

aging one's affairs, they seldom encourage intense concentration on a single activity, and they are inappropriate settings for nearly all objectives involving responsibilities that affect others. Insofar as these other objectives are important for the transition to adulthood, and we believe they are, schools act to retard youth in this transition, by monopolizing their time for the narrow objectives that schools have (Coleman *et al.*, 1974, p. 146).

The changes proposed by the Panel on Youth ". . . are intended to break that monopoly, through environments that complement schools." Thus the proposals ". . . address the objectives that schools omit, by proposing institutional structures that aid these objectives" (Coleman *et al.*, 1974, p. 146).

Our present findings may be seen as consistent with these views expressed by the Panel on Youth. It seems that recently too much has been expected of formal schooling, and too much has been claimed for it. Schools may not be very likely to produce the broad socializing effects that have sometimes been claimed. Rather than assuming or demanding such effects, and then viewing the lack of such effects as evidence of school failure, perhaps we should develop a reduced and more realistic set of expectations for

schools. Students, educators, and the rest of society could all be the beneficiaries.

References

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Youth in Transition: Volume VI, Adolescence to Adulthood—Change and Stability in the Lives of Young Men. Jerald G. Bachman, Patrick M. O'Malley, and Jerome Johnston. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1978. —An essay review by Harry F. Silberman, Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles.

The *Youth in Transition* series reports results of a longitudinal study of a nationwide sample of 2,213 boys who entered high school in the fall of 1966. A battery of tests was administered, and repeated interviews and/or questionnaires were collected during the eight years thereafter. The fifth and last measurement on 1,628 young men still participating in the study was obtained five years beyond high school in the spring of 1974. Three categories of findings were obtained: (a) individual differences; (b) changes in mean scores; and (c) causal connections.

Findings

In general, the findings on individual differences revealed that variations among the boys in

background and ability were related to differences in their academic attainment, and differences in academic attainment were in turn related to their later occupational status. In other words, those who came into high school with advantages were very likely to hold those advantages at least five years beyond high school.

The differences were quite stable; the more you had, the more you got. For example, on the average, boys from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had higher ability, got better grades in the ninth grade, had higher aspirations, showed higher job ambition in tenth grade, were subsequently more likely to attain higher levels of education and higher job status when they went to work, and had higher levels of self-esteem. Those at the low end of the socioeconomic distri-

bution were on the average more likely to drop out of high school and become unemployed, exhibit higher levels of interpersonal aggression, smoke more, and have the lowest self-esteem. Preferred attributes seemed to go together, and those who scored highest on a dimension at one point in time also were likely to score highest at later points in time.

Findings also revealed overall shifts in mean outcome scores over time. For example, on the positive side, most young men showed increases in self-esteem as they grew older. There was also a general decline in aggressive behavior with age, and racial attitudes became more positive. As the boys got older, they expressed a greater willingness to take on responsibilities and learn new things; by the end of the study, nearly everyone wanted a good job and seemed willing to work hard for it. On the other hand, drug use increased, and there was a general erosion of confidence in government over the eight-year period.

Findings also were analyzed in an attempt to establish causal links between experiences and outcomes. The authors are careful to caution the reader about making causal inferences in such a study, but they attempt to isolate the influence of social environments and experiences such as schooling, employment, and marriage on attitudes, job status, delinquency, and other non-cognitive outcomes. Although the authors found that the direct impact of amount of education on job status is larger than the direct impact of personal background characteristics, much of that educational effect is indirectly attributable to the interaction of schooling and personal characteristics; consequently, they concluded that prior personal characteristics have a greater total impact on job status than amount of education. In any case, the effect of amount of education on job status appears to be more a credentialing effect than a "value added" or increased socialization phenomenon.

Quality of schooling had no discernible influence on the outcomes that were measured. Failure to find evidence of school socialization effects was attributed to the sameness of schooling, for example, the lack of sufficient variation in elementary and secondary educational experiences, and the overwhelming importance of non-school factors.

While the analysis failed to find differential high school effects, it does suggest that the assumption of responsibilities such as marriage and paternity may result in positive social outcomes such as less delinquency, drug use, and aggression:

Specifically, it appears that unemployment may contribute to aggression and drug use, while marriage may tend to reduce such behaviors. Young men unemployed in 1974 reported fully twice as much interpersonal aggression and illicit use of amphetamines, barbiturates, and hallucinogens as did those who were employed. The earlier measures showed much smaller differences between those who were, and who were not, unemployed by 1974 (p. 217).

Unemployment may be particularly likely to produce self-blame and loss of self-esteem. Those with the lowest actual job attainments showed a downward adjustment in their aspirations, while those who attained the highest status jobs showed little change in occupational aspirations.

Policy Implications

Bachman, O'Malley, and Johnston derive three policy implications from their findings. First, they suggest ending the antidropout campaign because, "to the extent that dropouts are disadvantaged, the dropping out is largely a symptom, not the cause, of their problems" (p. 232), and "forcing every young person to stay in school through twelfth grade in order to help in screening for employment is not an efficient screening mechanism for the society as a whole" (p. 233). Second, they propose moving to alternative forms of credentials that de-emphasize the "union card" purpose of education in favor of its socialization function. Competency testing is preferred over social promotion and grading on the curve. Third, they recommend more alternatives to formal educational settings. For example, they recommend less time in formal school settings and more time on real responsibilities where the young can interact with people across a broader range of ages and circumstances and expand their work-role experiences.

What Can We Learn?

This book is clearly an important contribution to our understanding of a group of young

males who were part of the post-World War II "baby bulge." What can we learn from it? First, the picture of stability of attitudes and behavior that is presented seems to contradict the popular conception that this period of life, for this group of young men in particular, was one of storm, stress, and alienation. The book suggests that members of this group were involved in the normal problems associated with the gradual achievement of financial independence and control over their lives and that their attitudes and values reflect the secular changes in the larger society.

However, it should be pointed out that stability of differences among respondents says nothing about their absolute levels of behavior. For example, this cohort *did* exhibit an unusually high incidence of delinquent behavior, which may only partially be attributed to the size of the cohort. (The ratio of young men to adults during this period was higher than it has been since the first decade of this century. Delinquent behavior among youth was also at peak levels in those earlier days.) Adding to the indication of stress is that this group was also the target of its own delinquency. In the first half of 1973, the victimization rate for selected crimes against persons was higher for persons 16 to 24 years old than for the total population 12 years and over (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975). The stability of the differences does not reveal as much about the degree of stress experienced by these young people than would their homicide and suicide rates which are, in fact, much higher than for earlier cohorts.

Second, the failure to find that differences among schools have much direct influence on student outcomes, independent of background and personal characteristics, adds to the list of studies reporting similar results (Coleman *et al.*, 1966; Farrell, 1977; Jencks *et al.*, 1972; Minkovich, Davis, and Bashi, 1977). When partialing out background differences to estimate school effects, one is left with only a small portion of the variance that is uniquely accounted for by school effects, but this does *not* mean that schools are unimportant or that they do not make a difference; it only means that the observed dimensions don't vary much from school to school. Clearly, students learn a great deal in school, and

the greater amount of time they devote to a particular learning objective, the greater the likelihood that they will master that objective. The failure of schools to close the gap between high and low achievers doesn't indicate their failure to teach.

The authors readily acknowledge that "some of the socializing effects of education are so obvious that they scarcely need formal research to document them" (p. 225). Indeed, one important message of this book is that not only do schools educate, but families, peer groups, mass media, and many other nonschool agents also educate, and that may explain why initial differences persist, even among those who receive the same amount of schooling.

Consideration of the Recommendations

None of the policy implications are new, but they are very important and deserve careful consideration. For example, to end the antidropout campaign (if in fact there is such a campaign) and let students who are not likely to complete a college degree drop out of high school may be a self-realizing prophecy and represent the first step toward eliminating compulsory attendance laws. Inevitably those who most need additional schooling will be the ones who suffer most from such a policy, for they will be the semiliterate students who are least equipped to assume an adult role in society. If the number who choose to drop out is large, there will be additional problems of increased unemployment among teachers as well as students. Custodial care for young dropouts may also become a problem. The data from the youth transition study do not provide information about the consequences of the altered policy since those dropouts who continued to participate in the study may have left school partly because they had more attractive job alternatives and represent a different population from those who might leave only because they are not encouraged to stay.

This is not a defense of incarceration; there would doubtless be some improvement in the academic atmosphere if many reluctant schoolgoers were permitted to leave. But at this time the value of alternatives to school is relatively unknown. Schooling provides certain intrinsic benefits that may be lost by alternatives that provide income to dropouts, but that may not con-

tribute to their personal growth. A more constructive policy than releasing the recalcitrant into the secondary labor market would be to make the school program more interesting and effective. The choice is between providing less education or better education.

The authors also support a policy of work experience options wherein the student "stops out" or alternates between schooling and regular employment. But regular employment in the youth labor market may be worse than school; the contribution to personal development of part-time work has not been established. Educators should rather be involved in designing a curriculum of educational work experience in the community that is intentionally structured to enhance the intellectual and personal development of the student. The quality of the work experience needs to be monitored by someone concerned with the educational needs of the student.

The final policy recommendation to substitute competency-based certification for years of schooling is interesting and plausible, but also may not be any more just than the present system. When everyone is being assisted to achieve a common standard, the field of competition may simply shift to the amount of time required to achieve the standard, and those least able to delay their entry into the labor market may again take the longest to achieve the standard. Separating the screening or evaluative function from the more nurturant instructional function is certainly likely to improve the relationship between student and teacher, but it may also create considerable anxiety in the student who must take the

centrally administered examinations and may result in much teaching to the examination.

Perhaps the most pertinent policy implication of the data reported here is "to put it quite simply, if you want to make a difference in occupational status, it is better to exercise influence early" (p. 79). Bronfenbrenner (1978) would add that we must improve the conditions of parenthood "so that the family's magic power can be enhanced, so that its full potential can be realized" (p. 784).

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Response to Silberman

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Professor Silberman has done a good job of summarizing the findings and recommendations in our recent book, and we have only a few comments to offer in response. We too would like to see school programs become more interesting and effective, and we'd like to have the quality of parttime work experiences monitored by someone concerned with the educational needs of the stu-

dents (assuming it would not involve a cumbersome bureaucracy standing in the way of student jobs). Granting all that, we still share the view of Coleman's Panel on Youth that for many young people a better overall educational experience may involve spending a bit less time in formal classroom settings.

A more complex and certainly more contro-

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