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ABSTRACT
          A study was conducted among high school students to
discern their reasons for dropping out of school. Indepth interviews
were conducted with a random sample of 544 dropouts from a large
urban board in Canada. The profile of a typical dropout in the
literature is one of a chronic low achiever who is aimless,
alientated, angry, and has a variety of personal and social problems.
This classic pattern accounted for only 23 percent of the current
sample. The strategy of this study was to attempt to develop a series
of composite pictures or types which defined various categories of
dropouts. The largest group of students, 53 percent of the sample,
was described as work-oriented and included students who were usually
borderline passes, preferring work to school. A similar group,
comprising 6 percent, were the homemakers who left to get married or
to get a job. The fourth group was the intellectual elite, students
who seemed to have the capacity to do well in school but who had
renounced the system. The various patterns of dropping out were
discussed with a view toward developing strategies which might help
keep these students in school. (Author/PC)

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PATTERNS OF DROPPING OUT

Vivienne Young
Research Assistant

Carol Reich
Research Associate

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INTRODUCTION

"Dropouts, like unemployed workers or highway
fatalities, make wonderful statistics."

Students who drop out of school have been a source of great
concern to educators and parents alike. This is espec lly true with
the extension of free public education through high school. It has
generally been assumed that the more formal education a person has,
the better, and a high school diploma has become a prerequisite for
more and more jobs. Since there are now fewer financial barriers to
completing one's education, failure to complete is viewed as a sign that
someone has failed - the dropout, his family, the school.

Furthermore, many people have the feeling that the rate of
dropping out in recent years is increasing. Educators have also noted
a new type of dropout - the bright student who is doing well in school.
Although no one knows how large this group is, its very existence poses
grave questions about the adequacy of the present educational system, as
well as the values of today's young people.

Characteristics of the Dropout

Research studies on the dropout are legion. However, most of
the literature treats dropouts like highway statistics. Countless
variables have been isolated to describe them: their academic performance,
learning problems, attitudes towards authority, family background, employment
record, and their perception of themselves. However, the interplay of
these variables has rarely been considered. Dropouts have been viewed
as a bundle of separate characteristics which, when averaged and put
together, give a picture of what the group as a whole is like.

Since the numerous research studies differ in methods, design, and often in results, it is difficult to compare them and perhaps imprudent to consider them as a whole. However, if one does venture to make this step, a general picture of the dropout emerges.

The typical dropout, as described in the literature, appears to be aimless, alienated, and angry. He or she has experienced difficulties in learning from primary school on up, and often has had repeated failures (Bachman, 1971). The dropout has rarely been involved in school activities (Cervantes, 1965), and has often been a disciplinary problem (Nachman, 1963). He or she feels rejected by teachers and peers alike. The typical dropout comes from a large family, sometimes a broken one, and from a low socio-economic background (Bachman, 1971) which does not encourage high aspirations (Bledsoe, 1959). As an individual he or she has low self esteem (Whitmore and Chapman, 1963) and feels isolated and alienated (Schrieber, 1966). The stigma resulting from poor school performance in early childhood, follows the dropout into adolescence and culminates in dropping out of school.

A few studies of dropouts have uncovered some positive features associated with dropping out. One longitudinal study found that male dropouts usually earn more than graduates, and tend to show more leadership ability (Combs and Cooley, 1968). Another survey found that dropouts had positive feelings about further education and were intending to continue (Wright, 1973).

Alienation and Dropping Out

Dropping out, and the whole constellation of personal and social factors which seem to accompany it, may be viewed as a manifestation of

alienation. The literature on adolescent alienation makes a distinction between psychological alienation, i.e. alienation from the self and others, and sociological alienation, i.e. alienation from society and its institutions. In both forms of alienation, the educational system plays an important role. An individual's success or failure in school may contribute to psychological alienation which begins in primary school and continues throughout life (Bluhm, 1966). This, in turn, may be the cause of the dropout's low self esteem (Whitmore and Chapman, 1963). Feelings of psychological alienation may transfer to the school (Schreiber, 1966), and create hostility towards authority figures (Byles, 1969), perhaps generalizing to the educational system as a whole and from there to society.

There are few published works which express the feelings of students who are alienated from school. Our Time is Now is an excellent anthology of the student underground press. In the students' own words it reveals the resentment, frustration, and bitterness which some students feel.

Mehra (1973), in his article "Alienation: Meaning, Origins, and Forms," discusses two types of contemporary student alienation:

> "...a passive retreatist response, the defining feature
> of which is withdrawal from and rejection of traditional
> social values, norms, and institutions --- and a more active
> radical response, the defining characteristic of which is
> participation in a demonstrative or group activity that
> concerns itself with some political, social, or ethical
> principles."

Passive alienation can only be viewed as a negative response, a flight away from that which is viewed as alienating. Active alienation, on the other hand, can be viewed as a positive act in that it may lead to social reform. Active alienation assumes that society has the potential for change, and that individuals or groups have the strength to bring change

about. The positive aspects of alienation have been discussed by
Kenniston (1968) in his book, <u>Young Radicals</u>.

Reasons for Dropping Out .

Some studies have attempted to determine dropouts' own reasons
for leaving, and here the focus has been on identifying differences among
individuals. However, studies differ in the methods used to collect this
information. Some have relied on school records, but such information
is second-hand and often inaccurate.

Other studies have questioned the dropouts themselves, but the
questioning has generally been superficial. Dropouts often give more than
one reason for their decision, and without further probing, it is difficult
to assess their relative importance and relationship to one another. A
catalogue of reasons is no more enlightening than a list of average
background characteristics.

Briefly stated reasons may also be misleading. Many dropouts
report that they left because they needed to earn money. However, financial
need is, in part, a subjective matter, and in some studies it is difficult
to believe that the incidence of financial distress is so great.

Another frequently given reason is that the dropout merely
preferred work to school. In one study (Dillon, 1949), this reason was
given by 36 per cent of the dropouts. However, we don't know why the
students felt this way.

One researcher feels that both of these frequently cited reasons
often conceal deeper personal problems: unhappiness at school, feelings
' rejection, and an inability to relate schoolwork to adult life (Fuhrman, 1960).

Other dropouts have explicitly cited a personal problem as their reason for leaving: poor grades and lack of credits, inability to get along with teachers, lack of friends, dislike of discipline and rules (Syracuse Board of Education, 1950; Stobo & Ziegler, 1973 Wright, 1973). Unplanned pregnancy and/or marriage is often given by girls as a reason for withdrawal, particularly girls with high ability, who are more likely to leave for these reasons than because of poor academic performance (Woolatt, 1961).

All of these reasons have been given by dropouts questioned in several Metro studies. Stobo & Ziegler (1973) and Wright (1973) both found that dissatisfaction with school and a desire to work were the most frequently given reasons for withdrawal. However, it is not clear how these reasons relate to one another or what might underlie them. A person may want to work because he is dissatisfied with school. Likewise dissatisfaction with school may follow from a desire to work or from poor performance or social isolation.

As one research (Miller, 1964) writes:

> "Reasons given for leaving are notoriously inadequate: the art of asking 'why' has been highly developed in social research but has not reached out into the study of dropouts."

For a more extensive review of the literature on dropouts, there are several comprehensive works available. Both Dropping Out: A Review of the Research and Literature (Peebles, 1973) and School Dropouts (Miller, 1964) cover the research on characteristics of the dropout, retention programmes, and educational alternatives designed to alleviate the problem.

The Present Study

The present study was, in part, motivated by the feeling that previous research was unsatisfactory or incomplete. In addition, we felt that it was worthwhile to conduct a study specifically in and for Toronto, in order to identify the particular problems of students in this system.

Related to this is the fact that the simple size of the dropout problem in Toronto is unknown. Thus, in addition to finding out 'why' students leave, we hoped to document how many students leave, and what particular reasons Toronto students give.

For the purpose of this study, a dropout:

"...is a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except
death, before graduation or completion of a program of
studies and without transferring to another school.
The term 'dropout' is used most often to designate those
elementary and secondary school pupils who have been in
membership during the regular school term and who
withdraw from membership before graduating from secondary
school (grade twelve) or before completing equivalent
programs or studies. Such an individual is considered
a dropout whether his dropping out occurs during or
between regular school terms, whether his dropping out
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."[1]

This definition, when applied to students in the City of Toronto, results in some peculiar twists. Following the definition, we considered a student to be a dropout who left before completing a programme he had begun or had expressed an intention to begin. Thus, students who left after completing grade ten in a two-year programme were not considered dropouts, while grade twelve graduates who registered for grade thirteen, then left, were. Dropping out was thus defined in terms of the student's own plans rather than according to simple administrative categories.

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1 The definition agreed upon by the Co-operative Project on Pupil
   Accounting for Local and State School Systems. (see Schreiber, 1967, pg.216)

Our plan was to contact students who met these criteria and use an in-depth interview approach to ascertain their reasons for leaving. Combining this information with objective background data on school achievement, we would identify different patterns of dropping out. Rather than cataloging isolated factors, we would try to build a comprehensive picture of the various types of students who left.

Another difficulty with previous research, it seemed to us, was that it ignored those students who were also dissatisfied with school, or preferred to work, or had bad grades, but who nonetheless remained. Thus, we decided to adopt a second strategy, which was to identify students who were similar to the dropouts, but who had remained in school. We called these students stay-ins. By interviewing them we hoped to determine the real cause of dropping out, and what additional strengths or supports made it possible for some students to remain in school in spite of their difficulties.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

Data on dropouts was collected over one full year, beginning after the completion of the school year in June 1973 and continuing until the completion of the school year in June 1974. Students dropping out after the completion of their year in June 1973, but before the opening again of school in September, were identified from termination dates on the 1973 Student Master File. Students dropping out between September and April were identified from the monthly list of withdrawals which is produced for each secondary school in the city by the Computer Services Department. The groups identified by both of these procedures included students who transferred to schools outside of Toronto as well as students who left school altogether. As soon as each list was received, the Research Department selected every seventh name on the list for its initial sample.[2] Each school was then contacted to ascertain which students in the initial sample were transferees and which were dropouts, and how we could contact those who had dropped out.

Data was also collected on the number of students dropping out in May and June, but we did not attempt to contact these students for an interview due to constraints of time and money.

The number of dropouts and transferees in the initial sample appears in Table 1. Of the 921 students believed to be dropouts, we succeeded in contacting 670 or 73 per cent. Of those contacted,

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2 Due to a complication in the procedure, the actual sampling ratio was 1 to 7.5.

TABLE 1

DISPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Group	Number
Initial Sample	
Transferees	503
Dropouts	921
	1424
Dropouts	
Contacted	670
Not·Contacted	251
	921
Contacted	
Interviewed	544
Not Able to Interview	63
Not Dropouts	63
	670

544 were interviewed. There were some (9 per cent) whom we were

unable to interview either because of a severe language problem, an

explicit refusal, or repeated failure to keep appointments or return

calls, which we counted as implicit refusals. Another group of 9 per

cent were, when contacted, found to be still in school. Some of them

had returned to their old school and some had transferred to a new one.

These were also not interviewed.

Selecting the Control Group

Approximately 50 per cent of the former students in the

dropout sample were matched to students still in school. Using a

computerized list of all secondary school students which was sorted on

the basis of various background characteristics, dropouts and stay-ins

were matched on school, programme of study, grade, sex, age, number of

credits, and previous year's grade point average. This matching yielded
a group of stay-ins who were very similar to the dropouts in terms of
general background and school achievement.

We had originally planned to select stay-ins along with dropouts at
several points throughout the year. In January we attempted to locate
the first group of 86. However, when we approached the schools to find
out where they could be reached, we learned that 56 per cent of them
had likewise dropped out, a figure which rose to 60 per cent by the
end of the year. Thus, our matching criteria turned out to be very
powerful predictors of dropping out. This in itself is a worthwhile
finding and will be mentioned again in the Results section.

Our practical problem was solved by delaying this part of
the study until the spring. We expected, and it turned out to be the
case, that the dropout rate would be very low at this time of year;
anyone who was still in school in the spring was unlikely to drop out
before the end of the year. Therefore, we selected the stay-ins at that
point, checked with a cumulative list of withdrawals to eliminate
those who had left, and then contacted the remainder by telephone.

This procedure resulted in a very powerful control group of
stay-ins -- students who, superficially at least, were similar to the
dropouts, but who had remained in school throughout the entire year.

Because of the lateness of the year, we interviewed only the
first 75 stay-ins that we could reach.

The Interview

The interview for both the dropouts and the stay-ins was
open-ended, and designed to elicit information on the dropouts' decision

to leave, his length of deliberation, his attitudes toward school, his parents' involvement in his decision, and the influence of his peers. The stay-in interview probed for the student's attitudes toward school, whether or not he had ever considered leaving, if and how he had resolved any problems relating to school, and his contact with, and attitudes toward dropouts. Both groups were asked about their future goals and aspirations, and New Canadian status.

The interview schedule was pilot tested in order to develop an approach which would establish good rapport with each student. The interview began with an explanation of the general purpose of the study and an assurance that the student would remain anonymous. The introductory remarks for the stay-ins were somewhat more elaborate due to the greater concern among stay-ins with the confidentiality of their replies.

Copies of both interview schedules are reproduced in appendices A and B. The interviewers were not instructed to follow the exact order of the items on the schedule, but rather to cover all of the questions in a natural order suited to the student's responses. In many cases answers were given to questions before they were asked as the student was engaged in a spontaneous conversation about himself and his school. All responses were recorded as close to verbatim as possible.

Techniques of Measurement

Approximately 100 dropout interviews were conducted before a coding system was devised. At that point, we reflected on the patterns of dropping out which seemed to be developing, and specified a set of general categories into which students could be placed.

Each category, or pattern, represents a different interplay of variables, and was a judgment made during the coding from a study of the entire interview as well as background information on the student. In addition, codes were developed for the answers to specific questions. A coding scheme for the interviews of the stay-ins was devised in a similar manner after about 35 interviews had been completed. Both the general categories and the specific codes for each set of interviews were modified as the interviewing proceeded.

The codes were developed and the coding was done by the team of interviewers. However, coding of an interview occurred some time after the interview had taken place, and a person did not always code the interview he had done.

Coding reliability was assessed by double-coding a 10 per cent random sample of interviews. Agreement on the patterns of dropping out was 81 per cent, and the disagreement was mostly accounted for by confusions between two of the categories. Agreement on the stay-in patterns was 85 per cent. On the dropout interviews, agreement on the specific question codes was greater than 88 per cent on all but 5 items; on the stay-in interviews, agreement was better than 90 per cent on all but 4 items. Copies of both coding schemes are available on request from the Research Department.

In analyzing the data, we first determined the incidence of each pattern of staying in and dropping out. Then we compared the various groups of dropouts and stay-ins on background characteristics and the answers they gave to specific questions. Throughout this report, group differences are only noted if they are statistically significant. In most cases, significance was determined by the chi-square statistic.

RESULTS

Estimation of the Total Number of Dropouts

There were 1424 students in our initial sample of transferees

and withdrawals from June 1973 until April 1974. An additional 97

students withdrew in May, for a total of 1521 withdrawals. Since we

sampled every seventh name on the list, this represents a total of

10,647 withdrawals. Due to procedural error, an additional 930 names

did not have a chance to be sampled. Thus, we estimate that there are,

in total, 11,577 withdrawals.

From Table 1 we can compute that 66 per cent of the withdrawals

followed up were dropouts and the remainder transferees. Therefore,

we estimate that there was a total of 7672 dropouts and 3905 transferees.[3]

With reference to the total secondary school population, this

represents a dropout rate of 24 per cent and a transfer rate of 12 per cent.

This is higher than has been reported in other areas. Durham-

Northumberland reported a dropout rate of 12 per cent in a 1971-1972 study.

Scarborough, North York, York, and Hamilton Boards of Education reported

a 9 per cent dropout rate in surveys all conducted in 1970. Peel

County reported a rate close to 5 per cent; Vancouver found 6 per cent

in two different studies (see Appendix in Stobo and Ziegler, 1973).

However, it is likely that these studies did not include

students who dropped out over the summer. By summer dropout we do not mean

students who did not show up for school in September, but those who did

_____

3 9 per cent of the students identified by the schools as dropouts were
found, when contacted, to be transferees. However, it is probable
that some students who told their school that they were going to
transfer did not actually do so. We will assume that the error rate
in transferring is the same as the error rate in dropping out, and
that the two errors cancel one another out.

not even register for the fall term although they had not completed grade twelve. As Table 2 shows, such students account for 26 per cent of our sample. An additional 31 per cent of the sample drop out early in the first semester, and many of these are the "no-shows."

If we eliminate summer dropouts from the Toronto figure, we are left with a dropout rate of 18 per cent which can validly be compared to the rates from other Boards. This corrected dropout rate is still higher than the rate found in any other study, and is two times higher than the rate for several other Metro boroughs.

Table 3 gives an estimate of the number of dropouts by grade. The largest absolute number occurs in grade ten. But because dropping out is cumulative and each succeeding year enrolls a smaller number of students to begin with, the percentage of students in each grade who drop out actually rises a bit through grade twelve, after which there is a noticeable decline.

Table 3 also gives the percentage of students in each grade who remain in school. From these figures we can estimate the percentage of students enrolling in grade nine who complete grade twelve. The estimate is 34 per cent. It is also possible to estimate the per cent of grade nine students who complete grade thirteen. This figure is 21 per cent.

Both of these estimates are in close agreement with estimates produced in somewhat different ways by Buttrick (1973). They are however, about 9 per cent higher than the estimates produced by Wright (1967). Whether this is due to an actual increase in retention rates or to computational variation, it is difficult to say. For a more detailed discussion of how these estimates were derived, see Appendix C.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS LEAVING AT VARIOUS PERIODS OF THE YEAR

Period	Per Cent	Estimated Number
Summer	26	1995
Early First Semester (Sept.-Oct.)	31	2378
Late First Semester (Nov.-Dec.)	12	921
Early Second Semester (Jan.-Feb.)	15	1150
Late Second Semester (March-June)	16	1228
TOTAL	100%	7672

TABLE 3

DROPOUT AND RETENTION RATES BY GRADE

Grade*	Total Enrolment	Estimated No. of Dropouts	Per Cent Dropping Out	Per Cent Retained
9	8670	1532	18	82
10	7020	1802	26	74
11	6051	1568	26	74
12	5128	1351	26	74
13	2895	576	20	80
TOTAL	29764	6828		

* Level 1 and 2 and special grade 12 students were not included.

General Characteristics of the Dropout

Data on academic achievement shows that students who drop
out have generally been doing poorly in school. The average age of the
sample was seventeen years. Up to the year before they dropped out,
they had accumulated an average of 12.7 credits, whereas seventeen year
olds would be expected to have completed grade eleven and 21 credits.

Of course many students fall behind this theoretical ideal.
In a study done by the Research Department in 1971, it was found that
49 per cent of the secondary school population was below expected grade
placement by age seventeen (Wright, 1970, pg. 38). However, in our
sample of dropouts the figure was even higher, 83 per cent.

The data on grades is consistent with this picture. A weighted
grade point average was computed for the previous year's work. This
average was based on all courses taken, not only courses passed. Grade
nine students were not included in any calculations involving grades
since their grade eight records were not available. The average grade
point average achieved by grade ten to thirteen students in the dropout
sample was 50.0, just at the passing level.

Boys slightly outnumber girls in the sample 56 per cent to
44 per cent. However, dropping out tends to occur later for boys than for
girls. Girls are most likely to leave in grade ten, while the greatest
number of boys drop out from grade eleven.

It is interesting to note that dropping out among New Canadians
is lower than would be expected. Only 42 per cent of the sample was
identified as New Canadian, that is not born in Canada and/or not a
native speaker of English, whereas 48 per cent of the total secondary
population may be so described (Wright, 1970).

Dropping out is also not proportional to enrolment in the various level schools. While 86 per cent of the total secondary school population is in level four and five schools, only 68 per cent of the dropouts are from these schools. Proportionately more dropping out occurs in level one and two, and level two and three schools. Level one and two schools account for 5 per cent of the secondary population, but 10 per cent of the dropouts. Level two and three schools account for 9 per cent of the population, but 22 per cent of the dropouts. This is not surprising since the emphasis of these schools is on practical job training rather than the acquisition of credentials, and these students have a long history of poor achievement.

Patterns of Dropping Out

These general findings confirm the classic picture of the dropout as a chronic low achiever. Our experience in selecting the stay-in control sample reinforces this picture. In selecting stay-ins, students were matched with dropouts, not only by programme and sex, but also by age, number of credits, and grade point average, in that order. Thus, we had students who had, in the same number of years, earned the same number of credits with the same level of achievement as had the dropouts. Of a group of stay-ins matched with dropouts early in the year, 60 per cent of them had likewise dropped out by the end of the year.

However, overall averages can be deceiving and obscure individual differences. Although the Classic Dropout formed an important group of students in our study, other patterns also emerged, and only 23 per cent of the sample was judged to fit this pattern (see Table 4). We defined the Classic Dropout in the following way:

"Students who have exhibited poor attitudes to school, have
poor attendance, are failing subjects, lack credits and are
among the oldest at their grade level."

With reference to the general traits discussed above, students
in this category have earned fewer credits, have a lower grade point
average and more frequently leave as soon as school is no longer
compulsory. Classic Dropouts are even less likely to be female than
the sample as a whole, and less likely to be New Canadians.

It is interesting to note that Classic Dropouts are less
likely to have come from level four and five schools. However, rather
than clustering in level one and two schools, they seem to come dispro-
portionately (33 per cent) from schools at level two and three. Of those
who are in level four and five schools, more than would be expected come
from the Business programme.

Fewer of these dropouts leave in summer, and correspondingly
more leave early in the second semester, presumeably after they receive
their first semester grades.

For each of the patterns of dropping out we have attempted
to select one or two students who illustrate that category, and present
their background characteristics and a summary of their interview. The
Classic Dropout is well illustrated by the following protocol. In this,
as well as in the ones to follow, there is not a perfect correspondence
between the individual and the pattern to which he or she has been
assigned. Every student is different, and we have merely tried to
identify general areas of similarity.

TABLE 4

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VARIOUS PATTERNS OF DROPPING OUT

Pattern [a]	Per Cent Female	Per Cent New Canadian	Per Cent from level 4-5 schools	Per Cent Aged 16	Average No. of Credits	Average Grade Point Average [b]	Per Cent leaving in Summer
Classic Dropout (23%)	39	36	58	46	8.8	41.9	19
Work Oriented (53%)	37	39	74	32	13.9	51.9	26
Homemaker (6%)	100	65	71	27	14.1	53.7	26
Family Supporter (7%)	53	92	43	44	10.0	52.9	45
Cultural Isolate (2%)	67	100	44	33	6.9	62.0	44
Intellectual Elite (3%)	65	18	100	6	20.7	57.9	24
OVERALL	44	42	68	35	12.7	50.0	26

a   These 6 patterns account for 95% of the sample.   An additional 3% were Institutionalized and 2% had left for Miscellaneous reasons.

b   No grades available for students in grade 9.

" Peter was sixteen years old and a student at one of
the level one and two schools. He had earned only four
credits, and had had a large number of subject failures.
But he reported liking school -- his subjects, teachers,
the other students -- although he disliked the rules
and regulations. Peter evidently came from a troubled
home. His father died soon after Peter began school,
leaving his mother to care for five sisters besides
himself. A year later Peter attacked a teacher with
a yardstick, and was referred for extensive psychological
testing.

Tall for his age, Peter chose friends who were older
than he. These boys were dropping out of school when
Peter was still well under age. He continued his
turbulent history in secondary school. Last year
his mother also died, and Peter's subsequent depression
seems to have intensified his difficulties. Peter
had been in the welding programme, but was told that
for some reason he could not continue. He was fed
up with school and began skipping a lot of classes.
The crisis came when Peter got into trouble with a
teacher, and was sent to the office to be disciplined.
The vice-principal suggested that it might be better
for him to leave for a while and get a job, until
he decided what he really wanted to do.

Until that moment he had not really considered dropping
out. But although he felt concerned about leaving
school, he was so "bugged and pissed off" that he did
leave. ·

Peter said that most of his friends have also quit
school and are working. He would like to return,
and finish his welding course, and get a diploma.
He has no long term plans and seems depressed about
the future."

An even more important group was what we called the Work

Oriented Dropout, who was defined as follows:

"Students, usually borderline passes, who prefer work to
school and leave when they get a job."

This group comprised 53 per cent of the total sample. Like

the Classic Dropout, this group is also less likely to be female and

less likely to be New Canadian. However, Work Oriented Dropouts have

slightly better than average grades, number of credits, and are less

likely to leave at age sixteen. Work oriented students, more often than

other dropouts, come from level four and five schools, where they tend

to be in Technical programmes.

"G l e n was enrolled in the fourth year of a technical programme, and had already earned 26 credits. His grade point average was a respectable 65. However, he was 19, and thus somewhat older than the rest of his classmates. Glen liked most of his subjects and found school easy. He had a lot of free time to socialize with other students. But he felt that he was wasting his time, and could make money without any more education.

Halfway through the previous year he had been offered a good job which he turned down because he was doing well in school. But he soon regretted this decision, and now wishes he had left school much earlier. His decision to leave was actually made in the spring, and at the end cf the school year, he did not re-enrol. Glen's parents had always wanted him to finish school and even go on to university. But they didn't really contest his decision. Glen says 'They thought I knew what I was doing.'

Glen is presently working, and hopes to continue in the same job, buy a house and a car. He would also like to study electronics at night school and finish his grade twelve diploma. He expects his future satisfaction in life to come mainly from his job. 'If you're not happy in that, nothing's any good.'"

Work Oriented Dropouts want to take their place in the world of adults. A similar group is the Homemakers. Homemakers are:

"Girls, usually borderline passes, who are oriented toward homemaking, and raising a family, and do not perceive school as necessary for their goals."

If we add the females in the Homemaker group to those in the Work Oriented, the male-female split of the combined group is the same as in the total sample of dropouts. Thus, these two categories represent sex-related alternatives for a certain kind of student.

Homemakers however, have a higher level of academic achievement than both the Classic Dropout and the Work Oriented. This is seen in both the number of credits they earned, as well as the proportion having a grade point average above passing. The following student illustrates this category.

"Paula was a first year student at a level two and three school. She had earned six credits and had an overall grade point average of 84. She also had participated in a lot of extracurricular activities. Paula generally liked her teachers and felt that they took a personal interest in students. She also felt that most of the school rules and regulations were reasonable. Paula was dissatisfied with a few teachers whom she felt hadn't earned the respect they, in turn, demanded from students. But in general, Paula was happy and liked school.

In the spring Paula got engaged, and on the last day of school decided to leave in order to work. She found a job, and is working to save money for her approaching marriage, after which she plans to work one or two more years until she has a family. Although Paula's parents wanted her to finish school, they understood her reasons for leaving and accepted her decision. She feels a great loyalty to her school, but is doing well at work, and is happy with her plans for the future."

There are two New Canadian groups which are of special interest, although of limited size. The first we have called the Family Supporter, and is defined as follows:

"Students, generally New Canadians, who feel a responsibility to assist in a family business or to contribute to the family income."

This typology differs from the previous ones in that these students were relatively happy at school and left only because of financial necessity and parental pressure. They appear to be unusually responsible young adults who are aware of the need for education, but whose parents feel they have a legitimate right to the son or daughter's help.

7 per cent of the sample fall into this pattern. The group actually includes a few native Canadians, but they are rare. In fact, 80 per cent of the dropouts in this group are first as opposed to second generation immigrants, in contrast to 25 per cent from the total sample.

Students in this group are doing somewhat better in school than
the average dropout. The number failing their courses is low. The
number of credits they have earned is also low, but this is because
they leave relatively early in their school career. Almost twice
as many of these students come from level two and three schools as the
total group, and they are more likely to leave in the summer. The
total picture suggests that they have a real and long standing economic
need. It is significant that the group is not very large, and that
it includes few second generation immigrants. It is difficult to
say whether the change from the first to the second generation is
primarily cultural or economic.

> "Luigi was born in Italy and was in his fourth year
> of a technical programme. He had earned 24.5 credits
> with an overall average of 55. Luigi liked school,
> including the teachers and the courses he was taking.
> His one criticism was that extracurricular activities
> were organized so that new people didn't have a
> chance to participate.
>
> There had be. a lot of difficulty in Luigi's family
> during the past year, so much so that it almost
> ruined his year. He first considered leaving in the
> spring in order to get a job and help his family.
> During the summer, he found a good job in drafting,
> the course he was taking, and decided not to
> return in the fall. Luigi's feelings about dropping
> out were mixed. On the one hand he was glad to have
> the job, and on the other, he was sad to be leaving
> school. Luigi would like to get his architectural
> diploma, but his long range plans for the future
> are unclear. He 'hopes to get pleasure from
> everything.'"

The second group of New Canadians we have called the Cultural

Isolate. These are:

> "New Canadians who have a language problem and who
> are socially isolated in school."

It is encouraging that only 2 per cent of the sample fall
into this group, yet this does represent about 70 individuals.

Cultural Isolates are a very different group of students.
All are new immigrants, and have only recently begun school in Canada.
They have earned few credits, but have donc exceptionally well in the
courses they have taken. At the time they left, they were beginning
to experience academic difficulties, and were unhappy over this as well
as their failure to make friends.

> "Amira had come to Canada from Equador only last year, and
> was enrolled in an academic high school. In her own
> country she had finished grade eleven with good marks,
> and was disappointed at being placed again in the same
> grade.
>
> Amira, although receiving two hours of special language
> instruction a day, never really learned English, and
> couldn't handle her course work. She was frustrated
> at not being able to understand what the teachers
> said, and felt that she was not even making progress
> in learning English. She had no friends in school
> apart from the other students in the special English
> class.
>
> Amira finished the year, but didn't return in
> September. She was very upset over her failure to
> succeed in school, and burst into tears during the
> interview. At present, she is studying English at
> night school, and eventually hopes to go to
> university and become a nurse."

The final group is, at the present time, perhaps the most
talked about. These are the Intellectual Elite:

> "Students who have the capacity to do well in school,
> but who have renounced the system."

This group, although in some ways threatening to the system, comprises
only 3 per cent of the total sample. However, this does represent 119
individuals falling into this category who leave over the course
of a year. These students are the oldest and the closest to completing
their course. They are also one of the highest achieving groups,

and almost all are in academic courses. They are more likely than some of the other dropouts to leave in the middle of the year.

"Jim was a student at an academic high school. He was 17 years old and had earned only fifteen credits with an overall grade point average of 42. He was thus somewhat atypical in his level of achievement, but this stemmed from his almost complete disregard of coursework, although he reports reading a lot on his own.

Jim was very articulate in his criticisms of the educational system. He saw no relationship between what he was studying and his future needs. He viewed the school as a hierarchical system which resisted change, and in which people were promoted beyond their level of ability.

However, the fault lay not entirely at the feet of the staff. Students, too, were resistant to change. The current emphasis on student rights, he felt, gave teachers too little power to discipline students and make them work. Thus, Jim saw no value to staying in school, and in fact felt that it was 'doing him more harm than good.'

Jim first thought about leaving one Monday morning when he walked into class and was handed an assignment which he felt contained nothing he hadn't learned before. At that point he decided to leave, and went to the Guidance Office, where he was advised to take a week off and think it over. During the week he talked to friends, some of whom advised him to quit and others of whom felt he should stick it out for practical reasons. Eventually he decided to return, but stayed only two more weeks to finish exams, after which he left for good.

Jim was aware of SEED, but felt that going to an alternative would be 'like forgetting the real way school is like.' He also considered taking correspondence courses, but decided that he 'didn't believe in the diploma either.'

Jim is not worried about his future. He is only relieved to be free of school which 'was such a burden.' His goal used to be to make a lot of money, but, he says, 'now I only care about being happy in my job.' He is currently employed in the music industry and hopes to continue in that line of work. He has also considered going into social work, but has decided instead to save some money and travel in Europe. When asked what he thought would give him the greatest satisfaction in life, Jim replied, 'people, definitely.'"

In addition to these six patterns there is a small group of students (3 per cent) who left school because they were institutionalized in a correctional or psychiatric facility. Another group of 2 per cent left for a variety of reasons other than the ones described above.

Comparison of Dropouts Who Were Contacted With Those Who Were Not

A comparison of dropouts we were able to interview with those we either could not locate or were not able to interview shows that our sample is somewhat biased. Among those not in the sample, the disparity between males and females is even greater, males accounting for 59 per cent of those not contacted as opposed to 56 per cent in the sample. Although those lost to us were on average five months older, they had earned even fewer credits (8.6 vs. 12.7) and had a lower grade point average (47.8 vs. 50.0). Thus, we might expect that our sample has underestimated the number of dropouts who fall into the Classic Dropout pattern.

The sample probably also somewhat underestimates the number of Intellectual Elites. Although the overall picture of those not contacted is one of poor achievement, there is also a group of older students who were doing exceptionally well, a larger group than in the sample.

However, we would not expect this bias to make a large difference in the size of the various categories of dropouts.

Patterns of Staying in School

Our sample of stay-ins was not quite comparable to the dropouts in terms of academic achievement, due to the difficulty of finding similar students who had not already dropped out. Nevertheless the differences were not too great. Stay-ins had a grade point average

of 53.2 in contrast to the dropouts' average of 50.0. Stay-ins had
earned an average of 13.3 credits in contrast to the dropouts' 12.7.
Thus this group, superficially considered, might be expected to have
dropped out of school, yet for some reason they did not.

TABLE 5

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VARIOUS PATTERNS OF STAYING-IN SCHOOL

Pattern	Average Grade Point Average	Per Cent from level 4-5 schools	Average No. of Credits	Per Cent New Canadian	Per Cent Female
Career Oriented (42%)	*	58	13.6	48	45
Academically Oriented (28%)	*	90	13.9	70	25
Discontented Reformers (19%)	*	93	10.0	14	71
Potential Classic Dropouts (10%)	*	57	8.1	57	14
OVERALL	53.2	74	13.3	49	42

* No significant difference among groups.

The stay-ins fell into four general categories. The largest
group (42 per cent) are those we defined as Career Oriented. They are
similar to the Work Oriented Dropouts in that their goal is to get a job.
These students are not dropping out because they view school as a means
to that end. They had a very similar level of academic achievement
to the Work Oriented Dropout: a grade point average of 52.4, and an
average of 13.6 credits. But although 38 per cent have considered leaving
sch . most plan to com

school, most plan to complete grade twelve because the kind of job they
hope to get requires a diploma. There are more New Canadians among the
Career Oriented Stay-ins than amo· ɟ the Work-Oriented Dropouts (48 per
cent vs. 39 per cent).

> "Deborah was 16 and a student in a level two and three school.
> She had seven credits and a previous year's average of 76.
> Deborah doesn't especially like school. She does enjoy
> keypunching, which is her major area. Some of the teachers,
> she says, 'are okay,' but some 'really push you around.'
> She doesn't especially like the other kids either.
>
> Earlier last year she had considered leaving school, but
> decided that she needed 'education to get a decent job.'
> Her parents really want her to stay in school, and so she
> plans to complete her course."

The second largest group of stay-ins was described as
Academically Oriented (28 per cent). These students plan to complete
high school and hope to attend university. They are generally happy with
school and have not considered leaving. 84 per cent are New Canadians.
However, the academic performance of this group as a whole does not
indicate that university is a realistic goal. Their grade point average
and number of credits is no higher than in other groups.

> "Steve was 16 and a grade twelve student in an academic programme.
> He had 26 credits, and a previous year's average of 62. Steve's
> great love at school was football. Other than during football
> season, he said that he spend as little time at school as
> possible. He had few friends at school.
>
> Steve had never seriously considered dropping out. He
> knew one student who did, and 'thought this guy was
> stupid.' His parents were glad he was still in school.
> Steve plans to graduate from grade thirteen and then
> study engineering at University. Then 'guess I'll get
> into a big firm and be a little man on the ladder.'
> Sports will continue to be the big joy of his life."

The next group is the Discontented Reformers (19 per cent).
This is a group of students who are unhappy with school and have well-
defined ideas on how it could be improved. 85 per cent have considered
leaving. In terms of academic achievement, this group is very similar

to the Intellectual Elite -- both groups have averages close to 58.

However, the stay-ins are, on average, about five months younger, and

have earned seven fewer credits. It is tempting to surmize that today's

Discontented Reformer is tomorrow's more cynical Intellectual Elite.

> "Peter is a grade twelve student in an academic programme
> with 23 credits and a 56 average. He is 19 years old.
> Peter likes some of his subjects, particularly theatre
> arts and economics. He approves of the introduction of
> individual timetables. He dislikes the rules and
> regulations in general.
>
> He did consider leaving school, but decided to finish
> grade twelve, although he is not going on to grade
> thirteen. He feels he can get into university without
> it, and grade thirteen 'doesn't look very interesting
> and challenging.'
>
> Peter hopes to travel. His plans following graduation
> were to travel to British Columbia, and perhaps
> eventually to Korea and Hong Kong. Peter would like to
> learn Kung Fu there and come back to teach it in Canada.
> He expects his future satisfactions to come from
> 'knowledge.'"

The final group of stay-ins is the 10 per cent we have called

the Future Dropout. Members of this group look like the Classic Dropout

in many ways: they have a low grade point average (47.2), and few credits

(9.2). All of them have considered leaving school, and half are already

planning to look for work. In terms of remaining in school, the prognosis

for this group appears poor.

> "John is 18 years old and a grade eleven student in an
> academic programme. He had 22 credits, and a previous
> year's average of 39, evidencing several course failures.
> John has very mixed feelings about school and a history
> of getting into trouble. A few years ago 'he was
> kicked out for being late.' After talking with friends
> and relatives, he went back to school because he felt it's
> impossible 'to get a good job with only grade ten.' He
> has also gotten 'into all sorts of hassles' for his
> poor grades.
>
> John feels that 'whether you like a subject depends on the
> teacher.' Unfortunately, he says, 'most teachers turn
> you off... A few teachers are really good...down to
> earth, almost like parents...would rap with you and help
> you with any problems...(but) most teachers turned you off.'

John's plans for the future are very indefinite. His
parents are happy he's still in school, but he is vague
as to whether or not he will stay. He might, he says,
go into printing or photography, or he might 'buy a farm.'
His future satisfactions are likely to come from friends.
He thinks 'it's too risky to get married.' All the
marriages he knows 'have broken up.'"

The Decision to Leave

Guidance in Decision Making

For most students the decision to leave was not made overnight.
Almost half of the sample debated leaving for between two months and a
year. A further 16 per cent debated for longer than one year. However,
38 per cent did make the decision in a month or less.

We tried to classify dropouts according to their ability to
use school and community resources in making the decision to leave.
74 per cent showed little or no effort in utilizing these resources.
Predominant among this group is the Classic Dropout, who also tended
to leave very quickly. Homemakers and Family Supporters also made little
use of these resources, but they were not notably impulsive in deciding
to leave. Thus, their failure to use available resources probably
reflects the fact thay they are not so much dropping out of school
as choosing a different type of life which is more meaningful to them.

The Work Oriented Dropout more frequently made use of
school resources in reaching a decision. More of these students had
discussed their plans with guidance counsellors or other school staff.
Work Oriented Dropouts who did not make use of this service tended to
make their decision to leave rather quickly.

The Intellectual Elites were outstanding for using resources
outside of the school in their decision making. These students were

TABLE 6

FACTORS SURROUNDING THE DECISION TO LEAVE

Pattern	Per Cent Deciding in 1 mo. or less	Per Cent Passive in using Resources	Per Cent With Precipitating Situation	Per Cent of Parents Supporting Decision	Per Cent Knowing Other Dropouts
Classic Dropout	41	87	39	14	74
Work Oriented	33	69	43	24	65
Homemaker	39	82	88	24	55
Family Supporter	37	88	75	85	53
Cultural Isolate	14	56	56	25	38
Intellectual Elite	9	41	60	41	53
OVERALL	35	74	48	27	65

very active in exploring alternative educational settings such as universities and community colleges.

Precipitating Situations

Half of all the dropouts left school in response to some specific precipitating situation.[4] This was especially true of Family Supporters, 65 per cent of whom left due to some family or economic crisis. 67 per cent of the Homemakers left because of an engagement or marriage. Some left due to pregnancy. Dropouts falling into the pattern of the Intellectual Elite also had many precipitating situations, but they fall into no recognizable pattern.

The Cultural Isolate and the Work Oriented dropout had an average frequency of precipitating situations. The Cultural Isolate, more often than any of the other groups, left due to bad grades. Work Oriented Dropouts, showed no pattern in the situations that prompted them to leave.

The Classic Dropout least often left in response to some particular situation. Like the Future Dropout, who remains in school for no discernible reason, the Classic Dropout generally leaves in response to no particular event.

Mood at the Time of Leaving

We attempted to assess the mood of the dropouts at the time they left school. Half of the total group appeared to be happy and had no regrets. However, about 60 per cent of the Work Oriented and the Homemakers had positive feelings about leaving.

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4 Interrater reliability in coding precipitating situations was very low. Therefore, these findings should only be viewed as suggestive.

TABLE 7

MOOD OF THE DROPOUTS

Pattern	Mood			TOTAL
	Glad ·	Depressed	Angry & Depressed	
Classic Dropout	42	24	34	100
Work Oriented	58	25	17	100
Homemaker	61	30	9	100
Family Supporter	20	74	6	100
Cultural Isolate	0	89	11	100
Intellectual Elite	44	31	25	100
OVERALL	50	30	20	100

Almost 1/3 of the total group could best be described as depressed. Predominant among these were the Cultural Isolate (89 per cent depressed) and the Family Supporter (74 per cent), many of whom were aware of the social stigma attached to being a dropout.

20 per cent of the group expressed frustration and anger with their school experience. The Classic Dropout and the Intellectual Elite were more likely than the others to feel this way. Their comments were often bitter and resentful, expressing feelings of alienation. The Intellectual Elite were more vocal and gave instances of their efforts to bring about some change, e.g., "I did everything I could -- I was embittered when nothing worked." The Classic Dropout, in discussing how he felt at the time he left school, was often hostile and angry over perceived injustices. These students frequently pointed at teachers and administrators as always "against me," "picking on me" and "hassling me."

Social Influences

Not many parents (25 per cent) supported their child's decision to leave school. However, an important number did not take a real position (33 per cent), and only 39 per cent actively opposed the move.

Greater support came from parents of tne Intellectual Elite, half of whom agreed with their son's or daughter's decision. Even more supportive were tne parents of the Family Supporters. That 75 per cent of them should agree with their child's decision is not surprising in view of the high number experiencing some family or economic distress.

This picture contrasts with the one presented by the stay-ins, 90 per cent of whom had parents actively supporting their decision to remain. This finding emerges as one of the central facts of the study. The only stay-in group having a noticeably lower level of parental support was the Future Dropout. However, even among this group, 71 per cent had parents who wanted them to remain in school. Thus, the parents' attitudes toward education plays a crucial role in keeping students in school, even students who are not doing well and whose performance suggests that they might drop out.

Most of the dropouts had peer support for their decision to leave. Over 60 per cent knew other dropouts. Peer support played an even larger role among girls who fit into the Classic Pattern; 78 per cent of these had friends who were likewise dropping out. On the other hand, dropping out for the Homemaker was much more of an individual decision tied to her own situation. Only about 50 per cent of these girls had friends who were also leaving. This was also true of the Family Supporter, for much the same reasons.

Stay-ins have also had a lot of contact with dropouts, and their attitudes toward them are indicative of their general orientation toward completing school. Of the Academically Oriented, 80 per cent know dropouts, but 56 per cent do not support the decision of these students to leave. The Work Oriented feel similarly; 46 per cent oppose dropping out.

The attitude of the Discontented Reformers is somewhat different -- only 33 per cent oppose dropping out. And among Future Dropouts, disagreement is almost nonexistent -- only 14 per cent.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

Dropouts and stay-ins were asked, in a very general way, what they liked and disliked about school. Students were not asked how they felt about any particular aspects of their school experience, but could comment on anything they wished. Many of the comments referred, not to the learning environment per se, but to the more social aspects of school. Almost half of the dropouts volunteered that they liked the other students in their school. About 1/5 of the group as a whole enjoyed their involvement in extracurricular activities. About 1/3 expressed appreciation for personal relationships with teachers. However, 1/5 expressed dislike of teachers as people, and about 1/4 criticised the system of rules and regulations (see Table 7).

Turning to matters more directly related to the curriculum, 1/3 of the dropouts expressed approval of their courses, but almost 1/4 disliked their course work. Practical courses were specifically mentioned with approval by 21 per cent; almost no one said that he disliked this aspect of his work. The competence of the staff as teachers came in for rather heavy criticism. 30 per cent of the students volunteered that they generally disliked the teaching style and methods with which they were confronted. Central to their dissatisfaction was a question of authority and a desire for learning to be more student centred.

The comments of stay-ins were remarkably similar to the dropouts. However, criticism included opinions that "some of the teachers were trying to be too open. They let the students talk so much that the course didn't get covered," and "we need to respect them as adults, without this they can't control." One student referred to two types of teaching styles:

"some teachers treated the students like kids while others tried to
identify with and take on tne values of the student with the result
that the students lost all respect for them." However, in general,
students who remained in school were much less critical of the professional
staff.

TABLE 8

PER CENT OF DROPOUTS AND STAY-INS WHO
LIKED AND DISLIKED VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SCHOOL

	Liked		Disliked	
	Dropouts	Stay-ins	Dropouts	Stay-ins
Other Students	45	56	11	10
Personal Relationships with Teachers*	25	37	22	11
Rules and Regulations*	7	15	23	30
Extra-curricular Activities	23	15	3	1
General Coursework	33	38	23	21
Practical Courses	21	22	2	1
Teaching Methods*	2	6	30	12

* Significant difference among dropouts and stay-ins

In general the dropouts were neither totally positive nor
totally negative in their comments about school. One exception was
the Family Supporters, over half of whom expressed a very general
regard for their school experience. This was the group which was most
unhappy at having to leave.

At the other extreme, were members of the Intellectual Elite,
who tended to voice blanket disapproval of the school as well as the
function schools perform for the larger society. Many of these students
spoke quite directly and critically about "The System."

Classic Dropouts were distinct from the others in the extent to which they disliked their courses. This is congruent with their longstanding pattern of poor achievement. Dissatisfaction in the two New Canadian groups centred on their isolation from other students. This was a rare source of frustration among students from other groups.

PRESENT STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS

Most of the dropouts were currently working. One commented "it's the realization stage that kills you -- to be making it in the big, bad world." A few had returned to school full-time, a handful were full-time housewives. The remainder, about 1/5, were unoccupied. Very few were studying part-time (see Table 8).

All of the stay-ins, of course, were still in school, and almost all of them had immediate plans to continue their education. Long term plans for the stay-ins centered on finding and doing well in a job or career, although most of them viewed job success as instrumental to other goals, most notably a satisfying family life.

The dropouts' view of their future was much more poorly defined. Many more dropouts than stay-ins had no immediate or long term plans, although their views about what is ultimately satisfying in life were very similar to the views of the stay-ins. Dropouts were somewhat more likely than stay-ins to view family life and job success as their ultimate goals. Stay-ins expressed interest in a wider variety of satisfactions. The more stereotyped responses of the dropouts might be viewed as their attempt to give us socially acceptable answers. However, their greater interest in these two areas is also congruent with the reasons which they gave for leaving school -- to work, to raise a family, to help out at home.

The dropouts view of the future is generally congruent with the overall patterns of school leaving that have been described. This data reinforces our view of Classic Dropouts as generally unsuccessful. They are more likely than the others to have made no immediate or long

term plans, or to have a well-defined view of their future satisfactions.

They are more likely at the present time to be unemployed (37 per cent).

TABLE 8

PRESENT STATUS

Pattern[a]	Working	Homemaker	Student	Other	Unoccupied	Total
Classic Dropout (23%)	63	0	0	0	37	100%
Work Oriented (53%)	82	0	4	1	13	100%
Homemaker (6%)	62	24	0	0	15	100%
Family Supporter (7%)	88	0	0	3	10	100%
Intellectual Elite (3%)	71	0	18	0	12	100%
OVERALL	76	2	3	1	19	100%

a Cultural Isolates have been omitted due to the small size of the group.

Work Oriented Dropouts have a high level of current employment. They are also one of the only two groups in which students have returned to school, although there are not many who have done so. Work Oriented Dropouts have well-defined plans for the immediate future, which include education and a job. But they, like the others, have poorly developed long range plans. Thus, it seems that their work orientation may be a temporary pursuit, and that the future is still unsettled.

Homemakers have a low rate of employment which is identical
to the Classic Dropouts. However, relatively few of them are unoccupied,
the rest being currently engaged as full-time homemakers. For the 62
per cent who are employed, working is clearly subordinate to their
real goal which is to have a home and a family. This group has
the least interest in further education. Their immediate plans most
often involve marriage (53 per cent), although their long term plans
are as likely to include work as are the other groups. However, family
life is clearly their major source of future satisfaction, and all other
activities are instrumental to this one overriding goal.

Family Supporters have the highest rate of employment. On
future plans and sources of satisfaction, however, they are no different
from the other dropouts. Thus, their present activities clearly emerge
as being due to present circumstances, namely the economic plight of their
families. What they might do in the future is entirely unsettled, and
probably continues to depend on family need.

Intellectual Elites are radically different from any other
group. About 1/5 have already returned to school in another setting,
and 82 per cent have immediate plans to further their education. Very
few of this group have long term plans which include a job. 1/3 have
long term plans for more education, and the remainder fall into a
variety of other categories. The same is true for future satisfaction.
1/4 of the group said that they felt their future satisfaction would
lie in their own personal development. Another quarter referred to
a variety of goals including property ownership, travel and mental health.

This group was also notable in its lack of concern with family
relationships; fewer students than in any other group felt that their

future satisfaction lay here. This group then is concerned with its own personal development and individual goals. School was unsatisfactory because it was not seen as contributing to that end. Any solution to the problems of this group would have to be accommodating to their very individual needs.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The size of the dropout problem in Toronto is staggering.
From our sample, we estimate that approximately 7,500 students
dropped out over the course of the year, or 24 per cent of the total
secondary school population. This is a rate about 2 1/2 times what has
been reported for other Metro boroughs. Breaking down these figures
by grades, it appears that only 40 per cent of the students entering
grade nine will graduate from grade twelve and only 20 per cent from
grade thirteen.

An additional 3,800 students or 12 per cent of those in
secondary school transferred to other schools outside of Toronto. This
represents another problem with which the school system must cope.
Comparative figures on transfer rates in other areas are not available.

The picture of dropouts which emerges from this study is of
young adults whose decision to leave school is part of the fabric of
their own personality, present circumstances and view of the future,
as well as their past record of poorer than average academic performance.

Each dropout is an individual; however, the study has
identified six general types or patterns of dropping out which seem to
fairly well describe most of the Toronto population. If dropping out is
viewed as a problem, and that itself is problematic, there is no single
solution that the schools can adopt. Solutions need to be tailored to
the several different types of dropouts. Furthermore, there can be no
simple solutions since most students drop out in response to forces
external as well as internal to the school. School is truly part of the
larger society, and must be viewed within that framework.

One of the most common patterns of dropping out we have called the Classic Dropout. These are students who have a long standing history of poor achievement and poor attitudes toward school. For these students, leaving school is a negative act; they are attempting to escape from an environment which they find alienating and rejecting. Theirs is the "passive retreatist response" of the alienated as defined by Mehra (see pg. 3). Classic Dropouts have no clear idea of their future, and they are very likely to be unemployed after leaving, thus becoming a further burden to society.

It is very difficult to suggest how things could have been made better for this group. Certainly any programmes aimed at raising the academic achievement of poor students is relevant. Early identification is a necessity, and any meaningful intervention would have had to occur before secondary school. Also any programme should involve parents, since parents generally acquiesced in the Classic Dropout's decision to leave. Some suggestions to help the dropout have been outlined by Zeller in his book Lowering the Odds on Student Dropouts.

For the remaining students, the vast majority, leaving school is a positive act which either serves very real and immediate needs or fits into their goals for the future. The largest group of dropouts we described as Work Oriented. These students are interested in assuming adult roles, and getting a job served that function for them. Work Oriented dropouts often leave when a job becomes available. However, their view of the future suggests that their interest in working may be temporary. They do not have a clear idea of how their lives might develop later on. For these students, dropping out to work might be beneficial, allowing them to mature and develop a clearer idea of where

they want to go. In their interviews these students already evidenced a surprising maturity and a growing realization that "you can't get a good job without more education." These students as well as the others should be made well aware of the opportunities to return to school and of alternative educational settings.

Similar to the Work Oriented are the Homemakers, whose goals relate to a home and family. These young women leave school either to take up Homemaking directly or to obtain employment in order to save money for marriage or a family. Leaving school is part of their life plan. Many of them are currently working, and economic pressures may force many of them to continue in employment. Thus, at some point they too may be candidates for further training. For them an expansion of part time educational opportunities and work-study programmes might be helpful.

Perhaps the most disheartening group are the Family Supporters, New Canadians who leave school against their wishes to help support their families in times of crises. The decision of these students is in response to a real and present difficulty. However, it is also a difficulty of long standing and it is unlikely that they would be able to continue their education full time in the future. Like the Homemaker, they might possibly consider further education on a part-time basis or in a work-study programme, but presumeably it would have to be one in which they could earn a substantial wage.

A second group of New Canadians is the Cultural Isolate. This is a small group of students who are culturally and socially estranged from the system. Thus, although they are one of the highest achieving groups, their isolation has caused them to withdraw. These students

need a programme to improve their English language skills and bring them into ·.e main stream of Canadian culture. Moreover this may best be accomplished in another setting, since the group is somewhat older than most secondary school students.

The final group is the Intellectual Elite. These students have a variety of personal goals and a value system which emphasizes individuality. They do not view themselves as part of the mainstream of society, and in many cases embody the "active radical response," the second form of contemporary student alienation identified by Mehra. Any attempt to retain them in school would have to accept and encourage their independence. Alternatives such as SEED could be ideal. However, although somewhat more proficient than most other dropouts, their level of academic performance is not really high, perhaps due to lack of motivation but perhaps to lower ability. Thus, it is problematic whether or not they could function in an environment with the freedom of SEED. For some an alternative such as Subway Academy might be appropriate. These students were most active in utilizing community resources to further their ends, and yet from their comments, they are the most distrustful and alienated. For them, an emphasis on interpersonal regard is of primary importance in any institutional setting.

In attempting to implement any programme for dropouts, an immediate problem is how to identify those who might benefit. This is actually not an impossible task. Most considered leaving for some time before they actually dropped out. However, knowledge of intentions requires an intimate acquaintance with a student.

But the best predictor of dropping out is a low level of achievement, i.e. retarded grade level and repeated failures, combined

with any of the six patterns of attitudes and goals described above.
As our comparison group showed, there are students who have as low a
level of academic achievement as the dropouts, but who nevertheless
remain in school. However, these students, by and large have a different
pattern of attitudes and goals.

The largest group might be called the Career Oriented. Like
the Work Oriented dropouts, they have their sights set on a job, but
they view a high school diploma as a prerequisite for the kind of job
they require.

The second group may be described as Academically Oriented.
These students plan to complete high school and attend university or
other post-secondary institution. However, it would be a mistake to
describe them as intellectually oriented. For them, like the Career
Oriented, school is a means to an end. This group is doing no better
in school than the dropouts, and university is probably an unrealistic
goal. Most of them are New Canadians, and education is probably viewed as
a tool to further their upward mobility.

The third group is the Discontented Reformers. In almost
every way, they resemble the Intellectual Elites who have dropped out,
except that they are younger. They, too, may be expected to leave as
an "active radical response" to the frustration they encounter in
attempting to bring about change. They, too, are alienated from "The
System."

The final group of stay-ins look like the Classic Dropout in
so many respects that we have called them the Future Classic Dropout.
All of these students have considered leaving school and half are already

looking for work. For many, all that is required is a precipitating situation, and then plans to leave will materialize.

One differentiating factor between the stay-ins and the dropouts is the support of their parents. Only 39 per cent of the dropouts had parents who actively opposed their decision to leave while 90 per cent of the parents of stay-ins want them to continue their education. Only the Future Dropouts reported a lower level of parental support, although still not as low as the dropouts.

A second factor which differentiates stay-ins from dropouts is the greater clarity of the stay-ins' plans for the future. Almost all of the stay-ins had immediate plans to complete high school or even to go on to community college or university. However, over half of the dropouts also had plans for further education, but outside of the secondary school system. But more dropouts than stay-ins had no plans for the future or no idea what they hoped to achieve in life.

Thus, dropouts and stay-ins are alike in their generally low level of school achievement, but quite different in their family circumstances and goals for the future. Any attempt to retain dropouts in school must come to terms with these problems as well.

However, the problem does not end with those who leave. There are students who remain in school, for whom school seems less than satisfactory. We don't know how many students might fit into our stay-in patterns. But the results of the study do indicate a certain number of students who have little or no interest in school for its own sake, but rather view a high school diploma as a means to other ends. Some of these students have unrealistic goals for the future. If the educational system is going to deal with the dropout problem, it must deal with these students as well.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Dropouts

(Record responses to following questions in point form on blank piece of
paper, and check each question as it is covered.

_____ A. What did you like about school?

_____   What did you dislike about school?

_____ B. Could anything have been done to make you want or be able to
          stay in school?

          - programme change
          - treatment by teachers
          - financial help

_____ C. Can you tell me why you left?

_____ D. When did you first consider leaving?

_____ E. How did you feel at that time?

_____ F. When did you actually decide to leave?

_____ G. Did anything particular happen at that time?

_____ H. Did you consider any of the alternative schools like SEED?

_____ I. Do you know anyone else who's left school?

_____ J. How did your parents feel about your decision?

_____ K. Are you working now?

_____ L. Do you have any plans for the future? Now? Long range?

_____ M. What do you think will give you the greatest satisfaction when
          you're older?

          - family
          - friends
          - job   (use these as probes when respondent
          - hobbies/sports   seems uncertain)
          - other

_____ N. Where were you born?
          What was your first language?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Controls

Hello, my name is _____, and I have been employed by the Toronto Board of Education to do a study to try and find out why students leave school. We hope the study will lead to improvements in the schools. We're talking with a number of students who have left school to see what they disliked about school or what problems they were having. However, we felt that students who are still in school might have some of the same problems or dislikes. So we felt we should also talk with some people who were staying in school to see how they handled any problems they were having.

Do you have a few minutes to talk with me now?

No - when would be a more convenient time?

Yes

Before we begin I'd like you to know that this study is being done by the Research Department of the Board of Education and not by your school. No one at your school knows we have called you, and no one will know what you will have told us. We are planning to just summarize the comments that students make without mentioning any names. In fact individual names will be destroyed when the study is finished.

(Record responses to following questions in point form on blank piece of paper, and check each question as it is covered.)

_____ A. What do you like about school?
_____   What do you dislike about school?

_____ B.   Have you ever considered leaving school?

No
                                  _____ When was that?
                                  _____ Why were you thinking of leaving?
                                  _____ Did anything particular happen at that time?
                                  _____ What made you decide to stay?
                                  _____ Did you get any help or did anything change?

_____ C. Do you know anyone who left school this year?

No
                                  _____ How did you feel about it?

_____ D. Are there any things in school that you would like to see changed?

- programme change
- treatment by teachers
- individual courses
- financial aid availability

_____ E. How do your parents feel about your being in school?

_____ F. Are you working now?

_____ G. What are your plans for the future?

now?
long range?
(high school completion?)

_____ H. When you're older what do you think will give you the greatest satisfaction?

- family
- friends
- job
- leisure activities
- other

(Use these as probes when respondent seems uncertain)

_____ I. Where were you born?

_____ What was your first language?

APPENDIX C

Estimation of Retention Rates

There are an estimated 7672 dropouts (see page 14). Since
the vocational (level 1 and 2) schools are ungraded, they were eliminated
from this analysis. Students from these schools comprised 10 per cent
of the dropout sample. Students in special grade twelve were also
eliminated. They comprised 1 per cent of the dropout sample. Thus, the
adjusted estimate of the size of the dropout population is 7672 - 767 - 77
or 6828.

The percentage composition of the dropout sample by grade is
as follows:

Grade 9 - 22%
Grade 10 - 26%
Crade 11 - 23%
Grade 12 - 20%
Grade 13 - 8%
        100%

These figures exclude vocational and special twelve students.
Multiplying these figures by the estimated size of the dropout population,
6828, gives the estimated number of dropouts from each grade level. This
is presented in column three of Table 3 (page 16).

Column one of Table 3 gives the 1973-74 enrolment at each grade
level. Dividing the estimated number of dropouts by the total enrolment,
gives the percentage of students at each grade level who drop out. These
figures are given in the fourth column of Table 3. Column five gives the
percentage retention at each grade level, computed by subtracting column
four from 100 per cent.

We have estimated retention rates through grade twelve by
simply multiplying in succession the retention rates at each of the grade
levels through grade twelve, i.e., .82 x .74 x .74 x .75. This results
in an estimate of 34 per cent of grade nine students who complete grade
twelve. This calculation assumes that there are equal numbers of
individuals at all of the ages in question. It also assumes that
transferees into the system are similar to transferees out of the system
in their likelihood of dropping out. Since it is likely that transferees
in are somewhat more likely to drop out, our estimates are probably
somewhat high.

The number of students graduating from grade thirteen is the
number enrolled minus the number of dropouts, or 2319. The number
graduating from grade twelve is 5128 - 1351 or 3777. The number of
grade thirteen graduates, 2319, divided by the number of grade twelve
students who are eligible for grade thirteen, 3777, gives the percentage
of grade twelve graduates who complete grade thirteen - 61 per cent.

This figure, multiplied by the cumulative retention rate through
grade twelve, gives the cumulative retention rate through grade thirteen.
This rate is 21 per cent.