

HOW DROPOUTS EXPERIENCE SCHOOLING

by

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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the constituents of the experience of dropping out of school, a phenomenological analysis was made of the responses of twenty high school dropouts to a questionnaire regarding their experience of school before deciding to leave.

Results of the present study support existing literature and research which suggest that attention be directed towards school internal factors; students expressed a need for autonomy, feelings of futility and boredom, conflict with teachers and administration, disillusionment with intellectual dishonesty, and concern that school was an inappropriate place for personal growth. Little or no concern was expressed over school external factors such as finding work or getting married.

Examiners:



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
LIST OF APPENDICES	iii
Chapter	
*I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	1
*II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE	6
Part one--The international scene	6
Part two--Canada	11
III. RESEARCH METHODS: DISCUSSION AND PROCEDURE	19
Phenomenological analysis	20
Selection of subjects	22
Procedure for data collection	25
Analysis of data	27
Listing and preliminary grouping	27
Elimination	28
Reduction	28
First hypothetical identification	29
Application	29
Final identification	30
*IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	31
REFERENCES	35
APPENDICES	37

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Initial form	37
B. Questionnaire	38
C. Breakdown of <u>Ss</u> according to age, grade level and method of contact	39
D. Breakdown of background experience of members of Boy's Club Alternate Programme	40
E. Letter mailed to <u>Ss</u>	41
F. Response not included in data	42
G. 117 original statements identified	45
H. Preliminary grouping	49
I. Statements included in final categories	52
J. Final identification of categories and the percentages of respondents who appear in them	55
K. Excerpts from some of the responses	56

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The high school dropout is frequently seen as a problem to himself and to his family. He is also the subject of concern throughout the world. Much research has been carried out in an attempt to discover both the causes and the consequences of his defection. An accepted definition of a dropout (Putnam, 1963) is a pupil who leaves a school, for any reason except death, before graduation and without transferring to another school. The term dropout is used most often to designate an elementary or secondary pupil who has been in membership during the regular school term and who withdraws from membership before graduating from secondary school. For the purposes of this study, since the available records are known to be misleading, the self-report of the student--his own definition of his situation as dropped out--was accepted, whether or not his name appeared in the official records of dropouts for his school district.

In the past, the traditional image of the school as the gateway to learning and prosperity has been such that when a student did leave before graduation, the questions asked tended to centre on the individual rather than on the institution. Recent studies (Holt, 1969; Rogers, 1969; United Community Services of Vancouver, 1970) however indicate that not only are no adequate answers being found to the problem, but that the questions themselves may be being asked in the wrong place. Rather than continuing to consider the student as problem, the more appropriate investigation may be of the problem school.

In Canada the national dropout rate is estimated at 48% by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (1965). It is suggested here that any

system which apparently fails to meet the needs of nearly half the people who are compulsorily involved with it may be questioned, certainly as to its methods and even as to the necessity for its continued existence in its present form. Little work has been done in this country in the area of dropouts other than the statistical records kept by the provinces of grade retention rates over the years. The Canadian Teachers Federation cites 160 books and papers in "School Dropouts", in the series Bibliographies in education (1971), only six of which are concerned with Canadian data. In view of the seriousness of the situation, this shortage would seem to indicate the need of further investigation. More support for the need for further studies of dropouts comes from the diversity of opinion that exists as it is reflected in both the national and the international literature.

Although the dropout problem seems quite critical, little attention has been paid to the view of the group most immediately concerned, the students themselves. As it is the student who makes the decision to stay in school or to drop out, it seems both relevant and important to attempt to uncover some of the factors involved in that decision from the viewpoint of the person who makes it. The primary purpose of this study was to enquire, in a beginning way, into the direct experience of dropping out of school of a group of young people. The major approach to the literature for this study is to provide an historical context. Most existing studies examine factors that lie outside the school or are based on teacher's and administrator's perception of the student's situation. Thus a need was seen by the author to ask the students themselves to discuss their experience of deciding to drop out of school. Further, since the direct reactions of individual students

were sought, a method was selected which is free of the restrictions inherent in a formal questionnaire. Those studies that do attempt to investigate student opinion, as far as the researcher is aware, all involve the use of standardized forms which may structure the responses that are obtained. In the present study those factors which lie outside the school were termed "school external" and were defined as concerning socio-economic and environmental considerations relating to the student.

↗ "School internal" factors concerned school administration, curriculum, general teaching patterns and attitudes and student-teacher relationships.

Of the six studies mentioned earlier that are specifically concerned with Canadian high school dropouts, only one (Breton and McDonald, 1967) surveys the Canadian national scene and attempts to identify situational factors. Many school districts and some groups such as the United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver area in their publication The school and the dropout (1970), have made individual studies of the problem. However, of the provinces, only Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Ontario have conducted dropout studies (Saskatchewan has started such a study this year), and in none of these provinces' studies has any attempt been made, as far as this researcher is aware, to sample the student's viewpoint.

The Breton and McDonald (1967) study which did consult student opinion, used standardized questionnaires which structured responses into categories such as "to get a job", "to make my own living", "to get married", "disliked school", and "don't know". These categories fit the stereotyped picture of the high school dropout given by Cervantes (1965) which represents a consideration of mainly school external factors. School internal factors such as the emphasis on curriculum and teaching

(at the expense of students and learning) suggested by Rogers (1969), or the underachieving school described by Holt (1969), are ignored. These, and other works discussed in Chapter Two, comprise a body of literature strongly indicating that early student leaving may in large part result from student dissatisfaction with their schools rather than from socio-economic factors or the desire to get married. ✕

The purpose of the present study was to discover how the student himself experienced his situation prior to leaving school. The method employed gives students an opportunity to name the problems and concerns that were uppermost in their minds at the time of leaving school. By means of a phenomenological analysis (van Kaam, 1969) of the students' experiences immediately prior to leaving school, the constituents of that experience can be identified. The phenomenological method developed by van Kaam (1958) and used in this study is inductive, starting from the collected data of subjective experience and moving to a description covering the data of the sample. It is usually used to uncover and explicate subjective experiences which are "common", basically constant under various conditions and distinguishable from other experiences (van Kaam, 1958). The constituents of the experience are the parts, elements or components necessary in forming or making up a whole. Constituents of an experience are abstractions, not always existing as really separate elements apart from the whole, but separately identifiable.

It is not proposed here that constituents of experience and causal factors in dropping out are necessarily synonymous nor that the use of this method can, or even should, discriminate between school internal and school external factors in such a way that the different viewpoints become polarized. Rather, it is hoped that by its use, one or

more significant areas of concern to the students themselves may be indicated in which further questions may be asked.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE:

Part One--The International Scene

In 1969, the International Bureau of Education became an integral part of UNESCO and in July 1970 their first joint meeting was held in Geneva. In his opening speech, M. Rene Maheu, Director General of UNESCO, said that, although educational wastage, the theme chosen for the conference, was widespread, little investigation into it had been done and that " . . . work on the basis of what measures might be adopted to remedy the present situation is still in its infancy." Because of the unique character of the conference, the final report is summarized here in some detail as the most complete picture available of the world-wide concern over school dropouts. It is also considered particularly appropriate to the present study in that the emphasis throughout the conference was almost exclusively on school internal factors. *

Wastage, defined as the under-development of human resources, occurs both in the developing nations and in countries with highly developed and sophisticated educational systems. To reduce this wastage, the UNESCO/IBE report suggests that changes, both in educational structure and in the relationship between pupil and teacher will have to come about.

It was generally agreed that the content of education should be constantly questioned and examined to produce true reform.

The report constantly stressed the needs of the individual student, for too often it appeared " . . . that the compartmentalization of subjects and the rigid traditional attitude towards subjects on the syllabus meant that the individual was imprisoned within the knowledge

he acquired" (p. 13). The process of acquiring knowledge should give the student more than the opportunity to receive information passively; rather he should be allowed to select what he learns and assess its value. He should not be expected to receive a training for a specific job shown in the tables worked out by an anonymous planner, but be given a training which would enable him to choose his own occupation and change it in the future as the need arose.

Finally, the report concludes, within the prevailing systems of evaluation, too often the student considers himself as a failure and as a victim of that system. His knowledge should be assessed not so as to show what he can not do, but rather what he can do.

Recognition must be accorded the concept that the school no longer has a monopoly on education. Student knowledge and attitudes often result to a large extent from out-of-school activities and exposure to the mass media. Existing structures must become more flexible, and must aim at developing an aptitude to learn even more than at imparting knowledge. Teachers themselves must learn, not only to understand the student better, but to know themselves better in order to ensure a teacher-student relationship based on a positive attitude. They should be given opportunities to acquire a wide experience in life and in their careers if they are to guide students adequately.

In the United States the problem of educational wastage has reached such proportions that twice within the last decade a President has felt it necessary to bring the matter to the attention of the people. In his State of the Union Message to Congress on January 14, 1963, President John F. Kennedy urged the American people to become aware of the seriousness of the school dropout problem saying, ". . . the future

of any country which is dependent on the will and wisdom of its citizens is damaged, and irreparably damaged, whenever any of its children is not educated to the fullest extent of his capacity . . ." (NEA Research Memo, 1963, p. 10). Again, in 1965 President Johnson reiterated, " . . . there is a darker side to education in America . . . almost a million young people each year will continue to quit school if our schools fail to stimulate their desire to learn . . . the cost of this neglect runs high, both for the youth and for the nation (Schrieber, 1965, p. 14)."

Lucius Cervantes has carried out extensive sociological research among school dropouts in the United States, examining the socio-cultural and psychodynamic factors involved in the dropout phenomenon (1965). Using an interview schedule and a matched sample technique, Cervantes drew a picture of the typical dropout which mainly emphasized school external factors. Among these were membership in a large, unhappy family, parents who had not progressed beyond the eighth grade, parental inconsistencies in affection and discipline and a father who was absent or perceived as weak. The student had behaviour problems requiring disciplinary measures, had changed schools frequently, showed a weak deferred-gratification pattern and expressed an inadequate image of self. Little attention was paid to school internal factors, although the student was described as resentful of authority and expressing feelings of "not belonging" in school. Cervantes comments,

. . . the dropout is no longer a boon to the national economy. He is clumsily dysfunctional in the computer-precise, machine-oriented, communication saturated society . . . the appalling fact is that there are so many of him . . . 7,500,000 (in the U.S.) during the 1960's . . . 25% of the country's top talent (above 110 I.Q.) is lost through premature withdrawal from the secondary school process (p. 196).

Here it may be appropriate to note that such data have been and are biased in favour of upper and middle class youth (Pine, 1967), who are less likely to become official statistics of any kind, including school dropouts, than young people from the lower socio-economic brackets. In part this may be due to the alternate solutions available to their parents, such as private schooling. These solutions are beyond the reach of lower income families. Due to this bias, the characteristics of school dropouts listed by Cervantes, may in fact better reflect official statistics than a real life situation. More recent research also indicates that the dropout may not always be as "clumsily dysfunctional" as has been suggested. Combs and Cooley (1968) in their study of high school dropouts and non-college high school graduates expected to find that non-college high school graduates were better off than high school dropouts as far as future employment and earnings were concerned. "Unfortunately, the results were not consistent with these expectations. Not only were the male dropouts earning as much as the controls, but they had been earning it longer" (p. 361-2). However, when these data were collected the dropouts were only about 19 years old. Many of the consequences of leaving high school prior to graduation may not become apparent until later in life.

Many social and educational critics, for example Carl Rogers (1969) and John Holt (1969), suggest that, rather than doing more research into the student-as-problem, a contextual emphasis is needed. This means examining the school and how students perceive schooling rather than studying the personality or socio-economic characteristics of pupils. Rogers sees that ". . . nearly every student finds that large portions of his curriculum are for him meaningless" (p. 4), and that classroom

learning becomes a futile exercise in learning material which has no personal meaning. To further quote Rogers:

in the vast majority of our schools at all educational levels, we are locked into a traditional and conventional approach which makes significant learning improbable if not impossible. When we put together in one scheme such elements as a prescribed curriculum, similar assignments for all students, lecturing as almost the only mode of instruction, standard tests by which all students are externally evaluated and instructor chosen grades as the measure of learning, then we can almost guarantee that meaningful learning will be at an absolute minimum (1969, p. 5).

Holt suggests that most, if not all, schools are "bad places for kids", places where the child learns that he is ". . . worthless, fit only to take other people's orders . . . to dodge, bluff, fake, cheat and to be lazy" (p. 18-19). He views with concern the situation at the present time in the United States where ". . . having spent ten years making the children hate school so much that they drop out, we then spend all kinds of money trying to figure out how to make schools attractive enough so that they'll come back in" (p. 183-4).

In Great Britain the minimum school leaving age is 15. Although during the 1960's 40-45% of the students left at that time, a large percentage of them continued their education under the further education system (Venables, 1968). By this plan, employers are encouraged to give their young employees a regular number of hours off each week to enable them to carry on with their studies, and this programme is state subsidised. The system is apart from the universities and offers an enormous selection of classes and courses at local colleges. In her book, Leaving school and starting work (1968), Venables comments that one reason given for the popularity of these colleges is that

" . . . you're not a kid anymore" (p. 7). A system of schooling which has the power to retain the majority of adolescents, requires a change in attitude towards many adolescent learners. In Venables' words:

Earlier physical maturity and changing ideas about early marriage make it difficult for some 15 and 16 year olds to agree to remain school children for a further 2 or 3 years . . . if we decide that a longer school life is essential, both for the individual and the nation, then there will be need for a widespread change of attitude to adolescent learners (1968, p. 7).

To bring about a "widespread change of attitudes to adolescent learners", adults must consider the adolescents' experiences of schooling. The numerous obstacles to such attitude change include the ambivalence of adult feelings towards the young, " . . . the older generation is constrained to torment as well as test (Venables, 1968, p. 3)."

Part Two--Canada

The national dropout rate in Canada is estimated at 48% (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1965). Grade nomenclature is not standard for all the provinces. In order to give national totals of estimated retention rates, the DBS has combined provincial grades to describe specified levels.

Career decisions of Canadian youth (Breton & McDonald, 1967) was the only recent study concerned with Canadian students' reasons for their decision to leave school or to stay in available to the researcher. The authors published the preliminary, descriptive results of a survey of the educational and occupational choices of a little over 13% of Canadian secondary school students. A cross-sectional design was used to simplify administration and minimize the amount of time required for the project.

Data was collected from approximately 375 schools, 8,000 teachers and 150,000 students. The student questionnaires were divided into two main parts:

- A. You and your school,
- B. Your educational plans.

Of necessity, all the responses to B were a priori to the educational plans discussed. From these responses, however, some interesting indications appeared. To the question, "When you finish your education, what type of work or occupation will you be most qualified to go into?" 32.2% of Senior Secondary students across Canada indicated that they did not know and 28.8% stated that they did not know what type of work or occupation they would like most if they had a choice (p. 65).

To the question, "Do you think you will leave school soon, leave later or stay until finishing?" 67.8% said that they would definitely finish high school (it should be noted here that this figure is somewhat higher than the estimated national average of 52% who do actually complete high school). Those who did not plan to finish gave the following responses to a further question as to their main reason for leaving:

- To get a job	21.0%	36
To make my own living and be independent	59.1	
- Poor marks or grades	215.2	30
To get married	3.4	
Because of financial problems	6.6	
- Dislike school work	413.6	30
Other	314.3	
Don't know	316.7	

Boys and girls were about equally likely to say that they will probably or definitely finish high school. The difference varied depending on grade level, but tended to be around 3% in favour of the girls (p. 19).

The proportion of students who definitely planned to finish high school differed considerably from province to province, from 60.9% for Quebec to 80.7% for British Columbia (p. 65). However, as has been previously mentioned, these figures were obtained "before the fact" and as yet no comparison has been published between estimation and actuality. It is also important to be aware, in considering the projected reasons given by students for their possible school withdrawal, that categories such as "dislike school work", "other", and "don't know", which accounted for 44.6% of the whole, probably meant something different to each student who responded affirmatively.

In 1970 the United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver area published a report, The school and the dropout. The report reviewed research findings on student dropout and dissatisfaction, drawn from published studies in the fields of education and the sociology and psychology of education. The report relied heavily on research conducted in the United States and Canada.

This report, which placed great emphasis on the role of school internal factors in early student withdrawal, made the following major proposition:

That dropping out, student dissatisfaction and low commitment to educational values are in large part responses to three, not necessarily mutually exclusive, factors: educational failure, perceived irrelevancy of formal education and a lack of involvement on the part of the student in the process of education (United Community Services of Vancouver, 1970, p. 69).

It was suggested by the research evidence cited in this study that the phenomenon of dropping out is not a respecter of social background, intelligence or personality type, and that concentration on

school internal, rather than on school external factors is indicated for identifying the source of the problem. Schools were seen here as being (with the possible exception of prisons), " . . . the only ubiquitous, uniform, compulsory, government controlled social institutions which have a wholly captive clientele (United Community Services of Vancouver, 1970, p. 28)."

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The report The school and the dropout concluded by stating that findings taken from a broad spectrum of educational research substantiated the proposition quoted above and suggested that the nature of the authority-system and the teaching-learning structure in most schools, positively contributed to educational failure, perceived irrelevancy of formal education, student dissatisfaction and lack of involvement in the educational process. The authors of the report stressed that it was not their intention to accuse the schools of malperformance of duties, but rather to suggest that internal resistance to change and problems of innovation, implementation and evaluation have left them inadequate to accommodate and institutionalize change. The public school has retained features which are inappropriate to the demands of modern society.

Today, there is a greater emphasis on the schools' responsibility for all youth for longer periods of time, not only in terms of academic and vocational requirements but also in terms of social attitudes, interpersonal competence and maturity. Too many aspects of the school system are inadequate for this expanded task . . . the problems of early school leaving and the disaffection of youth won't be solved by a simple categorization in terms of "dropout" and "alienated". These concepts are too global and too diffuse, and, above all, they fail to highlight the social processes by which young persons come to reject the legitimacy of the school system (United Community Services of Vancouver, 1970, p. 69).

A different approach to the underlying problems of dropouts was taken by Dr. Aaron Bindman of the University of Saskatchewan (1966), who suggested that an exaggerated "pseudo-psychological" emphasis on individualism ". . . which regards the individual as a self-contained unit (Bindman, 1966, p. 24)", ignores the process of environmental influence on behaviour and stops researchers from asking the more important question, "What is wrong with society?" "I submit that we resist the hard look at society because we believe that we can sufficiently manipulate the individual . . . to reorient . . . him, no matter how disorganized and disorienting our society may be (Bindman, 1966, p. 25)." He commented that young people from affluent homes are increasingly found among high school dropouts.

In discussing possible solutions, he suggested that although any steps taken to overcome the problem would be expensive, they might not be as expensive as failing to equip youth to make ". . . a reasonable adaptation to the requirements of a modern complex society (Bindman, 1966, p. 28)". At present, many schools are attempting to increase their holding power by making school work interesting, exciting and stimulating. This Bindman saw as an entirely false hope on the grounds that reading, writing, and arithmetic could never, under any circumstances, be as stimulating as a ride in a car with a co-ed. Also, the result of making school "fun" too often turned out to be a diluted curriculum which lacked substance.

Bindman offered two possible solutions to the dropout phenomenon. One was based on what some psychologists have called a "psycho-social moratorium" for youth during the stressful years of social and physical maturation. An adaptation of this would involve young people

remaining in school and would require the development of a set of school sub-systems as holders of students within the high school. Many high school athletes today for example, have only the loosest attachment to the more academic aims of their school, but remain in order to take part in the sporting activities that they see as important in their lives. In much the same way, Bindman suggested, this concept could be broadened to include many other extracurricular activities which would be attractive enough to keep the students in school.

The second plan put forward by Bindman involved the introduction of a distributive education programme (already being adopted in some of the urban centre high schools in Saskatchewan), or "time-out" for work. In this approach, the students are helped to find work locally (for which they are paid) for half the day and attend school for the other half.

Three localized studies were reviewed. Hall and McFarlane's study of "Paulend", a typical Ontario community, in Transition from school to work, (1965), Ranciers' case studies of high school dropouts in a rural school division in Alberta (Alberta Journal of Education Research, 1963), and Dumka's interviews with one hundred dropouts reported in The B. C. Teacher (September-October, 1970).

Transition from school to work was an intensive indepth study made in "Paulend" to determine how school achievement was linked to (a) job opportunity, (b) income, (c) unemployment, and (d) work achievement. Students dropped out during all five years of the Ontario high school programme. The largest proportion left in grade 10 and another large contingent in grade 12. Hall and McFarlane stated that "It would appear that intelligence is roughly correlated with survival in high school, but

enough bright students drop out early and enough dull ones carry through to the end to cast doubt on intelligence tests as good predictors of school performance (p. 75)". Boys fell out of school to a greater extent than girls did and were more likely than girls to have trouble finding a job when they did. They also experienced longer periods of unemployment.

Rancier (1963) conducted case studies of ten high school dropouts in a rural school division in Alberta to find out why they left school and if and how this could have been prevented. Six significant similarities in the reasons given for withdrawal emerged. All the dropouts wanted to take courses of a more vocational nature than those offered in an academic programme. "Outside attractions" (classified by Rancier as ranging from boy or girl friends to desire for financial and social independence), played a large part in the reasons given for leaving school. Financial difficulties were often mentioned as an excuse for leaving school early, but Rancier suggested that ". . . it must be considered that there appeared to be some rationalization in using this as a reason (p. 20)." Dislike of school and teachers, the negative feelings of parents towards school and personality problems that pointed to the dropout as an isolate or near isolate in school were other important factors related to early school withdrawal. It was also suggested here that it was not the less intelligent who leave school before graduation.

In Victoria, B. C., Dumka (1969) interviewed 100 dropouts from the Greater Victoria School District and 100 stayins in the same area as a basis for comparison. The findings showed that there were characteristic differences in home and school experiences of the two groups. Dropouts had a higher rate of grade failure, reading retardation, truancy and rate of absence; they did not receive less counselling than students

who stayed in school, but both groups agreed that the services offered were inadequate. Dropouts felt that they were less accepted and understood at home and at school than stayins did and they became resentful of corporal punishment, which merely served to intensify their dislike of school. They took part in fewer extracurricular activities than students who stayed in school and felt that they were both academically and culturally disadvantaged. The majority of dropouts, at least in the greater Victoria area, did not come from the lower socio-economic levels.

Dumka questioned the attitude of the school towards some students and suggested that " . . . when certain pupils withdraw from school, there are sighs of relief from the staff and administration. Another school problem has left! (p. 27)." He stressed that the responsibility of the school to the student should not end when that student drops out. Rather, through competent counselling and a well organized follow-up programme, students should be encouraged and enabled to return to the system, even after they have once withdrawn from it. *

This chapter and the preceeding one were intended as a broad contextual review to provide a framework for the study which was carried out in Victoria by the researcher. It was hoped also that it might serve in some way to point up the complexity of this multi-faceted problem and the diversity of opinion that exists.

To the author, the word "dropout" itself has an unfortunate connotation, carrying with it an intimation of an almost inevitable process of attrition within which the student is powerless to act. It is suggested here that many so called dropouts are in fact driven-outs or break-outs, young men and women who have taken decisive action to escape a situation which they have come, over a period of years, to perceive as untenable. *

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS: DISCUSSION AND PROCEDURE

Research surveys involving the use of questionnaires have been much in use during recent years, resulting in the accumulation of a mass of statistical data. A problem arising from the use of standardized research questionnaires may be the inadvertent imposition by the investigator of response categories which fail to allow the subject sufficient latitude in which to express his views.

One value of the phenomenological method which was used in this study is that its use guards against subjectivism, defined by van Kaam as ". . . the one sided attempt by an investigator to impose man made categories, methods and schemata upon objectively given data (1969, p. 305)." The use of any method is only provisional, and must be open to change if it fails to lead to a deeper understanding of the subject. The phenomenological method was used here as a first approach which does not restrict the phenomena under study to an established structure of theoretical constructs.

Deciding to leave school is seen as distinct from other decisions made in every day life to the extent that any decision made differs from any other. Processes of decision making may have much in common, but the experience of that decision, the constituents or components involved, may differ both qualitatively and quantitatively each time a decision is made. The experience of deciding to get married, for example, may be presumed to differ from deciding to turn off the television. Within these decisions, one experiential phenomenon is distinguishable by an individual from another, although certainly not as clearly as a physical entity would be.

The purpose of this study was to discover the areas of common experience that might exist among individuals who decided to leave school before completing their studies. The study considered whether the experiences of that decision contained elements or components common to more than one person who made it, and what those elements were.

Phenomenological Analysis

The complexity of such a decision may make it appear difficult to isolate such a phenomenon as "experience of school", although everyday conversation does indicate a commonality of experience among early school leavers. An assumption of this type, intuitively valid though it may appear, does not serve as an adequate foundation for further theoretical development. It may be possible, however, to arrive at these commonalities in a more precise and scientific way by means of a method such as a phenomenological analysis.

There are six operations in the scientific explication of the data in a phenomenological analysis: listing and primary grouping, elimination, reduction, hypothetical identification, application and final identification. These steps do not always occur in the order indicated and they may tend, in practice, to overlap one another, but ". . . they form a set of ordered abstractions partly describing the complicated mental process that the phenomenological scientist experiences as a natural totality (van Kaam, 1969, p. 325)."

For this study, the data was collected by means of a questionnaire which was completed by the subjects. The initial form used in a brief pilot study (Appendix A) closely followed the outline given by van Kaam (1969, p. 331). The subjects were 12 girls, ages ranging from 16 to 22, all of whom had made some radical change in their life styles

during the previous 12 months. For some it was leaving school, for others, leaving university or a religious order or, in one case, the termination of a personal relationship. Girls were chosen for the pilot study because it had been decided to use male subjects for the actual study. Since anonymity was an essential feature of selection, there was no other way of ensuring that the same subject was not used twice.

The subjects used in the pilot study were contacted by the researcher and asked if they would be willing to help by giving half an hour of their time. All but three were personally known to the author and were chosen because their circumstances seemed appropriate; the names of the other three girls were suggested by those who had already completed the questionnaire. They were all interviewed in the researcher's home and were asked, with a minimum of preamble, if they would sit down and complete a questionnaire designed to refer to their particular situation. For example, girls who had left school were given a form with the words "Describe how you felt about school before you left," while the girls who had recently left the convent were asked to complete a form with the words "Describe how you felt about religious life before you left."

Interviews with each of the pilot study subjects after they had completed the initial forms resulted in the elimination of the numbering system used by van Kaam, which was found to tend to organize the responses into a point form, thereby reducing spontaneity. The question of confidentiality appeared to be important to all the respondents in the pilot study who stressed the need as they saw it for the researcher to establish a "trust" relationship with the subjects and to maintain an air of informality. In keeping with this aim, and the personal approach

that was felt to be an integral part of the project, the actual appearance of the form to be used was considered to be important. The use of coloured paper and hand lettering was suggested as one means of conveying a less formal impression than the white sheet, typewritten, that was used as the initial form in the pilot study. Several different layouts were prepared and the final version, using black hand lettering on legal sized pale blue paper (Appendix B) was chosen. The expressed need for informality and establishment of a climate of trust led to the decision to devote as much time as seemed necessary to each group of subjects before asking for their help, rather than presenting them with the form without any introduction.

Selection of Subjects

Male students who had been registered in grades 10, 11 or 12 in the Greater Victoria School District during the academic year 1970-71 were chosen as subjects. Fifteen of the twenty subjects used in the study were contacted through the Greater Victoria Boy's Club where they were registered in the Alternate Programme. The remaining 5 were names taken from the withdrawal list published by the Greater Victoria School Board.

Approximately forty boys are registered in the Alternate Programme. Attendance is checked for specific projects in which they are enrolled, or in cases where they are required to come. Some boys are there purely as "social" members, the majority are continuing their education by correspondence course with minimal supervision. Boys wander in and out during the day and at any time, some may be present who are not officially members. The difficulty of keeping track of who attended the club and the anonymity factor of the study made it impractical to

try and reach all forty. In 4 days, the author talked with over 30 boys. Some took forms and did not return them, some stated that they did not meet the criteria. Nineteen responses were obtained and fifteen were used in the study. The remaining 4 did not fit the criteria, either because they had left school prior to reaching grade 10 or before the academic year 1970-71.

Boys rather than girls were chosen for the study for a variety of reasons. The percentage of boys failing to complete high school is higher than the percentage of girls (Whittingham, 1966, p. 7). The consequences regarding employment of early school leaving may be more serious for boys than for girls (United Community Services of Vancouver, 1970, p. 2). Boys proved to be easier to contact than girls. Girls appear able to get part-time work, baby-sitting or in a kitchen, more easily than boys. Girls do not exhibit the same tendency to spend their days together in groups of ten or twelve if they are not employed and there is no facility for girls in Victoria comparable to the Boy's Club.

The breakdown of the twenty subjects according to grade level, age and method of contact is given in Appendix C. Students from grade 10, 11, and 12 only were contacted, and occupational class students were not included. Following van Kaam (1969, p. 32), older students were selected as more likely to have the written and expressive skills necessary for adequate response. Ten responses obtained from students who had left school while still enrolled in grade 8 confirmed this opinion, and these were not used in the final study.

The stipulation that students had been enrolled during the present academic year was deemed necessary in order to minimize the distortion which may be present in data recalled over a long period of time.

The subjects were chosen because they fitted the criteria specified and because they were available to the researcher. To reach as representative a group as possible, it was planned originally to contact subjects through a number of different places in the town. Included in these various settings were Cool Aid, the Juvenile Detention Centre, the Y.M.C.A., the Boy's Club, Middle Earth House, and the Reception and Diagnostic Centre at Carey Road, as well as the list of school withdrawals printed monthly by the Greater Victoria School Board. On investigation of the backgrounds of the boys registered in the Alternate Programme at the Boy's Club however, it was found that they represented a wide cross-section of the community and had themselves had experience of many of the groups and places named above. An indication of this breadth of experience is given in Appendix D, which shows a breakdown arrived at by the researcher in consultation with workers at the Club.

The Alternate Programme at the Boy's Club provides a work, recreation and study club programme for boys who have left school. Approximately 25% of the members are referred from Juvenile Court; for the remainder, attendance is largely voluntary, as is the amount of time spent at the club or out on work projects during the week. The atmosphere is informal and relaxed; smoking is allowed; coffee and coke are available; and an excellent rapport exists between the boys and the staff. An attempt at data collection was made in Bastion Square and from Middle Earth House. The samples gathered were not suitable for this study in that the subjects had either left school before the current academic year, or had not reached grade 10.

Procedure for Data Collection

The fifteen subjects who were reached through the Boy's Club were contacted during a five day period near the end of the school year. An average of 4 hours a day was spent with the boys in the large room used by the Alternate Programme. The researcher wore jeans and a sweater in keeping with the informal atmosphere.

On the first day, the programme director introduced the researcher to the group of 4 or 5 boys who were in the club. "Hey, this is Liz. She's from the University. Show her where the coffee is." The boys are accustomed to students as resource people and the presence of one more person from the University was readily accepted. No attempt at data collection was made at that time. It was felt necessary to establish a good relationship with as many of the boys as possible before asking them to respond to the questionnaire in a personal way. For the remainder of the day, the author sat, listened, drank coffee, talked, and acted as resource person for those boys who were studying.

On the second and subsequent days a pile of blue questionnaire forms was placed on a table by the researcher. When a form was picked up and commented on, the researcher explained her work and enumerated her criteria to one or more boys who appeared interested. Boys who felt that they met these criteria were asked to take a form and complete it if they had time. Similar contacts were made during the three days with individuals and with small groups. As often as was necessary, the following points were made by the researcher, approximately in this order and in as informal a manner as possible. "I am a graduate student at U. Vic., working on a master's thesis. My interest is in people who leave school before completing. I hear reasons why this happens, but they

come from administrators, teachers, and parents. I don't hear what the people who are actually doing the leaving--you--what you are saying. I'd like to know about that. If you have time, you could help me a lot by doing this (indicating the questionnaire). I'd really appreciate it."

Each subject completed his own questionnaire in his own time. No limit was set and some of the boys asked to be allowed to take the form home with them and do it in the evening and bring it back the next day. When a form was handed back, the researcher made a point of folding it and putting it in a file, without looking directly at it or the subject as it was felt important to support the claim of anonymity which was made throughout the study. This claim would have been affected if any attempt to link a subject with his response had been observed.

In addition to contacts made at the Alternate Programme, the names of 51 male students who had withdrawn from school and who appeared to fit the criteria already specified, were obtained from the list of withdrawals issued monthly by the Greater Victoria School Board. This extension was carried out to obtain responses from as varied a group as possible, and it was felt that in this way subjects who were actually employed might be contacted. A personal letter (Appendix E) was mailed to each of them with a copy of the questionnaire and a stamped envelope for its return to the researcher. Out of a total of eleven written replies, five were used in the study; five of the remainder had been described inaccurately on the list of withdrawals and did not in fact fit the required criteria, and one arrived too late to be included in the analysis of the data. Because so many of the comments made in it echo the replies received from the other subjects, this last reply is included, in the student's own language, in Appendix F.

Inaccuracies in the withdrawal list were such that no attempt was made to follow up nonrespondents. Some students shown on the "withdrawals" list had in fact graduated or transferred to other schools. Of the first ten letters received by the researcher, only five actually fitted the specified criteria although all ten names appeared from the list to be suitable for inclusion in the study. In addition, concern was expressed in two telephone calls made by mothers of boys who were shown on the withdrawal list but who had completed grade 12. As no other source of information was available, it was felt undesirable to continue for reasons of time, money, and the possibility of troubling some families unnecessarily.

Analysis of Data

Listing and Preliminary Grouping

After all the completed questionnaires were collected, the descriptive expressions contained in them were identified and listed independently by three judges (two women and one man), as separate unique statements. This method of using three judges, the author and two graduate students, in counselling psychology at the University of Victoria, was used in all six operations. The same three judges were used throughout. The judges familiarized themselves with the procedures and then worked independently from the raw data through all the steps in turn. After this, they worked together, starting once again with the raw data and conferring until a consensus was reached at each step. Disagreement among the judges presented no particular problem. If an expression was found by one judge that had been overlooked by another, it was added. If one judge was not convinced that a particular expression was really represented by the reduction which was subsequently made, this initial

reduction was supplemented until agreement was reached. Although some expressions appeared initially to overlap with others, further reduction was carried out only in the later stages of the explication. The preliminary grouping therefore was extremely flexible and was expanded to include every basically different statement made by the subjects. Throughout the process, van Kaam's statement that ". . . every expression revealing a moment of experience not manifested in formulations of other subjects must be written down, whether or not the researcher believes it to be worthwhile (p. 332)," was the guideline used by the judges.

Elimination

Those expressions that were probably not directly related to the experience of deciding to leave school, as judged by all three judges, were eliminated. In the process of elimination, however, it was necessary to bear in mind that some valid experiences might be revealed in negative or indirect ways, and it was felt to be important that these expressions be interpreted and listed carefully.

Reduction

In this stage, the imprecise, vague, sometimes negative and often overlapping expressions of the subjects were reduced to more precise and descriptive terms. Here too, inter-subjective agreement among the three judges was obtained in an attempt to eliminate subjectivism in the terms to which the expressions were reduced. Expressions such as "I couldn't take the courses I wanted to" and "I was forced to take courses I didn't want" were reduced to "I felt frustrated" ("frustrated" here defined as being thwarted from reaching a goal).

In the process of reduction each of the expressions listed had to be tested, by all three judges, on two dimensions:

1. does this expression by the subject contain a moment of experience that was really part of his decision to leave school?
2. If so, is it possible to identify this moment of experience, and label it precisely without violating the original statement of the subject?

After all the experiences were tested on these two dimensions, the judges were able to determine whether many seemingly different expressions actually had some relevant moment of experience in common. All the expressions discovered in this way to either directly or indirectly represent a shared experience were brought together.

First Hypothetical Identification

All the expressions gathered in the process of reduction were then grouped together and labeled with a more abstract formula which expressed a common feeling. This identification or labeling was referred to as "hypothetical" because it had not at this stage been tested against the original data (van Kaam, p. 327). This step resulted in the identification of five constituents or components of the experience of deciding to leave school, each of which headed a certain number of expressions in which they were originally contained. Each of these constituents was accompanied by the percentage of responses in which it was present.

Application

The fifth step of the explication was the application of the hypothetical descriptions to the original cases. The components that had been hypothetically identified had to be found, by all 3 judges, to

be fully compatible with the original responses made by the subjects. They could then be considered valid identifications and descriptions of the experience.

The following operational definition was used:

A necessary constituent of a certain experience is a moment of the experience which, while explicitly or implicitly expressed in the significant majority of explications, is also compatible with those descriptions which do not express it (van Kaam, 1969, p. 336).

For the present study, this guideline meant that all components were judged either (a) to describe a moment of experience explicitly or implicitly expressed in the majority of explications or (b) to be compatible with those descriptions in which they were not expressed.

Final Identification

After preceding steps had been completed, the formerly hypothetical identification of the components of the experience of deciding to leave school, were considered independently by the three judges to be a valid identification and description. It should be noted that validity was only for the group represented in this study, and lasts only until other cases of the experience of deciding to leave school are presented which do not correspond to the constituents described here and contained in the formula.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A synthetic description of the experience of schooling prior to dropping out, derived from the data collected in this study, is given here:

A subject, prior to leaving school, experienced a lack of autonomy and a feeling of being powerless to effect change in a system which he found frustrating, futile and boring. He experienced conflict with teachers and administration and was disillusioned by what he perceived as their intellectual dishonesty. He experienced school as an inappropriate place to resolve his confusion over his own identity.

This description summarized the results of the present study which expressed strong concern over school-internal factors. Support was found, on a local level, for the views of Holt (1969), Rogers (1969), the UNESCO/IBE Conference (1970), the United Community Services of Vancouver Report (1970), and Venables (1970), which were concerned almost exclusively with such school-internal factors as school administration, curriculum, general teaching patterns and attitudes and student-teacher relationships. School-internal factors mentioned by Dumka (1970) were also supported. No support was found for the importance of school-external factors such as socio-economic or environmental conditions in a student's decision to drop out of high school. While not necessarily refuting the concern of Breton and McDonald (1967) or Cervantes (1965) with school-external factors, findings from the present study indicate the need for further investigation of ways in which schools and teachers

may be failing to meet students' needs.

The UNESCO/IBE report stressed the need for changes in the educational structure and in student-teacher relationships, the importance of attending to the needs of the individual student and the need for an increase in self-awareness by teachers in order to facilitate more positive attitudes towards students. Students interviewed locally saw the same areas in need of change. Ninety percent expressed feelings of frustration, futility and boredom (Appendix J). The words "futile" and "boring" were used frequently by the respondents. "Frustration" was introduced by the judges to compact the expressed feelings of students compelled to take courses in which they were not interested or unable to work in areas which they saw as valuable. Seventy-five percent found themselves in conflict with the system, teachers and administration, both in matters relating to curriculum when they felt that their needs were ignored and in disciplinary procedures which they considered unreasonable. Feelings of being powerless to effect change were expressed by 65%. Furthermore, 40% were disillusioned by teachers whom they perceived as using class time to indoctrinate them with "middle-class" values (Appendix K). Twenty-five percent mentioned a particular incident that resulted in their deciding to leave school; seventy-five percent said that there was no particular incident but that school was not a place in which they found it possible to remain. It is important to note here that 75% of the subjects who participated in the present study were involved in a programme of continuing education through the Alternate Programme at the Boy's Club. Although they could not accept schooling, they were still concerned with getting an education.

The strong support found in the local study for the UNESCO/IBE report also existed for the school-internal factors discussed by Holt (1969) and Rogers (1969). Both Holt's view of school as a place where the student is not respected and Roger's statement that the curriculum is meaningless to many students reflect attitudes prevalent among the subjects interviewed by the author (Appendices F and K).

While Breton and McDonald (1967) found that 30% of high school students gave "to get a job and earn my own living" as a probable reason for leaving school, the importance of this school-external factor is not supported by the present study. Ten percent of the local subjects stated that they were working. The concern expressed however was not with "working to earn a living" but rather with the possibilities for self-exploration and self-fulfillment which they found in work but not in school (Appendices F and K).

The United Community Services of Vancouver Report (1970) described a lack of involvement for students in an education process perceived by them as irrelevant. The support of the local study for this view has already been made clear. Dumka's finding (1970) that corporal punishment bred resentment among students and served to intensify their dislike of school is also supported here. However the author doubts whether any of the dropouts she interviewed would be willing to cooperate with the follow-up counselling programme that Dumka suggests should be initiated by the schools. None of the young people with whom the author talked were prepared to consider further contact with a "regular" high school. They expressed concern over education per se but believed that they could best work for one outside the existing structure. Their pleasure at having "someone from the University"

listen to and accept their views appeared real, as did their concern for "other kids who'd have to drop out" because they too would find it impossible to stay in.

This initial look at how high school dropouts experience schooling before deciding to leave suggested many questions that so far remain unanswered. It suggested also that these questions should be asked of the student, about the school, as well as of the school about the student.

The feelings of alienation expressed by the subjects in the present study may reflect those common to the current youth culture rather than of high school dropouts alone. Further research using a control group of students who have chosen to remain in school is needed to clarify this point. Other changes planned by the author include the use of a sample drawn from a more extensive population and of taped verbal as well as written reports. In further studies, all subjects should be contacted in the same manner.

While finding little that was definitive, the present study indicated that the phenomenological method has value as a means of investigating the direct reactions of individuals in a way that should enrich further research.

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APPENDIX A

Initial Form

Age Sex

1. Do NOT write your name or any other personal identification at the top of this paper.
2. Write ONLY your age and sex at the top of this paper.
3. Please read ALL the following remarks before you write anything further.
4. Describe how you felt about school before you left
 - a. recall some situation when you felt you would really have to leave, that it was impossible for you to stay in school any longer
 - b. it does not matter how big or small the incident was, it is your feelings about it that are important. Try to describe how you felt in that situation NOT the situation itself
 - c. try to describe your feelings just as they were
 - d. please do not stop until you feel that you have described your feelings as completely as possible

APPENDIX B
Questionnaire

(on blue paper for subjects)

CONFIDENTIAL

Age..... Sex..... Last grade..... Year. 197-...

Do NOT write your name or any other personal identification at the top of this paper ~

Please read ALL the following remarks before you write anything further ~

Describe how you felt just before you left school ~

~ recall some situation when you felt you would really have to leave school, that it was impossible for you to stay in any longer ~

~ it does not matter how 'big' or 'small' the incident was. It is your feelings about it that are important ~ Try to

describe how you felt in that situation

NOT the situation itself ~

~ Try to describe your feelings just as they were ~

~ please do not stop until you feel that you have described your feelings as completely as possible ~

APPENDIX C

Breakdown of 20 Ss According to
Age, Grade Level and Method of Contact

<u>N</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Contact</u>
1	15	10	Boy's Club
9	16	10	Boy's Club
1	16	10	Mailing List
1	16	11	Boy's Club
1	17	10	Boy's Club
1	17	11	Boy's Club
2	18	10	Boy's Club
1	18	10	Mailing List
1	18	11	Mailing List
1	18	11	Boy's Club
1	18	12	Mailing List

APPENDIX D

Breakdown of Background Experience

of Members of Boy's Club Alternate Programme

On probation	25%
Referred by social agency: Family and Children's Service City Welfare, etc. Home problems or living away from home (includes 25% on probation)	42%
Living at home with no apparent major family problems	58%
Considered by staff to come from middle or upper-middle class homes	20%

APPENDIX E

Letter Mailed to Ss

May 13, 1971

Could you find time to reply to the enclosed questionnaire? I am working for my Masters Degree at the University of Victoria, and am preparing a thesis on students' reasons for leaving high school.

All the material I receive is held in the strictest confidence. Your name will not be linked with your response, nor will it be used in any other way. If you have any questions, please phone me at 598-4391. I would very much appreciate having the form back as soon as possible and I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX F

Response Not Included in the Data

"U", aged 16, left school in grade 11

Before I left school I felt crappy. Everything in the school was driving me nuts. For an example I will explain to you that the teachers made like they were super brains or god or something, you couldn't talk to them like they were normal people. For instance, my P. E. teacher, his name was (X), I put his name in there so if you ever see him you can spit on him or something. (X) figured he was just the greatest guy in the world. He used to drive me nuts. You couldn't do one thing wrong when he was around because if he began to dislike (you) he would get you kicked out of school. That's no lie either. I hated the guy. He used to help all the girls in our class but never any guys. He liked to rub their bums when they were on the trampoline and he used to watch all us guys eat our hearts out. He was also a sadist. He loved to torture students. If you didn't meet up to his requirements he would stay on your back until you went nuts. Anyway, so much for the I hate the teacher crap.

All the bloody teachers in the whole place figured I was a prick. That really ate my ass. I dropped in to see the councillor and the vice principal grabed me and said he wanted to talk to me. I nearly hammered the cocksucker right in the head. He gave me all this shit about he figured it would be to the schools advantage if I quit. Nice guy! He wiped out his little card and showed me how bad I had been. I tell you it sure as hell brought tears to my eyes. He's a real jerk. He was just very nicely telling me to quit fucking up his school and get out of it. It didn't matter what I did, the son of a bitch still hung onto

my back. Finally I said fuck this noise so I didn't go to any of my classes. I went down into the shops and worked on my car and I made cabinetts and stuff. I love the shop. I always did. I learned a lot down there and the shop teachers were really great. They^{new} I was skipping all my classes but they just told the other teachers I wasn't in the shops. It was really great. I was really working and I really liked it. For about three weeks I went to school at 7 and left at 5. That was pretty good for me. Then all hell broke loose. The teachers found out what I was doing and started to razz the shop teachers. I didn't even know this because the shop teachers didn't tell me. You know, that being a good shit, they knew I was working and learning down there so they left me. When I found out they were getting shit because I was down I freaked. There was no way I was going to let those guys get in any more trouble because of me. What a fuck up hey??? That killed me right there. The only work I had ever done in my life in school and I wasn't allowed to do it. I was really mad and hurt too I guess. That made me so god damn mad. You wouldn't believe it would you. There was no course I could take or even change over to so I could get into those shops. I will never forget that as long as I live. Thats one for your little book. The fuckers didn't want to let me work. They figured if I stayed down there all the other kids would want to also. Well then why didn't they make a fucking course that would let you stay in the shops. I was going to be a carpenter anyway so why shouldn't I learn something that would help my future. English sure as shit wasn't going to make me into a fucking good carpenter was it! Anyway when I got called to the office by the vice and he asked me what the Hell I was doing I said I was learning and working in the shops and I was really going

to help my future. He could dig this. No matter what I said or how hard I suckholed they wouldn't let me in the shops so I told him he could put his rosey little school up his rectum and walked out. . . . As far as I got it figured those bastards didn't want me in that bloody school so I went to work. I am working on construction on a framing crew and I love it. No shit. Well thats the end of my sob story but I hope those teachers learn to look past their God damn classrooms and change a course or two to help some of those guys.

Good luck over and out and I hope you make it.

John Dropout

APPENDIX G

117 Original Responses Identified

Complete list of statements with age and grade of respondent

"A", age 17, grade 11 (Boy's Club)

I didn't feel good in school
 I was unhappy
 I was confused
 I was in a turmoil on the inside trying to find myself
 people were throwing garbage at me from the outside
 it's impossible to learn something until you know yourself
 the schools should do something about this
 I know they won't

"B", age 18, grade 11 (Boy's Club)

I was confused
 I felt frustrated
 I received poor counselling
 I lost interest in my classes
 my classes were all screwed up

"C", age 18, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I felt frustrated
 I was embittered
 I lost my temper (with the principal)
 I got the strap
 school was not a place of learning
 school was a place where teacher's beliefs were pushed at me
 teacher's beliefs are not relevant to today
 schools should get updated and get fresh thoughts and minds
 into the system

"D", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I didn't have any freedom in school
 I felt like an animal caged in
 I was humiliated by a teacher in front of the class
 a teacher hit another kid and I didn't like it
 I felt so angry I walked out
 I was so mad I could have killed the teacher

"E", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I felt like skipping out
 When I got caught skipping out
 I gambled and lost

"F", age 17, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I didn't have any freedom in school
 school lacks individualism
 school lacks idealism
 I was hit unjustly by a teacher
 the principal sided with the teacher
 the principal didn't attempt to understand my feelings
 rules such as compulsory attendance are useless
 the principal manipulates the students through the use
 of student councils
 you're programmed in school to lead an average (money making) life

"G", age 18, grade 12 (Mailing List)

I was bitter about the administration
 I was bitter about the poor rules
 I was forced to take electives I didn't want
 I was hassled by the vice principal for not attending classes I
 didn't want to take
 I didn't get to take the classes I did want

"H", age 18, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I wasn't involved with the system
 I wasn't interested in the system
 I was hated by the teachers

"I", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I didn't have any freedom in school
 I didn't have any privileges
 I wasn't interested in the system
 I started to skip out
 skipping out became a habit
 I finally disinvolved myself totally

"J", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I started to skip out
 skipping out got to be a habit
 I got bored
 I didn't like teachers telling me what to do and when to do it
 it seemed as though they didn't want to kick me out

"K", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I didn't get along with the only school I was allowed to go to
 I wanted a school with more freedom

"L", aged 18, grade 10 (Mailing List)

I was wasting my time at school
 the only things I learnt I learnt on my own
 students need more help from teachers than they get
 when I quit I felt I was letting my parents down

"M", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I felt depressed in school
 I felt school was futile
 the school tried to remove my dignity
 the school tried to remove my independence
 because I had different beliefs from the teacher I was considered
 a deficit to the class
 I felt I was forced to leave school
 the school was used to push a particular ideology at me
 I left because of the teaching methods
 I left because of the subject matter

"N", age 16, grade 11 (Boy's Club)

I started to skip out
 it got to be habit
 I got bored

"O", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I felt depressed in school
 I got kicked out for fighting
 I got kicked out for skipping classes
 I was bugged by my peers

"P", age 16, grade 10 (Mailing List)

school was a rat race
 I wanted to do something that would show what I'd put into it
 school is for people who have interest in studies
 I have interest in work you can be proud of
 I wanted a job that would make a man out of me
 I didn't want to be a bloody hippie
 I couldn't stand the lazy bums who go to school and make a mess of
 the world
 I've got a job
 I'll advance in my job according to my ability
 I got into fights

"Q", age 18, grade 11 (Mailing List)

I've got a job
 I had to take courses I didn't want
 students should be allowed to take courses they need

my biggest disappointment was the slow rate at which we learnt
enjoyment of what one is doing is an important part of life
no attempt was made to understand my situation
working at my own pace would have given me a feeling of satisfaction
I got bored

"R", age 16, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

Having women teachers made me feel as if I was in grade 1
I couldn't stand having ladies tell me what to do

"S", age 15, grade 10 (Boy's Club)

I felt everyone was against me
there was nowhere I could go without getting hasselled
I felt pretty shitty
it was one complete mind-fuck

"T", age 18, grade 11 (Mailing List)

I was worried if I was doing the right thing
I was just plain sick of school
I had slowly lost my respect for school
I was disillusioned
I felt like a robot
the things I had to do were useless
teachers seemed like anybody else
I'd lost my fear of teachers
I'd lost my respect for teachers
I felt that if I didn't go along with teachers they didn't want me
I know I need to finish high school
I won't go back to a regular high school

APPENDIX H

Preliminary Grouping

Teachers

didn't show respect for me
didn't understand my feelings
principal placed system ahead of the individual
made me angry
I lost my fear of teachers
I lost my respect for teachers
I found out that teachers were just ordinary people
female teachers treated me like a child
I didn't like being told what to do by female teachers
the teachers hated me
make unjust demands
I received poor counselling
didn't help me enough
teaching methods inappropriate
too authoritarian

Curriculum

much of the required work is irrelevant
students should be allowed to proceed at their own pace
the work should be relevant
the things I had to do seemed to me to be useless
I had to take courses I did not want to take
the things I was expected to do didn't seem relevant to my present
or my future
I wasn't allowed to take the courses I wanted to take
where free choice was ostensibly available, it didn't work out that way
the subject matter was of no interest

Personal Feelings

everyone was against me
persecuted
angry
no respect for fellow students
mixed up inside
expressed anger
I was unhappy
I was resentful
frustrated
confused
felt like escaping the system
tried to beat the system and it didn't work
bored
wasn't treated with respect
manipulated
lack of freedom

disillusioned
 I'd taken all I could
 I couldn't accept their goals
 alienated from the system
 disillusioned
 couldn't accept values of peer group
 school was the wrong place for me
 not respected
 not allowed the freedom I deserved
 forced to leave school
 I expressed anger
 couldn't put up with the system
 lack of freedom
 persecuted by peers
 futility
 unable to adjust to system
 bored
 felt like escaping
 escaping became a habit
 not enough freedom
 I was concerned about dropping out of school

Personal Freedom and Ideology

feeling of rejection if teacher's standards not adhered to
 failure to accommodate to individual differences
 people were trying to impose their values on me
 understanding oneself is a prerequisite to understanding anything else
 self-understanding is a desirable goal in education
 contemporary thinking should influence the educational process
 outdated standards are imposed by the educational system
 a feeling of dissatisfaction arose from having to learn at a
 controlled pace
 education should be enjoyable
 apparent freedom of choice is illusory
 people were trying to impose their values on me
 rejection if teacher's beliefs not adhered to
 being brainwashed
 failure to accommodate to individual differences

Future-oriented Choices

regular high school didn't meet my needs
 work is more important to me than school
 success will be attained through my own ability
 I want my efforts to be rewarded
 I need a feeling of accomplishment and purposefulness
 I want responsibility
 I want to get grade 12

Administrative Side of School

feeling of bitterness against administration
resentment against meaningless rules
no freedom

APPENDIX I

Statements Included in Final Categories

1. Feeling of a lack of autonomy

I started to skip out
 skipping out got to be a habit
 I skipped out and got caught
 *students should be allowed to choose courses they need
 *I was disappointed by the slow rate at which we learnt
 I took courses I didn't need
 *I didn't get to take the courses I did want
 *I was forced to take electives I didn't want
 *rules such as compulsory attendance are useless
 *I was bitter about the poor rules
 I didn't have any freedom in school
 *I didn't like the teachers telling me what to do and when to do it
 *I was being hasselled by the vice principal for not attending courses
 I didn't want to take
 I couldn't stand having ladies tell me what to do
 the system was too tight
 I wanted a school with more freedom
 — *school tried to remove my independence
 school tried to remove my dignity
 I felt like an animal caged in
 I didn't have any privileges
 *there was no where I could go without getting hasselled
 school lacks individualism
 enjoyment of what one is doing is an important part of life
 I'd lost my fear of teachers

2. Perceived conflict with the system, teachers and administration

— *there was nowhere I could go without getting hasselled
 *school tried to remove my independence
 *I was being hasselled by the vice principal for not attending courses
 I didn't want to take
 *I didn't like the teachers telling me what to do and when to do it
 *I was bitter about the poor rules
 *rules such as compulsory attendance are useless
 *I was forced to take electives I didn't want
 *students should be allowed to choose courses they need
 *I didn't get to take the courses I did want
 school lacks idealism
 I got into fights
 *I left because of the teaching methods
 I was hated by the teachers
 having women teachers made me feel as if I was in grade 1
 *when I spoke to the principal about an injustice, he sided with the
 teacher
 *the principal didn't attempt to understand my feelings
 I didn't get along with the only school I was allowed to go to

*I wasn't interested in the system
 I was embittered
 I lost my temper with the principal
 *I felt everyone was against me
 *I felt that if I didn't go along with teachers they didn't want me
 *teacher's beliefs are not relevant to today
 I won't go back to a regular high school
 I was so mad I could have killed the teacher
 A teacher hit another kid and I didn't like it
 I was hit unjustly by a teacher
 I got kicked out for skipping classes
 I got kicked out for fighting
 I felt I was forced to leave school

3. Feelings of frustration, futility and boredom

*rules such as compulsory attendance are useless
 *I wasn't interested in the system
 *I felt everyone was against me
 I lost interest in my classes
 rules such as "no smoking" are useless
 I was bitter about the administration
 the only things I learnt I learnt on my own
 students need more help from teachers than they get
 I got bored
 I was wasting my time at school
 school was futile
 I felt depressed in school
 school is for people who have interest in studies
 I wasn't involved with the system
 I felt so angry I walked out
 I was just plain sick of school
 I felt like skipping out
 I felt frustrated
 schools should get updated and get fresh thoughts and minds into the
 system
 working at my own pace would have given me a feeling of satisfaction
 I was bugged by my peers
 school was a rat race
 *I was confused
 I didn't feel good in school
 *I was unhappy

4. Disillusioned by intellectual dishonesty

*I was disappointed by the slow rate at which we learnt
 *I left because of the teaching methods
 *when I spoke to the principal about an injustice he sided with the
 teacher
 *I felt that if I didn't go along with teachers they didn't want me
 I left because of the subject matter
 I received poor counselling
 I didn't want to be a bloody hippie

the school was used to push a particular ideology at me
 people were throwing garbage at me from the outside
 school programmes students to lead an average (money making) life
 the principal manipulates the students through the use of student
 councils

school was a place where teachers' beliefs were pushed at me
 because I had different beliefs from the teachers, I was considered a
 deficit to the school

I'd lost my respect for teachers
 teachers seemed like anybody else

5. Confused over personal identity, future

*I was unhappy

*I was confused

*teachers' beliefs are not relevant to today

*the principal didn't attempt to understand my feelings

*school tried to remove my independence

I wanted to do something that would show what I'd put into it

I wanted to do work I could be proud of

I was humiliated by a teacher in front of the class

I had slowly lost my respect for school

school was not a place of learning

I was disillusioned

I felt like a robot

I was in a turmoil on the inside, trying to find myself

no attempt is made to understand me in my situation

it is impossible to learn something until you know yourself

the schools should try and help people know themselves better

I wanted a job that would make a man out of me

I know I need to finish high school

I couldn't stand the lazy bums who go to school and make a mess of the
 world

I was worried if I was doing the right thing (in leaving)

when I quit I felt I was letting my parents down

* Statement is included in more than one category

APPENDIX J

Final Identification of Categories
and the Percentages of Respondents

Who Appear in Them

The constituents of the experience of deciding to leave school

1.	Feeling of a lack of autonomy--a powerlessness to effect change	
	*TQFMSIDKRGJEN	65%
2.	Perceived conflict with teachers, the administration, and the system	
	MOFDTCSHIKRGJQP	75%
3.	Feelings of frustration, futility and boredom	
	ABPOQCSETDMLJNFGHI	90%
4.	Feeling of being disillusioned by intellectual dishonesty	
	TMCFAPBQ	40%
5.	Feeling confusion about personal identity and the future	
	LTPCAQMDFB	50%
	Percentage who stated that there was a particular incident that resulted in their leaving school	25%
	Percentage who stated that there was no particular incident that resulted in their leaving school	75%

* Respondents represented in this category

APPENDIX K

Excerpts from Some of the Responses

"A", aged 17, left school in grade 11

I cannot recall any individual event that led me to quit school. In school I just didn't feel good. I was unhappy and confused. At a time when I was in a turmoil on the inside trying to find myself, there was all this garbage people were throwing at me from the outside. It is impossible to learn something until you know yourself. Maybe the schools should try and do something about this. I know they won't.

"F", aged 17, left school in grade 10

Public school have a definite lack of individualism, idealism and freedom. They slap down a bunch of useless rules, i.e., no smoking and compulsory attendance. Teachers are god, in '70 a teacher gave me two welts across my back so I complained to the principal and all he said was, you probably deserved it.

As far as attendance goes, one day if you don't feel like going to school obviously if you go your not going to turn out good work so why go at all.

Students council--the voice of the students--is run by teachers all the students council is is the voice of the principle in hopes that the students are more likely to accept it your not aloud to think--you're programed to lead an average life, you know go out and spend your day making money.

"M", aged 16, left school in Grade 10

My feelings prior to leaving school were depression and futility. The school had tried its best to remove my dignity and independence.

A person (me) who had social, political and theological beliefs removed from the teachers was considered a deficit to the class. There was not a particular incident. The structure of the school, the teaching methods, the subject matter and use of the school to push ideology all forced me to leave school.

"Q", age 18, left school in grade 11

. . . my biggest disappointment was the slow rate at which we progressed. In the first 2½ months of History 12 we completed 13 chapters of history. I skipped out and studied on my own at the University library and completed the next 14 chapters (of equal length) in 3 days, studying 6 hours per day. When caught being truant by the office I was told I would have to abide by the rules and be present at school or I would be expelled. So I completed the first semester and quit. I intend to complete my remaining subjects by correspondence . . . I am working full time and enjoying myself much more. This I feel is the most important part of life, enjoyment of what one is doing, and enjoying school was near to impossible for me, as it was simply a bore . . . If I could have worked at my own pace I would have found much greater satisfaction out of school, but this was impossible under this school system and I feel this is what is letting down and making most students fail to complete their grade 12.

"T", 18 years, left school in grade 11

. . . teachers were what made the school go around and if I couldn't get along with them or the system, they didn't want me, so I figured I'd better quit . . . but only because I couldn't stand it any longer. I'll probably go back and get my grade 11 finished and then get 12 only because I realize the value that employers set by education.

However you couldn't get me back in a high school again for blood nor money.

Well that's about it I guess good luck with the thesis. And I hope I've done some good, for both you and me and todays education. I hope you can tell I care because I really do. A lot more people should I guess anyway to change people would be impossible but within a system there is always room for change. Your in the position so why not shove it a bit in the right direction hey? Thanks for the chance to spout off Adios.

61
73
24
49

VITA

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