

Adult & Adolescent Dropout Behavior:
Are There Connections?
by


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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of the study was to examine the views of 20 Adult Basic Education (ABE) students (i.e., adults completing a grade 12 diploma) who had dropped out of an Academic Upgrading Program at a rural college in Northern Alberta. Through the use of questionnaires, participant observation, and in-depth interviews, their reflections on the reasons that led them to originally drop out of school were compared to their reasons for leaving an ABE program. This was primarily a qualitative study. The comparisons implied that there are connections between the reasons an individual gives for leaving high school and the reasons they give for leaving an ABE program. The stories from these 20 students supported the theory that dropping out of school was a process that originated during their initial schooling because of their personal situations and, that for this group, their life circumstances and attitudes toward school have not changed over time.

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DEDICATION

The completion of this thesis is dedicated to my husband, Richard, for both his emotional and technological support, and to the memory of my father, Dr. Robert A. McCleary, for both his love of learning and his enthusiasm for life that I have fortunately inherited.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I don't know, like it seems really weird. All of a sudden I'm back in school like a teenager again so now I have to go out and do what I did before...

female, age 24, dropped out Grade 10

Over the last century, the amount of education a person requires to allow for career opportunities and lifestyle choices has increased steadily. A hundred years ago, the ability to sign one's name, rather than marking an "X", meant a person was deemed literate. By the time of the First World War, people had to possess the equivalent of a fourth grade education to be considered literate and therefore, employable (Minister of Advanced Education, Training & Technology, 1991). After the Second World War, there were still numerous, well-paying jobs, with futures, available for employees who possessed a strong work ethic, even without the possession of a high school graduation certificate. However, in today's world without a Grade 12 diploma, full participation in society is a rare occurrence for individuals.

Between 1900 and 1970, the high school graduation rate in Canada increased from 10% to 70% (Neufeld & Stevens, 1992). Despite this increase, and the corresponding long term decline in the dropout rates, interest in the dropout issue among educators, researchers, economists and policy makers has increased in recent years, both in terms of the adolescent and the adult high school dropout. What distinguishes the situation today is not the rate of dropping out, but the economic and

social consequences of being denied a high school diploma. The consequences of dropping out are much more severe today than in the past. The federal government estimates that the cost to Canada over the next 20 years will be approximately \$33 billion in increased costs for social programs, welfare, prison, unemployment insurance, and lost revenues (Alberta Education, Module 1,1992).

Today, because of technology and the need to compete in a global economy, higher levels of reading and writing skills are required than ever before. A nation's competitiveness in the world market is to a large degree dependent on the quality of its human resources -- people's knowledge, learning, information and skilled intelligence. It is generally agreed that approximately 30% of Canadians are without a Grade 12 diploma (Alberta Education, Module 2, 1992; Neufeld & Stevens, 1991), however, this number may be highly inflated. Some have estimated the dropout rate to be as low as 12% (D. Higgins, personal communication, March 3, 1993). A 1993 national survey (prepared under contract to Human Resources and Labour Canada) entitled "Leaving School" (Devereaux) estimated that 18% of 20-year-old Canadians had not completed high school at the time of the survey.

The future for persons without a Grade 12 education is bleak. Individuals who drop out of school prematurely often face unemployment or dead-end, unsatisfying jobs (Neufeld & Stevens, 1991). Future forecasts predict that skill requirements are rising and that tomorrow's dropout will be in desperate circumstances. Data from Employment and Immigration Canada suggest that by the year 2000, 70% of the jobs

will require some post-secondary education (Alberta Career Development & Employment, 1991). Of those, about one-third of all jobs will be filled by college graduates (Johnston, 1987, cited in Thomas, 1990). With the changes to Canada's economic structure, it is estimated that between 1989 and 2000, 40% of the new jobs created will require more than 16 years of education and training (Devereaux, 1993). Non high school graduates are under represented in the fastest growing occupations and over represented in the declining occupational categories and it has been predicted that the already disadvantaged in the labour market will face even more difficult challenges in the future (Thomas, 1990).

At a personal level, the negative consequences of dropping out are enormous. Low self-esteem is a common psychological consequence suffered by persons who depart prematurely from school. Such a problem can lead to higher levels of substance abuse, unemployment, social assistance, conflict with the law, imprisonment and suicide (Devereaux, 1993; Neufeld & Stevens, 1991). Approximately one-half of inmates in federal prisons have less than a Grade 8 education (Alberta Education, 1992). The Southam study (Calami, 1987) found a strong correlation between students who drop out of school and the education level of their parents. This contention is supported by the National School Leavers Survey (Devereaux, 1993), mentioned earlier, which found that 45% of the dropouts studied had parents with low levels of education and another 23% had no idea of their parents' education levels. Those pupils who leave school early, in turn, have an increased chance of becoming

the parents of a new generation of dropouts themselves (Neufeld & Stevens, 1991). Households that are headed by a parent who did not go to high school are four times more likely to live in poverty than one headed by a university graduate (Alberta Education, Module 1, 1992). A vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty can be set up that is very costly in both human lives and public dollars.

Educational policy is no longer focused only on children and adolescents. The concept of lifelong learning and training for adults has become an important issue both for social reasons and economic productivity (Rubenson, 1992). The lack of a Grade 12 diploma is recognized as a problem for adults at any age level. Given declining birth rates and the aging of the work force, economic productivity will depend increasingly on what kind and the amount of education the existing labour force receives (Rubenson, 1992). As they age, those who lack the basic skills and qualifications find themselves cut off from any further education, unless they re-enter the educational system and upgrade their existing knowledge to a suitable level (Rumberger, 1987). Adult Basic Education programming has been developed, in part, to address this need.

Statement of the Problem

Attrition from high school education programs is a major concern, whether the focus is on the adult or adolescent dropout. Adult Basic Education programming has

been seen as a means to offer adults with low educational levels the opportunity to develop skills that they have not previously obtained (i.e., both academic and personal). It is often a difficult decision, with potentially harmful consequences, for an adult to re-enter an educational institution to pursue a goal they failed to complete earlier. ABE programs are viewed by some individuals as their "last chance" at the education they need for what they perceive as a "better life." Adults who have had unfavorable prior experiences with schools may be threatened by any academic learning situation. Many feel that they are vulnerable to the potential loss of some of the gains in self-esteem and confidence that they have built up outside of an academic setting if they "fail again" by dropping out of the ABE program. Unfortunately, a sincere desire to complete their education does not always prevent student withdrawal, and for a variety of reasons, a high percentage of adult students become "repeat" dropouts by withdrawing from an ABE program. Rates for repeaters have been identified as ranging from 20% to 60% in various programs (Thomas, 1991). It has been estimated that ABE programs experience attrition rates averaging four times the rate of attrition by other adult education programs (Martin, 1990). Referring specifically to Fairview College, the site of the present study described in detail in later sections, the "other" programs Martin refers to would be career programs such as Business Administration, Turf Grass Management, and Agricultural technology.

The dropout problem for adolescents and adults has been studied separately, in part because of the desire by adult educators to maintain their separate identity, as

evidenced by prolific literature on the distinction between andragogy (i.e., the art and science of helping adults learn) and pedagogy (i.e., the art and science of helping children learn). Authors have been divided on the issue of whether this distinction is a "fruitless semantic joust" (Mckenzie, 1990, p. 225) or a point of clarification for the true nature of Adult Education. Houle (1970) exemplified one group of authors that maintains learning is learning, and has the same basic design for every age, whenever and wherever it occurs. On the other hand, authors such as Knowles (1977) have maintained that adult and child learning are both qualitatively and quantitatively different.

The educational and affective questions that are involved with dropping out of school, whether one is a child or an adult, have not elicited any serious debate within the literature; they have simply been dealt with as two separate issues and studied individually. However, the reasons for school leaving may overlap within these two populations, or put more succinctly, may not change within some individuals as they age. The "at risk characteristics" (e.g., lack of ability to set long range goals, a sense of alienation from school, belonging to a low socio-economic group) of adolescent high school dropouts have been well documented in current research, but none of these findings have been examined in terms of the question of the adult ABE "repeat" dropout. Data from studies on the adolescent dropout support the contention that school leaving is a long term process, and that dropping out is just the final event in a gradual process of withdrawal. The possibility of extending these findings to the field

of adult basic education have not been investigated. If a connection does exist between the student's reasons for leaving school in high school and in an ABE setting, that is if withdrawing is indeed part of the same reoccurring pattern for some individuals, current practices may need to be changed by such findings. New strategies to deal with attrition for some adult students may need to be developed.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the present study is to examine the views of Adult Basic Education (ABE) students who have dropped out of an Academic Upgrading Program at a rural college in Alberta. Through the use of questionnaires, participant observation, and in-depth interviews, reflections of ABE students on the reasons that led them to originally drop out of school were compared to their reasons for leaving an ABE program. As a result of their insights, connections between adolescent dropout behavior and adult dropout behavior were examined.

The present study has three main purposes. The first focus is to examine the reasons adults gave for leaving the regular school system and to examine their attitudes about this experience. The second focus is to examine the reasons an adult gives for leaving an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program before completing the requirements for obtaining a Grade 12 diploma and then to compare their two sets of reasons. Examining the life-stories of students allows for the analyzing and identifying

of important themes that are relevant to their perceptions of their school experiences. The third focus is to compare both demographic information and high school dropout experiences given by ABE persisters and ABE dropouts. Although the high school dropout information dealt with in this study has retrospective bias, what is important here is the students' views of their experiences.

In this study the following research questions were posed:

1. Primary Research Questions:
 - a) What are the reasons ABE students give for having left high school?
 - b) What are the reasons ABE students give for leaving an ABE program?
 - c) Are there any commonalities between the two sets of reasons and if so are they sustained over time?
2. Secondary Research Questions:
 - a) What are the similarities and differences in the demographics between ABE dropouts and ABE persisters?
 - b) What are the similarities and differences between ABE dropouts and ABE persisters in their reasons stated for having left high school?

General Procedures

To answer the research questions the subjects who were chosen for study were all adult students who had left school without receiving a Grade 12 diploma (i.e., high school dropouts) and who were registered in the Peace River Fairview College Adult

Upgrading Program during the 1993/94 school year. In order to participate in the study the students had to remain in the ABE program for at least 3 weeks. Each of these students completed a questionnaire that dealt with the reasons for dropping out of school prior to their becoming a Fairview College student. Students who dropped out of the program prior to the 3 weeks were not included in the study. Those students who dropped out of the Adult Upgrading Program during the 1993/94 school year were administered a second questionnaire. In addition these students were interviewed by the researcher.

Data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The demographic information was primarily analyzed using descriptive statistics. Depending on the type of data, either percentages or the mean and standard deviation are reported. A one way analysis of variance and a Least Significant Difference test with a significance level of .05 were used to analyze the Likert-type questions. However, the primary focus is on the data generated from the interviews and from the open ended questions in the questionnaires. This information was studied using qualitative techniques such as searching for common themes and generating categories.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

High school student: any youth who attends a secondary school

Adult student: a person who is at least 18 years of age and has been out of school for at least one year.

Dropout: A high school student or adult who leaves an educational program before the completion of Grade 12 (i.e., school leaver).

Persister : a high school student who remains in school until graduation or an adult student who is actively participating in an ABE program as defined below.(i.e., stayers).

Adult Basic Education Programs (ABE): all educational programs up to the completion of high school available to adult students who have left the regular school program prior to graduation (i.e., programs for dropouts).

Academic Upgrading Program: the name of the ABE program at Fairview College located in Northern Alberta.

Summary

The current study attempts to search for possible connections between adult and adolescent dropout behavior. Reasons ABE dropouts give for leaving school are examined for possible similarities between their separate instances of dropping out. Their stories are examined for indications that dropping out is perhaps a reoccurring pattern for some individual students, that is, their reasons for school leaving may not change over time. Further, similarities and differences between ABE dropouts and ABE persisters are analyzed.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

An immense body of literature has been devoted to determining the causes of dropping out of high school and identifying those students who are most prone toward school leaving; but very little research has been conducted on adults who leave an ABE program. More limiting still is that most of the ABE literature is based in the United States, with minimal research on these issues being conducted in Canada (Thomas, 1990). Any connection that may exist between adolescent and adult dropout behavior does not appear to have been explored sufficiently in current literature. In this chapter the characteristics and theories that have been used to explain the dropout phenomenon at these two levels will be delineated. As in current practice, the information will be organized according to the age of the subject-- either pertaining to the adolescent or adult dropout. Each of these two categories will be organized into three sections; prevalence statistics, typology or characteristics of dropouts and theories or models of attrition. The final section is a summary of the review.

High School Dropouts

Prevalence Statistics

The magnitude of the dropout problem has been difficult to calculate because there is no standard definition of who constitutes a dropout. As a result of this lack of standardization, there is no universal method for counting or computing the dropout rate. The figures included here are those most commonly cited in the literature.

In Canada, the dropout rate most often cited is 30%. This figure is quoted in research studies, policy statements and media reports and according to Devereaux (1993) is “so ingrained in our national public consciousness that it appears to vary neither across studies nor over time” (p. 9). Using the class of 1989 as an example, it was estimated that this percentage would translate into approximately 137,000 young people across Canada who dropped out before graduating (Statistics Canada, 1991). However, in the most recent School Leavers Survey conducted in Canada (Devereaux, 1993) it was reported that only 18% of 20 year old Canadians had not completed high school. However, the author speculates that the decrease is due to a different method of calculation. The 30% figure is based on an age specific cohort as it moves through high school, that is, the number of students who enter Grade 9 in a given year is compared with the number of students who graduate four years later. On the other hand, the lower rate is based on survey data from which the proportion of any age group that does not have a high school diploma can be calculated. Both figures are accurate, they are just measuring different phenomena. According to Devereaux

(1993), the majority of Canadian dropouts (62%) had Grade 10 or less and 32% had a Grade 9 education or less. Almost 40% of the leavers were 16 or younger when they dropped out of school and 17% were between the ages of 14 and 15 (i.e., younger than the minimum school leaving age). In the United States the average attrition rate for the class of 1984 was estimated to be 29.1%. In some states the rate has been reported as high as 43.3%. Measured differently, it has been estimated that 25% of fifth graders will not remain in school until graduation (Rumberger, 1987).

There are wide variations in dropout statistics across regions and even within regions, only in part due to the various techniques used to calculate high school non-completion rate. In Canada students in smaller communities are more likely to drop out than students who live in large cities (HLA Consultants, 1984; Neufeld & Stevens, 1991), however, in the United States the opposite trend has been found (Fine, 1992; Rumberger, 1987). In Canada, a greater proportion of Native students drop out than students from other ethnic groups. According to the School Leavers Survey (1993), 40% of aboriginal 18-20-year-olds were leavers, although this figure is as high as 80% to 90% in some areas (Neufeld, 1991). American figures show that Native Americans also drop out more often (22.7%), followed by Hispanics (18.7%) who drop out more often than Afro-Americans (16.7%) (Fine, 1992).

Typology or Characteristics of Dropouts

Current research indicates many common characteristics, or traits, that distinguish dropouts. These characteristics can be divided into two broad categories: a) school related factors (e.g., dislike of teachers, academic failure, lack of participation), and b) personal and environmental factors (e.g., age, sex, socio-economic status). Most school leavers express a sense of alienation from the school setting and a feeling of isolation from their teachers, peers and the system (Devereaux, 1993; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1987; Fine, 1992; Finn, 1989; HLA Consultants, 1984; Price Waterhouse, 1990). Compared to the persisters, dropouts report lower levels of participation in extracurricular activities and are more likely to cut classes, to have disciplinary problems and to have been retained, suspended or expelled (Ekstrom et al., 1987; Fine, 1992; Finn, 1989; HLA Consultants, 1984; Karp, 1988; Neufeld, 1991). They also tend to have lower school grades, lower test scores, and do less homework than those who remain in school (Ekstrom et al., 1987; Finn, 1989; Neufeld, 1991; Rumberger, 1987). Dropouts are more likely to be working for pay while in school (Ekstrom, 1987; Wolman, Bruininks & Thurlow, 1989). It is not uncommon for leavers to work in excess of 15 hours per week (Neufeld, 1991). It is not surprising therefore, that 83% percent indicate that they believe most of what one needs to know is learned on the job, not in a school (Alberta Education, Module 1, 1992). Dropouts tend to be short range goal setters and have an external locus of control (Wolman et al., 1989; Neufeld, 1991). A large number of school leavers

report frequent drug and alcohol use (Fine, 1992; Price Waterhouse, 1990; Wolman et al., 1989) and some describe skipping school because they are "too stoned" or could not wake up after a night of substance abuse (Price Waterhouse, 1990). A comparatively high percentage of female dropouts are married (22%) and/or have dependent children (27%) (Devereaux, 1993).

Another common theme for the dropout is a perceived lack of support for staying in school, or a sense that the school has actually pushed them out (Leone, McLaughlin & Meisel, 1992; Price Waterhouse, 1990). Twenty-one percent reported that they were dissatisfied with school regulations and felt the rules were too strict, as compared with 15% of graduates (Devereaux, 1993). Finally, many youths describe homes where parents admonished them to do better in school but could not assist them either educationally or emotionally. Though some parents may have wanted to help, this was often prevented by either their own low educational attainment or a chaotic home environment (Fine, 1992; Neufeld, 1991; Price Waterhouse, 1990; Rumberger, 1987; Wolman et al., 1989). In Northern Alberta, 72% of leavers have parents, or other family members, who have left school early (Alberta Education, Module 2, 1992).

In 1990, staff at Price Waterhouse conducted a qualitative study to gain more understanding of the characteristics of school leavers and to assist in the design of a planned National survey of dropouts that was subsequently conducted in 1993. In preparation for this National survey, sponsored by Employment and Immigration

Canada and Statistics Canada, Statistics Canada conducted 38 focus groups with dropouts, current students, teachers and educational specialists from across Canada. The information that emerged from these in-depth interviews led to the identification of five general categories of dropouts (Price Waterhouse, pp. 8-10), described as follows:

1. Disadvantaged. This group was comprised of those students who were extremely disadvantaged both socially and economically. They typically grew up in a series of foster homes, or in essentially dysfunctional families, where one or both parents were frequently absent due to drug and alcohol abuse, or psychiatric problems. Both physical and sexual abuse figured prominently in their descriptions of family life. Social service agencies played a major role in the lives of most of these families. Frequent moves and changes in living conditions contributed to school problems that started at an early age. As a group, these students had fewer aspirations and more unrealistic plans for the future than any of the other groups.
2. Creative Independents. Students in this group were from middle- and upper-income homes in which parents were well educated and employed in jobs with professional status. Many of the parents were divorced. Most of these students had gone through elementary school with minimal problems, but had difficulty adjusting to high school. They felt that the school was dominated by cliques which did not allow them to be true individuals. The rigid structure and rules of the school system also stifled their creativity and

led them to complain about the irrelevancy of many of the required courses. As a group, they tended to be self assured and to have very specific aspirations in life that centered around some type of artistic or creative career.

3. Vocationally Focused. This group was comprised of students who saw little use for a high school education, but rather were vocationally oriented. Some of these youths reported having academic difficulties and may have had unrecognized learning disabilities that were not adequately dealt with by the school system. Problems with reading and writing skills limited their ability to perform their school work and led to constant frustration. Behavior problems and fights with other students and teachers were described as common occurrences by some members of this group; others reported no such problems but were simply not interested in what the school had to offer. The attainment of high salaries in construction, skilled labor or trade positions were common aspirations.

4. Minority. Minority students were represented in all groups, but also emerged as a distinct group with certain distinct characteristics. There was a feeling in this group that they did not belong or "fit in" to the high school because they were members of a visible minority. They complained of discrimination and the lack of appropriate role models for continuing on in education.

5. Critical Event. The final group was composed of students who described a series of personal and family situations that culminated in their leaving school. These students did not experience the extreme deprivation of the disadvantaged group, but had similar problems. The main difference was that they could trace their decision to withdraw to either a series of critical events or one specific event (e.g., health problem, pregnancy, parental divorce) whereas the other group could not. Frequently home situations with only one parent present, or drug and alcohol abuse were described. Parents tended to have limited formal education, but many students described situations where at least one parent was struggling hard to provide for the family. Members of this group were defensive about their parent(s) competencies and believed that the parent(s) had performed to the best of their abilities.

The initial categories that emerged during the qualitative part of the national survey were not, however, pursued during the quantitative phase of the study. Higgins, (in charge of the study in his role as Chief, Projections and Analysis Section, Education, Culture and Tourism Division) believed that the personal details gathered during the interviews were consequently lost during the subsequent massive telephone questionnaire campaign conducted in 1992. Higgins suggested that further exploration of these potential groupings would require another qualitative study (personal communication, March 1993).

Fine (1991), also using qualitative methods of research, studied students of a large American urban high school and, on the basis of her findings, proposed a radically different conceptualization of the dropout student. The picture that emerged from her research was that the students who chose to leave the public education system were in fact taking control of lives which were fundamentally out of control. Their withdrawal was viewed not as a sign of weakness and educational inferiority, but rather as a strong criticism of the public education system. These dropouts, when tested with various psychological inventories, scored as being psychologically healthy. They were less depressed, more willing to challenge social inequity, and more unwilling to conform mindlessly than the persisters studied. By the time Fine completed her research, rather than being pessimistic about the fate of those who left school early, she was "worried about what we instill in those who remain" (p. 4). She postulated that the problem lies not in the character of the dropouts, but in the practices of public education as an extension of the broader social inequities in the United States. However, the fact remains that students who do not graduate, for whatever reason, are put at a grave disadvantage.

Theories or Models of Attrition

Leaving school is described as a developmental process in most of the literature on dropouts. Rumberger (1987) stated, "dropping out itself might better be viewed as a process of disengagement from school, perhaps for either social or

academic reasons, that culminates in the final act of leaving" (p. 111). Rather than a single decision point, most dropouts described a long, gradual process of withdrawal. Two models are presented that explain "dropping out" as a process that originated in the earliest grades. It should be noted that not all authors are supportive of the use of models. For example, Fine (1992) posited that any model should be viewed as being too simplistic to explain the complex problem of dropping out and is therefore not beneficial to studying the issue and is actually detrimental to a full understanding. However, other writers have hypothesized that while the individual factors that contribute to withdrawal from school varied across students, the process of school leaving is actually fairly consistent for all dropouts (Price Waterhouse, 1990) and therefore models are useful tools for both understanding and preventing early school leaving.

The two models that have been used to describe dropping out as a developmental process in the literature on dropout phenomena most frequently are the Frustration Self-Esteem Model and the Participation and Identification Model. These models will be described in the following section.

Frustration self-esteem model. The Frustration model has been used for a number of years to explain the effects of school on disruptive behavior and juvenile delinquency, two characteristics that have been closely linked to school failure and dropping out. Finn (1989) suggested that this model can also be applied to explain the process of school withdrawal. According to this paradigm, unsuccessful school

outcomes lead to reduced self-esteem, which in turn cause problem behaviors that are in conflict with expectations from the context that is viewed as responsible for the failure. Poor performance in this model is frequently measured by a history of low grades and low test scores on achievement tests and intelligence tests. The consistent evidence of the students' inadequacy leads them to experience frustration, embarrassment and a lower academic self-concept than successful students. This continual cycle of failure causes students to exhibit lower levels of self-efficacy and greater feelings of powerlessness. According to this model, the culmination of this cycle is the exhibition of more behavioral problems in the school setting. As more adult attention is focused on the disruptive behavior, the students fall farther behind academically, face more failure, develop more self-esteem problems and act out in ever increasing amounts. The typical conclusion to this cycle is that students either withdraw voluntarily from school or are removed by school authorities.

Participation and Identification Model. The premise supporting the Participation and Identification model is that if students participate in school they develop a commitment to learning and a commitment to place. These attributes are, according to some, inversely related to feelings of alienation and the act of dropping out (Fine, 1992; Finn, 1989; Price Waterhouse, 1990). Finn (1989) has hypothesized that students who identify with school and who have an internalized concept of belonging to the school environment will hold their school attachments and

experiences in high regard and will thus value their success in school relevant goals. Further, active participation will lead to identification with school, which encompasses both a sense of belongingness and a valuing of school related outcomes. Active participation in school takes many forms. In this model four possible levels of participation are identified. The student would either: (a) response to minimal requirements, (b) respond to class related initiatives, (c) participate in extracurricular activities and/or (d) respond by participating in school decision making. Non participation, on the other hand, predisposes a student to continue not to participate in school related functions. This can lead to less successful outcomes, less identification with the school, increased alienation, and ultimately to emotional and physical withdrawal.

An interesting question that can be posed in regards to both of these models is what happens to this cycle of withdrawal when a student originally drops out of school. Is the process of school leaving that led to the initial dropping out completed, and therefore the associated beliefs and behavior disappear, or does the cycle go into a 'holding pattern' waiting to recommence when the student enters into another academic program? If the latter situation is true, an important issue in the field is what would be needed to stop the at risk ABE students from repeating their past experiences with formal education when they attempt to continue their interrupted schooling.

Adult Dropouts

Adults who enter ABE programs and leave before completion are in fact “repeat” dropouts. Before entering the ABE program they have already been labeled as dropouts from a primary or secondary program. Thomas (1990) has argued that this group of ABE students could actually be called “dropins” because many of them had a history of withdrawing and later returning to an ABE program. Darkenwald (1981) postulated that there are two reasons why dropping out tends to be even more prevalent in adult education than in the secondary system. The first is that participation in ABE programs is generally not compulsory or even semicompulsory; consequently adults can more easily exercise their option to not participate with fewer immediate negative consequences than a youth faces when dropping out. The second, related reason has to do with “the relatively lesser significance for adults of the student role and of the ties that connect the adult to the educational program” (p. 2). For the adult, the student role is generally secondary to many other social roles already assumed (e.g., wife, mother, father and worker), consequently there is no need for a major shift in their self view after leaving school.

Even though there is agreement that attrition from adult education programs is a major concern, little advance has been made in understanding the phenomenon. Thomas (1990) has postulated that in part this is due to the complexity of the problem, the lack of unanimity on a definition for “dropout” and the existence of only a few theory-based studies. Unfortunately, even less is known about the Canadian ABE

experience because most of the relevant research has been conducted in the United States on post secondary populations.

Prevalence Statistics

In 1976, more than 3.5 million adults (22.8%) in Canada had a Grade 8 education or less, and more than 850,000 had less than 5 years of schooling (Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1991). In the report Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta (1989), based on the 1986 Canadian Census, it was reported that 10.8 % of all Albertans had less than a Grade 9 education. For Northern Alberta the rate was found to be 16.5%. Consequently there is a large pool of potential Adult Upgrading students in the North.

Researchers have noted relatively low levels of participation in adult basic education programs in relation to the apparent need. Faris (1992) reported that out of the 23.7% of Canadian youths who were 20 years old in April of 1991, who had reported that they had dropped out, only half had reported returning and attempting to upgrade. Unfortunately however, in this study there were no statistics on how many of these students were actually successful in their endeavor. Across all age groups, only 4.25% of Canadians with less than a high school education are involved in ABE programs, and from this small percentage a 30% to 40% attrition rate is not uncommon (Ministry of Advanced Education, Training & Technology, 1991). Absenteeism and student turnover are endemic problems in ABE programs (Mezirow,

Darkenwald & Knox, 1975; Quigley, 1992). In a survey conducted by Mezirow and his colleagues, published in 1975, "one in five teachers estimated that absenteeism was in the 10 to 24 % range, and nearly a quarter reported that 25 to 49 % of the students were absent at any one class session" (p. 67). "Two fifths of the teachers surveyed estimated that 10 to 24 % of their students drop out by the sixth week of class and another 17 % placed the dropout rate in their class during the first five weeks in the 25 to 49 % range" (p. 68). These figures still appear to hold true. An overall college wide study of attrition/retention at Camosun College in British Columbia showed a 40% attrition rate for ABE programs for the 1987/88 school year (Thomas, 1990). The Peace River Fairview College campus (the setting of the current study) reported an average of 19% attrition rate for the 1992/1993 school year and a 13% rate for the 1993/1994 school year. Quantitatively the rates are high, therefore retention, the "How do we keep them?", has become the number one issue facing the field (Quigley, 1992).

As attrition has become recognized as an important factor in adult education, researchers have investigated similar issues to those being studied by researchers working in the field of high school attrition. Authors have attempted to define the typology of the "high risk" adult student and to develop predictive models (e.g., Boshier's Congruence Model, Rubenson's Expectancy-Valence Model, Tinto's Model and Garrison's use of the Transition Model); however, these models have been found to have limited use with the ABE population (Garrison, 1983b). At the same time,

educators and researchers have documented attempts to reduce attrition by teaching various coping strategies to students and by utilizing different teaching and programming approaches (cf., Darkenwald & Gavin, 1987; Jackson-Mayer, 1987). Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any literature that probes the possible relationship between a student's high school experience and ABE attrition.

Typology or Characteristics of ABE Dropouts

Before attempting to understand the phenomena of attrition in ABE, it is important to discuss who participates in the various programs and what motivates them to return to school. Unfortunately, much of the research has been conducted in the United States and is related to all types of adult education programs and not specific to the ABE population. Extending information collected from other types of adult education programs however, is to ignore substantial population differences in the ABE cohort (Beder & Valentine, 1990; Thomas, 1990). It should be noted that most authors place a strong emphasis on the heterogeneity of this population. For example, Beder and Valentine (1990) state that "ABE students are as diverse and as goal oriented as any group of learners engaged in protracted and demanding educational activities" (p. 93). It is therefore extremely difficult, and would perhaps even be misleading, to attempt a global answer to "who" participates in an ABE program. Based on the same reasoning, it is equally impossible to describe a typical ABE dropout or the reasons behind their attrition (Garrison, 1985; Thomas, 1990).

Motivation to participate, and barriers to participation, are as diverse as the population of undereducated adults. Researchers have substantiated the idea that there are discrete subgroups in the literacy population and that their motivation is multidimensional. Beder and Valentine (1990) demonstrated the diversity of motivation among ABE participants in Iowa. They postulated that ten factors explained participation in ABE. The ten factors, in order of importance, were:

1. Educational Advancement: desire to complete high school
2. Self-Improvement: desire to be "better"
3. Literacy Development: desire to improve written and oral communication skills
4. Community/Church Involvement: desire to play more active role in community
5. Economic Need: desire for job and higher salary
6. Family Responsibility: desire to be a better parent, help children with homework and set a good example for children
7. Diversion: desire for social contact and escapism
8. Job advancement: desire to be promoted
9. Launching: desire to restructure and take control of one's life
(i.e. expectation of imminent life changes)
10. Urging of Others: desire to conform to external pressure

By means of cluster analysis the authors were able to describe six types of ABE students: (a) Mainstream Women (i.e., women whose life circumstances place them within the traditional American mainstream); (b) The Urged (i.e., mature learners who are influenced back into education because of external forces; students less in control of their lives than members of other clusters); (c) Young Adults (i.e., young dropouts returning as they enter adulthood); (c) The Climbers (i.e., older students who view ABE as a means to move up the socioeconomic ladder); (d) The Least Affluent and Least Employed (i.e., students with the lowest socio-economic status and a high perceived need for literacy skills); and (e) Low Ability Strivers (i.e., students who are hard working but less able academically). Beder and Valentine concluded that ABE participants are as diverse as any group participating in other educational endeavors.

Martin (1984, 1987) sought to identify and describe the lifestyle classifications that exist among what he termed adult high school noncompleters (i.e., dropouts). In his study, based on demographic characteristics (i.e., means of support) and attitudinal dispositions (i.e., social behavior), he identified six life-style classifications. Two of the classifications, Entrepreneurs and Superiors, were composed of persons who possessed the highest standard of living, worked part time, but did not perceive themselves as possessing the physical health or stamina to pursue both work and educational endeavors. The Regulars also tended to have a high standard of living, but their negative outlook on the world, negative self-perceptions and dislike for school acted as disincentives for the pursuit of education. The Suppliants possessed the time,

love of learning and positive self-perceptions to pursue education, but their efforts would continually be hampered by a lack of financial resources, the need for child care and an inability to communicate effectively with more educated people. The Marginals were mainly composed of women who relied on public assistance, had the greatest number of persons living in their home with the lowest income per person, but also were generally the most satisfied with their lives. The final group, the Underclass, were consistently engaged in anti-social acts such as crime and drug abuse. They shared many demographic characteristics and attitudinal dispositions as their counterparts in other categories, but would be hampered in their schooling by their chemical dependency and commitment to criminal activities. Martin (1987) concluded that one of the "primary reasons for an inability of ABE programs to enroll and retain noncompleters is the perception that all such adults form a singular, monolithic population" (p. 33).

Findings from these two studies add to the growing body of research that has stressed the importance of viewing ABE students as members of a multi-dimensional population and not as a homogeneous population. Both of the previous studies were conducted in the United States, which according to some Canadian researchers, makes generalizations difficult. Thomas (1990) speculates that "research results in the United States are not necessarily applicable in Canada, but are useful in stimulating us to reflect on our own knowledge and praxis" (p. 79).

Thomas (1990) conducted a study to explore reasons for non participation in ABE Literacy programs and reasons for dropout from these programs in the province of British Columbia. The ABE professionals surveyed stated that their perceived reasons for adult students' dropout included: (a) economic need (e.g., get a job); (b) financial need (e.g., loss of funding); (c) lack of support systems (e.g., general and specific, such as day care); (d) personal and family problems (e.g., physical health, children's health, legal problems); (e) psychological (e.g., fear of success); and (f) program related (e.g., learning difficulties, slow progress, unrealistic goals). Also identified in this study, were a group of people who Thomas referred to as "stopouts." This group was characterized by the habit of only dropping out temporarily when forced by circumstances or personal habits; they always left with the intention of "dropping in" again. The notion of a "stopout" typifies one difficulty that plague adult researchers, the question of who actually constitutes a dropout. It is often difficult to tell whether students are dropouts or merely planning to complete their education at a different time, at a different pace, or in a different place. In this study, Thomas does not address the question of whether the student was repeating a pattern from their early history with school.

Theories or Models of Attrition

The absence of testable theory has hampered adult education participation and dropout research for decades (Boshier, 1973; Thomas, 1991). Despite numerous

studies there has been little progress made in understanding the phenomena of adult dropout. Martin (1990), in referring to the over 100 studies on dropout behavior of adult students, stated that "the findings from the research have been inconclusive, contradictory, and they lack the structure, conceptual unity, and explanatory power offered by a conceptual framework" (p. 159). Mezirow and his colleagues (1975) concurred that "the relationship of research to theory construction has been tenuous and results have been either too specific or too general to provide practitioners with practical guidance" (p. vii). As discussed previously, the study of ABE participation and dropout in Canada has not been explored in any detail and research pertaining to ABE dropout behavior in a Northern Canadian rural region appears to be nonexistent.

Garrison (1987), a Canadian researcher who has conducted several studies on ABE populations, afforded an excellent example of the difficulty of applying existing theories to this population in his study of Boshier's Congruence model. Carl Rogers' self-concept theory, the notion of incongruency between self and experience, was used as the framework for the development of this model by Boshier (1973). Boshier suggested that the adult learner's primary concern was maintaining congruence between the environment and inner psychological needs. He concluded that incongruencies (i.e., a lack of a fit between the participant and the educational environment) are additive; and the greater the sum, the higher the probability of dropout. Measurement of self-concept incongruency, or discrepancy scores, was accomplished by means of a test developed by Boshier entitled the Personality and

Educational Environment Scales (PEES). The discrepancy scores obtained were used to predict dropping out. This complex model purported to take into account the interaction between internal psychological and external environmental variables. Boshier (1973) postulated that "adult dropout can be understood to occur as a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy between the participant's self-concept and key aspects (largely people) of the educational environment" (p. 260).

According to Darkenwald (1981), a basic problem with the Congruence Model is that incongruence may "merely measure dissatisfaction with self, teacher, and other students rather than "psychological distance" between the participants' self-concepts and their concepts of teacher, other students and ideal self" (p.9). He has suggested that environmental variables were not specified or tested for adequately in this theory, rather, only the individual psychological variable of congruence had been tested. Garrison (1987) concurred with Darkenwald's critique, and further stated that the model only dealt with one psychological construct that of self-esteem. In his own study to test Boshier's findings, and whether they applied to a group of ABE students in an Urban high school completion program, Garrison (1987) found that the dropouts in his group had less self/other incongruence than Persisters, the reverse of what the "congruence model" would suggest. Garrison suggested that the only conclusion that can be drawn from these results are that the generalizeability of a model based on university students to ABE students "is at best questionable" (p. 219).

Researchers in the field of adult education have used similar methodologies as those employed by researchers in the field of adolescent education. To date most studies have been quantitative in design, using tools such as questionnaires, aptitude tests, self concepts scales, adjective check lists, life change questionnaires, and environmental rating scales. Parametric statistics have been used to interpret the vast array of data collected. Researchers have generally concluded that because a large number of variables combine in unique ways to cause dropout behavior, it is essential to examine the problem in a broad perspective. Unfortunately, this broad perspective has produced findings that are both inconclusive and contradictory in nature (Thomas, 1990). To date, it has also not included examining adults' high school experiences to investigate any possible relationship to their later decisions to drop out of an ABE program.

Those who have studied the adult dropout experience have not been highly successful in being able to derive meaning, or useful findings, from employing a purely quantitative research design. Thomas (1990) stated that there has been little progress in understanding the phenomena of adult dropout and Garrison (1987) concluded that reasons for dropout are many and complex, thus making prediction of dropout very difficult. Garrison (personal communication, January, 1993) suggested that because of the heterogeneity of the population under investigation, many confounding variables made data gathered by purely quantitative methods hard to analyze and hard to validate by replication. In a similar manner, he posited that much useful information

was potentially lost by not examining the students' ideas about their school experiences in-depth using a more qualitative methodology. Thomas (1990) concurred that ethnographic and phenomenological research was perhaps more suited to an ABE population than quantitative studies. By interviewing students about their views, valuable insights into their educational experiences can be gained.

Summary of the Review

Today there is little debate that "dropping out", for both high school and ABE students, is a major concern for individuals, educational institutions and society as a whole. At both federal and provincial levels, government dollars are being spent on the development and implementation of preventative programs. "Stay-In-School Initiatives" to assist local schools to adopt action plans to reduce the dropout rate are being developed and implemented throughout both the United States and Canada. The new emphasis on life long learning has meant that adult dropouts are being viewed as a part of a larger educational problem. However, it appears that there is a need for further research that attempts to determine whether there is any commonalty for an individual between their experience of dropping out of high school and dropping out of an ABE program. To date, the adolescent and adult school experiences of individuals have been examined as two distinct episodes in their lives. Dropping out of high school is generally viewed as a long term process with the final withdrawal being the last in a series of steps. These findings have not been examined in regards to their

possible application to elucidate adult ABE dropout behavior (i.e., are both behaviors part of the same process?). The present study examined the commonality between participants' perceptions of their experiences of dropping out of a public school and leaving an ABE program.

CHAPTER 3

Research Method

The purpose of the present study was to examine the possible connections between adult and adolescent dropout behavior and to compare ABE dropouts with ABE persisters on various items. This chapter includes a description of the methodology and instrumentation used for this study. A research design that included both quantitative and qualitative measures was employed to solicit a broad base of information. The rationale for the selection of the setting was dictated by both the researcher's beliefs and current work situation. Human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it is occurring. Therefore, it is more productive to study behavior in situ whenever possible. The physical setting and the internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables and thus can only be studied in the setting where the variables are operating (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1980). The specific setting was chosen because the researcher was employed as the coordinator, counselor, and an instructor by Fairview College (described below). By choosing this setting, the researcher was permitted to use the students as research subjects for this study. By being a participant-observer in this research project, insight was gained through extensive interpersonal relationships with both staff and students that would have been impossible to achieve without daily contact. However, being a participant in the lives of the students being used as subjects could have caused some potential difficulties that will be addressed later in

this chapter. Descriptions of the setting and of the subjects are presented first, followed by a description of the data collection methods used for the pilot study and the study. This chapter is concluded with a brief discussion of the data analysis techniques employed.

Setting

Fairview College is a community college that has its original campus located in Fairview, Alberta and a number of satellite campuses throughout Northern Alberta (regional map in Appendix A). Although established as an agricultural college in 1951 under the name of Fairview School of Agriculture, it was renamed Fairview Community College in 1960. The change of name heralded a corresponding change in programming and the College has since expanded its program offerings to include academic, career, technical and apprenticeship programs at the largest campus in Fairview and modified offerings at its regional campuses located in approximately 15 other communities. Fairview College serves more than 3,300 students annually in an area of about 102,000 square kilometers in Northwestern, Alberta that constitutes approximately 16% of Alberta. The largest satellite campus outside of Fairview is located about 85 kilometers west of the original campus in Peace River, a rural town with a population of approximately 6500. The programs offered in Peace River include academic upgrading, various business programs and power engineering. Between 1990 and 1993, the upgrading program in Peace River has traditionally

enrolled more ABE students than other similar programs within the Fairview College regional campuses. During this period of time, 80 to 110 students per semester were registered as ABE students in Peace River. This program is housed in the H.A. George Building which was the site of this research project.

Subjects

Permission was granted by Fairview College to use all Peace River upgrading students as possible subjects for the present study (Appendix B). Therefore, the population utilized included all students who registered in Fairview College's Academic Upgrading program in Peace River during the two semesters which constituted the 1993/94 school year, and who attended the ABE program for at least three weeks. There were 93 students enrolled in the Fall semester and 23 new registrants in the winter semester, for a total of 116 students. All students received a covering letter and signed a permission form (Appendix C) before participating in the study. Initial information was collected by questionnaire during the first week of school (September 13/14, 1993 for the first group and February 3, 1994 for the second group) on every student who did not already possess a Grade 12 diploma. Three of the new students were high school graduates interested in trying to increase their previous marks, so the entire eligible population totaled 113 students. This group was composed of 67 females (59.3%) and 46 males (40.7%). They ranged in age from 17 years to 62 years and the average age was 27.81 years, with a standard deviation of

8.29 years. All but 2 of the students were Canadian citizens (98.2%). Forty-three students had no children (38.1%) and the remainder (61.9%) had between 1 to 5 children (11.5%, 23%, 15.9%, 10.6% and 0.9% respectively). There were 60 students who had repeated one or more grades (53.1%) and 53 who had never repeated a grade (46.9%). The initial grade that students had left school ranged from Grade 6 to part way through Grade 12. The largest number of students dropped out of school before completing Grade 9 (30 students, 26.5%) and the next largest group left school before completing Grade 10 (22 students, 19.5%). Thirty-six students (31.9%) had previously been enrolled in another upgrading program before coming to Fairview College and the remaining 76 students (1 student did not answer the question) had not been involved in any form of upgrading before entering the Fairview ABE program (67.3%).

The students who withdrew from the ABE program before completing their education formed the self-selected sample that was the primary focus of the research and was therefore studied in greater detail. Members of this group completed a second, shorter form of the initial questionnaire (i.e., the demographic information was deleted) and were interviewed in-depth at the time of their withdrawing from the College. By the end of the study, this group was composed of 23 students (20% of the total population). Twenty of the students who withdrew participated in the study (87%). Of the 3 not interviewed, 2 disappeared with no warning and 1 immediately moved to another Province upon quitting the program.

Instrumentation

There were two primary data collection methods used for this study; questionnaires and in-depth guided interviews. The questionnaires provided an opportunity for each subject to answer exactly the same questions, while the interviews provided sufficient flexibility to allow for more depth and less restrictions than those placed by the more narrowly focused questions in the questionnaire. In addition, because the researcher was a participant-observer, much background information was collected informally through direct observation and interaction with both the subjects, prior to them withdrawing, and staff members who were involved daily with the subjects. The research methodology allowed for broad and free access to pertinent information (e.g., students' previous school records and ABE instructors' assessments of students) that would not have been available otherwise.

Payne (1990) stated in an article entitled "Doing Adult Education Research", that when doing research as a participant observer, issues of power could enter into the relationship between researcher and subjects because of the traditional view of teacher-student or principal-student relationships. While acknowledging this possible limitation, Payne's conclusion that it was possible to present one's self as an "adult-to-another-adult-as-equals" with a shared interest in the issues surrounding the students' education was also recognized. Most subjects appeared to be both enthusiastic and interested in participating in the research. All students who were interviewed said they

felt comfortable sharing their reasons for withdrawal and saw no personal drawbacks to being perfectly candid. On the contrary, they said they were pleased that their experiences were viewed as being important enough to study. Use of interviews, as well as questionnaires and participant-observation, allowed for assessment of reliability through triangulation of methodology, and gave greater scope to the study of a complex reality.

Questionnaire:

Questionnaires utilized in previous research (e.g. Thomas, 1990; Statistics Canada, 1991) on adult and/or adolescent dropouts were examined in detail, along with the relevant literature that discussed characteristics of the dropout. The questionnaire developed for the purpose of the present study (Appendix D) was designed based on the information gained from these sources. The instrument consisted of four parts:

1. Demographic questions (e.g. age, sex, highest grade completed)
2. Likert-type questions that dealt with issues surrounding educational experiences and the decision to drop out of a high school program (e.g., I found school boring, I felt I could learn more outside of school)
3. Open ended questions (e.g., Why did you decide to leave school?)

4. Semantic differential scale to measure attitudes based on adjective pairs (e.g., unfair/fair, good/bad, caring/uncaring) found to be high in the evaluation dimension of meaning toward the school experience (Osgood, cited in Mueller, 1986, p. 54).

The initial draft of the questionnaire was examined by four ABE instructors, a high school counselor, and a Literacy Coordinator. Suggestions made (e.g., minor changes in wording) were adapted for the draft used in the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted on four adults who had been students in the Fairview College ABE program the previous year (i.e., 1992/93 school year). Three had completed the program, and one had left before obtaining her Grade 12 equivalency diploma. The students in the pilot study individually completed the questionnaire. They were then interviewed as a group to solicit feedback on the questionnaire and also to allow the researcher to practice interview techniques. The participants found three of the questions on the questionnaire slightly confusing. Wording was subsequently reworked to reflect their suggestions on the questions they found misleading. The participants in the pilot group also had some excellent advice about the researcher's interview technique (e.g., shorter questions and allowing more time for the interviewee to formulate an answer before prompting them in a "traditional teacher style") which were taken into account for subsequent interviews. As previously stated, the final

revised form of the questionnaire was completed by 113 registered students in the 1993/94 ABE program.

A second form of the questionnaire (Appendix E) was utilized for all students who dropped out of the ABE program. Students completed the second questionnaire at the same time they formally withdrew (i.e., signed the official withdrawal forms) from the College. This form was a minimally altered version of the original questionnaire. The changes in wording were made to reflect the students current leaving from the ABE program, as opposed to the past leaving from a public school program. The demographic information had already been completed by each subject, so was not needed on the second instrument. Twenty students completed the second questionnaire.

Interview:

Nineteen of the 20 students who completed the second questionnaire were each interviewed within one week of withdrawing from the ABE program. One student was interviewed 5 months later. Both of the student's completed questionnaires were used as the preliminary interview guide to start each student's withdrawal interview, and again at the end of each interview as a check on whether the interviewee had developed new or modified insights as a result of participating in the interview. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed by a secretary familiar with the use of dictaphones. During each interview annotations were made of

the subject's responses and upon completion further observations were recorded (e.g., possible emergent connections between the subject's various experiences, any observations about the student's behavior noted during the interview). Portions of one interview (#11) were not initially tape recorded successfully because of a faulty connection in the recorder. Due to various circumstances in the subject's life, he could not be re-interviewed until 6 months later. The two transcripts were both used for analysis. The availability of transcripts from two interviews, held at different times, allowed for the unforeseen opportunity to analyze this student's data for reliability over time. One other subject was re-interviewed after almost a year at her own request, because she said that she had more insights to share with the researcher.

Although it was recognized that the use of a tape recorder can intimidate some people, perhaps causing them to be less free with their answers, a small recorder was used in this research. The use of the tape recorder helped to eliminate the possibility of the researcher making an unconscious selection of data that would support any existing biases. It also allowed for the continual re-examination of the source materials during analysis as various hypotheses emerged (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Once the student appeared to be comfortable with the tape recorder and the interview format, then a semi-structured, one-to-two hour interview was conducted to debrief the individuals in more depth about their various experiences of school leaving; their family background, their current family, personal crisis and generally any life experience(s) considered important to them in the development of their ideas

pertaining to school and education. Marshall and Rossman (1989) postulated that the semi-structured interview allows the "participant's perspective on the issues under investigation to unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p. 82). Since a connection between the phenomenon of high school dropout and ABE dropout is not covered satisfactorily in current literature, this method was used to facilitate the emergence of unknown data. Borg and Gall (1989) concur that the semi-structured interview "provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth, and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach" (p. 452).

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the collection of the first group of questionnaires, but formal analysis was not begun until all interviews were completed (with the exception of the two "double" interviews noted earlier). The main thrust of the research was qualitative in design but information was also gathered and analyzed using quantitative procedures.

Quantitative Procedures

The information gained by means of the instrument (e.g., demographic information and the Likert-type questions) was tabled and descriptive statistics were generated. The data was further examined to differentiate between the dropout group

and the persistence group and then was subsequently analyzed for comparison. Both similarities and differences between these two groups were noted.

Qualitative Procedures

The analysis started with the annotations that were made during and after each of the interviews about the subjects' responses and emotions. Input from staff members about each student who dropped out was also noted at the time of each student's withdrawal. These annotations were worthwhile later during the formal analysis. As stated earlier, all interviews were transcribed by a secretary who had previous experience with the use of a dictaphone. The researcher then listened to all tapes while reading through the transcripts to check for accuracy and to make notes of voice changes (e.g., tremors, pauses) that were evident at certain points in the interview. Two ABE instructors and a high school counselor each listened to two different, randomly selected interviews while reading the corresponding transcripts, to corroborate the accuracy of the transcriptions and to offer suggestions of parallels and differences they noticed between each student's two experiences of dropping out of school. These ideas were subsequently used to aid and validate the researcher's own analysis.

The five steps outlined by Marshall and Rossman (1989), and supported by Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz (1991), were followed to interpret the raw data collected on the dropout group. Analysis included the following procedures: (1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories, themes and patterns; (3) testing

emergent hypotheses; (4) searching for alternative explanations; and (5) writing the report (pp. 114-119).

Organizing the data was accomplished by thorough reading and re-reading of the raw data and organizing it by means of charting and color coding various groups of data. Generating categories, themes, and patterns, was accomplished by identifying prominent themes (i.e., meaning that runs through all or most of the data), and reoccurring ideas that tie the students and their thoughts on their school experiences together, and then generating potential categories of dropout characteristics that were distinct from one another yet internally consistent. The five general categories identified for high school dropouts in the 1990 national survey (i.e., disadvantaged, creative independent, vocationally focused, minority, and critical event) were examined for their potential transferability to understanding the adult dropout and the link between their various school leaving experiences.

Emergent hypotheses about categories and patterns were evaluated by testing and retesting them against the data. As previously noted, two ABE instructors (both of whom had previous research experience) and a high school counselor volunteered to critically question the researcher's analysis at various points during the research process by reviewing tapes and transcripts. Searching for alternative explanations, or other plausible explanations, for the data was explored by constantly challenging the emerging patterns. Again, input from other professionals helped to facilitate this phase

of the analysis. Discussions with the two students who were reinterviewed also helped to clarify and validate the emerging hypotheses..

Writing the report, or the presentation of the material, was the final phase in the analytical procedure. To benefit fully from the qualitative approach to this research project, much information is shared by using the students' own words. The sense of meaning that others give to their own experiences, through their own understanding, is critical. Therefore, the use of their own language to understand the events in their lives is essential. In Chapter 4, the results derived from this study will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the research data. In the first section the demographic information from the two groups of students, the “persisters” and the “dropouts” will be compared. In the second section, the data gathered from the in-depth interviews and the open ended questions is used to compare the students’ life circumstances when they were dropping out of the regular school system and then dropping out of the ABE program. The relevancy of the 5 typologies postulated to categorize high school dropouts (Price Waterhouse School Leavers Qualitative study, 1990) was re-examined to determine if there were possible links to understanding the dropout behavior of the ABE population in this study. The third section is organized by presenting the stories from selected students who represent examples of individuals who appear to be consistent with the descriptions of the specific categories mentioned above, and also the history of one student who does not appear to be represented by the existing framework. Each story is a summation of the student’s own account of their experiences of dropping out, first from the public school system and then from an ABE program. In the final section the similarities and differences as measured by the Likert-type questions in the questionnaire, between ABE dropouts and persisters in their reasons stated for having left high school, will be presented.

Data from the Semantic Differential Scale provided no useful information in either comparing the two groups of students, or in comparing the dropouts' attitudes toward their two experiences of school leaving. In discussions with various students, it became apparent that there was much confusion surrounding this part of the questionnaire. Even though every subject "ticked the spaces" between the pairs of words, those questioned later confirmed that they really would not be able to explain why they placed their check mark in any particular spot. The instructions did not appear to be clear enough for the participants to fully understand what they were being asked to do. Therefore, that data will not be presented.

Demographic Information

The 23 dropouts were compared with the 90 persisters on a number of demographic variables. All questions pertaining to schooling (e.g., difficulties with math or English, repeating a grade) reflect the students' educational experiences prior to enrolling in the ABE program. This information is displayed in Table 1.

The dropout group consisted of 11 females and 12 males and the persister group consisted of 56 females and 34 males. Combining all the students in both groups by gender, less women than men dropped out of the ABE program, 16% and 26% respectively.

Table 1: Group Comparisons of Demographic Variables

Variable	Dropouts (% or M)	SD	Persisters (% or M)	SD
male	52.2%	N/A	37.8%	N/A
female	47.8%	N/A	62.2%	N/A
age	23.9	6.1	28.8	8.5
married	73.9%	N/A	68.9%	N/A
number of children	1.6	1.3	1.5	1.5
highest grade completed	9.6	1.0	9.4	2.0
highest grade father completed	8.3	2.6	8.3	2.7
highest grade mother completed	10.3	2.2	9.3	2.6
repeated grade	56.5%	N/A	52.2%	N/A
difficulties with math	69.6%	N/A	71.1%	N/A
failed math	47.8%	N/A	43.3%	N/A
difficulties with English	43.5%	N/A	47.8%	N/A
failed English	30.4%	N/A	25.6%	N/A
previously enrolled in another ABE program	21.7%	N/A	34.8%	N/A

The two groups were more alike than different on 12 of the 13 variables measured. As noted in Table 1, almost the same percentage of dropouts and persisters were married and they had almost the same average number of children. Members of both groups initially left school at approximately the same grade level. It is interesting to note that only 18 dropouts and 62 persisters (71%) knew the highest grade their fathers had completed, and 17 dropouts and 67 persisters (73%) knew the highest grade their mothers completed. This figure is consistent with the findings from the

national survey on school leavers (Devereaux, 1993) which also reported that 73% of school leavers (the group to which both ABE persisters and ABE dropouts initially belonged), but a full 89% of graduates knew their parents' level of education. From the available data it was calculated that, on average, the fathers for both groups dropped out at the same grade level (Grade 8.3). The mothers of students from both groups had a higher level of education than did their fathers. However, the mothers of persisters dropped out, on average, one grade level sooner than the mothers of dropouts (9.3 and 10.3 respectively).

Before initially dropping out of school, the percentage of students in both groups who had difficulty with math was extremely high. Close to half of all students surveyed reported that they had previously failed a math course. Fewer students in either group felt they had difficulty with English and/or had actually failed English. As previously stated, the percentages for both groups on these variables was similar. With such high perceived difficulty surrounding two core subjects, it is not surprising that more than half of the students from each group reported that they repeated a grade during their initial schooling. This figure is higher than the 36% failure rate for school leavers reported by Devereaux in the 1993 national survey. Previous upgrading had been attempted by a larger percentage of students from the persister group than from the dropout group (34.8% and 21.7% respectively).

The dropouts ranged in age from 18 years to 41 years and, as shown in Table 1, the average age was 23.9 years. The persisters ranged from 17 years to 62 years,

the average age being 28.8 years. A one way analysis of variance indicated a significant difference, $F(1, 111) = 6.84, p = 0.0101$. Thus there is sufficient reason to conclude that the dropouts are, on average, younger than the persisters for this population of students.

Interview Information

The five typologies postulated in the Price Waterhouse Qualitative Research On School Leavers (1990) were re-examined to evaluate their usefulness in categorizing the school experiences of the ABE dropouts interviewed in this study. However, the intent was not to force all of the ABE dropouts into this pre-existing framework, but rather to repeatedly search the data to see which students were or were not represented by these categories. The five general categories of school leavers identified in the 1990 study, and described fully in Chapter 2, are briefly summarized below:

1. Disadvantaged: The students in this group were the most severely limited, both socially and economically, by their early home experiences. They grew up in families, foster homes or group homes where problems such as physical and sexual abuse, parents addicted to alcohol or drugs, and/or parents with psychiatric disorders figured prominently in their life stories. Members of this group had either no definitive aspirations, or unrealistic goals for the future.

2. Creative Independents: This group of students came from middle- and upper-income families where parents were often professionals, but also often separated. These students felt that the school regulations were too rigid and not really conducive to true learning. Many had aspirations that involved creative or artistic careers and felt that the other high school courses were irrelevant.
3. Vocationally Focused: The desire to work, rather than study, was the primary characteristic defining the members in this group. Some students had academic difficulties that could perhaps be attributed to undiagnosed learning disabilities, but others simply saw the high school courses as being irrelevant. Aspirations included the desire for jobs with high salaries in construction, skilled labor or to start a new business.
4. Minority: Being a member of a visible minority, with the feeling of not being accepted by or “fitting into” the high school, was the characteristic most noted in this group. They felt that there were not enough appropriate role models for them to see the benefits of continuing in their education. These youths complained of often feeling they were being discriminated against within the schools.
5. Critical Event: The members of this group were similar to those in the disadvantaged group, but did not experience the extreme deprivations that defined the youths in the first group. Students from this category could

describe a series of critical events, or family situations, that culminated in their decision to leave school.

Many of the students who were interviewed for this study had common threads that ran through their stories of early school leaving, which was consistent with the findings found in much of the high school dropout literature reported earlier. Most of the students described a fairly consistent process of withdrawal from the educational system that they were involved with (i.e., increased skipping, not doing homework), but the specific details of what led up to that final withdrawal, the actual reasons, were singular to each story teller. Despite the uniqueness of each experience, it was possible to find similarities that allowed for grouping of the students, while recognizing that there were also variations within each category. It is also important to note that the information included in both of the questionnaires by the students, first describing why they dropped out of high school and then out of the ABE program, was generally only a small piece of the explanation that was elicited during the interview. Further, the reasons given in the questionnaire for why a student dropped out of high school, which were initially all centered on blaming the school system (e.g., poor teachers, stupid subjects, boredom, no relevancy), were often revised after the student re-examined and verbally shared their past and present experiences.

Applicable Categories

It became apparent after much reading and re-reading of the data that only three of the Price Waterhouse categories were applicable in trying to understand and categorize this group of ABE dropouts' various experiences of leaving school. The categories that were useful in grouping and interpreting the ABE dropouts' experiences were those of the disadvantaged, the vocationally focused, and the minority school leavers. The remainder of the students did not appear to fit any of the existing categories, however, they exhibited many similarities as a group. Based on these common characteristics, the new categorization could be labeled as either the "peer and party" or the "fun and frolic" school leavers.

The following four sections describe common characteristics of the members of each of the four applicable groups of school leavers described above. The comments used to exemplify the thinking of participants in each group are taken verbatim from the in-depth interviews with the students. Quotes were selected based on their overall representiveness of the group's thinking on various issues.

Disadvantaged School Leavers.

Eleven of the students (i.e., 6 women and 5 men) were examples of people who had been raised in families with multiple problems (i.e., lack of parental support, homes that were characterized by drug, alcohol, mental and/or sexual abuse, multiple foster homes) which in their own estimation, had caused them to withdraw from

school the first time. In retrospect, they realized that what was happening in their lives at the time of their original school withdrawal, their ‘home’ life, was probably much more relevant to the reasons they withdrew from school, than any of the more ‘socially acceptable’ explanations they would have reported at the time (e.g., bored, teachers do not care, school work was irrelevant).

School was a kind of haven, you wanted to be at school, you didn’t want to be at home. We didn’t dare get bad marks. But going to school with black eyes and stuff, trying to miss school as much as possible. . . it was just hard. I didn’t want to be asked what was going on at home.

Male, age 25, dropped out Grade 9

. . . school was more like some place to get away from home because my home life was more pressure than school. . .

Male, age 19, dropped out Grade 10

I found with all my personal problems I couldn’t stay focused on school or be able to enjoy it.

Male, age 19, dropped out Grade 9

Even though school was a “safe harbor” for many of these students, the pressures of a chaotic home life appeared to have finally made continued schooling impossible.

[What happened at school was affected by] my mom’s drinking and what was happening to me (sexual abuse). . . I used to wonder does it happen to everybody, does it happen to that kid, this kid? It was too hard.

Female, age 20, dropped out Grade 9

The family problems. I was having problems in the group homes. That effected how I was doing at school. Its partly my fault but when I left

there [a particular group home] I didn't move because I wanted to. I still wanted to go to school but they sort of killed it when they moved me. So I didn't want to come to school after that. They gave me the message that school isn't important, they do not stress it enough in these places.

male, age 19, dropped out Grade 9

[Stepfather was] making us work too much and keeping us out of school. His idea was he had a Grade 3 education he could do it in the world so he figured we could too. Mom, she couldn't cope, she couldn't argue, she just let things go the way they did.

Male, age 25, dropped out Grade 9

Most of the students in this category did not have specific goals for their education. They had very vague aspirations for what they wanted to gain from their personal investment in the time and energy that is required to complete an ABE program.

To make something of myself. To start my own work, my own family.

Male, age 25, dropped out Grade 9

Because I feel ashamed to have to say that I never graduated.

Male, age 19, dropped out Grade 10

To show myself that I can get a Grade 12, and get a job, and help support my kids.

Female, age 23, dropped out Grade 10

At the time of their leaving the ABE program, these same individuals were still living in 'multi-problem homes', however, at this point in their lives, they were the adult in the home rather than the child. Many of them could make a clear connection

between the effect of their past and present 'home lifes' and their two experiences of leaving school.

That's what gots to do with my problems now, he D_____ [common law husband] beat me all the time and having kids so young and all.

Female, age 20, dropped out Grade 9, first child at age 14

. . . in a way they are the same. This time I am on the other side. Instead of being bothered by it [parents' and aunt's drinking and partying], I'm doing it [drugs and partying]. School can be very demanding and sometimes drugs can too, they're not a good mix.

Male, age 24, dropped out Grade 10

The things going on at home, first with my mother and now S_____ [husband's name] really are no different. I don't always want someone dictating to me what to do, pulling me away [from school]. My kids need a mother a little bit more together, one who got an education, who got a job, who can raise them instead of them raising mom, that's not right. That's what we had to do, but here I am.

Female, age 23, dropped out Grade 10, mother of 3

I can't cope with the out side and school at the same time. I never could.

Female, age 24, dropped out Grade 10

I guess I need a stable life at home so I can achieve my goals and dreams educationally. I keep trying. Once I did a whole year [of ABE] because I was happy at a home with my Uncle and happy at school and I had time to do my homework without being stressed out with problems around me. It's hard to concentrate when you got a lot on your mind.

Male, age 19, dropped out Grade 9

. . . now my fiancee, then my step dad . . . same train of thought, same ideas about school. Education's not important, go make money. It was the easiest thing, not the easiest thing to do to quit school, but it seemed like the only solution at both times.

Male, age 24, dropped out Grade 9

A life 'out of control', with no clear goal oriented behavior, rather than a school system that was lacking, appears to be the primary reason for this group of students to drop out of any educational program. Their continuing role in life as a "victim", rather than as a "controller", their poor coping skills, and their unfocused or unrealistic aspirations had not appeared to change since their original school withdrawal experiences.

Vocationally Focused

Four of the students, all males, formed a distinct group who were best described by the vocationally focused school leavers category. All four had initially left high school because they felt that school did not seem relevant when compared to the real world of work and the making of money.

My mother she was always working and my grandfather, to him, he was more prouder when we went to work [rather than to school].

male, age 35, dropped out Grade 8

I decided that money was more important then education. I quit because I had a great paying job. I was making big money and school didn't seem important to me at the time. It was more in the hands of 'oh I can get it later, put it off to the side'. But little I knew it was only seasonal work.

male, age 20, dropped out Grade 11 but doing Grade 7/8 work

When I dropped out of high school I just didn't care. I'd much rather be working. I dropped out and I had a full time job at the gas station and I thought I was really making the coin. I really believed that the stuff we were taking there had no relevancy to my future. I wanted to

make fast money. My Dad always said if a person worked hard, it did not matter what job he was doing.

male, age 23, dropped out Grade 10

When I dropped out I just had in mind to go to work, make money, go from there.

male, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

All had come back to school because they were in a period of unemployment and had either been convinced by “someone else” that they needed more training if they wished to “advance in life” or they saw coming to school as a way to make some money.

I was working, but then I got laid off, lack of contracts. So I moved up here and M_____ [girl friend] said I should go to school too. Sure I said.

male, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

Everybody bugging me to come. Paying me to go to school is nice, but paying me when I didn't come to school [skipping] is really good. But if you are not there [work], they are not going to pay. What they pay me here [school] is , I wouldn't be hurt if I lost it, but if I am going to lose \$150 a day [fire fighting] that's a lot of money to lose. So you have to be there [at work], but if I was getting away with it [pretending to be sick] and didn't have to be here [school] and still got paid, I wouldn't be here. The plan was I'd drag on and make money for two years. . . . I want to stay off social services cause I hate it.

male, age 35, dropped out Grade 8

The jobs got less and less there for a bit and I always had work, but I mean it wasn't always the greatest and then in the fall, my mom finally twisted my arm, just about broke it, and said 'you've got to go back to school'.

male, age 20, dropped out Grade 11

The four members in this category all said they understood that if they wished to advance into more permanent employment opportunities they needed to upgrade their academic qualifications. Even though all four of the men agreed that a Grade 12 was “necessary”, three of them did not appear to see the relevancy of the courses they had to take to “earn” the diploma. The following quotes exemplify this sentiment:

I couldn't see where it would benefit me, English. I could read and that was the main thing, I could write. Spelling errors someone else could make them out. I could read and write that was the main thing.

male, age 20, dropped out Grade 11

I just wish school would train you to be something and just leave it at that instead of going through all the horseshit of having science and everything. You don't need it and I don't see why you have to get stuck with it. If you want to be this, train you for that, and then you're qualified.

male, age 35, dropped out Grade 8

The fourth student had similar beliefs in high school:

I enjoyed school for the women and football and wrestling. I never felt that anything I took in high school was ever going to help me in the 'real world'.

male, age 23, dropped out Grade 10

But after participating in the ABE program he had changed his attitude about the importance of education in the 'real world', even though he was still not clear on the actual benefits of specific courses.

Back then I thought I was really cool. I tell you if I could do it over again, I would rather be one of those geeks that's succeeding

somewhere, one of those geeks that had no friends but do really well in school, than someone who is popular and a jock. Back then I could not figure out what these courses, how they were going to help me out with my careers and my future, whatever. But now I come back and I look at the courses and while I am doing the course, I can kind of see how this fits into the overall future plan. I mean, I see job opportunities and stuff and I'm just missing the Grade 12, it really slowed me down not getting the Grade 12. I need the diploma.

It was interesting to note that all the members of this group stressed a common belief that one of the benefits of work was that "you were always doing something different, while school was the same routine day in and day out". Their consensus was that you always felt "boxed in" when you were in school.

[At work] you are always moving and it's a change of scenery, school is the same scenery. Every day is different in the work force. And when you are working outside you're moving around and you do not feel lazy and you do not feel like your body is getting run down and you're using more calories and thinking and you're moving and you can stay awake. In school you work that many hours, you fall asleep because of the intense thinking. School is very educational but a person finds more interesting things to do than just school.

male, age 20, Grade 11

School I found was the same routine day in day out, but with a job you're always doing something different. So it adds a little excitement and a challenge.

male, age 23, dropped out Grade 10

I think school is important, I just hate to do it. I see the other students working away at it, working at it, but I can't do that. The same routine all the time. I don't know why. But at work I am responsible, I get the job done. There I am in charge of people and here I am only in charge of myself.

male, age 35, dropped out Grade 8

None of the men in this group had an actual goal beyond “working at a good, steady job”. When asked what ‘life plan’ prompted them to come back to school, none had a specific goal.

I do believe that you need school to get somewhere. School is very important. I always found work, but I see old guys out there, 45, still doing grunt work, plugging away, and wrecking their backs. I don’t want to be doing that.

male, age 23, dropped out Grade 10

I know it would benefit me to have my Grade 12, on the other hand, I have to go to work. With the changing life where am I going? If I knew where I was going, it [school] would be no problem.

male, age 20, dropped out Grade 11

It is difficult to get employment without an education. I found out about my heart [condition] and couldn’t do labor any more. So now what?

male, age 35, dropped out Grade 8

I wanted to do things, I wanted to do things so bad but it seemed like I wasn’t getting anywhere in school.

male, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

Two of the four also had learning difficulties that made their progress very slow. The frustration that they had experienced in their earlier schooling was apparent in their adult educational endeavors. The world of work gave them a much different view of themselves than their experiences with school.

When I’m out working [I feel] pretty good, especially when I’m bouncing [doorman], cause other people look up to you. They look at you as a muscle figure and that’s all. But when you come to school you gotta look and act smart and I’m not smart. [In high school] people looked up to me because I played football, but I was always a

dumb jock. I took the easy way out and I'm doing it again, I'm quitting.

male, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

[At school] I never felt like I was moving ahead. Repeat, repeat, the same daily routine. I never understood the material. I pushed it aside but it reflected back, it was a vicious circle. But the money I make [working] is mine. I have things to show for it. I've got skidoos, stuff. Maybe its like school could be good if it was in the night shift. Cause I could work all day and go to school all night.

male, age 20, dropped out Grade 11

The students in this group were pulled away from their academic endeavors once again because they felt that they had to drop out of the ABE program to return to work for financial reasons. The idea of surviving on a very reduced income for the sake of a future goal was not a concept that was acceptable to them for the extended period of time it would take them to complete their education. Their common belief that the salary from work was more important than the knowledge from education was stated succinctly by the student who said, "It seems you always need money to make life better", even though he was the one who said he could now see the relevancy of his course work. That money and work were more satisfying, and generally more important, than education was still very much evident in the thinking of this group of students.

Minority

One student was best described by the minority category, even though her family of origin would have placed her in the disadvantaged category. She is a young

lady of native descent who was placed at age 2 months as a foster child in a middle-class white family. At the age of 4 years she was adopted by them, making her the youngest of three children. Her experiences with both her home life and school reflect her feelings of being out of place and of feeling that she was being discriminated against.

I didn't know who I was. I didn't have an identity or anything. I was really lost. I was Native and discriminated against growing up, so I had low self-esteem. It started when I was really young, in kindergarten and grade one and two, when I was just little. The family that adopted me was from the same area as my natural parents so a lot of them discriminated against me even in my own [extended] family.

female, age 19, dropped out Grade 9.

This student dropped out of school at age 15 and tried ABE three times, between the ages of 17 to 19. At the time of her interview, she had dropped out of school more times than any other student in the study. She was also the youngest student that the College had admitted to the Peace River ABE program. During her initial dropout interview, she blamed all of her 'failures' on alcohol, drugs and/or pregnancies.

It was in Grade 8 that I started doing drugs and had a problem with drinking. I just thought like I was having fun and being irresponsible, I didn't realize it was a problem that I needed to get help with. So when I was in school [ABE] the first time I was drinking lots, even more. Before I came I had the baby and gave him up for adoption in that August so when school started in September I was in bad shape, the whole mourning process thing. All the times I left it was drinking, funding was a bit of a problem, and twice pregnancies, all of it together I guess.

Approximately one year later she phoned the school and wanted to come and 'talk' again. She had moved away from Peace River for a year and felt that she had important insights to share about the real causes that led to her having dropped out of school so often. It was not that what she had initially said was untrue, it was just that she believed she had gained a better insight into what had led to her reoccurring problems. The following is one of her comments:

I do not think I can blame it all on drinking or the combination with being pregnant. It was just that I had to accept myself. I had to understand things in my childhood to understand who I am now. It helped me understand that I didn't know who I was all these years. Like being separated from my family, being discriminated against a lot and I know there's lots of buried feelings there that I didn't think existed. So I uncovered a lot of those things. Like I'd have friends at school and their parents wouldn't like me because I was native and it's still like that. It's still like that, but I don't bother with it because it's not my problem, it's their problem and I realize that. I don't have to carry it for them.

When questioned about what allowed her to make these changes "inside herself", she attributed the new insights to her association with a Native Women's Association. She had met people who "really helped her talk a lot about her past" and helped her to learn who she was and what she wanted to do with the future.

I was able to go into different communities, see education on racism and stuff, it was really interesting. Lots of these people [members of the Native Women's Association] used to drink lots. None of them do anymore. Most of them have Masters degrees now. They have there own businesses and stuff. They're native. That's what probably influences me the most. I just got really interested in life again.

Being exposed to cultural role models who were educated and doing work that was of value and interest to this student obviously had a tremendous effect on changing her self image. According to her, these changes then allowed her to adapt a new outlook on school and to see the value of actually completing her Grade 12. Her recent actions certainly supported her theory that things were different. When she came to share her new insights, she had just completed a nine week course in Native Studies and was in the process of completing courses in senior math, social studies and senior English in another ABE program. Plans were underway for her to enter a two year University diploma program in Native Studies. The interesting question that had to be asked was why, after four previous attempts at school, was this time successful for this student? According to her it was because “I was ready, I was really ready for it. It’s not the school, it’s not the teachers it’s a ‘you’ kind of change”.

Peer and Party or Fun and Frolic

The final four students do not appear to be members of any of the existing Price Waterhouse categories. The two males and two females that comprise this group were pulled away from their schooling simply because they enjoyed being with their friends and having a good time. After the completion of elementary school, they appeared to see few benefits to deferring their pleasures for the sake of an education. As one student said, “Elementary school was fun games, junior high you have some

little sock hops and stuff, but senior high isn't fun anymore, it's work". Comments pertaining to why they initially dropped out of school reflect the importance for them of socializing with a 'peer group' and doing "fun things" outside of school, rather than the necessary work inside the school.

Well it started in Grade 8. The principal didn't want to pass me because I slacked off some way or another. I'd always want to be with my friends and they'd be skipping out or they wouldn't be in school and in order for me to keep up with them, I'd have to not be in school either.

male, age 18, dropped out Grade 10

Well in Grade 8 I discovered the joys of skipping out and getting away with it. Boyfriends, friends and vehicles, turn 16 and you get your own vehicle. You have so many other fun things you could be doing, you'd rather be doing than going to school. That's basically what it was for me.

female, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

Junior high school was a big party. I failed Grade 7. I started partying and then I failed. I had too many friends. I sat in the back of the class is what happened. The person in the back of the class can get away with anything back there, so we did. I just had too many people to be with, to see and too many games of pool to play. Too much of a social life.

female, age 20, dropped out Grade 10

I was kind of horsing around in Grade 8 and 9, not taking anything serious, not taking homework home, not studying. I just looked forward to phys. ed. and lunch and friends. I failed Grade 9 but did it again and passed. Grade 10 was OK but then it went down hill. I got my truck. Once I got my truck I took the most advantage I could getting out of there, but I shouldn't of. Outside peer pressure that's what did it.

male, age 22, dropped out Grade 11

No members in this group appeared to actively dislike school, they just found too many other activities that were more fun and did not really see the necessity to curb their enjoyment for the sake of an education. School was “boring” and was therefore “easy to be distracted from”. As one student put it:

It wasn't that I ever hated school. I found it interesting. I just could never focus. I stop and think, oh there are so many other different things; I could be here, I could be there, I could be doing so many different things with my friends or doing whatever. It wasn't that I wasn't exactly interested in school, it was just that it wasn't immediately fun.

female, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

The need for social contacts outside of the school was equally apparent for each of these students during their attempt at completing the ABE program. After the beginning of school, perhaps after the “novelty wore off”, all of them had very poor attendance records that ultimately led to their withdrawing from the program. The reasons given for leaving the ABE program appeared to closely mirror the original reasons for dropping out of high school.

My friends were going out Well, let's go out, it's Friday night, Karaoke night or whatever, yeah okay sure. Wednesday night let's go after bowling or something. And then it ended up not just being Friday nights, I ended up finding something else on Wednesday, something else to do on Tuesdays. . . Too many other things to do and I couldn't focus on school. I'm really a social person. I was misled in the sense that I could not keep up with school because the more important things to me were being able to party, stay up later than usual and problems. I wanted my free time.

male, age 18, dropped out Grade 10

Its almost exactly the same as last time. It is a lack of being able to commit because there are so many other things out there that I'd rather

be doing. When I was in high school it was different things I'd rather be doing, but still the same. I am not going to be the best I can be, because I don't want to be here right now. So why should I go through that? I am just sitting here B.S'ing so why torture everybody else?

female, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

The reason I came back was I felt I had nothing going on, I wasn't working at the time. I thought well I'll come to school and get paid for it, but it just doesn't work that way. When you come back you have to want it. Cause if you don't want it, there is no point in coming. I just keep taking the easy way out and quitting. I get bored, there is other stuff to do.

male, age 22, dropped out Grade 11

I just never had the time to do my homework. There was my house work and B____[baby] and S_____[husband]. I never had a space of time to do my homework. Those three hours in the middle of the day [study periods] were also my LUNCH hour and there was UPTOWN, all the banks and stores are open. Gee, I still have friends. I hardly ever saw them once I started school. So I had to stop for coffee. Then I'd miss the English class it was so late in the afternoon [3 o'clock] because I had to cook supper.

female, age 20, dropped out Grade 9

It is interesting to note that not one of these students appeared to have a specific goal that they were working toward when they enrolled in the ABE program.

When asked what getting the Grade 12 would do for them, their answers are characterized by vague aspirations.

It will help make me feel my life is complete. 'Cause till I get that I just don't feel right about myself. Makes me kind of mad because I'm the only kid in the family that hasn't graduated. Once I have my Grade 12 it will bring me more into reality, the way I see it. Because you are kind of stuck in one level, but once you've got it you move up again. Just to get it, and then once I got it I would decide what I was going to do with my life.

male, age 22, dropped out Grade 11

It would mean that I could graduate and go to University.

male, age 18, dropped out Grade 10

I guess if I got my Grade 12 I could go to University.

female, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

I wanted to come back to school so many times and I had gone down to the Unemployment office and they kept telling me “fill these out, bring them back, fill these out, bring them back” but they’d give me papers saying what do you want to do, you have to know what you want to do. I just want my Grade 12, you know. Like, that’s exactly what my teachers did in high school. They said what do you want to do. Well I don’t know. I still don’t know.

female, age 20, dropped out Grade 10

The members of this group all said that at some point they planned to finish school. They “really, really did believe” that education was important it was just that the timing had not been correct for them “this time”. When asked what would have to happen to allow them to be successful in their attempt to complete a Grade 12, the answers were all fairly similar:

I just don’t want to do school right now, I’ve got too many other things going on. I know its a yucky thing to say. I still have a lot to learn about me, and hope some day I will be able to devote all my time to receiving an education.

female, age 21, dropped out Grade 10

I will graduate someday in the latter part of the next 5 years. I plan to get married and have another child or two and then I will go back for a Grade 12 education. This wasn’t a good time. I want them [my kids] to learn from my mistakes, once I do.

female, age 20, dropped out Grade 10

Right now the Grade 12 wasn't important. It's not the right time. But I just will have to sit down and really do it. A little bit of growing up will be a big factor. Changing my attitude toward everything. I can apply myself to sports and I've got no problems, but then when it comes to a little hard work [in school] I just get frustrated and I take the easiest way out. But I'm getting a little older right now and it is getting time to change and take my future seriously.

male, age 22, dropped out Grade 11

I'm looking for a challenge. I think I am going to have to be strong, try and work my hardest. If I can pull it off, if I got an 80 the first time I am going to go for a 90 next time. Like at the bar. If I could put away 3 beer last time, maybe I'll put away 6 this time. Next time I am going to have to be stronger.

male, age 18, dropped out Grade 10

These students each verbalized that at some future time the change would have to happen inside themselves for their attempts at schooling to be successful. In both instances of dropping out of school, they stated that it was not the school, the teachers, nor the subjects that caused them to be unsuccessful, but rather as one student said "it was just me in general". Three of the students talked about the need to "grow up more" and that "some time in the future" they would have to be prepared to focus and not be so concerned with just having a good time. The last, and youngest, member of this group was cognizant of his need to change if he wished to be successful, however, his lack of maturity was evident in his conversations around this issue. He kept repeating he would have to be "stronger", and he'd "show everyone", but could not really explain what being "stronger" had to do with completing school.

Life Stories

The following sections include more detailed life stories of selected students. All twenty stories were of interest, all were unique, however, taken in entirety, they were also very long. Because the stories had been grouped according to similar themes, to exemplify certain patterns of thoughts and behaviors, only certain stories are presented here. Each history reported below was selected because it was representative of the group of stories for a specific category. The only exception is the story representing the minority school leavers category. Because there was only one student in this group, obviously no choice was possible. Two stories have been selected from the disadvantaged group, due to this groups larger membership. Only one detailed story is included from each of the other smaller categories. All names used are pseudonyms.

Disadvantaged School Leavers

Dee: At the time of the interview Dee was a 20 year old mother of two, who was expecting her third baby when she withdrew from the ABE program after 1 month of sporadic attendance. She is the youngest in a family of three daughters. Her parents died when she was quite young and she was raised in a combination of foster homes, a few periods of time with her older sisters, and finally living on her own at age 16. She had dropped out of high school after 1 semester in Grade 10. The reason stated was because she was pregnant.

I decided on my own that I wasn't going back because of peers and everything, wondering what my teachers would have thought because I went to a Catholic school and I just didn't think it was very cool that I go back. Guys were embarrassed that I was pregnant and I was embarrassed with my teachers and things. I didn't talk to a guidance counselor, I didn't talk to nobody.

She also had not passed any of the first semester courses and her attendance had been very poor. She moved to Alberta to stay with a Grandmother she had "never seen in years since I was a little, little girl", but did not last long in this situation. Dee then moved closer to Peace River and she became pregnant again when her first daughter was 1 year old. Her new "in-laws" had temporary custody of both of her children, when the new baby was a few months old, but took her to court for permanent custody. She did not show up on the day of the case. When asked why this happened she replied:

I don't really know, I can't even remember. It was something really like if I really, really, really would of wanted to, then I would have been able to be there. I was kinda unsure too, like I didn't know if I should sign these kids over to them or whether I should keep them and I thought if I just avoided it that, you know, maybe I wouldn't have to sign. I never talked to nobody.

Dee started the ABE program, but had very poor attendance from almost day 1. She blamed her missing of classes on lack of adequate funding; she could not afford to buy her books. "No one would give me that funding whatsoever, and I have no one to back me financially, like I have no parents or family that I could have said I need school books." She was on a type of funding that her tuition had been paid and she

was given an allowance per day for each day of attendance. Because she was continually missing time, her weekly checks were less than what was initially allocated and therefore, she never had money to purchase her books. Rather than coming to discuss the problems she chose to “sit in class and do nothing cause I don’t have books or stay home in the trailer and do nothing cause I don’t have money.” When asked whose problem it was that she was in this financial bind, Dee replied, “Well it’s not my fault and I can’t blame it on anyone else.” What was she going to do about all of this, nothing. She was leaving school and she was not going to talk to nobody.

When asked if education was important, Dee replied with an emphatic yes.

When asked why, she replied “Because I wanna be someone in life, I wanna get somewhere.” When asked if she saw any similarities between her two school leaving experiences she said:

Not really because I didn’t have to pay for my textbooks then. Me being pregnant this time isn’t like a major thing, I can still go to school. But when I was younger it was more like a peer thing you know, like I was embarrassed that I was pregnant. That’s why I quit then.

Jane: Jane was 37 years old at the time of the interview, had 3 adult children and 5 grandchildren. Two of her daughters were attending the ABE program at the same time as she was, but both of them were in the more advanced program. The surface reason for having originally quit school in Grade 10 was because she was pregnant, but she had not really enjoyed school since Grade 8. At this time she had been transferred into a Peace River school from a smaller, rural school. In the rural

school, she had a friend who used to cheat with her by always marking each others in-class test papers.

We'd make C's into A's and whatever, so we always got high marks. And like we corrected each other's tests in math and science and did real well. I could do English on my own. It didn't bother me because I was getting the marks the teacher wanted us to get. I could take the mark home and show my Dad I was doing good in school. In the new school we couldn't cheat with each other's test papers, that's when I got the bad marks. It didn't matter if I was in school or not, I didn't have a clue what the teacher was talking about. Nothing made sense.

She started skipping:

. . . going downtown, going to the [river] bank, and we'd drink, maybe two beers all day. Sometimes we'd just go down there and build fires because we had nothing else to do, it was boring but not as bad as school.

Her father was generally "working in the bush" (hunting and trapping) and even though he was upset that she was skipping school an average of two days a week, he was rarely home to supervise her. She actually had no one who was caring for her for most of the fall and winter, because her three older brothers had all quit school early and moved away from home and her mother had "abandoned" the family when Jane was 4 months old. Jane ran away from home at age 15, was picked up by the police and reluctantly returned to Peace River. By the time her father returned from the bush she was "pregnant and out of school, not much he could do".

The earlier move into a larger school, aside from curtailing Jane's cheating, also made her aware of the fact that she had been sexually abused and that this type of behavior was not the norm for every family.

It had been happening to me as many years as I can remember, with all of them (brothers and father). I didn't know until we started to take religion that this shouldn't be happening. Maybe if I had stayed in N_____ school we would have known more when we got older. My girls (the two who were also students in the ABE program) were also abused by their step dad only they took theirs to court, I didn't."

Jane's mother re-entered the picture when Jane was 15 and herself the mother of a new born baby girl. Jane had been placed with her daughter in a foster home while attempting to finish a semester of Grade 10. However, she left school again, and moved in with her mother in another town. Her mother was given custody of the child.

Even though I lived with her, I hated her. She did more damage to me than anything. She drank all the time and as far as I'm concerned she probably used to prostitute me to all the men she brought to the house. She needed money for booze and poker. I tried Grade 10 again but it didn't take. I stayed there until I had my next baby and then I moved in with M's Dad. I had her [Jane's Mom] declared an unfit guardian and got T_____ back. It didn't work, he [M's dad] beat me so bad, so I moved back to the farm. Both my girls were sick in the hospital and I remember the hospital calling me to pick them up. But I didn't. Not for two years, I left and went to Calgary. I never came back until after I had H---, but then I settled in Edmonton and didn't take the girls for another 2 years. [Both the girls were placed in a series of foster homes, until the family reunited when they were about 4 and 5.]

Jane was in the ABE program for 3 months. During this time she missed at least 2 days a week due to a family crisis (either her own or her daughters) or health

related matters. However, even as she was leaving she repeated what had been her stand the entire semester.

I really want to be here. If I hadn't missed so much school, that's the big thing. All the home problems belong at home and that's where I leave them. When I go back home that's where I face them. When I was in school last time I knew everything, this time now I found out I don't. My daughter's health problems are psychological, she makes herself sick. They did an ultra sound of the whole upper half of me and couldn't find anything so they have to go back. But, if I hadn't been sick I would still be here. If you lose just one day [of school] you lose alot. When I was here I was doing good.

Her wish from her education was to become a social worker. She had been a truck driver and really enjoyed it but it was long hours. As she said:

I really enjoyed working with people and it was actually one of them that said I should go into being a counselor, working with native people, so that's what I decided to do.

She had not explored the requirements for any social work programs prior to registering for the ABE program nor during her enrollment, although she had made plans to pursue this a number of times.

Jane's current home life was very similar to the chaotic situation she faced as a child. She had an alcoholic common-law husband, who had been unemployed since getting out of jail a few years ago when he had served time for abusing her two daughters. She had a young boyfriend (a 23 year old ABE dropout from the previous year) who boarded with one of her daughters, because he could not live at Jane's house. Since Jane's common-law had a record, her boyfriend was not allowed on the

premises without being in violation of his own parole. Both daughters were single parents who were struggling to finish their own ABE programs. To date, neither one has completed the program. The youngest has tried twice and dropped out twice. Both daughters claimed to hate their mother, but appeared to spend much time being dependent on her. Both girls had left high school prior to the trial about their own sexual abuse experiences, one was in Grade 10 and the other in Grade 11. The daughters both had patterns of poor attendance during their schooling. Neither girl had been living at home prior to leaving the public system. Jane's personal circumstances and lack of coping skills were again interfering with her desire to get an education. From all appearances, the two daughters were exhibiting many of the same life circumstances and unsuccessful patterns of behavior that had led to Jane's continued failure in regards to her desire for a Grade 12 diploma.

Vocationally Focused

Dave: Dave was a 20 year old single male who dropped out of the ABE program after 7 1/2 months of attendance. He had some learning disabilities surrounding his ability to do reading and writing. Even though he dropped out of high school initially in Grade 11, his level of English functioning was more typical of a beginning junior high student.

Dave grew up on a farm in a small community outside of Peace River. His elementary years were "OK", but he never really liked being in school. As long as he could remember he always felt that:

It is more important to be out in the fresh air and enjoy life than sitting in school and doing school work you've done for 8 hours or whatever. You want to explore something different and you only have so much time. I like the outside better than the inside. Always have, always will.

At the end of grade six, by about age 12, Dave started to help more on the farm. When asked if working on the farm exacerbated his difficulties in school, and added to his ultimately dropping out, he stated he did not think so:

No it wasn't to do with working. I only done what I was capable of doing and I did what I was interested in. My dad always liked me to help him, which I could never turn down, and I'd never change that opportunity for anybody. It was a good learning experience. But I mean on the other hand I should have put more into school than working at home and it would have probably benefitted me. They [family] encouraged me to go to school, but I pulled away because I didn't like it, I rebelled.

He felt strongly that the first time he left high school it was because he saw no relevancy to what he was studying and found no interest in "learning for learning's sake". He readily shared that the academic problems he was having with English added to his frustration with school, but Dave quite early had decided that "money was more important than education". He also found that the subjects and the format of school were very boring compared to working outside.

English; you go to class, you walk in and it's the same story over and over. Work; you go here, you walk there, but it's a different place, different scenery, it's never the same. Working, it's a new experience every day, you have to be careful, you have to look out for yourself, it's more challenging.

He left high school for a “great paying” job which later turned out to be only seasonal employment. The jobs got “less and less” and finally his mother persuaded him to try the ABE program. It is interesting to note that she had been a successful graduate of the program about 10 years earlier and had faith that it was a good place for her son to complete his education. Dave liked the College program:

This school is very interesting if a person wants to make it interesting. The teachers is great at the College. I’ve got no complaints. Not like in high school where I found it very boring. [In high school] You got your assignment, you do your assignment, you leave class. You only got told things once, you got it or you didn’t. It had to come almost by instinct. But at the College it is more in the hands of ‘I’ll tell it to you. You don’t understand it I’ll repeat it. But I can only repeat so much and then the rest of the class has to go on. Which is understandable, I have no problems here.

If Dave liked the College program so much why then did he choose to leave? Just like in high school, he again decided that it was more important to be in the work force to make money than to be in a classroom trying to complete a Grade 12. As he said “It all boils down to financial problems”. His girlfriend was pregnant and Dave felt that “getting the best for the baby”, in a material sense, was more important than another year of schooling.

I wish I could stay in school because I know it would benefit me somehow to have my Grade 12. On the other hand, I have to work. I know I am going to work, but on the other hand, it’s I want to save money for things; furniture and supply the baby with not too bad a house. But on the other hand, is all the money just going up in smoke? Sure I will have something to show for it but is it what I want. It’s something my Dad said, “If you don’t hold on to your money, you won’t have anything”. And that’s something that stuck in the back of my head.

Dave finished the interview by stating that if he could do it again, he would have stayed in school the first time. When asked if he wished this because then he would already have his Grade 12, he said “oh no” it is because “a person doesn’t realize how good they’ve got it”. When you are in high school “your mother is there for you, everything is paid and you don’t have no expenses”. The idea that education itself has an intrinsic value when compared to work and money, had never been a belief of Dave’s. He did think he would be back to try “someday” because “school is a good atmosphere”. However, coming back to school would only occur when there was “no work out there” for him or as he said, “if I knew where I was going, it [school] would be no problem”.

Minority

Joyce: Joyce was 19 years old at the time of her first interview and 20 years old when she came back to the school on her own initiative to be re-interviewed. She had actual dropped out of the ABE program three previous times over the two years she had been associated with the College. She was the youngest student accepted into the program and had been funded more times than any previous student. This was due to the fact that she was academically capable and presented herself very well to both the funding agency and the College personnel. She also impressed her peers. The first and fourth time she was in school, she was elected to Student Association positions (President and Vice-president respectively), even though the other students knew

about her poor track record of completion. Such a capable person being unsuccessful so many times was a mystery to everyone.

Joyce is a native who had been placed in a white middle-class family as a foster child at age 2 months. She was formally adopted at age 4 years, making her the youngest of three children. She is very close to her 'brother' who is seven years older and not very fond of her 'sister' who is four years older.

During the first interview Joyce said that school was fine up until Grade 8, she did not have any problems.

I liked school, up until half of Grade 8. Then everything changed. My attitude changed. I was always close to my brother when I was growing up and he left to go to school in Saskatoon. I think that's what changed. Everything changed. Everything just blew. I was bad and just didn't care.

At this point in her life, Joyce started drinking heavily, doing drugs ("just hash and marijuana"), and running away from home. This behavior led to her being sent to a youth assessment center in a larger urban area. After a few months in the center she was sent back home, but did not want to return to school. Her parents supported the idea of her working for awhile and so Joyce took a year off and later thought "hey, I could work and never go to school". From age 15 to 17 she worked at a number of jobs and continued to drink even more heavily. At age 17 she enrolled in the ABE program and lasted about 2 months before withdrawing. Asked about this period, Joyce said:

I was drinking lots, even more. I had my baby and gave him up for adoption. It was just crazy, every night all the time drinking. That's

when I came back to school [ABE] the first time. Everything I did had to be because I had to go out drinking all the time. It interfered with everything, it was too much. I quit school and I didn't sober up for a long time; I didn't do anything. It interfered all the times I came back, the drinking and drugs.

Joyce's next 3 experiences with the ABE program were very similar to her first one. As mentioned previously, after Joyce withdrew from the ABE program for the fourth time, she moved to another Province and did not return to Peace River for almost a year. Upon her return, she wanted to share her new found insights into why she had been on "such a treadmill about school and everything" for such an extended period. More importantly, she wanted to explain what she felt had caused such a significant and positive change in her life.

When I moved there I had nothing. I didn't even know if there was going to be a tomorrow. So that was the first thing that finally got me. I just couldn't live like that anymore, it was chaos. I got in with a really good bunch of people, native people, and I stopped drinking. I don't know why, I just know I learned who I am. They kept telling me if I understood what happened then [childhood], you understand who you are now, and then you'll know who you are going to be tomorrow. So I thought hey that makes a lot of sense.

Joyce still felt her brother's leaving was important, however, now she realized this was mainly because it left her feeling isolated and not knowing how to relate to the other members in her family. She realized that she had always had problems getting along with her family and the brother had been the "connection" for her. Without him she felt "more native" and started into the patterns of behavior that further isolated her. At school she felt discriminated against and sometimes caught

between the white friends of her family and the fact that she was native. She started drinking, but said that all her problems could not be “blamed on the drinking”. Joyce made an interesting comment at this point in the interview about the difference between her white friends who were drinking and getting into trouble in junior high and herself:

Sometimes I think it is more acceptable for someone non-native to be drinking and doing things. A lot of people if they saw me, it’s “Oh, just another drunk indian”. But the others it was just “Oh, some kids”.

When asked to explain what she now understood as the reasons for her past problems with school, and her life in general, she said:

It was about me. I had to go away and see who I was. I didn’t have an identity or anything. It was more a feeling inside of me. I think I went away and learned things about myself. The more I got out into the world to see what was there, and I think that’s why I sobered up too. I haven’t drunk for a long time. Just talking with my family and different people. Being square and honest about it, I think is what turned me around. The bottom line is that I had to accept myself.

School only became successful for Joyce once she could change herself and accept who she was. For her this meant she had to meet some other native people who were “successful” and involved in activities that Joyce saw as important. Only after this was she able to deal with the problems that had continually interfered with her being able to use her many talents and to complete her education. She had “learned who I am” and she had a future planned that included more education than just her Grade 12. To date, she has continued successfully toward her goals.

Peer and Party or Fun and Frolic

Leslie: Leslie was a 21 year old, single female who had initially dropped out of high school in Grade 10. She successfully attended the ABE program for one semester, although her attendance became more sporadic toward the end of that period. She attended for only one month of her second semester. Leslie's attendance was abysmal in the second semester, and even when she went to classes, her behavior was not conducive to either her or any of the other students actually learning. She wandered in and out of classes and socialized continually with anyone sitting close to her. It was a relief for both staff and other students when she finally decided to withdraw.

Discussing her earlier experiences with school, Leslie felt that she was always "a problem child" academically speaking. She had difficulty focusing and was always easily distracted by "other fun things in the room". However, she felt school was fine until Grade 8 or 9. According to her she started to "be kind of a bad kid in junior high, they didn't pressure you to do your homework so I didn't". She still managed to pass into high school but then "really started to go down hill". Her explanation for the increasing difficulties she was having at school all centered on the decreasing amount of amusement she received from attending:

Well in elementary school you play games and do fun things. Junior high you do that too, you have little sock hops and things. But once you get to senior high it's not fun anymore - it's work. They give you so much responsibility. They kind of leave everything up to you and it almost goes to your head, I found. I was skipping out, I was forging notes, I was really bad.

Leslie dropped out of school, worked for six months and took a six month hair-dressing course. However, once she started working in a salon she had problems similar to those she had faced during high school:

It's the same thing with me when I work. I get into something, I get really gung ho, I'm sure this is what I want, I'm sure I'm going to enjoy it and I do my best to be the best I can like in the first couple weeks and then it's like, either I'm not getting accomplishment for it or I'm not getting praise for it. I don't feel like it's worth it anymore because no one is noticing. I stop having fun. I then give up and the novelty kind of wears off and then eventually I get back to where I started.

When hair-dressing ceased to be amusing, she decided she would come back to an ABE program to get her Grade 12 and "go to University or something". When asked how her experiences this time compared to her dropping out of school in Grade 10, Leslie had no hesitation in answering:

It is almost exactly the same. I wish it wasn't but it is. It's a lack of being able to commit because there are so many other things out there that I'd rather be doing. My parents are so frustrated with me. It's like what are we going to do with you? My boyfriend, he's irate with me right now. But like I told him, you guys, like you can't force me. I'm an adult and I know I can't be the best I can be because I don't want to be there [school] right now. I tell my parents it is their fault, I always got everything I wanted. Everything comes easy. My whole life everything was fun.

Leslie said she "hated" herself for not being able to complete her Grade 12 at this time. When she had originally registered she was sure that she was ready. The first semester was really good until the end "when I really started to lose it". That she

had “totally lost it the second semester” was obvious to her and she took full responsibility for her failure to stay committed. She really wished that she could change, and knew it would not just happen “by magic”. When asked if she saw a possible solution she replied:

Maybe I’ll grow out of it. Maybe I’ll wake up and get into the real world. But I just can’t right now. It’s nobodys fault but my own. Dad said to me, “If you know what’s wrong why can’t you change it?” I didn’t have much to say.

Leslie’s attitude’s toward school, and life in general, did not appear to have changed over time. She sincerely wished that it would, but seemed to be at a loss to make her life different. Making the leap into the “real world”, the adult world of work and responsibility, was not at this time possible for her. She speculated that the change had to happen “inside” of herself, but was at a loss to facilitate this transformation.

Likert-type Questions

Comparing the data for the dropouts and persisters generated by responses to the Likert-type questions, produced no major differences in the reasons these students initially withdrew from school. These data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Group Responses to Likert-type Questions

Scale: 1 = not important 2 = of little importance 3 = moderately important
 4 = important 5 = very important

Question	Dropouts		Persisters	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. I found school boring	2.6	1.3	2.8	1.4
2. I had problems with my teachers	2.9	1.5	2.8	1.4
3. I had problems with school work	3.0	1.4	3.3	1.5
4. I skipped classes	3.3	1.4	2.8	1.7
5. I thought school was a waste of my time	2.8	1.6	2.9	1.5
6. I did not participate in classes	2.4	1.3	2.7	1.4
7. I did not like the other students	2.0	1.5	2.4	1.5
8. My friends were not in school	2.1	1.5	2.1	1.5
9. I found it hard to join in school activities	2.4	1.6	2.8	1.6
10. I felt other students did not like me	2.1	1.4	2.4	1.5
11. My friends had dropped out of school	2.0	1.4	2.0	1.3
12. I felt like I did not fit into school	2.8	1.7	3.0	1.6
13. I had problems at home	2.6	1.8	3.0	1.7
14. My parents did not think high school was important	1.4	1.0	2.0	1.5
15. I had lots of work to help with at home	2.2	1.6	2.4	1.6
16. I was not living at home	2.2	1.6	2.1	1.7
17. I preferred work to school	2.6	1.8	2.9	1.7
18. I had to work for financial reasons	2.6	1.8	2.2	1.6
19. I had a drug/alcohol problem	1.9	1.4	1.2	1.1
20. My parents had a drug/alcohol problem	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.4
21. I was pregnant	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.4
22. I liked the freedom outside of school	3.4	1.5	3.3	1.7
23. I always felt behind in my school work	3.1	1.4	3.0	1.6
24. I felt the school pushed me out	2.3	1.6	2.3	1.5
25. I felt I could learn more outside of school	3.1	1.5	2.8	1.7

An analysis of variance on the responses from question 14, “My parents did not think high school was important” came the closest to producing a significant statistical difference ($p = 0.09$). Interestingly enough, it was the persisters as a group who found this reason to be of more importance than the dropouts (mean equals 2.0

and 1.4 respectively) in making their decision to leave school. However, neither recorded response indicated that their parents' attitude had a great deal of impact on their decision.

Only five of the reasons stated in the questionnaire rated as having a moderately high impact (i.e., $\bar{M} \geq 3.0$) on the dropout group's decision to initially leave school. These reasons were: a) "I had problems with school work ($\bar{M} = 3.0$), b) "I skipped classes" ($\bar{M} = 3.3$), c) "I liked the freedom outside of school" ($\bar{M} = 3.4$), d) "I always felt behind in my school work" ($\bar{M} = 3.1$) and e) "I felt I could learn more outside of school" ($\bar{M} = 3.1$). These same five reasons were also rated as being relatively important to the persisters ($\bar{M} = 3.3, 2.8, 3.1, 3.0$ and 2.8 respectively). The only other items to receive a rating of 'moderately important' for the persisters were: a) "I felt like I did not fit into school ($\bar{M} = 3.0$) and b) "I had problems at home" ($\bar{M} = 3.0$). These two items received only a mean of 2.8 and 2.6 respectively for the dropouts.

Dropouts rated 14 of the 25 reasons listed as being slightly more important than the persisters did, but as noted previously, none were significantly higher. This list was comprised of the most common reasons, as reported in the literature, that students have given for dropping out of high school. However, on average, none of these reasons rated as being 'extremely important' to this group of students in their decision to quit school. It is important to note, as stated earlier, that there appears to be some disparity between what students marked on a questionnaire as being

important to their decisions and what they verbally shared during the interviews. Eleven of the dropouts described home lives that they said played a significant role in their not being successful in school, and yet only three of these students marked, “I had problems at home”, as being extremely important to their decision to quit school. Another two students from this group marked this reason as moderately important. The other six rated their home life as ‘not being important’ or ‘of little importance’ to their original decision to dropout. When queried about this apparent anomaly, the students stated that it was much easier to share their stories when they were talking rather than to “just tick a little box”. Also, some of them felt that they had just developed the habit of never really telling anyone what had gone on, or what was going on, in their lives so that it was hard “to tell the truth, or even know the truth” when they were just “filling in a piece of paper”. According to the dropouts who were interviewed, talking to someone who was interested in their history made it much easier for them to tell what had actually happened. For many, it was the first time they had extensively thought about or shared these stories.

Summary

The analysis of the demographic information indicate that the two groups, the dropouts and persisters, are more alike than different. The only significant difference noted between these two groups was based on their age, the dropouts were, on average, younger than the persisters.

The in-depth interviews, and the open ended questions, solicited the most interesting and detailed information pertaining to the dropouts. Three of the Price Waterhouse School Leavers categories (i.e., the disadvantaged, the vocationally focused, and the minority) proved to be useful in categorizing and describing the patterns of behavior and life circumstance surrounding 16 of the students who had dropped out of the ABE program. Four students were best described by the creation of a new classification, labeled either the 'peer and party' or the 'fun and frolic' category.

The reasons this group of 20 students give for having left high school and for leaving the ABE program show many commonalities for each person. The two sets of reasons for dropping out for each of these individuals appears to be a continuation of the same process, rather than a new set of factors, whether they are describing why they left high school initially or why they are leaving an ABE program.

The Likert-type questions, based on the most common reasons students have given for leaving school, revealed that both the persisters and dropouts rated these items basically the same. There was no significant difference between the two sets of answers. On average, few of the reasons listed in the questionnaire rated even an answer of 'moderately important' to this group of students when they were making their decision to quit school the first time. As a point of caution in interpreting these statistics however, students who were later interviewed said that they found it difficult to "just tick a small box" in response to these questions. Rather, they thought that

talking about their experiences was a more valid method to use when trying to understand the basis for their two, or more, decisions to leave school.

CHAPTER 5

Implications and Recommendations

The present study attempted to examine the views of ABE students who dropped out of an Adult Upgrading program before receiving their Grade 12 diploma. It has focused on the experiences of 20 students who dropped out of an ABE program at a rural college in Northern Alberta. The primary research question guiding this analysis has been whether the reasons given by an ABE student for leaving high school and for leaving an ABE program have any commonalities and, if so, are they sustained over time. The secondary question focused on a comparison between the ABE dropouts and the ABE persisters on both selected demographic information and their stated reasons for having initially dropped out of school. The data derives primarily from in-depth interviews and questionnaires. This chapter provides a summary of the findings from each type of research method, along with the conclusions arrived at from these results. In conclusion, the limitations applied to the study, implications for the College and possible directions for further research are presented.

Summary of Findings

Interview Data

The quantity and quality of information gathered from the in-depth interviews was superior to the information collected by questionnaire. Members of this

population stated that it was difficult for them to honestly answer questions on a piece of paper but they were willing to verbally share detailed descriptions about their present lives, their past experiences and their attitudes toward school. That a qualitative approach to the research is more suited to this population, as suggested in some of the literature on dropout and in discussions with other adult education researchers, is supported by the present study.

Data from the in-depth interviews indicates that there is a connection between the reasons that an individual gives for initially leaving high school and the reasons given for dropping out of an ABE program. The students' frank disclosures about their life histories, both in and out of school, allowed for parallels to be drawn between their various experiences of dropping out. The stories of these 20 students support the theory posited by many researchers on adolescent dropout, that leaving school is a process (cf., Devereaux, 1993; Fine, 1992; Neufeld, 1991, and Rumberger, 1987). Each of the interviews analyzed during this research has demonstrated clearly that the life circumstances and attitudes toward school have not changed over time for this group of students. More precisely, the two sets of reasons for dropping out for each of these students appears to be a continuation of the same process, whether they are describing why they left high school initially or why they are leaving an ABE program at a later date.

Findings from this study also add to the growing body of research that stresses the heterogeneity of ABE students (cf. Beder & Valentine, 1990; Garrison, 1983;

Martin, 1987). The needs of undereducated adults must not be viewed as a single entity. This point is clearly demonstrated by the fact that even the relatively small sample of 20 students interviewed for this study represented 4 distinct groups. It was possible to sort 16 of the ABE dropouts, based on their life experiences and reasons for dropping out of school, using 3 of the 5 school leavers categories reported in the 1990 Price Waterhouse School Leavers Qualitative study (i.e., the disadvantaged, the vocationally focused and the minority). The creation of a new category ('peer and party' or 'fun and frolic') was necessary to group the remaining 4 students. The experiences that these 4 groups of students had with schooling was quite distinct, and highly influenced by 'outside' factors (i.e., home life, self esteem, goals, relationships). A chance at being successful in school (i.e., to graduate) may require different types of support and programming from the school for each of these individuals. Many members from this group of students felt they needed to personally make "inside" changes if they were going to be able to complete Grade 12. What was needed to make these "inside" changes was not clear to most of the students interviewed. Unfortunately, the lack of a homogeneous population would certainly point to the conclusion that the needed alterations would be as individualistic as the students themselves; thus making it difficult for ABE programs to predict what "inside" changes individual student's need in any global sense.

Demographic Information

The 23 ABE dropouts were compared to the 90 ABE persisters on a number of variables. The questions about schooling (e.g., repeat grade, highest grade level) pertain to the students' experiences in high school, not in an ABE program. All of the ABE students were initially members of the same population, high school dropouts as opposed to high school graduates, prior to becoming members of the ABE dropout or ABE persisters group. Although the in-depth interviews support the idea that ABE students are as varied as other groups of students, this group of students is none the less similar on some demographic variables. Data from this study indicates that there was little difference between the two groups on the following variables: (a) marital status, (b) number of children, (c) highest grade completed, (d) highest grade completed by mother, (e) highest grade completed by father, (f) difficulty with math, (g) difficulty with English, (h) failed math, (i) failed English, (j) repeated a grade, and (k) previous enrollment in another ABE program.

Percentages and means generated on items (c) through (j) were similar to the figures reported in the 1993 national survey comparing school leavers to high school graduates. That is, the ABE student population in the present study was representative of the school leavers population described in the national report. The only noted difference is that a higher percent of the students surveyed for the present study had failed a grade when compared to the average percentage reported in the national survey (54.4% and 36% respectively).

A greater percentage of males were evident in the dropout group than in the persister group. By combining all students in both groups by gender, more men dropped out of the ABE program than women (26% and 16% respectively). Therefore, in this group of students, men were more likely to be ABE dropouts than women. The only significant difference arising from the data is that the dropouts were younger (23.9 years) than the persister (28.8 years). There is sufficient reason to conclude that the dropouts are, on average, younger than the persisters for this population of students.

Likert-type Questions

Data from the responses to the Likert-type questions, pertaining to the reasons given for initially leaving school, shows little difference between the ABE dropouts and the ABE persisters. Fourteen of the 25 reasons listed were ranked as slightly more important by the dropouts, but none were significantly higher. Similarly, the 11 reasons that were ranked as more important by the persisters again exhibited no significant differences when compared to the dropouts' reasons. What is of interest with these questions, however, is that the responses students gave to a reason listed in the questionnaire, was not always consistent to what was disclosed during the interview. This apparent aberration is consistent with the perceived need by some researchers to pursue more qualitative means when trying to get to know this population. Students were not trying to paint a false picture of themselves with their

answers to the questions in the questionnaire; rather, they just found it difficult to describe very complex ideas or situations by simply “ticking a box”.

Limitations

Certain limitations applied to this study. For one, the study was limited to an examination of the reasons given by adult students attending a Northern Alberta, rural based, Community College regarding their reasons for dropping out of school. Therefore, the sample size was relatively small and consequently no attempt can be made to apply the findings of the current study to other localities or groups of students.

Some of the information being studied was possibly limited because it was based on students' recollections of events, rather than the events themselves. Although their memories may not represent reality as it “really” was, they do represent the reality that affects the students' perceptions about school and their school experiences. What was important to this study was the students' perceptions rather than the actual events. It is interesting to note, the students interviewed said they had a much better perspective on the issues surrounding their initial difficulties with school now that they were adults. They also stated that they were more willing to share personal stories because they were older, than they would have been, if they had been interviewed as adolescents. According to these students, as teenagers they would have been more likely not to share information that would have reflected poorly or either themselves or their families.

The researcher's role as a participant-observer may have biased some of the student answers during the interview. However, on the positive side, the increased access to information was a consequence of the researcher's role as participant observer. Interestingly, it was the researcher's role as counselor (as opposed to coordinator or instructor) that evolved as the most potentially limiting during the actual interviews. The ABE students were willing to share their life experiences with the researcher because of the respect and trust that had developed between them from daily professional contact. Upon dropping out of the ABE program, many of them faced new problems that needed to be dealt with before they left the College. It was often difficult to remain the neutral researcher in the face of an individual's new crises. The students themselves were very good at understanding that counseling issues would be dealt with after the research interview, but this was not always easy for the interviewer.

Perhaps the most limiting factor to the usefulness of the findings from this study was the fact that only the dropouts were interviewed. The wealth of information that was shared by the "dropouts" during the in-depth interviews was not solicited from the "persisters". The "persisters" participation was limited to responding only to the first questionnaire. Insights that pertain to questions such as; "What happens to change the dropout process?" or "What makes a student stay in an ABE program?", can not be addressed from the findings of the current study. In-depth interviews with "persisters" will be needed to gain these insights.

Implications for Fairview College

The importance of research to the practitioner is most often how results will relate to what they are already doing in the field on a daily basis. The conclusions from the present study suggest that current practices of assessing new students for admission to the ABE program at Fairview College in Peace River may benefit from some modifications. At present, very little information is initially collected about the potential students' previous high school experiences. Current practice is to primarily focus the intake interview on the students' past academic records and not to explore other issues that may have surrounded their initially dropping out of school. Perhaps more time should be spent discussing the students' previous experiences and searching for whether the individuals' life circumstances and attitudes have changed over time.

This change in focus is indicated by the experiences of a large percentage of the students examined in the present study, who ultimately dropped out of the ABE program. Members of this group had experienced chaotic life circumstances in their past (i.e., members of the disadvantaged group) which continued into the time of the study, that affected their chances of success in the ABE program. As posited from the data, if there had not been noticeable alterations in attitudes and behavior patterns, success was not possible for the student at that point in time. Another group of students who left high school because of the lure of work and money (i.e., members of the vocationally focused group), would need to be closely questioned to clarify what brought them back to upgrade their academic skills. The issues surrounding their

opinions about the benefits of an education should be explored. If the ABE course work is viewed by them as being irrelevant, perhaps this type of potential ABE student would be better directed to a job training program, rather than being 'set up' to potentially be stigmatized by "failing again" as happened to the four men in this study.

The idea that success in academic endeavors will come only after a change "inside" the student is still too vague to be of much practical use in the field. Unfortunately, it also sounds so simplistic and obvious that it is difficult to accept as a serious research question. The "inside" change referred to by the students in the study did not appear to be merely another way to define the need to set goals and develop long range plans. Rather, it appeared to be a way to describe what needed to happen to allow a student to change the patterns of behavior that had led to their unsuccessful attempts at schooling; to allow the dropout process to terminate. Students interviewed did not appear to believe that a school would be able to assist in helping to bring about this change, rather, it was something that had to happen to them (caused by their efforts?) if they were to change their unsuccessful patterns of behavior.

Directions for Future Research

One of the research implications that can be drawn from this study is the need for a replication of the in-depth interviews with other groups of ABE dropouts at

other College campuses. This would serve to provide a larger Canadian research base on this population and would also corroborate the findings from the present study.

A similar study is also needed that would include in-depth interviews with the ABE persisters to explore their ideas about what had happened in their lives to allow them to complete their education. By examining this group of successful students, it may be possible to illuminate the concept of “inside” change alluded to in the present study. To help address the idea of change introduced by many of the participants in this study, a thorough literature review could be conducted in the area of “developmental/life span” issues.

Concluding Comment

Returning to school is a major undertaking for the Adults who are trying to complete their Grade 12 education. The very attempt is to be admired, whether the student is successful or needs to withdraw before completion, perhaps to try again at a later point in time. Each student who returns to an ABE program has already faced the experience of failing in another school setting. They are exhibiting tremendous courage by returning to the very institution that has previously been the site of their defeat, in an attempt to change the outcome. For an adult there are many more “hurdles to be jumped” in pursuit of the high school diploma than would normally be the case for an adolescent. The many roles that adults assume, in conjunction with the role of “student”, make the challenge even more difficult. It is for these reasons that it

is important to closely listen to the students themselves, they are best suited to help develop educational programs that will allow more adults to be successful.

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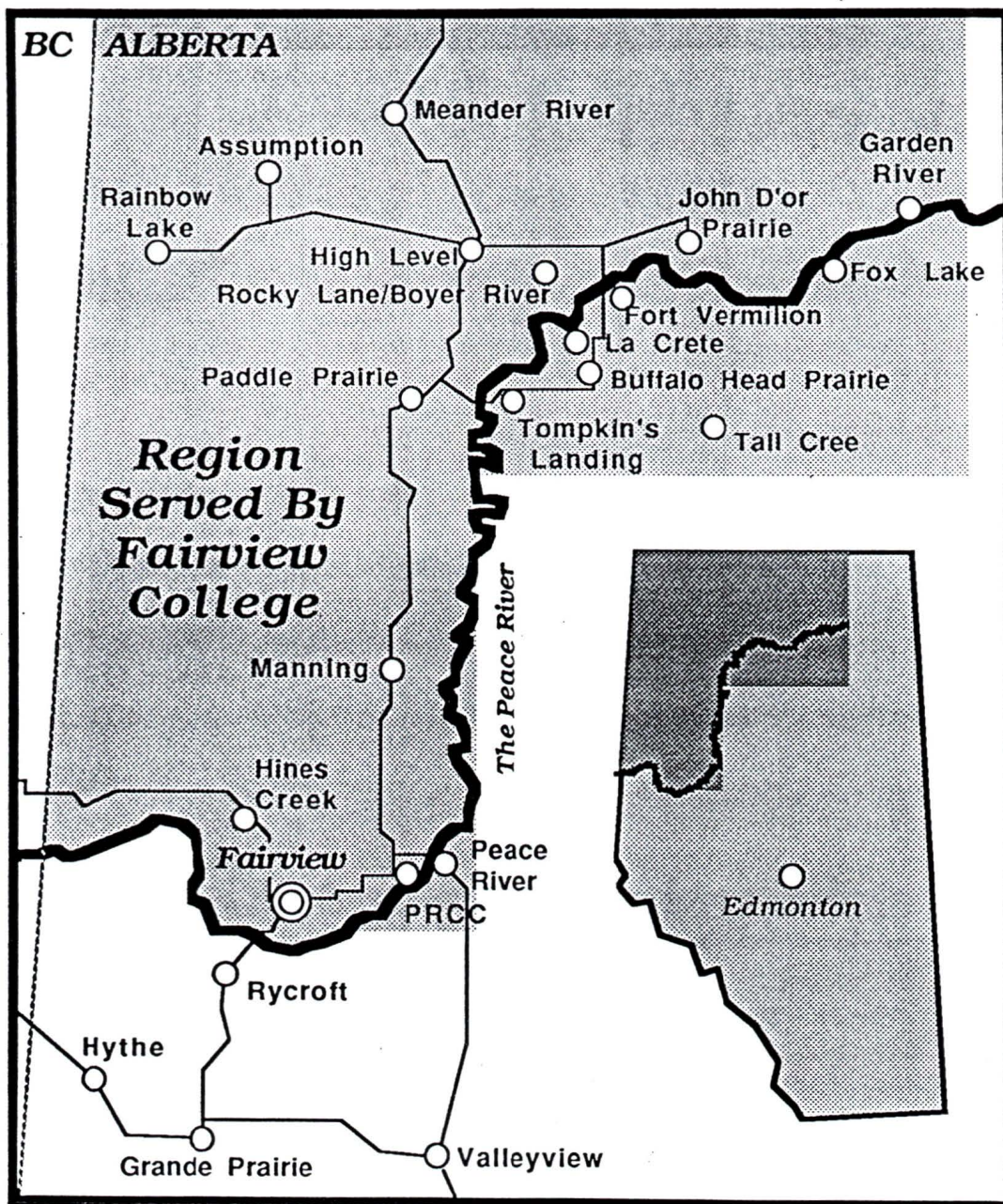
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APPENDIX A

Map of Region Served by Fairview College



APPENDIX B

Letter of Approval from Fairview College

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FAIRVIEW COLLEGE

MEMORANDUM

=====

TO: Buff Smith

FROM: Al Bromling

EXT: 615

DATE: 12 May, 1994

RE: RESEARCH AT FAIRVIEW COLLEGE

Buff, I am pleased to approve your request to involve Academic Upgrading students at Fairview in your research project. I understand that you have Dave's permission in this regard.

Good luck with your project!


Al Bromling
VICE PRESIDENT
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

AB/mfr

cc: Dave Saunders
Dave McLaughlin

APPENDIX C

Student Covering Letter/Permission Form

Dear Student,

I am completing a Master's Degree at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia. As part of my Master's work I am studying the reasons that adults give for dropping out of their last school prior to coming into the Upgrading program.

Unfortunately, every year we also lose some students who have to leave the College program. I am interested in the reasons that would lead a student to make this decision. Hopefully, the information that I gather will be useful in understanding the reasons for dropping out of school, and also how we can help to prevent this from happening.

Information will be gathered from everyone who is participating by filling out a questionnaire. Some of you will also be asked to participate in a taped interview session. The tape will be destroyed after I have used the information on the recording.

You are under no pressure to participate in this study. It is completely voluntary and non-participation will have no effect on your schooling. Your name will not appear in the study. All information obtained will be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. If you have any questions feel free to come to my office and talk to me about your ideas and concerns.

Thank you very much,

Buff Smith

I, the undersigned, give my permission to participate in the study described in the above letter. I understand that anonymity (my name will not be used on any report) is assured and that the information given is confidential.

(sign here please)

(date)

(print your name here please)

APPENDIX D

School Leavers Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

School Leavers Survey

Part A**Basic Information - Personal and Schooling**

1. What is your sex?

 male

 female

2. How old are you now? _____

3. Was most of your schooling in Canada?

 yes

 no
 if no, where was your schooling? _____

4. What is the highest grade that you finished?

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 5 or less	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

5. What is the highest grade that your **father** finished?

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 5 or less	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

6.. What is the highest grade that your **mother** finished?

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 5 or less	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

7. What was the last year you attended school?

year _____

8. Have you ever repeated any grade(s)?

- yes no
 if yes, which grade(s) did you repeat? _____

9. In school did you have difficulties with math?

- yes no
 If yes, starting in which grade? _____

10. In school did you ever fail math?

- yes no
 If yes, which grade(s) _____

11. In school did you have difficulties with English?

- yes no
 If yes, starting in which grade? _____

12. In school did you ever fail English?

- yes no
 If yes, which grade(s)? _____

13. What was your average in the last full term before you left elementary/secondary school?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly A's (80% or above) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly D's (50% to 59%) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly B's (70% to 79%) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly F's (Under 50%) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mainly C's (60% to 69%) | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

14. Overall, did you enjoy school?

- yes no both

Please explain your answer?

15. Why did you decide to leave school?

16. How would your teacher(s) describe you during your last year of school?

17. Before attending Fairview College Upgrading, have you ever been in another adult education program?

yes no

18. Why are you back in school?

19. Do you have any children?

none one two
 more _____

20. Are you a single parent?

yes no

21. What kinds of things interest you? (hobbies, sports, art, music, etc.)

22. Is there any other information you would like to add?

Part B

Experiences and Feelings I Had Leaving School

Below is a list of reasons that many students have given for quitting school. Please think about whether they were important in your decision to leave school. Read each statement and check the box that indicates how important it was to you.

Scale: 1 = Not important 2 = Of little importance 3 = Moderately important
 4 = Important 5 = Very Important

	Not Important	Moderately Important		Very Important	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I found school boring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I had problems with my teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I had problems with school work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I skipped classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I thought school was a waste of my time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I did not participate in classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I did not like the other students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My friends were not in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I found it hard to join school activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I felt other students did not like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. My friends had dropped out of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I felt like I did not fit into school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Not Important	Moderately Important			Very Important
	1	2	3	4	5
13. I had problems at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My parents did not think high school was important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I had lots of work to help with at home (like babysitting or cleaning and cooking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I was not living at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I <u>preferred</u> work (a job) to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I <u>had</u> to work for financial reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I had a drug and/or alcohol problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. My parents had a drug and/or alcohol problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I was pregnant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I liked the freedom outside of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I always felt behind in my school work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I felt the school pushed me out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I felt I could learn more outside of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other reasons that were important to me:

Part C

Check (✓) the position between each pair of words which best describes the meaning of school to you. Respond quickly on the basis of your first impression. Please answer every question.

SCHOOL

good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	bad
pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unpleasant
worthless	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	valuable
kind	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	cruel
unfair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	fair
successful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unsuccessful
friendly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	unfriendly
caring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	uncaring
interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	boring
honest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dishonest

APPENDIX E

Second Form of School Leavers Questionnaire

Part A

Experiences and Feelings I Have Leaving School

Below is a list of reasons that many students have given for quitting school. Please think about whether they were important in your decision to leave school. Read each statement and check the box that indicates how important it was to you.

Scale: 1 = Not important 2 = Of little importance 3 = Moderately important
 4 = Important 5 = Very Important

	Not Important		Moderately Important		Very Important
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I found school boring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I had problems with my teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I had problems with school work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I skipped classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I thought school was a waste of my time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I did not participate in classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I did not like the other students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My friends were not in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I found it hard to join school activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
10. I felt other students did not like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. My friends had dropped out of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I felt like I did not fit into school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I had problems at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My family does not think school is important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I had lots of work to help with at home (like babysitting or cleaning and cooking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I was not living at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I <u>prefer</u> work (a job) to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I <u>have</u> to work for financial reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I have a drug and/or alcohol problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. A family member has a drug /alcohol problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I am pregnant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I like the freedom outside of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I always feel behind in my school work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I feel the school pushed me out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I feel I could learn more outside of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART B

26. Other reasons that were important to me:

27. Overall, did you enjoy school?

yes no both

Please explain your answer?

28. Why did you decide to leave school?

29. How would your teachers describe you during you time in the Fairview College program?

30. In what ways is leaving school this time the same as when you left last time?

31. Is there any other information you would like to add?

Part C

Check (✓) the position between each pair of words which best describes the meaning of school to you. Respond quickly on the basis of your first impression. Please answer every question.

SCHOOL

good	_____	bad
pleasant	_____	unpleasant
worthless	_____	valuable
kind	_____	cruel
unfair	_____	fair
successful	_____	unsuccessful
friendly	_____	unfriendly
caring	_____	uncaring
interesting	_____	boring
honest	_____	dishonest

VITA

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Given Names: Beverly (Buff) McCleary

Place of Birth: Baltimore, Maryland, United States

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1992 to 1995
University of Alberta	1977 to 1986
University of Pennsylvania	1966 to 1970

Degrees Awarded:

B.A.	University of Pennsylvania	1970
Prof. Teaching Certificate	University of Alberta	1986

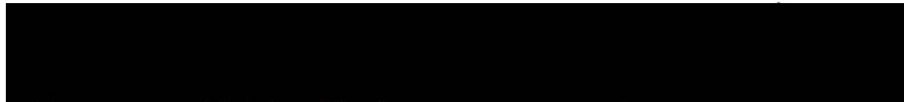
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Title of Thesis:

Adult & Adolescent Dropout Behavior: Are There Connections?

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