

EFFECTS OF BEING IN A CAREER DEVELOPMENT STUDY ON THE SUBJECTS' CAREERS*

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The possible effect that singling out individuals to serve as subjects of longitudinal projects may have on the behavior studied has received little attention. Even if no direct attempt is made to alter behavior, it is conceivable that the extra attention given to certain behaviors may produce change.

In the Career Pattern Study (4) subjects have been aware that the course of their careers would be studied for a period of twenty years. At both the ninth and twelfth grades they were intensively tested and interviewed. Three years after leaving high school they were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to gather information about their post-high school educational and vocational experiences. Four years later they were again tested and interviewed at length concerning factors they had considered in making vocational choices, the jobs they had held in the past, their plans for the future, and other possible determinants of vocational development.

Thus at four different periods the subjects were asked to review systematically the factors which had led them to the positions they now held, and to consider both short-term and long-range goals

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and their attainment. In these contacts no attempts were made by staff members to counsel or in any way to affect the subjects' careers: quite the contrary. Yet it is conceivable that these contacts, with their emphasis on career planning, might have led the subjects to give more thought to their careers than would similar boys not so intensively studied. These boys, because of the periodic review of their careers and the inherent stimulus to planning, might be further ahead in their career development.

This paper presents some results of a study designed to determine whether, in fact, certain aspects of the subjects' careers have been influenced by their participation in the project.

Procedures

Students who had graduated from the same high school a year ahead of the CPS subjects were selected as controls for a similar number of Career Pattern Study subjects. They were present in the school during only one of the contacts with the original group, and were themselves not directly contacted by the staff until they had been out of high school for three years. Equating on IQ reduced the totals to 82 in each group. A brief questionnaire was sent to the controls asking them to report on jobs held and on education received since high school. A similar questionnaire was sent to them four years later.

A record of the educational and vocational plans formulated by these students as they entered high school was obtained from high school records after the class had graduated. Information concerning

IQ, age, grade-point average, and socio-economic status was similarly obtained. Thus it was possible to equate and to compare the two groups, on variables presumed to be related to subsequent vocational behavior, at the time the study was begun.

Table I indicates that at the beginning of the study these groups were similar in age, IQ, and level of job and educational aspirations. A statistically significant but practically negligible difference was found in socio-economic status. It therefore may be concluded that the experimental and control groups were comparable at the inception of the Career Pattern Study.

Results

Having ascertained that the two groups were comparable on important variables on which they had not been equated at the inception of the study, comparisons between the groups were then made three years and ten years later on selected criterion variables.

A record of the educational and vocational plans formulated by the students when they were in the twelfth grade was obtained from high school records. The students' vocational preferences were rated according to the Hamburger (1) modification of the Warner Occupational Scale. The mean level of aspiration was 3.2 for the control group and 3.3 for the experimental group, when in the 12th grade.

The students' educational plans were rated according to the Heyde Scale (2). The mean level of education desired as 12th graders by the control group was 2.9 and by the experimental group 3.1. Thus three years after the beginning of the study the potentially career-

conscious CPS subjects were making plans similar to those formulated by the uncontaminated class which had graduated a year earlier.

Achievement in high school was compared by means of the grade-point averages of the two classes. The mean for the controls was 75.9 and for the experimentals it was 75.0. Here again no significant difference was found between the two groups.

Comparisons were then made between the groups seven years after they had left high school at about age 25. The mean level of jobs held by the controls was 4.0, and by the experimentals 4.3. The mean level of education obtained by the controls was 3.1 and by the experimentals 3.3. Thus the groups held jobs at the same level and had obtained the same amount of education.

It is worth noting incidentally that although no difference was found between the controls and experimentals in the level of jobs held at the time of the follow-up at age 25, neither group had attained the level aspired to in the 12th grade. The controls had aspired to a job level of 3.2 and had reached a level of 4.0. The experimentals had aspired to a level of 3.3 and had attained a level of 4.3, illustrated by white collar jobs such as those of the lowest level of managers, general bookkeepers and cashiers, and by blue collar jobs at the highly skilled level, such as master plumber, watchmaker or factory foreman. On the other hand, both groups had obtained the amount of education desired at the end of high school. The controls had aspired to an educational level of 3.0 and had obtained a level of 3.1. According to the Heyde Scale this corresponds to the completion of some college

but not graduation from a four year course. The experimentals had aspired to a level of 3.1 and had attained a level of 3.3. At age 25, educational goals have been attained but vocational goals are still unachieved: establishment may be in process but is not completed.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that in spite of the extra attention given to their careers, the subjects of the Career Pattern Study did not differ from the uncontaminated control group in their early vocational behavior. They aspired to similar occupational levels, and seven years later both groups were one level short of their goal. They had hoped for about the same amount of education, and both groups had obtained this education by the time they were 25.

These findings support the hypothesis that the careers of the subjects have not been influenced by participation in this research project. If changes were to be anticipated one might have expected these to occur early in the subjects' careers, when contacts with the experimental group were most frequent and when the subjects were still in the process of making and revising plans. Whatever effect the study may have had, it was not great enough to affect the criterion variables examined here, namely, educational and vocational aspirations and attainments.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that although no differences have been found between the groups at this time, they will appear later. At age 25 many of the subjects had just completed college or military service. They may not have had much chance to advance up

the occupational ladder. As a result of the extra attention given to their careers the subjects of the Career Pattern Study may have chosen their jobs more wisely and may eventually attain higher levels than characterize a group which has not given as much thought to occupational choices and development. It is too soon to determine this.

The 82 subjects in each sample are subjects who cooperated in returning questionnaires. Since less effort had been made to obtain replies from the control group, subjects in the experimental group who had responded after approximately the same amount of effort were chosen for this comparison. Other studies have generally found that non-cooperative subjects come from lower socio-economic groups and are less successful than more cooperative subjects. If the careers of the non-cooperative subjects in both groups were studied one might perhaps find some differences. Since no information is available about these subjects this hypothesis cannot be tested. The conclusion that no difference is found in the careers of cooperative subjects at least is warranted.

That no difference has been found so far between the experimentals and controls is perhaps not surprising. Rothney (3) points out, in his studies of the outcomes of vocational guidance, that although significant differences are found between counseled and non-counseled subjects, these were not as large as one might expect from the claims of vocational counselors. If direct attempts to modify behavior generally produce minor differences between counseled and non-counseled subjects, one cannot expect that contacts in which no conscious effort is made to alter behavior will bring about change. Analysis of other types of behavior manifested by these subjects may throw more light on this question.

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Table 1

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9th Grade Comparisons (Pre-test)

	Experimentals		Controls		P*
	N	Means	N	Means	
Age	82	18 yrs.	82	17 yrs., 11 mos.	NS
IQ (equated)	82	103.7	82	103.8	NS
Socio-economic status	80	4.5	78	4.1	.05
Level of vocational aspiration	70	2.9	56	3.1	NS
Level of educational aspiration	80	2.9	76	2.9	NS

12th Grade Comparisons (Intermediate criteria)

Level of vocational aspiration	75	3.3	70	3.2	NS
Level of educational aspiration	81	3.1	82	2.9	NS
High school grades	80	75.0	82	75.9	NS

19th Grade Comparisons (Ultimate criteria)

Occupational level attained	73	4.3	71	4.0	NS
Educational level attained	82	3.3	82	3.1	NS

*Significance of difference computed with means carried out to second decimal; rounded for easy reading in this table.