	2	1	I was asked to leave
0	2	0	1	Chicanos aren't asked to join clubs
0	0	0	1	Joined the military service
0	0	0	0	Friends wanted me to quit

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