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DROPOUTS, CAUSES AND CIRCUMSTANCES, ANACONDA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1973 - 1975

by

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ABSTRACT

This study has been confined to Anaconda High School dropouts since 1973--the causes and circumstances of their leaving school without graduating. In order to ascertain information on this subject a questionnaire was designed which asked the people most directly involved --the dropouts themselves--to respond. More than half of them did so. Their candid comments together with the data collected constitute a body of information upon which to build more effective methods of working with potential dropouts.

The relatively modern dilemma of school dropouts is increased as population, automation, and educational requirements increase. Serious national efforts have been directed towards alleviating the educational mortality rate, but the problem persists. Primary causes of dropout include reading difficulties, the impersonal quality of school, and a lack of relationship between classes and life.

The Anaconda dropout problem, while not excessive in comparison with national statistics, is a cause of concern in the local community. Boredom with school was given as a reason for leaving by more than half of the people who returned questionnaires. More than 40% of Anaconda's recent dropouts cited truancy or irregular attendance as a contributing factor and more than 35% checked difficulty with school subjects. Nearly half of the respondents identified other reasons than those listed in the questionnaire. These revealed patterns closely associated with low self esteem.

Fewer than half of the dropouts are currently employed. Over 60% said that they would return to school if it could be arranged. An additional follow-up mailing will invite these people to re-register for fall classes. More than half of respondents felt that not enough effort was made to help them stay in school. A majority indicated that they had been given enough freedom in the choice of school subjects. Fewer than 40% indicated that the chance to attend classes in the morning and work in the afternoon would have kept them in school.

Only 36% of the mothers and 33% of the fathers of the dropouts had finished high school. More than 60% of dropouts in Anaconda since 1973 did live with both parents while attending school.

Recommendations included improving the teaching of reading at all levels of education in Anaconda, humanizing the school environment, and emphasizing the intrinsic value of education in releasing individual potential. The results of this study will be considered by school personnel as educational changes are proposed and implemented.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of the school dropout is as old as schools themselves, but the problem of the school dropout is a relatively modern one, aggravated by the population explosion, the economic explosion, and the academic explosion.

Sociologist Lucius F. Cervantes described the minorities of yesterday with their multiple identification marks as the American mosaic assembled from many and varied patterns culturally manufactured abroad. "But," he wrote, "the minority of tomorrow will bear the unique stamp: Made in America. That minority will be the high school dropouts" (1965:5).

High school pupils have been dropping out at a national rate of about 25 percent. Only 752 out of each 1,000 pupils who entered fifth grade in 1962 graduated from high school. Authorities say that there has been no detectable change in the dropout rate since then. The majority leave school in the 10th and 11th grades. An additional one million young people are listed as "unaccounted for" and remain outside the educational system.

In view of these numbers and the likelihood that there will be, according to Education U.S.A., Special Report 1972, a total of eight million more dropouts during the 1970 decade, it seems surprising to find the problem of pupil retention slipping below the national

political horizon. In the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and at the start of the Nixon administration, dropouts were assigned high priority. But as the controversies over busing and desegregation have taken over the educational spotlight, little has been heard of the dropout. One United States Office of Education official cited confusion as a possible reason for the de-emphasis: "We're really not sure of the stance federal offices should take, whether a highly publicized assault on the dropout problem is more detrimental than beneficial." Part of the doubt, he said, stems from a University of Michigan study by Jerald G. Bachman (included in the Review of Literature chapter in this paper) which suggests that 12 years of schooling may not be ideal for everyone (Howard, 1972:1).

Dropout prevention programs are often costly. Federal funding is maintained for dropout prevention and rehabilitation programs, particularly in the field of career training, but the government has displayed no inclination to expand this drastically. So the burden is on the already tax-burdened states and as a result the number of children reached is limited.

A third factor may well be reluctance of school administrators to reorder priorities around the disadvantaged or "different" child.

On another major issue affecting dropouts--curriculum--the President's Commission on School Finance, in its March 1972 report advocated the adoption of career education programs and the elimination

of the general track, recommending a blend of the best of the academic and vocational tracks.

Hyrum Smith, who directed the USOE program said he believed it is possible to "save" 75 percent of the dropouts "if you change the school system--you can't keep kids who are dropping out in the same situation. There has to be a change in the program, a structural change and a change of personnel."

In 1970-71 there were,

> 850,000 school dropouts, many of whom left because they found their school experiences irrelevant, 750,000 who graduated from the general track and did not go on to college and 850,000 high school graduates who dropped out of college.

In total, 2.45 million students left the formal educational system in the first school year of this decade (Howard, 1972:3-4).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem examined in this paper was to investigate opinions of recent local dropouts themselves concerning the reasons for their leaving school without graduating.

In order to survey the causes and circumstances of Anaconda High School dropouts in the past two years, a simple questionnaire was compiled consisting of eleven queries. The questionnaire was designed to provide information from the young people themselves about their reasons for dropping out of school. The instrument, a nonjudgmental,

nonthreatening checklist allowed respondents merely to checkmark items or respond more fully if they so wished.

The questionnaire was divided into five areas of inquiry:

1) factors listed as reasons for quitting school.
2) number of schools attended.
3) questions about present employment.
4) questions about specific policies or procedures concerning school withdrawal.
5) questions concerning education of parents and the student's living arrangements while attending school.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Compared with national statistics on dropouts already cited in this chapter, a local dropout rate in the Anaconda High School of less than seven percent over the past two years does not seem alarming. It is a matter of concern, however, to the community, to parents, and to the Anaconda High School faculty.

Each of these individual dropouts represents a unique composite of complaints, circumstances and causative psychological factors that can be compared with the literature reviewed on this perplexing subject. The questionnaire survey attempted to discover as many as possible of these individual sets of causes and circumstances.

It is possible that even the concentration of attention that

has been focused on this problem at Anaconda High School over the past two school years has had some effect in retarding the rate of dropout. The high school administration has given full support to this study. Information summarized from the study will be given consideration by administrators, teachers, and counselors as school policy and programs are revised.

These past two years have included the assimilation into the Anaconda public school system of more than 270 senior high school students from Anaconda Central High School which closed in May, 1973. The transition was carefully prepared for and smoothly accomplished, but did, of course, involve some trauma with the change for its participants.

A serendipitous by-product of the survey has been the re-enrollment of some of the dropouts for the current fall term.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

In fashioning a questionnaire for dropouts which would be both brief and clear while inclusive enough to collect important statistical information, these general questions were considered:

1. What factors did recent local school dropouts themselves regard as reasons for their leaving school without graduating?

2. Did the respondent indicate ways in which school policy or procedure might have affected his withdrawal?

3. Were the mother and father high school graduates and did the young person live with both parents while attending school?

GENERAL PROCEDURE

The questionnaire asked that the young people addressed cooperate in completing a survey in the causes of school dropout from Anaconda Senior High School during the past two years. Respondents were invited to answer honestly and openly with the pledge that all replies would be treated confidentially. No identification was required. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed for the return.

Only 35 percent of the first mailing in April, 1975, was returned so a follow-up letter addressed personally to each one was mailed in June, 1975. This produced a 52.5 percent return.

The answers on the returned questionnaires were then summarized by the information given and opinions expressed.

In addition, a selected survey of the literature available in the Montana State University Library and that available at Anaconda High School related to this topic was completed and is presented in Chapter 2.

LIMITATIONS AND/OR DELIMITATIONS

This study was limited to the young people who have left the Anaconda High School during the past two years. It was further delimited

to a portion of that number for whom current addresses could be ascertained. Fifty-two and one half percent of these young people responded which was considered very good by this investigator considering that the audience had separated and in some cases even alienated themselves from school and perhaps would see no advantage in replying.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

From the Dictionary of Education edited by Carter V. Good, the definition of the term most prominent in this study:

> 1. Dropout--most often designates an elementary or secondary school pupil who has been in membership during the regular school term and who withdraws or is dropped from membership for any reason except death or transfer to another school before graduating from secondary school (grade 12) or before completing an equivalent program of studies; such an individual is considered a dropout whether his dropping out occurs during or between regular school terms, whether it occurs before or after he has passed the compulsory school attendance age, and where applicable, whether or not he has completed a minimum required amount of school work (1973).

And one further definition:

> 2. Congruence--(Rogers) the conscious integration of an experience to become a part of the self (Chaplin, 1968).

SUMMARY

The modern dilemma of school dropouts is increased as automation, population, and educational requirements increase. Serious national efforts have been directed toward alleviating the educational

mortality rate but the eight million additional dropouts predicted for the 1970 decade will probably remain a nearly accurate figure. Causes, not symptoms, must be treated to produce any remedy for the complaints associated with the dropout.

The problem of this study was to investigate the reasons recent dropouts at Anaconda High School gave for their leaving school without graduating. It attacks a problem which is not excessive when compared with national dropout statistics but one which creates cause for concern in the local community. It could be important for consideration as changes are made in the Anaconda High School.

General questions asked for the factors which dropouts themselves would identify as reasons for their withdrawing from school and ways in which school policy or procedure might be affecting dropouts. These questions were also asked: Were the parents high school graduates and did the young person live at home while attending school?

Questionnaires were sent to persons who have dropped out of Anaconda High School during the past two years. Slightly more than half of the eighty young people contacted replied.

As a first step in planning this investigation the literature on the subject was surveyed for help in understanding the many aspects of the problem and for information which contributed to the contents of the questionnaire. Material selected from the literature will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Dropout phenomena have been analyzed, annotated, studied, and questioned innumerable ways. The dropout question elicits emotional response, no matter which opinion is espoused. This review of selected literature attempted to sample and/or summarize some opinions, responses, reactions to, and studies of the dropout question.

A dropout generally is a person who does not see formal education as related to his particular needs or goals. The term dropout itself seems to convey a derogatory meaning, imply stigma or negative connotation, even the idea of loser.

In a reasonably all-conclusive summary of this subject, "Dropout-Causes and Consequences," in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, it is stated:

> During the past sixty years the quality of public education in America has improved. The curriculum has been broadened and enriched to meet better the needs of all children. Teachers spend more years in preparation, and the quality of their preparation is better. The school year has been extended and the school day lengthened. More children and youth attend school and more graduate from high school and college. The median number of years of schooling completed by persons in the civilian labor force 18 years and older exceeded 12 years (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1964). No country in history can match this, or the huge sums spent in public education. Yet, despite all these gains, a constant and gnawing problem remains. For years educators tackled the problem and tried to resolve it, but instead of being solved it erupted violently and became, and still is a national problem. It is the school dropout problem (Harris, 1969:308).

Recent presidents have called national attention toward renewed efforts to provide this country's children with the fullest possible educational opportunities. In his State of the Union Message to the Congress on January 14, 1963, President Kennedy said:

> The future of any country which is dependent on the will and widsom of its citizens is damaged, and irreparably damaged, whenever any of its children is not educated to the fullest extent of his capacity. . . . Today an estimated four out of ten students in the fifth grade will not even finish high school--and that is a waste we cannot afford (Harris, 1969).

Six months later, at a press conference, Kennedy referred to the dropout as a "serious national problem" and then announced:

> A boy or a girl has only a limited time in their life in which to get an education and yet it will shape their whole lives and the lives of their children. . . .
>
> One of the things which we're going to do here is to provide out of the Presidential Emergency Fund $250,000 on an emergency basis for guidance counselors to see if we can get some of these boys and girls back to school. They will appreciate any effort we make for the rest of their lives (Schreiber, 1964:preface).

Inroads were made; many youths returned to school, but the problem continued to grow. In his message on education to Congress on January 12, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson, after extolling America's concern with providing free education from elementary school through college for its children, had this to say:

> There is a darker side of education in America. Almost a million young people will continue to quit school each year--if our schools fail to stimulate their desire to learn. In our 15 largest cities, 60 percent of the tenth grade students from poverty neighborhoods drop out before finishing high school. The cost of this neglect runs high--both for the youth and the nation.

Congress reacted positively to these presidential messages. Enabling legislation was passed which created the new and enlarged Vocational Education Act with a work-study provision, The Job Corps, The Manpower Defense and Training Act, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and The Higher Education Act. Yet the nation's dropout dilemma persists.

Reduced life-time earning power for the dropout, lack of participation in schoolwide activities, parents who do not encourage education, a national figure ranging from 25 to 40 percent dropout rate among 10th graders (the law in most states requires school attendance to age 16), reading failure, low socioeconomic status, deflated self-images, broken homes, and parents who were themselves dropouts were enumerated as parts of the pattern that characterized the dropout (Harris, 1969).

One of the clear trends in secondary schools during the 1970's has been the significant expansion of work experience, community service, and other forms of action learning. Interest in the integration of work and school goes beyond that of the student, teacher, and parent. President Gerald R. Ford, in a commencement address at Ohio State University, emphasized the educational value of close relationships between the classroom and the working world. He urged schools to work with business and labor to "create a new community of learning across the nation" and challenged the graduates to "show us how work-study programs can be a part of the on-going educational process" (Kiernan, 1975:9).

In 1971 a nation-wide study called Youth in Transition, conducted by the Institute for Social Research, under a contract from the U. S. Office of Education, selected a representative sample of more than 2,000 tenth grade boys from 87 public schools across the country. Interviews were first conducted with the boys in 1966; follow-up information was obtained in 1968, 1969, and in 1970--a year after most of the students had graduated from high school. The results consistently indicated that the boy who is likely to drop out is well above average in rebellious and delinquent behavior by the time he enters high school. A number of dropouts could also be called "pushouts," but others leave without coercion and in spite of pressures from teachers and parents to remain in school. Other personality characteristics also distinguish those boys most likely to become high school dropouts. The results indicate that the potential dropout is lower than average in measures of self-esteem, needs for self-development, commitment to social values, feelings of personal efficacy, and occupational aspiration.

Another conclusion reached by the Youth in Transition team was that high school grades have consistently been among the best predictors of academic success in college (Bachman, 1971). Inversely, grades may also be a predictor of dropout.

The findings of the study conducted from Michigan indicated that dropping out is neither "good" nor "bad." They found it to be a symptom, rather than a cause of new troubles or a cure for old ones.

The following conclusions were based on the evidence presently available recognizing the limitations of a study which followed young men only until the age of 19 or 20. Given their findings, the research team from Youth in Transition proposed the following: (A) The anti-dropout campaign on radio and television be sharply curtailed. There is little evidence to support many of the claims of the anti-dropout campaign and furthermore it is, as the ambiguous title might indicate, truly an "anti-dropout" program giving dropouts a bad name and adding to the burden of a word already heavily negative in connotation. (B) Greater emphasis be placed on early school and preschool interventions. Maslow has hypothesized that "the value-life is probably species-wide, supracultural, even though it must be actualized by culture in order to exist" (Maslow, 1967).

> Can we, therefore, say that everyone yearns for the higher life, the spiritual . . . . Certainly we can say in principle that such a yearning must be considered to be a potential in every newborn baby until proven otherwise. That is to say, our best guess is that this potentiality, if it is lost, is lost after birth. It is also socially realistic today to bet that most newborn babies will never actualize this potentiality, and will never rise to the highest levels of motivation because of poverty, exploitation, prejudice, etc. There is, in fact, inequality of opportunity in the world today.

Perhaps what Maslow is implying is that given support, the inborn yearning potential of every baby would provide motivations necessary to seek out opportunities for growing into fully-functioning persons. Would research discover that low expectations of ourselves and of each other are limiting potential?

The third and final finding of the Youth in Transition team was that: (C) The range of educational options for young people aged 16 to 18 be broadened and serious consideration given to reducing the number of years necessary for attaining a high school diploma.

Among assorted reactions to the Youth in Transition study and its findings, Robert A. Luke, adult education specialist, Division of Instruction and Professional Development, NEA, proposes:

> An additional option that Dr. Bachman might consider adding to his recommendations in one that envisions a kind of rebate system whereby the public guarantees every citizen at least 12 years of schooling. If the student cannot exercise his option to use his 12 years before he is 18, then he can "cash in" his option at a later date. Such a provision would conquer the last remaining frontier in American education--the right of every person to a high school education irrespective of race, religion, geography or age.

Other responses from school administrators to Youth in Transition findings:

> Let's rid our schools of their custodial function and make them more responsive to students! . . .recognize the difference between education and compulsory school attendance (California).

"Follow-up counseling should be provided students who choose to leave school before graduation" (Missouri).

From Indiana:

> Bachman's research exposes the false assumption that all American youth can profit by high school. Until that institution is remodeled, the term dropout will continue to place the brand of failure on the youth rather than on our society's false assumption, which is where it should be.

"Bachman is correct when he says 'there is room for change on both sides'" (Michigan).

And from Maryland:

> The characteristics discovered by Bachman's study seem to corroborate what William Glasser has come to label the "failure identity" students. Above all, these students are lonely individuals for whom school experiences have tended to create and reinforce the idea that they are not very successful people. Consequently, the only integral act the student can do in terms of the school is drop out. And then, along come the media announcing that dropouts are something less than human (Bachman, 1972:30-31).

Under certain conditions schools can be very lonely places. In his book Loneliness in the Schools, Dr. Marc Robert stated that if even one person in a school feels this separation-induced loneliness, this mood communicates itself and may become contagious (1973:9).

The contagion seems to be of epidemic proportions. Dr. William Glasser has pointed out in Schools Without Failure that the impersonal quality of secondary education is a major complaint among even the most successful students. "The second major point that these students made," he wrote, "was that their education had little relationship to their lives" (1969:218). Curiously enough, he found that the students accepted irrelevance in education more willingly than their lack of involvement. He suggests that children without high internal and external motivation feel the pain of impersonal secondary education more acutely than children with greater motivation.

> It is my belief, confirmed by years of talking to the girls at Ventura, that children with low motivation feel so much pain that they withdraw from school either physically or mentally. Giving up trying to become involved, they accept school as an impersonal place that does not contribute to fulfilling their needs. The motivated students react to pain by trying harder; the others get rid of the pain by failing and dropping out. . .
>
> We should work toward making high school a warmer, more personal place for the student. This is not coddling the students; on the contrary, it is both simple humanity and common sense--the former because we reduce or eliminate the pain felt by the students, the latter because we make education better without spending any more money. If we do spend more money on the schools, as some people believe is necessary, we will gain little benefit from it unless we create an environment of greater involvement (1969:218-19).

In his study of "Educational Participation and Dropout: A Theoretical Model" based on self theory and proposed to account for adult education and dropout, Roger Boshier, lecturer in psychology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, expressed the view that:

> Dropout is in some ways an extension of nonparticipation: variables associated with one are associated with the other. Researchers must recognize that both participation and dropout stem from an <u>interaction</u> of internal psychological and external environmental variables.

Boshier's model schematically asserts that "congruence" both within the participant and between the participant and his educational environment determine participation/non-participation and dropout/persistence. Boshier characterizes students as "deficiency" or "growth" motivated in accord with A. H. Maslow's Theory of Metamotivation.

> Growth-motivated people are 'expressing' rather than 'coping'. Determinants impelling the behaviour of growth-motivated people are primarily inner ones, whilst, deficiency-

> motivated people are impelled by social and environmental pressures. Deficiency-motivated people use work and educational activity 'more for achieving gratification of lower basic needs, or neurotic needs, as a means to an end. . .or as a response to cultural expectations' (Maslow). In the growth-motivated person (who, by definition, has satisfied lower-order needs in Maslow's hierarchy), impulses are desired and welcomed rather than rejected and feared. Gratification increases motivation. Instead of wanting less and less, the person wants more of, say, education. In one sense these motives can never be satisfied because growth is continuing. The growth motivated person is inner directed, autonomous, open to new experience, willing to be spontaneous, creative, and free from deterministic attitudes (Boshier, 1973:271).

Boshier notes the power of age as a congruence/dropout mediator explicable within self theory. He cites Maslow's discovery that congruence or self-actualization tends to be an ultimate or final state of affairs, a far goal rather than a dynamic process active throughout life. Accordingly young people can be expected to be more deficiency-motivated than older people; "growth" replacing deficiency motivation as a person overcomes adolescent storms (1973:277).

Dr. Boshier tested this theory and found it to be true at the level of adult education. This investigator found it to be even more emphatically true at senior high school level. Boshier further stated that "lower-order deficiency needs are most readily observable in young people, although, if not satisfied, may remain prepotent throughout life" (1973:262).

Boshier reported that C. N. Cofer and M. H. Appley, authors of Motivation: Theory and Research, said that Maslow's "growth-motivated person" is synonymous with Rogers' "fully functioning person" (1973:259).

Rogers characterized the process of becoming a fully-functioning person in an updated appraisal of the paper referred to by Boshier. "A Therapist View of the Good Life" which is Chapter 9 in his book On Becoming a Person described this latter theme. He contended that

> The good life, from the point of view of my experience, is the process of movement in a direction which the human organism selects when it is inwardly free to move in any direction, and the general qualities of this selected direction appear to have a certain universality.

The fully functioning person is characterized by Rogers as open to experience, living fully in each moment, and trusting in his organism (1961).

According to the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, commissioned by the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, society has, in the name of universal education, "decoupled the generations." The casual and informal links between youth and adults that in earlier years provided continuity and stabilized values have been broken. As a result, the Panel states, "We have succeeded in producing a youth society housed in an overburdened institution excessively isolated from the reality of the community and adult world" (1974:Introduction).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals agrees that youth are being shortchanged by current arrangements.

> Physically, today's youth mature early. They exhibit an intellectual precocity and social awareness unmatched by previous generations. Yet, they are set aside by society. Most are asked to assume only minor responsibilities. Although

> fully ready to contribute to the world's work, they are instructed to wait longer than did their parents or grandparents for that day of contribution. As one consequence of the waiting and the isolation, youth retreats to an exotic and ersatz subculture. Society loses their talents and they, in turn, lose the opportunity to mature through the assumption of responsible roles.
>
> The Association believes that the routes available to youth to become adults are insufficient. The artificiality of the present arrangement must be amended by the addition of authentic experiences. The adult world should be recoupled with youth. Youth can, and should, assume more responsibility for the welfare of others. Youth should have the opportunity to work seriously at community aims as well as for individual goals. And youth should have learning opportunities in the practical and specific realm as well as those which are vicarious and theoretical (Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, 1975:16).

Dr. Glasser goes even further in his criticism of our treatment of youth.

> We never learn that we must become involved with students in discussing relevant subjects when they are young, when they trust us and look up to us. Our failure to do so is a major cause of the mistrust so prevalent today. For example, the intellectual topics important to adults (such as war, politics, religion, abortion, love, sex, family planning, zoning, lobbying and taxes) are never discussed in depth and with meaning in any school (1969:217).

These are suggestions from students themselves about how to run high schools. They are quoted from How Students Rate Their Schools and Teachers by Gordon A. Sabine, NASSP, (1971:70-71).

> Lead and direct, and channel interests rather than dictate them. Make students want to seek out answers themselves; make them interested in everything on earth; make them want to read every word printed, study every painting, hear every symphony, do and be every thing on earth just once so that they can better appreciate their talents and that of others.

> Students may not be adults but they are people. They should be included in making rules and policies that are for them. Let students learn to take responsibility by giving it to them.
>
> The more youth get, the more they want. But they demand in order to find out where they stand. Anyone, including the freedom-loving young, wants to know where the boundaries are. It is frightening, especially when you are still forming your standards, to find everyone saying "whatever you want is right." If you as administrators understood this, you would find youth easier to live with. There is a happy medium between dogma and soft touch called mutual respect.

So wisely are these young people asking for enthusiastic leadership, inspiration, trust and responsibility, discipline, direction, and respect. Another youngster writes with some bitterness, much truth:

> Understanding, respect, acceptance, and help are more important than any new football field or any number of straight A students or any country or city racial quota. A 16-year-old girl, pregnant, not married, needs an education, needs the acceptance of returning to school much more than 10 promising students. A 16-year-old boy, faced with marijuana charges, needs a helping hand, understanding, and support, not shame and reproach.

Bill Howard and the staff of Education, U. S. A. who documented a study investigating Dropouts: Prevention and Rehabilitation describe the following characteristics of potential or actual dropouts:

. inability to read at grade level and a pattern of failure.

. withdrawal from extracurricular activities.

. disruption in the classroom.

. frequent absenteeism.

. weak peer relationships in school.

. emotional disturbances related to home environment.

Home factors also bear heavily on the dropout. The most pertinent ones: if his father is unskilled or semi-skilled; if his mother is not a high school graduate; if communication between home and school is poor; and if his home is relatively unstable (1972:5-6).

The members of the Policy Institute, Syracuse University Research Corporation who authored Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma for the Ford Foundation report that more than 40 percent of Americans over 22 do not have a high school diploma and a large percentage of students--some 900,000 annually--continue to drop out of high school before graduation. "The prognosis for the future is dismal." Pregnancy and young parenthood are major causes for leaving school before graduation. The need to support young families is an important factor among male dropouts. Pregnancy is by far the most frequent cause of young girls' leaving school (Bailey, 1973:8, 37, & 38).

The 1972 study of programs for potential dropouts by Howard found that

> . . .the most neglected person in all dropout prevention and rehabilitation programs is the pregnant girl, married or unmarried. Although some educators, notably those in larger cities, have in recent years adopted enlightened programs to serve the pregnant student, the policy of the great majority of schools is still to exclude the girl as soon as her condition is known or shows. She becomes a pushout, not a dropout.
>
> Nationally, over 210,000 school-age girls give birth each year and only about 40,000 of them live in communities where continuing education, health and social services are made available. The remaining 170,000 are ostracized to their

> homes; most of them return to their formal education and many have more babies while still in their teens.
>
> Pregnancy is the single largest cause of girls leaving school, and what troubles authorities studying the problem is the fact that the girls are being penalized at great cost to themselves and to society (1972:21).

A third study, Sex Equality in Schools, completed in April, 1975, reiterates the fact that pregnancy is the major known cause of female teenage drop outs. Though many schools provide special programs for young mothers or pregnant students, they can often receive only home, evening or special school education, and have difficulty arranging for child care. Even in districts that have excellent programs, combined with medical attention and child care studies, many girls still drop out, because they don't know about these programs, are reluctant to try to continue their education, or their lives are changing in so many ways they just cannot manage it. Yet girls can't afford to quit school any more than boys can (1975:8). "Only 1 in 10 women will never work--half will work as long as 30 years" (Martinez, 1974:3). Young mothers, in particular, will probably need to support themselves and their children. If they are married their husbands are usually under 21, in the age group with the highest unemployment. "Marriages of people under 18 are 3 or 4 times more likely than others to end in divorce" (Education for Survival, 1973:16).

So it's very important to encourage students who are pregnant or who have children to stay in school. Furthermore, the association of

school administrators recommends that schools offer them some special help.

- They need counseling on the importance to them of education.
- They need day care facilities.
- They need confidence that they won't be shamed or ridiculed, and reassurance in dealing with unpleasant incidents.
- They may need immediate vocational training to help them meet new responsibilities.
- They also need support from qualified staff members who are sensitive to their special problems.

(AASA, 1975:9)

Frustration, failure, lack of fulfillment are symptoms one researcher found characteristic of almost all dropouts, male or female. "[Girls'] irregular attendance and disruptive behavior often terminates with pregnancy" (Pinkney, 1971:52). In these terms pregnancy is not so much a cause as a resultant effect and does not separate the basic causes of dropout along sex lines.

"The greatest single factor causing dropouts is inability to read," said Robert R. Morman, Associate Professor of Education, California State College at Los Angeles in an article titled, "Automation, Dropouts, and Guidance." Mormon lists such other reasons for dropouts as the lure of a paying job, teenage marriages, boredom with school courses, poor marks, illusions of the money that can be earned, parental pressures, and parental apathy. "Among dropouts," he wrote,

"750,000 are estimated to be actively seeking work while the 'outlaw pack' of 350,000 are not even looking" (1964:87).

"Aside from the waste in human lives, the mounting welfare load, and the increase in crime make it imperative that we act" (Pinkney, 1964:53). One has to look no further than recent news magazines to read of this. A six-city survey in the July 7, 1975 issue of the U.S. News & World Report describes today's street gangs moving into a pattern of armed crime. These are angry, unhappy young people.

In a paper entitled "The Forgotten Ones" included in the book Educational Issues in a Changing Society, the authors characterized the out of school youth in their late teens as the most "underused and abused." They described this segment of society as its outstanding victims, more to be pitied than censored, and censored they are in every area of mass communication, in homes, churches, and the schools.

> They are called restless, apathetic, aggressive, unappreciative, and delinquent by turns.
>
> In the case of our youth in the 16 to 20 year age group, the problems of the society tend to be explained away as necessary evils instead of being faced realistically. The realities are these: Our youth are underemployed, underrewarded, and under-recognized.
>
> Our current economy is a result in part of the decline of entry occupations. Technological changes have removed many of the unskilled and semiskilled jobs from the range of opportunity. The labor force can do more in less time. The result is the rushing of retirement, the firing of men and women near retirement age, and non-hiring of youth (Kerber and Smith, 1964:420).

The high school dropout clearly ranks well down in the ranks of the unskilled. Lucius F. Cervantes, in A Better Education: A Better Job made the point that the worker of today has to have proved that he has basic skills, adaptability, and the capacity to get along with others. The dropout has not proved that he has any of these three essentials (1965:55).

As cited earlier in this review of literature, the term dropout bears the burden of negative connotation, perhaps unnecessarily. For instance in estimating the monetary value of an education, several authors (Bachman, Friedenberg, Lichter & Silberman) have shown the fallacy of comparing two sets of data where utterly no effort has been made to introduce factors of control. In other words, a high school graduate and a dropout are comparable only when we are relatively sure that we have two otherwise comparable persons; that is, equally intelligent, equally motivated, equally energetic, equally ambitious, and equally privileged environmentally, except for education.

The argument that high school graduation confers great economic benefits is fallacious at several points. 1) It is true that high school dropouts have difficulty finding jobs, and for this reason they are unwise to leave school. Our economy has no place to put adolescents except in schools and those who challenge this rule by leaving the custody of school quickly find this out. It is not necessarily true, however, that the three essentials listed above go with graduation from

high school. 2) It is true that high school graduates make much more money over a lifetime than dropouts do. But dividing the population simply into people who have graduated from high school and people who have not includes among the graduates everybody who goes on to finish college or to enter professions. 3) The argument that staying in school makes for easier employment and higher income is flawed even statistically. It depends, for such validity as it possesses, on the fact that many youngsters do drop out. It all remained to compete for jobs or college entrance the average would fall and the economic advantage of high school education would prove largely illusory.

Charles E. Silberman in his book Crisis in the Classroom explained that during the long period of labor surplus in the 1950s and early 1960s, employers made a diploma a prerequisite for employment as a screening device. By the time the labor surplus had ended, the screening device had become a traditional job requirement.

> The demand for more education also reflects a major cultural change. The United States is becoming more and more of a 'credential society,' a kind of pseudo-meritocracy in which a person is judged by his credentials--his high school or college diploma--rather than by his performance on the job (Silberman, 1970:68).

In his provocative book, Coming of Age in America, Edgar Z. Friedenberg explored many half-truths connected with the education of adolescents:

> The problem was that the kids were dropping out; the solution ought to be to keep them in; the discussion was about how to do it, not about the wisdom of doing it.

> Furthermore, despite all the fuss about the problem, nobody seemed interested in the dropouts, as people, at all. Nobody listened to them until after they had duly repented.
>
> Nobody. . .in deploring the serious error the dropouts were making, said a single word about education. They spoke only of the trouble the dropouts were going to have getting and keeping jobs, achieving a high standard of living and a satisfactory level of social status. Nobody suggested that they might be missing anything in school that was worth while for its own sake or that might enrich their later life aesthetically or conceptually. The idea that education apart from its concrete function might have any intrinsic value was overlooked (1965:164-165).

In the February, 1972 issue of The High School Journal a dropout-prevention program designed by Barbara J. Chance and Joseph A. Sarthory presented this basic premise. Any attempt to reduce the dropout rate must concern itself both with changing the characteristics of potential dropouts and the schools they attend (Chance, 1972:208-18).

Carl Rogers in his book Freedom To Learn set down these thoughts concerning educational administration. It would seem reasonable that what Dr. Rogers says here of administrators could be applied as well to all school personnel.

> The administrator finds that his work consists primarily of removing obstacles such as 'red tape,' of creating opportunities where teachers and students and administrators (including himself) can freely use their potential, of encouraging growth and change, and of creating a climate in which each person can believe that his potential is valued, his capacity for responsibility is trusted, his creative abilities prized.
>
> The administrator has the task of using himself in just as fulfilling a way as he makes possible for his staff and students. He does not submerge himself, but uses his

> leadership qualities, his vision, his wider information, all the characteristics which have led to his being placed in a position of responsibility, as positive input in a living and changing organization. Part of his function is to serve as a catalyst in releasing the capacity of others, but he is failing in his task if he does not release and develop his own potential as well. He is in the business of growing persons, but he himself is one of those persons (1961:208).

"Everyday teaching is a process of mutual discovery, interaction, and exploration of the self as well as of another person and a subject matter. It is intensely alive, aware, sensitive" (Holt, 1970:13). But John Holt in the foreword to the text of his book How Children Fail also wrote, "Most children in school fail. For a great many this failure is avowed and absolute." He reported close to forty percent of those who begin high school drop out before they finish, which is higher than the one in three attrition rate in college. "They fail because they are afraid, bored, and confused." The forty percent figure was also the one used in The Drop-Outs, a 1962 treatment study of intellectually capable students who drop out of high school (Lichter, preface).

Finally education, as Daniel Bell asserted, "is a confrontation with a discipline, a confrontation with a teacher, a confrontation with oneself" (Approaches to Education for Character, 1969). Learning is a transformation of the whole person.

All the more so during adolescence, whose "central developmental task," according to Edgar Friedenberg, "is self-definition" (The Vanishing Adolescent, 1960). Erik Erikson pointed out "the need of the

young person to develop a sense of identity, for, from among all possible and imaginable relations, he must make a series of ever narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments" (The Challenge of Youth, 1965).

Most succinctly, Piaget wrote, "Affectivity is nothing without intelligence. Intelligence furnishes affectivity with its means and clarifies its ends" (1967:69).

Schools then must use their capacity to help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to decode their experience--their experience with themselves, with others, with the world--not just during adolescence, but for the rest of their lives.

SUMMARY

The literature surveyed in this chapter showed a sampling of the many facets of the national dropout dilemma. The term dropout carries a definitely negative connotation.

The review began with a summary statement from The Encyclopedia of Educational Research, including presidential messages and congressional action to remedy the dropout situation, and the various parts of the pattern of the dropout.

Action learning is the most positive trend shown in secondary education in the 70's.

The Youth in Transition research team found dropout to be a

symptom, rather than a cause of new troubles or a cure for old ones. They recommended that the anti-dropout campaign be curtailed, that greater emphasis be placed on early school and preschool interventions, and that the range of educational options for 16 to 18-year-olds be broadened with serious consideration given to reducing the number of years necessary for attaining a high school diploma.

Assorted reactions to the Youth in Transition study were recorded.

The impersonal quality of secondary schools was investigated in the literature at some length with emphasis on Boshier's congruence model and its similarity to Maslow's theory of metamotivation and Rogers' fully functioning person.

The idea that modern society, in the name of universal education, has separated the generations was reviewed according to the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, The National Association of Secondary School Principals, Dr. William Glasser, and some of the students themselves as quoted from How Students Rate Their Schools and Teachers.

Characteristics of dropouts were listed, described, explained, and analyzed as reported by the staffs of three separate investigating teams, Education, U.S.A., The Policy Institute, Syracuse University Research Corporation, and The American Association of Secondary Administrators. The recommendations of these studies were noted.

Frustration, failure, and lack of fulfillment, often epitomized by the inability to read, mark the dropout. The out of school youth in their late teens are described as "underused" and "abused" by Kerber and Smith.

Many of the fallacies associated with the idea of the monetary value of education were noted as was the error of overlooking the intrinsic value of education in releasing and developing individual potential, in transforming the whole person, in giving meaning and direction to experience.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

While an effort was made to keep the questionnaire as simple, direct, and unobtrusive as possible, the investigator realized that dropout is a subject area loaded with emotional explosives. Any such questions might be interpreted as intrusive by those who consider the subject better forgotten.

The dropout, by definition, has disassociated himself from formal education. He often sees no relationship between the classroom and his personal needs or goals. The questionnaire was not intended to censor the dropout nor was it designed to sell school to him. It was compiled solely to serve the school personnel at Anaconda High School in discovering some basic reasons that former students themselves could give for having dropped out.

The answers received to the questions asked of these former students were organized and summarized into a practical body of information.

POPULATION DESCRIPTION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The population which was studied was composed of young people who had dropped out of Anaconda High School since 1973. It included all those described by the definition on page seven of this paper, that is, without regard to compulsory school attendance age, completion of

minimum requirements, or the fact that dropping out occurred during or between regular school terms. It did not include any students dropped from roll lists because of death or transfer to another school. But it did include several who have, since leaving the high school, passed the general equivalency examination.

The individuals to be sampled were chosen from this complete list of dropouts on the basis of finding current mailing addresses for the eighty who were then mailed questionnaires in April of this year. A telephone survey was conducted by the investigator to check the accuracy of dropouts' addresses from their latest school records. The eighty who were mailed questionnaires quite accidentally included exactly forty males and forty females.

DEFINITION OF TREATMENT

Because all people who were included in the sample were closely related to the situation and all had opinions, all sample results were considered. Number 2 of the questionnaire did not yield completely valid results, however, apparently because of some misunderstanding of the item.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

A cover letter of explanation introduced the questionnaire to the sample population. It was mimeographer in the same 8½ x 13 inch

paper which also contained the itemized questionnaire. This was done to simplify the mailing and to conserve paper. The initial mailing also included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return.

A follow-up mailing was sent out in June to boost the percentage of response to 52.5. The last questionnaires from which responses were included in the tabulation of results were received July 9, 1975.

Interviews were also conducted with approximately 25 percent of the respondents either by phone or in person.

METHODS OF ORGANIZING DATA

As the completed questionnaires were returned, the information was transferred to a master sheet prepared to record the data systematically by choice of answer to each question. A computation was made of the number of responses for each category of response and these sums were converted to the percentages of the total that they represented.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The answers to all questions were tabulated and a tally was made of responses to the choice of answer on all questions. The percentage of the total count was calculated for each choice so that the data could be analyzed and summarized.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN FOR ACCURACY

In order to avoid errors in computation, a calculator was used to tally data and determine percentages.

SUMMARY

The procedures followed in completing this study relied largely on the data collected by questionnaires from more than fifty percent of the dropout population who have left Anaconda High School in the last two years. Information from questionnaires was systematically summarized, tabulated, and converted to the percentages of the total. (See Appendices A & B, page 56-62).

In addition to the comments and personal observations written on questionnaires, approximately 25 percent of the respondents answered more directly by phone or in person to talk over the matter of their own individual school withdrawal.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Replies from dropouts overall seemed to express disappointment in themselves and discouragement or dissatisfaction with the school system, but a majority of the Anaconda dropouts when asked, "Would you return to school if it could be arranged?" responded Yes (52.2%) or maybe (10%).

SURVEY RESULTS

The questionnaire included five areas of inquiry: 1) factors listed as reasons for quitting school; 2) number of schools attended; 3) three questions about present employment; 4) four questions about specific policies or procedures possibly connected with school withdrawal; and 5) two questions concerning the education of their parents and the students' living arrangements while attending school.

The first questionnaire item listed eleven factors associated in the literature with school dropout. A twelfth space was reserved for checkmark if "Other reasons" were factors. The directions asked the respondent to check as many as were applicable and specify their other reasons on the reverse side of the questionnaire form.

Questionnaire item 2 asked for the number of schools attended. The remainder of the questionnaire items, numbers 3 through 11, called for simple yes or no replies. Where responses chosen were "yes and no"

or "maybe" or where no answer was given, place was made for these replies in the tally.

DATA ANALYSIS

Tables are included (Appendix B, page 59) which show the questionnaire results in five sets:

Table 1.--factors listed as reasons for quitting school.

Table 2.--number of schools attended.

Table 3.--questions about present employment.

Table 4.--school policies or procedures concerning withdrawal.

Table 5.--education of parents and students' living arrangements while attending school.

The respondents checked the following as answers to question 1. which asked: "Would you consider any of the factors listed below as reasons for quitting school? Check as many as seem applicable to you." The factors listed were: early marriage, pregnancy, difficulty with school subjects, boredom with school, disinterest in further classroom instruction, truancy or irregular attendance, desire to become independent of parents, pressure from parents to quit school, pressure from friends to quit school, parents who didn't care, financial need, and other reasons (Please specify on reverse side).

Of the factors checked by respondents as contributory to their leaving school, 54.8% marked boredom with school as a reason.

Over 45% of the respondents checked the item "Other reasons" and stated specifics. Most of these indicated personal and/or family difficulties as reasons for having left school without graduating. One man wrote from a distant military base that the high school faculty "didn't care enough about what the students tried to do in school work." One blamed the grading system, particularly the FA policy (failure because of absence). Another concluded a letter filled with news of her life since leaving A.H.S. and her reasons for doing so by writing, "Thanks for asking why. I've often wondered if anyone cared why people leave." Her reasons, incidentally, were thoughtfully explained in retrospect and even her regrets, she felt, had contributed to her determination to earn a college degree in the next six years. This young woman had left school in the last quarter before graduation.

Percentages of response to other items under question 1. were as follows in rank order: Truancy or irregular attendance followed as the second most often marked printed response with 42.85% of the sample population checking this as a reason for leaving school; Difficulty with school subjects--35.7%; Early marriage--26.19%; Pregnancy--23.8%; Desire to become independent of parents--19%; Pressure from friends to quit school--16.66%; Disinterest in further classroom instruction--16.66%; Financial need--14.28%; and Parents who didn't care--4.76%. No one marked the item "Pressure from parents to quit school."

Question 2., "Including the Anaconda Senior High School, in how

many schools were you enrolled?" elicited these 42 replies: 8, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6, 6, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2 & Job Corps, 1, 1, 1, 1, "six months in Job Corps," "no other high school," four who responded "none," and four who did not answer.

Question 3., "Have you had trouble finding work since you left school?" received 30% affirmative replies, 60% negative replies, 5% who answered "yes and no" and another 5% who did not respond to this question.

Question 4., "Are you presently employed?" was answered in approximately these percentages: 45%--Yes, 50%--No, 5%--No answer.

Question 5., "Are you happy with your present job?" was not answered by approximately 43%. Thirty-three and one third percent answered yes, (about three-fourths of those employed); more than 19% answered no; nearly 5% answered "yes and no."

Question 6., "Do you think enough of an effort was made to help you stay in school?" brought these replies: One third answered yes, nearly 60% answered no, approximately 9% did not answer.

Question 7., "Would you return to school if it could be arranged?" Over 60% responded yes or maybe: 52.38%--yes, 9.52%--maybe. Thirty-five and 7/10% answered no. Only one person did not reply to this question which accounts for the remaining 2+%.

Question 8., "Would you have continued in school if you could

have attended classes in the morning and worked in the afternoon?' Only 38% answered yes to this question; 43% replied, no; 7%--maybe; and 12% gave no response.

Question 9., "Were you given enough freedom in choosing your school subjects?" Two-thirds of the replies on this were yes. Fewer than 30% answered no. Approximately 4½% did not answer.

Question 10., "Did your parents finish school?" Mother completed high school--35.7% replied yes to this. Father completed high school--33.33% answered yes.

Question 11., "Did you live with both parents while you attended high school?" was answered yes by more than 64% of respondents; 26% answered no. Fewer than 10% did not answer.

INTERPRETATION

Of the 42 persons who responded, four made known that they were now in some branch of the service. One has finished his high school education there. Two are currently in the Job Corps and three have spent from two to six months with this organization. Two are enrolled in a vocational-technical program. Five reported having passed their G.E.D. examinations and three more plan to take the tests soon. Four replied that they plan to continue their formal education. At least three girls are re-enrolled for fall term and there may be others.

Among some of the other reasons mentioned for quitting school besides those already quoted in this chapter were these: drugs, parents' divorce, physical or emotional illness, trouble at home, parents' separation, father's death, foster homes, parents' refusal to consent to daughter's marriage, and hostility of other kids at school.

One young man replied, "It's too bad that some of the teachers didn't have more faith in me. I had a bad reputation coming into high school and no one let me forget it."

Another wrote this, ". . .it was hard for me to stay all day and the teachers would not help a person so I sied [sic] Hell with it."

Only nine of the questionnaires had fewer than two checkmarks on question 1. asking reasons for quitting school. Several of these marked the last "other reasons" and went on to elaborate their own multiple list of personal factors.

Question 2 did not yield interpretable results. Apparently some ambiguity was involved in the question so that four replies were "none," The one response, "No other high school" gives the clue to the confusion.

Questions 3, 4, and 5 were probably not in the best order. It seems now, after tabulating 42 responses to these three questions, that the first question (No. 3) should have been "Are you presently employed?' No. 4 "If so, are you happy with your present job?" No. 5. "Have you had trouble finding work since you left school? Negative

responses to both questions 3 and 4 as printed on a third of the questionnaires provides puzzlement. Possible interpretations are these: Illness, pregnancy, or young motherhood prevented employment or according to Robert Morman's statistics cited in Chapter 2, these represent part of the 350,000 not even looking for work.

Question 6 received at least one negative reply which referred not to school personnel but to parents lack of effort to help her stay in school.

Questions 7, 8, and 9 showed answers which might not have been expected. As previously mentioned, over 60% replied that they would return to school if it could be arranged. This could be interpreted as wishful thinking, yet curiously enough, present school policy is not seriously indicted in the answers given to questions 8 and 9. These dropouts do not favor part-time school attendance nor did many of them think that they were not given enough freedom in choosing school subjects.

At least one third of these young people's parents finished high school. Fifteen percent did not answer the question concerning the father's education.

Replies which combined answers on question 11, (i.e. living with one or another parent alternately or with foster parents and relatives) resulted in percentages which totaled more than 100% on this item. The percentages of replies to question 1 total more than

100%, of course, because the directions allowed respondents to check as many factors as seemed applicable.

Eleven students who were personally interviewed were very cooperative and none seemed suspicious, indifferent, or hostile. They appeared to be genuinely interested in aiding in the process of an investigation into causes and circumstances of dropping out of high school.

One former student remarked that "it took being a part of the working world to convince me of the need for education." A young man summed up his own regrets for having quit school in these words: "It meant no work, boredom, and trouble." Astutely, one young woman philosophized that most dropouts think that "there's no use of going to school. 'I can always get my G.E.D.' But about maybe five of ten ever complete the G.E.D. procedures." (The percentage of dropouts in the Anaconda community who complete the G.E.D. procedures is probably higher than that because of efforts of the Deer Lodge County counseling staff.)

Calling himself a "kick-out" rather than a dropout, another described at great length his feelings about a school system which does not allow enough leeway to challenge students where they have much experience and need advanced instruction but which is too difficult in other areas where a student is lacking. His particular situation involved difficulties in English but considerable expertise in diesel

mechanics, math, and science. He left for the Army with the G.E.D. certificate, a $2500 bonus, and dreams of college work later in anthropology.

One girl came into the office to discuss the possibility of returning to school this fall. She was obviously in the last months of her pregnancy, unmarried, plans to keep the child, and care has been arranged with the aunt with whom she lives. Some schedule manipulating was required to coordinate her school time with the aunt's working hours, but the way has been cleared for her return to the classroom. She expressed a desire to please her mother by earning her high school diploma.

An epileptic with low self-esteem was referred to the vocational rehabilitation personnel and assistance has been arranged for his vocational training. A former student who had been hospitalized for severe depression, has the G.E.D. certificate, a summer job which is as beneficial emotionally as economically, and acceptance for college entrance in September. It would be a breech of confidence to detail any further these or other circumstances which accompanied the withdrawal from school of these young people.

SUMMARY

Data collected seemed consistent with Youth in Transition findings summarized in Chapter 2. Results indicated that the Anaconda

dropout is also lower than average in measures of self esteem and feelings of personal efficacy.

Boredom with school and truancy or irregular attendance were the factors most frequently checked as reasons for quitting Anaconda High School.

Over 45% of respondents specified other reasons than those listed on the questionnaire. The majority of these described personal difficulties.

Seventy-five percent of those currently employed said they are happy with their job but half of the dropouts are not employed.

Nearly 60% think more effort could have been made to help them stay in school. Over 60% expressed a desire to return to school. The opportunity of working part-time while attending school and more freedom in selecting school subjects seemed not to have been deciding factors to these dropouts.

Approximately one third of these people's parents finished high school. More than sixty percent had lived with both parents while attending school.

Eleven young people personally interviewed were found to be cooperative, honest, and interested in this investigation. None was suspicious, indifferent, or hostile.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This study has been confined to Anaconda High School dropouts since 1973--the causes and circumstances of their leaving school without graduating.

In order to ascertain information on this subject a questionnaire was designed which invited the people most directly involved--the dropouts themselves--to respond. More than half of them did so. Their candid comments together with the data collected constitute a body of valuable information upon which to build more effective methods of working with potential dropouts from now on.

The relatively modern dilemma of school dropouts is increased as population, automation, and educational requirements increase. Serious national efforts have been directed toward alleviating the educational mortality rate but the problem persists. Causes, not symptoms, must be treated to produce any real remedy for the complaints associated with the dropout, complaints which primarily include: reading difficulties, the impersonal quality of school, and a lack of relationship between classes and life.

The Anaconda dropout problem is not excessive when compared with national statistics but it is a cause for concern in the local

community. The results of this study will be considered by school personnel as educational changes are proposed and implemented.

The first question asked the dropouts to checkmark or specify reasons for their having left school. These young people were also given an opportunity to express an opinion concerning current school policies or procedures as they related to withdrawal. Other questions referred to number of schools attended, present employment of the dropouts, education of parents, and living arrangements while attending school.

As a first step in planning this investigation the literature on the subject was surveyed for help in understanding the multiple aspects of the problem and for information which contributed to the contents of the questionnaire.

The literature surveyed was a sampling from the great bulk of material written on the different views of the subject of dropouts. The term dropout carries a definitely negative connotation.

The review began with a summary statement from the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, including presidential messages and subsequent congressional action to remedy the dropout situation, and the various parts of the pattern of the dropout.

Action learning emerged as the most positive trend shown in secondary education in the '70s.

The Youth in Transition research team found dropout to be a

symptom, rather than a cause of new troubles or a cure for old ones. They recommended that the anti-dropout campaign be curtailed, that greater emphasis be placed on early school and preschool interventions, and that the range of educational options for 16 to 18-year-olds be broadened with serious consideration given to reducing the number of years necessary for attaining a high school diploma.

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The idea that modern society, in the name of universal education, has separated the generations was reviewed according to the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Dr. William Glasser, and some of the students themselves as quoted from How Students Rate Their Schools and Teachers.

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Over forty-five percent of respondents specified other reasons than those listed in the questionnaire. The majority of these described personal difficulties.

Seventy-five percent of those currently employed said that they are happy with their job but half of the dropouts are not employed.

Nearly sixty percent think more effort could have been made to help them stay in school. Over 60% expressed a desire to return to school. The opportunity of working part-time while attending school and more freedom in selecting school subjects seemed not to have been deciding factors to these dropouts.

Approximately one third of these people's parents finished high school. More than 60% had lived with both parents while attending school.

The eleven young people personally interviewed were found to be cooperative, honest, and interested in this investigation. None was suspicious, indifferent, or hostile.

CONCLUSIONS

Boredom with school was given as a reason for leaving by more than half of the people who returned questionnaires. More than 40% of Anaconda's recent dropouts cited truancy or irregular attendance

as a contributing factor and more than 35% checked difficulty with school subjects.

Is it possible to conclude that boredom is therefore a cause of symptomatic truancy or is the irregular attendance and resulting difficulty with subject matter a cause of boredom and noninvolvement? This would pose an interesting question for further research.

About one fourth of all respondents checked early marriage and/or pregnancy as a cause of their withdrawing from school. At least ten of the girls who have dropped out of Anaconda High School since 1973 have done so because of pregnancy according to this survey.

Other listed reasons chosen as contributing factors in individual cases of school withdrawal were: Desire to become independent of parents--19%; Pressure from friends to quit school--16.66%; Disinterest in further classroom instruction--16.66%; and Financial need--14.28%. No one marked the item Pressure from parents to quit school, and only two respondents indicated that a factor in their taking leave of school was parents who didn't care.

The commentaries that nearly half of the young people volunteered under the heading of other reasons cannot really be summarized. The researcher could only conclude that while patterns did emerge which affirmed much of the literature in this field, it also became apparent that each individual's reasons are uniquely his own and therefore cannot be categorized except in a most general way.

Almost 30% of the respondents reported having been enrolled in five or more schools before dropping out. Other answers to this question were uninterpretable in some cases because the question had been misunderstood.

Questions three, four, and five yielded this information about present employment of the group investigated: Fewer than half are currently employed. Of the total number only one third answered yes to the question, Are you happy with your present job? This one third, however, represents nearly 75% of those actually employed. Almost 60% reported having had no trouble finding work since leaving school. Part of this percentage must be representative of those who haven't tried to find employment for whatever reason.

Questions six, seven, eight, and nine solicited opinions and ideas related to school procedures, policies, and withdrawal. More than half of those returning questionnaires felt that not enough effort was made to help them stay in school. Over 60% said that they would return to school if it could be arranged. An additional follow-up mailing will invite these people to re-register for classes fall quarter.

Nearly 12% did not answer the question, Would you have continued in school if you could have attended classes in the morning and worked in the afternoon? The remaining 88% split nearly evenly in answering this query--43% said no, 38%--yes, 7%--maybe.

A majority of the dropouts felt that they had been given enough freedom in the choice of school subjects.

More than half of the mothers and fathers of the dropouts had not finished high school themselves.

More than 60% of dropouts in Anaconda did live with both parents while attending school, according to answers received to question 11. This statistic may not accurately indicate the incidence of dropout which occurs when young people move out of their parents' homes during high school, since the response may have honestly answered the question of the majority of time or indeed all of the time while attending school. Moving out or running away from home often occurs simultaneously with dropping out of school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed as a result of this research:

1. Since a limited ability to read with understanding is not only ego deflating but also a serious handicap in the academic arena and a major cause of school dropout, every effort must be expended toward improving the teaching of reading at all levels of education in Anaconda.

2. In keeping with the goal of humanizing school which is both educationally sound and constitutionally necessary, every employee from

the custodian to the school administrator must be selected as a person who cares for young people, and feels confortable in working with them.

3. An environment at Anaconda High School must continually be encouraged which creates a climate where student responsibility is emphasized, where conformity is not imposed, where learners solve problems important to them, where interest is high, and where there is an active commitment to discovery and learning.

4. Through the combined efforts of administrators, teachers, and counselors an attendance alert be maintained with potential dropouts, not as a custodial function but in response to the needs of these students in pinpointing possible difficulties before a break with school occurs.

5. That interest in dropouts, potential dropouts, under-achievers, truants, delinquents, teenagers, be in the individuals as people not as members of a group and without the stereotyping "loser" tags.

6. Finally, school must be the guardian and leader of efforts to release human potential, respect human dignity, and trust in and nurture human responsibility.

APPENDIX A

Cover Letter and Questionnaire

Follow-up Letter

A N A C O N D A H I G H S C H O O L

ANACONDA, MONTANA

We are conducting a survey of the causes and circumstances of school dropouts in the past two years from Anaconda High School. Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire and returning it promptly in the enclosed envelope will be appreciated.

The questionnaire is designed to help us determine some of the reasons why students drop out of school. Please answer honestly and openly. If you wish to add comments or suggestions of your own, you may do so. All replies will be treated confidentially. You need not identify yourself. An addressed envelope is enclosed.

Sincerely,

Peggy Walsh
Counselor
(telephone 563-6665)

1. Would you consider any of the factors listed below as reasons for quitting school? Check as many as seem applicable to you.

26.19 Early marriage.

23.81 Pregnancy.

35.714 Difficulty with school subjects.

54.76 Boredom with school

16.66 Disinterest in further classroom instruction.

42.85 Truancy or irregular attendance.

19.04 Desire to become independent of parents.

-0- Pressure from parents to quit school.

16.66 Pressure from friends to quit school.

4.76 Parents who didn't care.

14.28 Financial need.

45.23 Other reasons (Please specify on reverse side.)

2. Including the Anaconda Senior High School, in how many schools were you enrolled? *

3. Have you had trouble finding work since you left school? YES NO
   No answer 4.76; Yes & No 4.76 30.95 59.52

4. Are you presently employed? 42.23 50.
   No answer 4.76

5. Are you happy with your present job? 33.33 19.04
   No answer 42.86; Yes & No 4.76

6. Do you think enough of an effort was made to help you stay in school? 33.33 57.14
   No answer 9.52

7. Would you return to school if it could be arranged? 52.38 35.7
   No answer 2.38; Maybe 9.52

8. Would you have continued in school if you could have attended classes in the morning and worked afternoons? 38.1 42.86
   No answer 11.9; Maybe 9.52

9. Were you given enough freedom in choosing your school subjects? 66.67 28.57
   No answer 4.76

10. Did your parents finish school? 35.7 57.14
    Mother completed high school
    No answer 7.14
    Father completed high school 33.33 52.38
    No answer 14.28

11. Did you live with both parents while you attended school?
    No answer 9.52 64.29 26.19
    Lived with mother only 21.43
    Lived with father only 2.38
    Other (Please specify) 14.29

*See Appendix B for the tabulation of responses to question 2.

A N A C O N D A H I G H S C H O O L

ANACONDA, MONTANA

June 18, 1975

Dear

A questionnaire was mailed to you early in April requesting your responses to items concerned with your leaving Anaconda High School. Replies so far received have been interesting and informative.

However, if this study is to be thoroughly representative, a greater number of replies is necessary. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed. If for some reason you did not return the first questionnaire, please return this one at your earliest convenience.

I will be in my office all week June 23-27 (phone 563-6665) if you would prefer to tell me your views by phone or in person.

Thank you,

Peggy Walsh

APPENDIX B

Tabular Summary of Questionnaire Results

TABLE 1

QUESTION 1--FACTORS LISTED AS REASONS FOR QUITTING SCHOOL

Factors	Responses	
	Total	Precent
Early marriage	11	26.19
Pregnancy	10	23.81
Difficulty with school subjects	15	35.71
Boredom with school	23	54.76
Disinterest in further classroom instruction	7	16.66
Truancy or irregular attendance	18	42.85
Desire to become independent of parents	8	19.04
Pressure from parents to quit school	0	
Pressure from friends to quit school	7	16.66
Parents who didn't care	2	4.76
Financial need	6	14.28
Other reasons specified	19	45.23

TABLE 2

QUESTION 2--NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ATTENDED

									Uninterpreted Or No Answer
Number	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Total	2	2	3	5	5	7	4	4	9
Percent	4.76	4.76	7.14	11.9	11.9	16.66	9.5	9.5	21.43

TABLE 3

QUESTIONS 3, 4, AND 5--PRESENT EMPLOYMENT

Question	Responses			
	YES	NO	YES & NO OR MAYBE	NO ANSWER
	Total / %	Total / %	Total / %	Total / %
3	13 / 30.95	25 / 59.52	2 / 4.76	2 / 4.76
4	19 / 45.23	21 / 50.		2 / 4.76
5	14 / 33.33	8 / 19.04	2 / 4.76	18 / 42.86

TABLE 4

QUESTIONS 6, 7, 8, AND 9--SCHOOL POLICIES AND WITHDRAWAL

Questions	Responses			
	YES	NO	YES & NO OR MAYBE	NO ANSWER
	Total / %	Total / %	Total / %	Total / %
6	14 / 33.33	24 / 57.14		4 / 9.52
7	22 / 52.38	15 / 35.7	4 / 9.52	1 / 2.38
8	16 / 38.1	18 / 42.86	3 / 7.14	5 / 11.9
9	28 / 66.67	12 / 28.57		2 / 4.76

TABLE 5

QUESTIONS 10 AND 11--EDUCATION OF PARENTS AND LIVING ARRANGEMENT WHILE ATTENDING SCHOOL

Questions		Responses			
		YES	NO	YES & NO OR MAYBE	NO
		Total / %	Total / %	Total / %	Total / %
10	(mother)	15 / 35.7	24 / 57.14		3 / 7.14
	(father)	14 / 33.33	22 / 52.38		6 /14.28
11		27 / 64.29	11 / 26.19		4 / 9.52

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