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THE INFLUENCE OF SELECTED FAMILY AND SCHOOL RELATED
FACTORS ON THE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LEVELS
OF HIGH SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS

by

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A statewide research project was launched by the School of Vocational Education, Louisiana State University during the Spring of 1968 to identify educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of secondary school students in Louisiana. It was also concerned with the determination of the influence of certain factors on the vocational and educational objectives of these students.

1. Do boys and girls develop definite occupational objectives while in high school?
2. At what grade level do they make career choices?
3. What are their educational plans?

4. Who influenced them in making their educational and occupational plans?
5. Are high schools providing the guidance services needed to assist students in making decisions concerning educational and occupational objectives?
6. Do boys and girls feel that they are receiving the training that will enable them to determine occupational and educational objectives?
7. Are boys and girls knowledgeable concerning the work world?
8. What factors, family and school related, directly affect the formulation of aspirations and expectations concerning education and occupations?

To provide a framework on which to build the study, certain assumptions were made. It was assumed that various factors associated with the school affect the occupational and educational desires and expectations of young people. As an example, it is generally accepted that status position of the family from which the student comes will affect his occupational and educational goals. Generally, students from higher status families do not have the monetary problems which stifle vaulting ambition nor are they as limited in occupational vision as the student from the lesser status family.

It was also assumed that the occupational desires of the sexes differ as a result of socialization. Today, in our society, it is the male who is perceived as the source of income for the family while the female role is more typically visualized as keeping the home, rearing children and at times helping with the family income.

It was further assumed that desired and expected occupational and educational aspirations of students from the higher status families would be more nearly in harmony than would those of students from lower status families. One very obvious reason might be that the student from the upper status family will not so frequently interpret as an insurmountable hurdle, the necessity of financing an education which will allow him to obtain a high level occupation and therefore will not find it necessary to lower his expectations.

Assumptions were also made that certain school related factors were associated with occupational and educational decisions of youth. Generally, we have proceeded, in public education, on the premise that students with high academic achievements, above average leader-qualities and participation in extra-curricular activities usually aspired higher educationally and occupationally and that there would be less difference in these aspirations. Certain research has tended to indicate that this is not necessarily true that certain factors involving the availability of occupational information and counseling services, the availability of a wide variety of courses to stimulate interest and develop ability, as well as the encouragement of the school administration and teachers exert a considerable

influence on the educational and occupational decisions of youth. Using other research as a beginning point it was assumed that a large percentage of the students in Louisiana high schools would indicate that the school could do a better job of educational and occupational orientation.

This study was descriptive and utilized the Survey Method with the group interview technique to obtain needed information. Data were collected by the use of a multiple choice inventory form designed to determine the educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of secondary school students in Louisiana. The inventory was administered by experienced survey teams in a one hour period per group in each of the public secondary schools participating in the sample. The survey director corresponded with each parish superintendent in the state concerning their schools participating in the study. Affirmative replies were received from twenty parish school systems. The Louisiana State University Research Team and the parish superintendents arranged the survey schedule. Schools were selected, which in the judgement of the administration, were representative of the urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. Visits by the survey team were arranged at the convenience of each school system for the purpose of collecting data. Samples for each school ranged from twenty per cent to 100 per cent of the total student body. Final sample consisted of 6,200 girls and 5,810 boys.

Data were organized and presented in six parts: General information, Self-related factors, Family related factors and School-related factors; also Educational and Occupational aspirations and expectations.

Statistical procedures involved were frequency and percentage distributions, frequency count by assigned cell blocks, chi-square test of significance, and contingency coefficient.

The sample included nineteen parishes and a total of sixty-four high schools.

Findings indicate that students were fairly evenly divided between a college preparatory and a general curriculum, an average of around forty per cent each for boys and girls--vocational curriculums claimed only approximately twenty per cent of each.

Self-related Factors

1. Ninety three per cent of the students indicated that they lived with both parents, a parent and a step-parent or one parent only.

2. Data indicate that the majority of the students do not work while in high school.

3. The majority of the students associate with friends that are presently in high school (92.7 per cent).

Family-related Factors

One of the objectives of this study was to determine the family factors that influence the educational and occupational aspirations of high school students in Louisiana. Another function was to determine to what extent high school students have firmed up their expected educational and vocational plans.

1. Fifty-two per cent of the students indicated that their mother is a full-time homemaker.
2. Father's annual income ranged from under \$3,000.00 (17.2 per cent) to over \$9,000.00 (16.4 per cent). Thirty-two per cent indicated incomes that ranged from \$3,000.00 to \$7,000.00. It was significant that annual income was fairly well distributed over the scale with responses gradually decreasing as the upper limits were reached.
3. Mother's income fell primarily in the under \$3,000.00 and less than \$5,000.00 ranges. Many no replies were recorded because mothers were not employed.
4. The number of children per family ranged from one to more than nine. The average family was composed of four or five children.
5. The majority of the students indicated that family status in the community as being that of just average people (73.5 per cent).
6. Responses to the question concerning father's education in the following manner:

Less than high school	50.9 per cent
Completed high school	23.9 per cent
Vocational School, business school or some college	11.4 per cent
College degree	6.4 per cent
7. Mother's education was as listed below:

Less than high school	45.1 per cent
Completed high School	34.1 per cent
Vocational school, business school or some college	10.8 per cent
College degree	5.0 per cent
8. The majority of the parents were very encouraging concerning their children continuing education beyond the high school level.
9. Data reveal that in the main families considered the fathers and mothers occupations to be satisfactory or good.

School-related Factors

1. In the majority of cases high school achievement was listed in the "C" and "B" range.
2. Seventy-six per cent of the participants listed their leadership ability as average or above.
3. Data show that secondary school teachers are encouraging students to continue their education.
4. Availability of occupational information received responses ranging from fair to excellent with good receiving the most responses. Availability of counseling service received responses in the same manner.
5. A very broad participation in extra curricular activities was indicated. Fifteen per cent indicated no participation.
6. English, math, H & PE and science were listed as subjects that exerted the most influence on educational and occupational choices.
7. Mothers were at the top of the list of persons influencing educational choices with fathers following very closely. The guidance counselor, principal and academic teacher were the school personnel most frequently listed.
8. Concerning persons influencing occupational choices the mothers were found to be at the top of the list with fathers ranking second. School personnel received a disappointing number of replies in this category.
9. A negative reply was received in the majority of the cases when students responded to the item concerning discussion of future occupational plans with teachers or guidance counselor.

Occupational

1. Response to the item concerning freedom to choose their desired occupation produced a list of 181 different occupations. It was interesting to note that the majority of the occupations listed would rank from medium to high on a prestige scale. Occupations noted as outstanding for boys were engineering, medicine and teaching in professional categories. In the technician and skilled areas television repair, mechanic and welding were listed most frequently. The girls listed teaching, nursing and secretary most frequently. A high percentage of the students indicated no choice.

2. Response to the item requesting a statement of the occupation they would probably enter produced a list of about 160 different occupations. A comparison of the desired occupation and that which they expected to enter indicated that in the main about 55 per cent of the students expect to attain their desired occupational goal. A disturbing note was indicated when 30 per cent responded that they had not made a choice of their expected occupation.
3. According to replies recorded 50.2 per cent of the secondary school students made their occupational choice before they entered the tenth grade. Fifteen per cent indicated that occupational choices were made while in the twelfth grade.
4. Education needed to enter chosen occupation was listed as college degrees by 32.8 per cent, vocational school or some college by 31.4 per cent and high school completion by 21.3 per cent.
5. Probable reasons given for not entering desired occupations are as follows:

a. change of interest	41.1 per cent
b. lack of finances	17.0 per cent
c. marriage	14.9 per cent
d. physical handicap	12.5 per cent

Educational

Data indicate that the majority of the students interviewed aspire fairly high in terms of desired and expected educational goals. Most students felt that some education beyond high school was necessary.

It was indicated that continued education would be financed by parents, scholarships and part-time work.

Implications

The findings of this study add emphasis to the need for a long look at broadening the secondary school program. The guidance and counseling service at the secondary school level should be extended so that up-to-date occupational information may be provided students beginning in the earlier grades. A beginning course dealing with job opportunities in all occupational areas might be used effectively for this purpose.

Data suggests the addition to the high school curriculum of a broad vocational education offering. Also suggested is the need for a better coordination of teaching, guidance and counseling.

The need for a continuing research program in the occupational areas is emphasized. Training in occupational areas should be coordinated with employment opportunities.