

**A STUDY OF DROP-OUTS
IN ST. JAMES, 1962-63**

**A Thesis
Submitted to
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**by
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May, 1965**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful recognition is accorded Dr. William H. Lucow, for his counsel; Mr. R. T. F. Thompson, for his encouragement and assistance; and Messrs. A. Reid, J. S. Hanna and T. C. MacGregor, for their assistance in providing background information on the City of St. James and the School Division of St. James.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Early withdrawal from school is a well recognized problem, but comparatively little research has been done, in Canada, to relate dropping out of school to its causes. The City of St. James has its share of drop-outs in spite of its many social, economic and educational advantages. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to identify salient factors related to early school withdrawal in this typical urban Manitoba community.

The hypothesis was proposed that home factors are more critical in the decision to withdraw from school than are school factors.

The method of investigation consisted first of a pilot study to determine the feasibility of an investigation of drop-outs in St. James, then of interviewing one-third of the St. James drop-out population, chosen by random selection, for the school year September 2, 1962 to September 3, 1963. Each interviewee provided personal statistical information as well as personal views on a wide range of factors which might be related to drop-out, and he completed Bell Adjustment Inventory and School Inventory forms. School records supplied additional information.

When summarized in tables and analyzed, these data

pointed to salient factors in drop-out in both the home and the school. Children living in the oldest section of St. James and in the poorest houses were most prone to drop out. Parents with less education and in unskilled occupations were more likely to have drop-out offspring than parents in more skilled jobs. The most critical period in drop-out is at age sixteen and seventeen, or grades nine and ten; and the middle children in large families are more likely to withdraw than others. Male drop-outs were usually smokers, had been truant and had had trouble with the police. Both male and female drop-outs enjoyed part-time employment while students, and most expected to take further training but were ill prepared for it. They were mainly of low normal or dull normal intelligence, and had reading difficulties. Excessive changing of schools, serious failure records, poor attendance, limited homework efforts, a difficulty with study and a reluctance to ask for help or seek extra tuition are related to drop-out, but the actual prospect of failure is not related. Fear of failure is an important factor.

The school was a consistently poor area of adjustment but the high incidence of maladjustment in one or another home adjustment area indicates interaction and, when considered with additional personal observations of home problems, tended to affirm the validity of the hypothesis.

Some possible methods of treating the problem of drop-out lay in the direction of improvement in course offerings and guidance in the school, but most important of all, in the development of educational programs in industry which would encourage the growth of these young persons in a more meaningful setting.

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CHAPTER I

THE DROP-OUT PROBLEM

Early withdrawal from school is a fact of human behavior which is of concern to administrators, parents, and employers and for some decades it has been regarded as one of the outstanding problems in the field of education. However, although the problem is widely discussed in newspapers, magazines and educational publications, very little formal research has been done in Canada to establish accurately why a student leaves school before completing his course of study. As a basis for action in Canada there is very heavy dependence upon data gathered in the United States. These data are of unquestionable usefulness but it is conceivable that dropping out of school may have different motivation in Canada or a particular part of Canada.

Purpose of the Study

What factors cause young people to drop out of school in a typical Manitoba community? The type of life which a local child leads is influenced by the nature and extent of his formal education. Discarding the opportunity to accept education seriously limits the choices open to him when he tries to select a vocation.

Several factors must be at work in influencing a

child to drop out of school. If properly identified, these forces may be harnessed or at least held in check by those interested in the child's development and future. It is the purpose of this study to identify the salient factors related to early withdrawal from school by students in an urban environment in Manitoba.

Significance of the Study

Investigations in the United States show that the person who leaves school before graduation usually finds himself on the "less wanted" list of the labor market. He has less educational background to recommend him to an employer. He has no saleable skill and very often insufficient education to enable him to qualify for skilled training. The outcome is well illustrated in the results of a follow-up study of drop-outs conducted in Louisville, Kentucky, where it was found that the youngest workers (under 18 years) were least wanted by employers, had the poorest jobs and least job satisfaction.¹

Canada's Department of Labour has outlined the problem as follows:

¹ J. Dan Hull and Howard Cummings, "Discovering the Extent to Which Youth's Needs are Being Met," Report on Early School Leavers, Fifty-second Yearbook of the N.S.S.E., p. 71.

During the last few years a revolution has been taking place in Canada--a revolution in employment which is almost certain to affect the future of your children.

The introduction of more and better machines and improved methods of doing things, have been gradually wiping out thousands of jobs which require little education or training, so that unskilled and semi-skilled jobs now represent only 30 per cent of all employment in Canada. At the same time, employment opportunities continue to increase proportionately for graduates of apprenticeship programs, institutes of technology, high schools, vocational schools, trade schools and universities.

What this means to the future of the young people in your family is obvious. Early drop-out from school could mean being cut off from 70 per cent of the jobs in Canada, being limited in their earnings for life, a closed door to the better training opportunities in industry, often being restricted to dead-end jobs, and possibly a lifetime of insecurity and long periods of unemployment.²

This appraisal is well based in fact:

Unemployment is most serious among the poorly educated. A survey made in February, 1960, by the Department of Labor, disclosed the fact that 44 per cent of the unemployed had not reached Grade 8, 26 per cent had left school at Grade 8, and 8 per cent had left secondary school after only one or two years.³

There seems to be a direct relationship between inadequate education and being out of work, and this creates problems

² Dominion of Canada, Department of Labour, Education, Training and Employment. (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1961.)

³ Dominion of Canada, Department of Labour, "Drop-Outs," The Bulletin, 41: 219. October, 1961.

for society in general as well as for the individual. Today's drop-outs will be citizens tomorrow. Non-producing members of society dependent on their fellows constitute a serious drain upon the nation's resources. Furthermore, into their hands will be placed a measure of the responsibility for the conduct of civic and federal affairs. Some of them may be elected to public office; their support will likely be sought in programs of civic betterment; they will also raise children who may be strongly inclined to follow their examples; and, perhaps most shocking of all, as Topping has indicated, from their ranks are drawn the habitual delinquents that plague our society.⁴

In Canada, little formal research has been done on the subject of drop-outs and therefore little has been published. Royal commissions on education in Alberta and British Columbia produced some information,⁵ and the School Division of Winnipeg Self-Survey of 1948 dealt with drop-outs briefly.⁶ Dr. Lewis S. Beattie explored the matter very extensively in his report to the Canadian Conference on

⁴ C. W. Topping, "Some Factors in Juvenile Delinquency," The Manitoba School Journal, 17:17, December, 1955.

⁵ Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Alberta, 1959, (Edmonton: The Queen's Printer, 1959); and Royal Commission on Education, Report, [British Columbia], (Victoria: The Queen's Printer, 1960).

⁶ Committee on Field Services, Report of the Directed Self-Survey Winnipeg Public Schools, (Department of Education, University of Chicago, September, 1948) pp. 205-235, 261-277.

Education in 1962.⁷ But up until June, 1962, only four graduate theses dealt with the problem of drop-outs with a view to determining why people leave school before graduation.⁸ The Canadian Education Association gave the matter some attention in 1950 and 1951,⁹ but between July, 1950, and June, 1962, only one research article in this field in Canada was reported in the Education Index, and that was from Ontario.¹⁰ No mention of the drop-out problem in Canada was noted in the 1960 edition of the Encyclopaedia of Educational Research¹¹ although England and Australia were mentioned as well as the United States. There seems to be a lack of enthusiasm to explore the problem in Canada.

⁷ Lewis S. Beattie, The Development of Student Potential, (Ottawa: The Canadian Conference on Education, 1961).

⁸ Metro Gushaty, (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta); Gordon James Rancier, (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta); Gobin Sawh, (unpublished Master's thesis, University of New Brunswick); and Jacqueline D. Boucher, (unpublished Master's thesis, University of New Brunswick), see Bibliography.

⁹ Canadian Research Committee on Practical Education, Your Child Leaves School, (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1950); and Better Schooling for Canadian Youth, (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1951).

¹⁰ W. G. Fleming, "Study of High School Plans Among Grade VIII Pupils in Oxford County," paper, Ontario College of Education.

¹¹ C. W. Harris (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, 1960, pp. 8-11 and 1278-9.