THE SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION
OF THE EARLY SCHOOL LEAVER

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THE SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION OF THE EARLY SCHOOL LEAVER

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to clarify the role of the self system in the work transition process of early school leavers, specifically, the role of the possible self in the degree of gainfulness in relation to work. The work transition process is best conceptualized as a gradual life-long process. It includes interactions, events and decisions that influence individuals as they attempt to realize their personal goals in the development of a satisfying lifestyle. Possible selves are a component in the work transition process. They are future views of self that have yet to be realized, for example, aspirations, goals or fears. Possible selves are the link between self-concept and motivation. The more elaborated and defined the possible self, the more likely is it that this possible self will be realized, thus leading to gainfulness and influencing the work transition process.

The sample used in this study consisted of a total of 2109 early school leavers. These respondents were a part of the Youth Transition into the Labour Market (YTLM) study which began in 1989 in Newfoundland and Labrador with follow-up in 1990. The possible self was defined in terms of plans and outlooks at the time of school leaving, and was contrasted to the actual activities of the leavers about one year later.

This research revealed that the possible selves of the respondents at school leaving were significantly related to the degree of gainfulness of the early school leavers at a later time. A possible self related to a defined intention appeared to contribute to a greater degree of gainful engagement. Gender and geography were shown to also influence the work transition process in leading to gainful engagement. Urban early school leavers, both male

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and female, tended to be more gainful then their rural counterparts. No significant difference existed between males and females in the level of gainfulness, however, males tended to be more gainful in the area of work, while females tended to be more gainfully engaged in school and training. Reasons for leaving, as reported by the early leavers, were found to be related to degree of gainfulness. Individuals leaving for economic and academic reasons were more gainful then those reporting leaving for behavior reasons.

Recommendations rising from the research included programming in the K-12 system with a focus on the development of the possible self. This programming would include comprehensive career education programs designed to meet the needs of urban and rural youth, virtual cooperative education work placements, and mandatory work experience to address the gap that exists in communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the process that takes place in the school to work transition of the early school leaver in Newfoundland. The self-system of the early school leaver was viewed in its relationship to the transition into the labour market. The study considered the influence of self-representation, perceived and real boundaries, personal attributes and skills on work related outcomes of the transition process. These are gainful engagement, and the degree of employment of the early school leavers in the initial years after dropping out of school.

Significance of Study

One of the most critical factors in the labour force experience of adolescents and young adults is the transition from school to employment (Taylor & Popma, 1990). Persons aged 15 to 24 have typically experienced higher unemployment rates than other groups in Canada (Spain & Sharpe, 1990). Unemployment rates among youth in Canada grew from 11.3% in 1989 to 17.7% in 1994 (The Labour Force, February 1994, Stats Canada). Statistics available from Human Resources Development Canada, 1997, indicate that employment rates among youth are steady at approximately 45%. Despite a smaller population participating in the labour market, youth unemployment rates remain high. In 1989 the Newfoundland youth

unemployment rate was at 23.7%, in 1996 that rate rose to 29%. Nationally this rate rose from 11.2% in 1989 to 16.1% in 1996. Part time employment has increased for youth since 1980's with a decrease in full time employment. Nationally 45% of jobs held by youth are part time.

Newfoundland youth, in particular teenagers, are more likely not to have any form of work experience. According to Human Resource Development Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador Region, 34% of youth in Canada have never held a job. It is estimated that this statistic is double for youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Banducci (1984) noted youth unemployment to be typically two or three times higher than adult unemployment resulting from poor preparation in school, limited practical experience in business and industry, as well as difficulties in skill training acquisition and apprenticeship. Recent changes in the labour market complicate this further and have caused a wider gap in the skills necessary for employment and those which early leavers possess.

Changes in the labour market, loss of natural resources, combined with global competition, necessitate greater consideration of factors which influence the transition from school to work. Contemporary youth must possess skills deemed unnecessary by past labor force. According to Edwin Herr (1988) our youth must not only have numeracy and literacy skills but must exhibit skills of adaptability and flexibility.

Magnusson and Redekopp (1992) contend that skills necessary for a successful transition are competence, self-management and salience and that these skills interactively and inter-dependently facilitate a successful transition. In response to this issue the Conference Board of Canada (1994) developed a list of employability skills which employers

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in Canada see as essential for successful transition into the labour market.

The role of the self-system must be considered in the process of the development of these skills. Unlike traditional school to work transitions, contemporary transitions must be understood by educators and policy makers, so as programs may be implemented to facilitate and enhance this transition. Skill development must involve career building strategies, strategies that will enhance the total youth.

The Study Rationale

Transition

According to Bridges (1995) a transition is the internal process we go through in response to changes in our life. Change is the event or situation; transition is the experience. Change is constant in all aspects of our life and we are therefore as individuals involved in transitions either knowingly or unknowingly throughout our life span. Spain and Sharpe (1991) state that changes in the work place have resulted in lifestyles of people having to combine functions of work, education, family and social and leisure activities. They contend that it is the accommodations that are made among these components that creates the transition process.

The process of transition is life-long. At any point, work transition would be regarded by the society at large as successful if the individual was engaged in activity that would lead to the acquisition of skills and attitudes that are believed to contribute to the goal of economic independence (Spain & Sharpe, 1990). Most young people make the transition from school to a job with relatively little difficulty unless the local or national economies are

in the doldrums or that older, more experienced workers are being laid off (Ginzberg, 1984).

Transition from school to work is a complex process. This transition should not be seen as a point in time or as an event. The school to work transition should be viewed as a process that takes place throughout the school life of the young person, and continues on into adulthood. The school to work transition links three different parties - youth, the school and the employers. Problems can arise from either, ranging from information flow, improper preparation, or communication skills. (Taylor & Popma, 1990).

There is no set transitional period. Students leave school with or without a diploma and then try to find a job. The methods that they employ to find a job differ from one person to another. Some may have family support, help from guidance counsellors, or teachers, and some may have friends willing to give them a job. This process of moving from school to the workplace constitutes the transition. There are no set steps or guidelines. Every individual's transition will vary depending on individual circumstances. Thus, it is difficult to give a clear and concise description of school to work transition. In fact, Marquardt (1996) states that since 1980 the patterns of youth transition into the labour market have been changing. The prolonged circuitous paths of combining school and work in different ways lengthens transition time and delays transitions in other dimensions of achieving adult independence.

The definition of transition used by the Ontario Teachers' Federation(OTF)(1983) in their submission to the Ontario Cabinet is as follows:

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The break with school and entry into employment has come to be regarded as part of a longer phase in the lives of youths which begins while they are still at school ... with development of expectations and aspirations about school and work-and extends well into their first years at work including their adjustment to working life. It is this phase which represents the transitional years because the young individuals proceed through a series of stages and decisions each entailing implications for the next, from full-time education to full-time employment (p. 2-3. OTF).

This transition process cannot be viewed as being linear. It is a complex process that involves the inter and intra actions of the individual and his social context. Within this social context the transition into work and the degree to which it occurs is dependent on several variables: the nature of self and possible self, job search skills, job related and personal attributes and skills and boundaries; all of which may impose limits on the transition and influence outcomes.

The Meaning of Work

According to Hoyt (1988) work is conscious effort, other than that whose primary purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at providing benefits for oneself or for one self and others.

The interaction between individuals from varied backgrounds and diverse work settings makes it highly unlikely that there is only one meaning for "WORK". The model employed in this study considered work from a societal perspective. Work outcomes will be considered gainful if they contribute to the good of society as a whole. From the point of view of society, the individual should become a self sufficient economic asset striving toward greater flexibility in the workplace; and thus, become a productive, viable member. In this study

gainful engagement will be defined with respect to total time worked (full or part time), time in school, time in search, and time in care giving/homemaking. These factors are considered to constitute engagement in gainful employment or activities leading to gainful employment.

Transition Within a Social Context

The transition process and the evolution of the self system occurs within a particular social context. Bronfenbrenner (1979) views human development as a lasting change in the way a person perceives and deals with his/her environment. Human development is viewed as occurring within an ecological system. He describes the environment as a set of nested structures, each inside the other, somewhat like a set of Russian dolls. The innermost parts of that system exercise the most immediate influences on the individual, and the individual transition processes.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979):

> At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person...interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given setting. That is, the environment as it is perceived rather than as it may exist in objective reality is what is important for behavior and development. (p. 3- 4)

The early school leaver develops within such a social context. The developing self concept of the early leaver will be influenced by family, school and community, with family being the most influential. It is these inter and intra relationships and the perception of these experiences which contribute to the developing self of the early school leaver. The macro system, the outer system over which the individual would have little direct control would

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also influence his/her development. These would include the culture of which he/she is a part, the economy and the political climate. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

The Self System

The self is at the center of the ecological context. The importance of the self-concept in the process of career development is described by Super (1976) who says that "A person's self-concept, his picture of himself, influences his actions and helps determine the occupations he prefers, the kind of training he undertakes and the degree of satisfaction he experiences on his job" (p. 108). The self system consists of schema or sets of knowledge of self, which include the possible self. The development of these schema are influenced by the social context. A cognitive view of self concept is of the self as a structure of schemas. These structures are created from experiences of the individual developing in a social context. What is incorporated into the self system as schemas, depend on interactions with others in the social context. Self schemas are constructed creatively and selectively from an individual's past experiences in a particular domain. (Marcus & Nurius, 1986).

Self schemas are selective with respect to what is remembered, what and how stimuli are interpreted and the inferences that are made. Viewed in this way, the self concept can be seen as a regulator of behavior. The possible self may be viewed as the part of the self concept that contributes to this regulation of behavior. Marcus and Nurius (1986) contend that possible selves are important because they function as incentives for future behavior and because they provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self.

Transition and Self

Transition into the labour market and future behavior will be influenced by the possible self. Self knowledge of what is possible is motivational in that it provides a framework for future direction. Possible selves permit the individual to select a direction and plan strategies in that direction.

The Possible Self

The self system or the present self, regulates future behavior because present self consists of self representations which reflect how the individual views his future, his possible self (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989).

> Possible selves are specific representations of one's self in future states and circumstances that serve to organize and energize one's actions. These thoughts, images or senses of one's self in the end-state or in the intermediate states are viewed as the individualized carriers of motivation. They are the manifestation of one's goals, aspirations, motives, fears and threats" (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 212).

Possible selves, which are a part of the present self, contain a vision of desired or undesired end states. These possible selves often contain strategies to the fulfilment of the end state, the possible self, the degree of which is dependent on the development of the self system (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Possible selves provide a cognitive framework for movement toward a perceived goal. This cognitive framework or plan is the link between present and future selves and the motivator that organizes and directs behavior in transition.

This study proposes that it is the development of the self system, in which the possible self exists, that gives organization, direction and self-relevant meaning that in turn leads to a successful transition into the labour market. Transition to gainful engagement is facilitated

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by the development of the possible self.   According to Russell, Spain and Cahill, (1992) individuals are most likely to develop possible selves for guiding behavior in domains that are central and have well elaborated self-schemas. These are the domains to which there will be commitment and the need for validation from the social context.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

This study hypothesized that the possible self influences the transition of the early school leaver into the labour market, and that the more elaborated the possible self, the greater the degree of gainful engagement. To explore this hypothesis, several research questions were addressed.

Research Questions

The basic research question was about the relationship of gainful engagement and the possible self. This was explored using four specific research questions.

1. Are the reasons for leaving school as reported by the leavers related to gainful engagement?

2. Is the grade at school leaving related to gainful engagement?

3. Is gender related to gainful engagement?

4. Is geography related to the gainful engagement?

Limitations

A total of 2,109 early school leavers were identified; however, the generalizability of the findings must be considered in light of the following limitations. A total of 2,109

early school leavers is probably a substantially smaller number than actually left school during the period from Easter, 1987 to Easter 1988, the period during which this sample was identified. The comparison of grade eight enrolments and high school graduates suggests that early leaving figures were actually in excess of 3,000 for the period. (Spain & Sharpe, 1990). The study had attempted to identify all the early leavers during that period, so the procedures may have been biased by the way that school authorities reported their early leavers. For example, the actual scale of early leaving may have been confused by the definition of the drop-out. According to Spain and Sharpe (1991), no one has actually defined who an early school leaver is with respect to all categories of students.

Another limitation stems from the complexity of reaching children through the school system, thus, limiting clear information on the full scale of early leaving.

At the time of the interview 640 of the identified early leavers were away from home, most of them outside Newfoundland. In all, 35.47 percent of early school leavers were away from home at interview time. It was possible to contact and interview only 166 of those away from home.

The fact that not all schools participated in the survey limits to some degree the representative sample of early school leavers.

Economic Considerations

At the time of the interviews, 1987-1991, the economy of Newfoundland was fairly stable. Since that time there has been a moratorium placed on the exploitation of the largest natural resource, the codfish. Changes in the economy and future labour market, according to this model, will influence the self-system. From this research it is not

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possible to determine if this would negatively or positively impact on the relationships that were investigated.

The YTLM study that provided the data for this study was designed before this model was developed so there may be limitations on actual applicability to the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature in relation to this study focussed on aspects of the proposed transition model. The model proposed that the possible self developing within a social context influences both the transition into the labour market and the degree of gainful engagement. Work and the self system were therefore the focal points of this literature review.

Work

Definition of Work

Work is a term having multiple definitions, meanings that shift across time and hierarchical elements that differ within and between societies (Herr, 1988). Super (1976) defines work as:

> The systematic pursuit of an objective valued by oneself (even if only for survival) and desired by others; directed and consecutive, requires the expenditure of effort. It may be compensated (paid work) or uncompensated (volunteer work or an avocation). The objective may be intrinsic enjoyment of the work itself, the structure given to life by the work role, the economic support which work makes possible, or the type of leisure which it facilitates. (p. 20, 1976)

The National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) defines work as a conscious effort, other than having as its primary purposes either coping or relaxing, aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or others (Sears, 1982). Braude (1975) maintains that work needs to be understood within a context of people, position and purpose.

The interaction between individuals from varied backgrounds and diverse work settings

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makes it highly unlikely that there is only one meaning for "work". In order to understand the meaning of work for each individual it will be necessary to look at the outcomes of work and the outcomes that are significant to different individuals. Employed people spend about 1/3 of their waking hours in activities related to work. Time spent in training for work, looking for work and work-related activities constitutes a major part of a person's life. For most adults and their families, working is the major source of economic well-being.

Corson (1988) in Education For Work looks at the historical influences on the meaning of work:

> The workplace has become separated from the home; occupational roles have become distinct from kin-based roles and relationships; labour market values have penetrated into family decisions about the future of offspring; parents have come to see that children's job prospects are far removed from any form of socialisation that they can possibly receive within the family; and parents are not usually placed to make the social connections necessary to put their children in touch with work that might suit and satisfy their wants and talents. (p.12)

Branson (1988) in Gender, Education and Work, as cited in Corson, views work as follows:

> 'Work' is what we orient ourselves towards in childhood and adolescence and what we must compensate for when forced to leave it in retirement. In ideological terms it is the most meaningful stage of our lives. If we don't work we are assumed lazy, parasitic, disabled, still in childhood, still being educated for work, resting in our dotage after fulfilment of work, or a housewife. "Work" is public work, labour that secures financial reward in the public world. (p.95).

Work also provides non-economic benefits to individuals. Sixty-five to 95% of individuals in the national labour force samples state that they would continue to work even if they had enough money to live comfortable for the rest of their lives without working (Harpaz, 1988). This shows the social and psychological value attached to working.

The nature of work has changed over time, from muscle and sweat to industrial, and now to a knowledge based work system. These changes place new demands on the worker. The key factor now in a nation's ability to compete in the growing global economy is the quality of its work force. Work, then, from a societal view, must meet the demands of a changing economy. Society today demands a workforce with the skills of literacy, numeracy and flexibility (Herr, 1990). These demands must lead to a development of the human resources so that the worker can obtain those skills. For the worker it means an understanding of the changing economy and an understanding of the skills necessary to fit into this new labour market. From the point of view of society as a whole, the individual should become a self sufficient economic asset striving toward greater flexibility in the workplace; a productive member.

Purposes of Work/ Work Outcomes

Work in the nineties has taken on a new meaning. Statistics Canada estimates that thirty percent of Canadians with paid jobs are in non-standard jobs. The knowledge based society is changing the nature of gainful engagement. Work in the future could mean part-time, temporary, contract work, job sharing, seasonal, or self employment. However, the purpose of work and the needs met for individuals and society remain consistent. For the individual, work may serve several needs, economic, social and psychological. Depending on the type of work all or some of these needs may be met. The extent to which the self system is actualized in gainful engagement will contribute to the degree of satisfaction of the individual and to the realization of societal needs, consisting of a sustainable economy and the nurturance and maintenance of the family unit. The outcome of work for individuals may

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not meet the needs of the society of which he is a member, thus, causing him to be an unproductive member of that society. Therefore, from a societal perspective and within this model we are perceiving the worker to be a productive and adaptive member of society.

Job satisfaction can be viewed as the degree to which the needs of the individual are met, the actualization of the possible self. Gainful engagement that has societal significance must also provide individual satisfaction in order to ensure that desired results are reached.

Theories of Job Satisfaction

Herr and Cramer (1992) said that job satisfaction is a complex term incorporating matters of job context and job content, overall satisfaction and facet satisfaction. People differ in what brings them work satisfaction. Theories of job satisfaction have focussed on different satisfiers. Herzberg (1968) looked at achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility, and work itself as factors associated with the job's content and responsible for satisfaction. Equity theory (Pritchard, 1969) states that satisfaction depends on one's feelings of fairness or justice; equity; or the lack of it. Vroom's (1964) Valence--Instrumentality--Expectancy theory posited that the motivation to work is influenced by the level of satisfaction anticipated and the expectation (subject probability) that work will result in the anticipated satisfaction. In turn, the level of satisfaction anticipated is determined by the instrumentality (effectiveness) of the job in obtaining certain outcomes, and the valences, or importance of these outcomes to the worker.

All satisfiers within a work situation relate to the self-system which, in turn, influences the possible self. The satisfactions and dissatisfactions reinforce self-relevant behavior, and the self perception of the ability to perform in ways to attain the satisfaction. Feelings of

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satisfaction are internalized and incorporated into schemas (me as worker) within the self system. The early school leaver may enter a work situation that does not meet their needs, aspiration or values, thus causing dissatisfaction and negative attitudes towards work.

Krahn and Lowe (1991) found evidence that intrinsic rewards provided young people with greater job satisfaction than did extrinsic rewards.

Work and Youth

Betcherman and Morissette (1994) examined the hypothesis that early unemployment experiences have a "scarring" effect over the rest of a person's career. Although there is some evidence for a "scarring", their findings are mixed. Hanna and Doran (1995) state that the inability of young people to form a serious attachment to the labour market can have grave consequences. They have found that youth in Canada may develop a dependency on the social system if they are unsuccessful in seeking employment during difficult times.

Berryman (1980), in a youth unemployment study, found that youth displayed positive attitudes toward work and in fact possessed values and attitudes similar to adults prior to entry into labour market. However, disenchantment set in when these younger workers found that they were relegated to low-level jobs. Erikson (1959) considered the trying on of a variety of different identities as an integral part of the psychological development of the adolescence. He believed that "In general it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity which most disturbs young people" (p. 132).

According to Greenberger and Steinberg (1981), in past eras, the transition from adolescence into adulthood was accomplished through a graded series of passages in which the young person assumed, gradually and incrementally, the work, family, and citizen roles

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he or she eventually would hold as adults. In such transitions the prerequisite to adulthood was social maturity; the ability to carry out on a mature level, the social roles and responsibilities deemed necessary for successful life as an adult member of the community.

In contemporary society this is no longer the case. The adolescent in present society must be prepared to face challenges, instability, confusion, contradictions and unpredictability. The transition then will require psychological as well as social maturity alternatives in order to work (Raelin, 1981).

Transition

The process of transition is life long, and at any point, work transition would be regarded by the society at large as successful if the individual was engaged in activity that would lead to the acquisition of skills and attitudes that are believed to contribute to the goal of economic independence (Spain & Sharpe, 1990). They go on to say that in our society, education is a universally valued activity as it leads, in general, to greater success in the obtainment of employment. Studies, virtually without number have attested to the fact that the highest levels of employment are enjoyed by the more highly educated sector in our society (Spain & Sharpe, 1990).

Transition into Work

The model presented in this study proposes that the possible self is central to the transition process and is dependent on self-representation, perception of boundaries, which influence and are influenced by the self; self attributes and skills, job search skills and existing boundaries. Transition takes place in an environmental context that operates to control both opportunity, and the perception that people have of their opportunities. For

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example, the number of jobs actually available to young people, and their beliefs about this, will influence the transition process.

According to Spain and Sharpe (1990), the context is the real world with which the person must deal in making the work transition. It is multi-faceted, and much of it is outside the control of the individuals involved. The macro context is comprised of major, widespread influences that are distanced from individuals: these are the economic trends, major policy changes of government, and the introduction of radical innovation, such as the new technology.

According to *The Employment Outlook* (OCED, 1996) the school-to-work transition is the change in the major activities of young people from school-going to work, seeking work as they age. The transition period is the time interval during which a cohort of young people moves from near full enrollment in school to negligible enrolment, and from negligible labour market activity to high levels of labour market activity.

According to the Canadian Labour Force Development Board transition into employment is a process. Its success depends upon a complex set of factors, including, characteristics of the labour market as well as those of the individuals (1994). Krahn and Lowe (1992) in the Tri-City study and follow-up, found that transition from school to work is no longer a linear process, rather, there is a great deal of movement back and forth between the education system and the labour market. Stevenson (1978), states that as a group, young workers in the United States enter the labour force gradually rather than abruptly on the completion of school.

The transition from school to work is often viewed as occurring upon the completion

of high school or post-secondary education. According to Marquadt (1996) we can no longer assume that the basic life-course transitions made in the past are now valid. Changing labor markets and demographics combined with global competition have lead to a more challenging transition process. In the future, it is believed that transition will become long term, with the pursuit of multiple careers. Work and education will be continuing process, and there will never be a point when education both formal and non formal stops. Changes in the form of work will necessitate changes in the transition process. Reduction in full time employees, shifts to temporary, contractual, and self employment will influence the traditional transition process highlighting a need for more direction and planning. The possible self will be essential in the direction of the transition process.

Credentials

The transition process, which is not a simple one, may be complicated further for the early school leaver. According to *Putting the Pieces Together: Toward a coherent transition system for Canada's labour force*, the report of the Task Force on Transition into Employment to the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (1994), early school leavers are more likely to be unemployed or not in the labour market then graduates. Their findings stated that leavers lacked clear career objectives and thus appeared less motivated and focused than graduates.

According to Charner (1987), employers may view the dropout as not having initiative or staying power. Credentials, that is, high school graduation, imply certain levels of academic and personal skills, knowledge, and attitudes that potential employees should possess. Employers place considerable emphasis on credentials. To most employers the

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high school diploma demonstrates maturity, responsibility, staying power and a certain level of academic skills. For many early leavers and graduates, the transition from school to work becomes a difficult one because they do not possess the minimum credentials viewed by employers to be essential for entry level. Thus, the lack of skills influence the transition process.

Work Summary

Work helps to define status in society. It meets physical, social and emotional needs. The nature of work has changed over time, and so has the work transition. Successful transition from school to labour market is dependent on clearly defined strategies, organization and planning. Programming must address these needs in a development approach in the K-12 system. Gaskell and Lazerson (1981) state that:

> The transition from high school to full time work has been seen as the transition from a sheltered and benign world of adolescence to a competitive and harsh world that must be negotiated alone. The transition, which is difficult at any time, is exacerbated when economic conditions deteriorate and the number of young people seeking to enter the labor force increases. (p. 80)

The Self-System

Russell, Cahill and Spain (1992) have written that:

> the self develops within a social context which establishes the direction of self-development by influencing the development of the possible selves, and then in validating, or establishing the self-relevancy of the change. The self, in turn, exercises an influence on the social context. The self is an interpretation of personal abilities and attributes as they are operationalized within this social context and as they are mediated by the self-system. The operation of the self-system is constrained by boundaries in the context which define the ways that the self can be expressed. Finally, the development of the self-system is controlled by

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self-regulatory and other processes.(p.2)

Marcus (1987) views this dynamic entity as possessing a possible self, as well as a core or central self and a working self. First, Core or central selves are those which are most elaborated, valued, and most powerful in directing behaviour and processing information. Next, Possible selves are those which are not yet realized. Some selves are realized while others are futuristic (possible selves--feared or hoped for). "These selves function as incentives for behaviour, providing images of the future self in desired or undesired end-states. They also function to provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self" (p. 302); Finally, The working self-concept is a third type of representation. Markus and Wurf (1978) state that:

> it is no longer feasible to refer to *the* self-concept.... The idea is simply that not all self-representations or identities that are part of the complete self-concept will be accessible at any one time. The working self-concept, or the self-concept of the moment, is best viewed as a continually active, shifting array of accessible self knowledge. (p. 307)

In this view, the core self is considered quite stable and would be most resistant to change. However, around this core there are self-views which are prone to change and shift, depending on the particular activity and may access (in memory and thought) particular aspects of self which then become the focus of attentional processes. These can become background schemas given other situations which illuminate different aspects of self. It would seem that activated states, that become part of working self have the potential to change core, if a connection is made to self-system in a particular way. An individual may be behaving in different ways but continue to hold self-views which no longer represent self in a behavioural sense. Once this connection is made, modification of core may begin to take

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place. For example, although an individual continues to hold a view of self as non-assertive, the potential is there to alter cognition and feelings, the self view (Markus & Wurf, 1990). It is this movement of the working self that explains the seeming inconsistency in behavior that is observed in people.

Possible Selves

While investigation of this topic is relatively new, diverse preliminary studies have been conducted and considerable theoretical discussion has taken place (Cross & Markus, 1991; Day, Borkowski, Dietmeyer, Howsepian & Saenz, in press; Inglehart, Markus & Brown, 1989; Markus & Nurius, 1986, 1987; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman & Markus, 1990b; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989; Markus, Cross & Wurf, 1990). This research has focused upon such issues as the functions of possible selves, possible selves across a life span, the generating of possible selves in particularly troubling contexts, and the use of imaging in creating possible selves, to name a few.

Inglehart, Marcus and Brown (1989) have investigated the relationship between possible selves in the professional domain and achievement related with this profession. They hypothesized that (a) the possible selves focus actions in the pursuit of the desired end state; and (b) that they energize a person to persist in the activities necessary to achieve a goal. These hypotheses were tested with data from a six year study of 250 students in an integrated A.B.-M.D. program, and (b) a four year panel study of 1156 students in medical school. The hypotheses were supported by the results of both studies.

In another study, Oyserman and Marcus (1990) studied the relationship between possible selves and delinquency. This study consisted of 238 youths between the ages of 13-16 who

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varied in degree of their delinquency being asked to describe their possible selves. Although many similarities were found among their hoped-for selves, the groups of youth differed markedly in the nature of their expected and feared selves. The balance between expected possible selves and feared possible selves was the particular focus. Balance was hypothesized to occur when expected possible selves are offset by countervailing feared selves in the same domain (e.g. expecting a job, but fearing being unemployed). It was found that the officially non-delinquent youths were quite likely to display balance between their expectations and fears, unlike the most delinquent youth.

The possible self is important because of its key role in directing the transitional process. Two functions of possible selves in the motivational process are: (1), the structuring or focussing aspect; and (2), the energizing function toward pursuing goals. As outlined by Ingelhart, Markus and Brown (1989), the structuring or focussing function acts to present a person with a real conceptualization of a desired goal resulting in the possible selves initiating and structuring a person's activities towards achieving this goal.

The second function, the energizing function of possible selves, involves the affective state. When thinking about a possible self, a person may experience positive or negative emotions which will energize a person to pursue actions necessary to achieve or to avoid an end-state. In focusing on a specific professional possible self and in perceiving a satisfying possible career, the individual will be motivated to achieve this possible career self. As indicated by Markus and Nurius (1987), it is the possible self that puts the self into action, that outlines the likely course of action. Possible selves work to regulate behaviour and provide a person with the motivation to realize or to avoid possible end-states. Motivation,

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as examined by Markus and Nurius (1987), is perceived "as a reflection of what individuals hope to accomplish with their lives and the kind of people they would like and not like to become" (p. 162).

Unless possible selves are well-elaborated, firmly rooted, and also affirmed by others through social interaction, they may become less important and, as stated by Markus and Nurius (1987), "they may easily slip out of the working self-concept to be replaced by negative possibilities" (p. 164).

Summary

Individuals are most likely to develop possible selves for guiding behavior in domains that are central and have well elaborated self-schemas. These are the domains to which there will be commitment and the need for validation from the social context. The success of the transition into the labour market should then be in direct relation to the degree of elaborated possible self.

Career Development and the Self-Concept

The importance of self-concept in the career development of an individual has long been recognized by developmental career theorists. Ginzberg, Ginzburg, Axelrad and Herma (1951) assert that occupational choice is a developmental process: It is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years. Each step in the process has a meaningful relation to those which precede and follow it.

Super (1976) stresses an integrative approach with the interaction of personal and environmental variables in career development. Gottfredson, as cited in Herr (1981),

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"accepts the fundamental importance of self-concept in vocational development, that people seek jobs compatible with their images of themselves" (p.135). Social class, intelligence, and sex are seen as important determinants of both self-concept and the types of compromises people must make, thus, the theory integrates a social systems perspective with the more psychological approaches" (Gottfredson, p. 546).

The importance of the individual is reflected by Drier (1980) when he states that

"career development competency development is not totally dependent upon external forces or programs but reflects a personal growth pattern that in general is unique to the individual. However, for the integration of career development in all of education and especially vocational education, certain common patterns of growth, coupled with individual variations, offer generalizations about usual developmental patterns and career sequences that need to be considered." (p.135)

Drier further states that:

"students who are personally committed to personal success, who possess the confidence in their abilities and self-knowledge necessary to make informed choices, can effectively pursue educational opportunities with the expectation of achieving meaningful and desired outcomes."(p.135)

Super's work highlights the importance of the self-concept in career development. Russell, Spain and Cahill (1992), building on Super's theory, focus on the role of self-concept, as described by Markus, (1990) as a dynamic entity, working to regulate behavior and influence motivation in the process of career development.

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Ecological System

The ecological system will provide a framework to show how the possible self, which includes occupational identity, is formed. The ecological system consists of four inter/intra related systems - micro, meso, exo and macro.

The <u>microsystem</u> is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The setting may be in the family or classroom. Key to this development are; the molar activities, activities that are continuous; and the interpersonal relations that take place between child and parent or parents. The roles of the people involved (i.e., parent, child) will dictate the interpersonal relations (Young, 1983).

The environmental events that are most effective are those that engage others. Active engagement or exposure to what others are doing often inspires the person to undertake similar activities. Young children are more likely to learn to talk if others around him are talking and especially if they are speaking directly to the child. The effectiveness of the parents' interactions will depend on role demands, stress and supports emanating from other settings.

The <u>mesosystem</u> comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates. The most critical link between the two settings, of home and school, is the one that establishes the existence of a mesosystem, that is, the setting transition that occurs when the person enters a new environment. If a child enters school unaccompanied, the link is referred to as solitary, if accompanied by a parent we have a dual link. A mesosystem in which there is more than one person who is active in both settings

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is referred to as a multiple link. The extent of the influence on the development of the child will depend on the extent to which the parent is involved in the school. Development will be enhanced if both settings encourage the growth of mutual trust, positive orientation and goal consensus between settings.

The exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but, one in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person. These contexts are the socioeconomic status, mothers' employment, personal-social network of the parents, public policy and media.

The macrosystem refers to consistencies in the form and content of lower order systems (micro, meso, exo) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with a belief system or ideology underlying such consistencies.

It is within this framework that the possible self of the individual develops. The self develops within a reciprocal relationship with family, school and community. It is through these interactions of this reciprocal relationships that the validation of the present and possible selves, or lack of, takes place thus leading to the development of self schemas which are the bases of the possible self.

Social Context (the School)

A particular school environment has an impact on a student's self-concept both negatively and positively. The messages a student receives as a result of socialization in a particular school environment will be interpreted by the student and integrated into the self-

concept. For example, a student in junior high school may obtain a top mark in English, be praised by the teacher and have trouble being accepted by peers because she is categorized as a "teacher's pet." These kinds of experiences can contribute to how students perceive themselves as students on an academic and social level. The value placed on these aspects of self and the particular situational variables will determine how, or if these experiences go beyond the working self into the core or possible self (Russell, Cahill & Spain, 1992).

Social Context (Family)

The influence of the family on the development of the child has long been recognized in child development and socialization literature. A review of the literature in the area of family influence on career aspiration shows a strong positive correlation (Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Palladio, 1991; Lopez, 1989; Kush & Cochran, 1993; Penick & Jepsen, 1992; Kinnier, Brigman, & Noble, 1990; Schiltuess & Blustein, 1994; Young, Friesen & Borychi, 1994; Young, Paseluikho & Valach, 1996). The focus, however, has been on structural factors: socio-economic status, parents' occupational and educational levels and role modelling (Young, 1985; McCracken, 1991; Laosa, 1982; Cloward & Jones, 1963).

Russell, Cahill & Spain (1992), applying Bronfenbrenner's model of social development, look at the influence of the family on the possible self of the child. The family is a major, maybe the major microsystem, in which the child develops. The child, through a reciprocal relationship in the family environment, develops knowledge of self. The parent brings his\her self-concept, consisting of self-schemas: beliefs, values, dreams, hopes and fears to the microsystem. The parent has as a part of their developed self schemas, role intentions, which

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if actualized become activities and interpersonal behaviors. Young and Friesen (1992) identified 1772 intentions of parents in influencing the career development of their children.

The existing research has considered these variables in relation to outcomes; that is, career and educational outcomes. The need to consider self-concept as a mediating variable between family influence and achievement, rather than family as causal, has been shown by Song and Hattie (1984). The process by which this mediation occurs, however, has not been clearly articulated or investigated. Recent local studies (Spain & Sharpe,1990, Westra & Bennett, 1991) show a dependency of secondary students on their parents in the areas of financial support, decision making and information seeking. These local findings are supported by Hunter (1985) who found parents were seen more frequently to provide explanations, while friends provided more understanding.

Summary

The possible self of an individual develops within a social context. The family and school settings are among the most influential in the development of our youth. As educators we do not have a direct influence on the family, we do, however, have control of educational planning. In order to ensure the full development of the possible self, programming which connects family and school; and school and work must be developed.

The Early School Leaver

Spain and Sharpe (1990) in The Youth Transition into the Labour Market Study, state that the early school leaver is a paradox.

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As a group, they seemed to recognize value in education. Indeed, many expressed aspirations that implied a need to make an important commitment to extensive education and training. They had, nonetheless, rejected public education, the first step in achieving their aspirations. (p. 158)

More recent studies support these findings. According to Marguart (1996) one remarkable finding into early school leaving in Canada is that most early leavers value education and have plans to return to school. Tanner (1991), found that over 70% of the early leavers they interviewed planned to return to school. Coley (1995) reported that the one thing apparently unscathed by dropouts' circumstances is their outlook on life. About one fifth of respondents in *Dreams Deferred: High School Dropouts in the United States* planned to attend vocational, trade or business school.

A review of existing literature in the area produces definitions that would lead one to believe that the dropout is a breed of its own. Students who drop out are generally portrayed to be aimless, resentful, rebellious adolescents who have been doing poorly in school. They are commonly seen as losers by our society. They have learning problems, their attitudes towards teachers are poor, their perceptions are poor, and on the whole they come from low socio-economic family backgrounds (Watson, 1957).

According to Backman (1971), the dropout has experienced difficulties in learning, especially reading, from the primary grades up and often has had repeated failure or has been socially promoted. The dropout has rarely been involved in extra-curricular school activities and has often been a disciplinary problem or has been suspended or has had problems with absenteeism.

These correlational studies tend to overlook the complex reasons that underlie school

failure. The term "dropout" holds negative connotations by denoting a weakness of character within the young person. Finn (1989) clearly outlines the problem--we have data on correlates of dropping-out and studies on interventions; "Few, however, are based on a systematic understanding of the developmental processes that lead an individual to withdraw completely from schooling" (p. 118).

Multiple Factors

Wehlage and Rutter (1990) caution against the stereotypical characteristics of early school leavers. They suggest the characteristics of the dropout are multifactored and diverse, and that dropping out is often the result of a complex web of student characteristics that interact with the characteristics of the school.

Diverse Group

The dropout population is not homogeneous. Youth who drop out come from all socio-economic groups and they drop out for many reasons. The fall issue of Canadian Council for Social Development 1992 (CCSD) states several reasons:

- They are bored with the curriculum or feel they are not being equipped for the type of job they want after graduation.

- They lack the support of parents who value school performance or who know how to help their children get the most out of school.

- They look at the state of the economy and do not believe they have a chance for a better job, even if they graduate from high school.

- Their low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence leads to behavior problems, drug and

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alcohol abuse, truancy and pregnancy.

Wehlage and Rutter (1990) caution against the use of the labels 'at-risk student' or 'dropout' with a fear that they may mask the diversity of those students. This view of diversity of characteristics of the dropout takes us away from the majority of research done in the 60's and 70's that examined personal and social characteristics and saw the cause of the problem lying within the individual. If we take the view that a diversity of youth can be described as 'at-risk', then the structure of schools must change to respond to the diversity of students to help them achieve a common goal--completion and transition into the labour market. Development of the possible self through affirmation, well elaborated strategies and rootedness should enable this transition.

Consequences

According to Persaud and Madak (1992), "students who leave school before obtaining a high school diploma place themselves at risk to a lifetime of personal and career problems as well as creating a problem for Canadian society at large" (p. 236). Employment and Immigration Canada estimates that 100,000 young people will leave high school this year before graduating. The consequences for both the individual and society are far reaching. The individual has greater difficulty finding well paying work and is frequently unemployed. He or she has a greater chance of having to rely on social assistance, unemployment and food banks. Their contribution to society and the economy is greatly limited. This life style in turn may contribute to the stress and the ill-health of the individual, thus, placing further drain on the economy.

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Possible Selves of Early School Leaver

Possible selves provide a link between the self-concept and motivation (Markus & Nurius, 1987). Markus and Nurius (1987) argue that the motivation to carry out all but the most routine and habitual actions depends on the creation of possible selves. They further contend that the possible self must have a balance of expected and dreaded self-schema in order to reach maximal motivation. For early school leavers, exiting school before some possible selves have been realized, may limit their motivation and lead to unsuccessful transitions into the labour market.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study explored the effect of the possible self on the gainful engagement of the early leaver. The career transition model which provided the direction for this study was developed by Russell, Cahill and Spain (1992). The original data for this study was not gathered for the purpose of this particular work transition model, thus, making this a secondary analyses of that data set.

Information regarding the possible self, the independent variable, was extracted from data provided in "Youth Transition into the Labour Market (YTLM): The Early School Leavers: Initial Survey conducted by Spain & Sharpe (1990). This was subsequently explored in relation to the gainful engagement of the early leaver, the dependant variable. This information was extracted from data gathered in "Youth Transition into the Labour Market (YTLM) Life After school: A Profile of Early School Leavers in Newfoundland and Labrador, also conducted by Spain & Sharpe (1991).

The YTLM Study

The "Youth Transition into the Labour Market (YTLM): The Early School Leavers: Initial Survey was conducted by Spain & Sharpe (1990). This study of youth into the labour market which began in 1987 was a developmental study of the process of youth as they make the difficult transition into the labour market of Newfoundland and Labrador. The study was undertaken with the broad purpose of developing an understanding of the aspirations and

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needs of youth to better devise programming to help to meet these needs. The project consisted of two parallel yet interrelated studies, one focusing on the full cohort of approximately 9,000 Level III high school students at the end of 1988-1989 school year and a second, focusing on the full cohort of students (grade 7-11) who dropped out of school between Easter 1987 and Easter 1988. Data from the latter was used for this study.

The following summary of the YTLM procedures was taken from reports on the initial study (Spain & Sharpe, 1990) and the report on the second follow-up study (Spain & Sharpe, 1991).

Identifying Early Leavers

The sampling process for the study of early school leavers proceeded in two stages. In the first, schools were asked to identify persons who were classified as early leavers, including all persons who had left school and, who were lower than the mandated school leaving age of sixteen, during the period Easter 1987 to Easter 1988. The period of Easter was selected to make it easier to identify persons who decided to drop out over the summer holidays.

A second attempt at identifying the early leaver was made by comparing the returns from the first sampling with the Department of Education school leaving returns. All procedures were based on the 1987-88 Newfoundland School Directory. Initially all schools reported to have at least a grade seven were surveyed for dropouts.

No early leavers were reported by school administrators of schools which combined elementary, or primary grades with grades seven, eight and nine. It was decided not to follow

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up on these schools.

Interview Process

An interview process was used to gather information for both the initial and follow-up survey. It was decided, given problems in administering questionnaires to early school leavers, that a face to face or phone interview would produce better results. The development of the interview protocol took place between the Fall of 1987 and the Spring of 1988. The interview protocol, information booklet, and the "Interview's Manual, Early School Leaver Project" were developed in consultation with the Department of Education Project Advisory Committee.

For the initial survey, persons who had been identified by school personnel in local areas, were recruited and trained by a combination of letter and telephone procedures. They attempted to locate and interview all early leavers who had lived in their area during school. Most of the interviews took place during the late Spring and late Fall of 1988. A total of 1276 persons were actually interviewed. From these a total of 1274 usable interviews were obtained, that is, 60.41 percent of the originally identified group of early leavers.

The follow-up survey was conducted in January 1990 directed at the sample interviewed in the initial survey, and the same interview process was used. An attempt was made to re-establish contact with the 1274 persons sampled in the original survey. A total of 1012 useable interviews, 79.4% of the original sample of 1276, were obtained.

The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the study was "gainful engagement". All the information concerning the dependent variable was obtained from the second, follow-up questionnaire. As the second interview took place two years after the first, these work outcomes could be considered potentially to be consequences of the possible self, which was based on data from the first interview. The data were classified into categories of gainful engagement. The classification process was directed by a panel whose purpose was to aid in the adaptation of the transition model. One of the authors of the YTLM Studies chaired this three member panel, all of whom were familiar with the pertinent literature and the work transition model being used.

In an attempt to further clarify the concept of work outcomes, the term "gainful engagement" was deemed appropriate. At this stage in the work transition process, it was assumed that many individuals could be involved in a variety of activities that might be classified as "gainful" from a societal perspective, yet not necessarily be directly involved in work. An individual was thought to be gainfully engaged if he or she was involved in any activity that was directly related to, or potentially leading to employment.

Figure 1 shows the question chosen by the panel that best represented the dependent variable, gainful engagement.

Present Activities

In order to determine the degree of engagement of the early leaver in 1991, respondents were asked what they were doing at the time of the interview. The interviewer read the following categories: (1), looking for work; (2), working for someone else; (3), going to

school; (4), homemaker; (5) self-employed; (6), accepted for a course; (7). or unemployed. Respondents could give multiple answers. For example, they could state that they were both going to school and working.

Present activities as reported by the respondents were categorized in hierarchical order in degree of gainful engagement, relative to the labour market as follows:

- **Working for Others**--These respondents could also be working for self. in school. homemaking or in job search.

- **Working for Self**--These respondents could also be in school, homemaking or in job search, but did not list working for others.

- **In School**--These respondents could also be in homemaking or job search, but did not list working as one of their activities

- **Homemaking**--These respondents could also be in job search.

- **Job Search**--These respondents were not engaged in any other of the above activities. but said that they were looking for work.

- **Not Gainful**--These respondents would not be engaged in any of the other categories. Most often, they said that they were unemployed

- **No Response**--A total of 21 did not respond to this question.

The responses to this question were further classified as gainful or not gainful engagement. The responses that were considered gainful were (1), working for someone else; (2), working for yourself for money; (3), going to school/taking a course; and (4), homemaking. The "not gainful" categories consisted of (1), looking for work; (2), accepted

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for a course: and (3), unemployed and not looking for work.

As the numbers in homemaking were not sufficient to allow for a reliable analysis they were subsequently dropped from this study.

This present time, are you: (Accept all that apply)
- Working for somebody else
- Working for yourself for money
- Looking for work
- Going to school\taking a course
- Accepted for a course
- Homemaker
- Unemployed and not looking for work

Figure 1: Question used to define the nature of engagement

The Independent Variables

The possible self was the independent variable in the study. It was represented by three different types of information; (1) two to three year outlook, (2) the reasons for school leaving; and (3), the last grade completed before leaving school. In addition, two independent factors known to significantly impact both on the development of the self, and to also independently influence opportunity were also included in the analysis. They were (1), geography and (2), gender.

All the questions from the first survey were classified in terms of the work transition model. This classification process was directed by the panel described above. These

classifications included self representation, boundaries, attributes, abilities, and skills. Given the fact that the questionnaire was not developed with this model in mind, the classification of all questions in this manner was not possible. In keeping with the stated purpose of the study only questions judged to represent the possible self of the respondent were used in the analysis being presented here. Following is a discussion of each of the two questions selected and the rationale for classifying them as indicators of the possible self at school-leaving time. Figure two shows these questions.

Two to Three Year Outlook

All the respondents in the initial school leaving survey were asked what they saw themselves doing in two to three years. This question was thought to be a direct and obvious reflection of the possible self to the extent that it represented a statement of a respondent's goals. It fits the definition of possible selves given by Marcus and Ruvulo (1989).

> "Possible selves are specific representations of one's self in future states and circumstances that serve to organize and energize one's actions. These thoughts, images or senses of one's self in the end-state or in the intermediate states are viewed as the individualized carriers of motivation. They are the manifestation of one's goals, aspirations , motives, fears and threats" (Markus & Ruvulo, 1989, p. 212)

As discussed in the previous chapter, possible selves stated as goals serve a structuring function, and help to determine the goal-directed behavior in which an individual engages. Growth theories emphasize individuals' personal responsibility and free choice in creating their identities; they emphasize the individual's future and his or her role in creating it. Possible selves give direction to this growth and change. If these theories are correct, a positive relationship would be found between the statement of intentions, and gainful

engagement in two year's time.

During the interview, the interviewer posed the question and invited a free response, which was then classified into one of five accepted responses. As seen in Figure 2.

Reasons for School-Leaving

The initial survey of school leavers asked them their reasons for deciding to leave school. These reasons reflect the possible self at the time as they are either explicit or implied statements of the immediate goals of the school leaver at the time because they speak to the motive for taking the action of school leaving. As such, the reasons should be predictive of behavior in the short term.

In the YTLM study the early leavers were asked an open-ended question about their reasons for school-leaving (see Figure 2) with an invitation to respond in their own words. They could give as many reasons as they wished. A single reason was given by 66.9 percent (852) of the respondents, a total of 350 (27.5) gave two reasons, and three reasons were given by 5.3 percent (68). The reasons were then classified by the YTLM study into seven broad categories: (1) school program related; (2) school performance related; (3) employment related; (4) money related; (5) family related; (6) personal reasons; and (7) don't know. (Spain and Sharpe, 1989, p 38).

For the purpose of this study the seven broad categories were reclassified into four categories as there was overlap as determined by the panel.

(1) Behavioral Related Reasons was a broad category. Persons giving this reason may have been suspended from school, did not like the teachers, been sick or pregnant. In

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general, reasons in this category were not expected to be related to any of the categories of gainful engagement.

(2) Achievement Related Reasons. Persons in this category may have stated that they were failing, or could not do the work.

(3) Program Related Reasons. Early leavers in this category said that they could not see the use of school subjects or that they found school uninteresting.

(4) Economic Related Reasons. This was a very broad category that included reasons such as getting a job, helping at home and earning spending money.

After classifying all the open-ended reasons given by a respondent into these categories, the most salient reason was determined to be the category containing the largest number of specific reasons offered by the respondent. This was the category used in this study to describe the reason of the respondent for leaving school.

Last Grade Completed

According to Spain and Sharpe (1990) there is in Newfoundland and Labrador a substantial dropout rate beginning in grade seven and continuing throughout the entire secondary school cycle. The secondary educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador consists of thirteen years of schooling, kindergarten to grade twelve. Skills and knowledge acquisition are developmental and as such, the higher the grade completed the higher the perceived degree of skills and knowledge. Given the importance of education that is generally accepted by the early school leavers (Spain and Sharpe, 1989), the self perception of skills and knowledge can be expected to be related to the length of education. Knowledge of the grade completed must therefore be factored into analysis.

Geography and Gender

The possible self consists of self schemas that develop within a social context. This social context exerts influence on the development of possible selves as they relate to views of occupational selves. In the discussion of the ecosystem in the preceding chapter, it was seen how the meso and macro context in which the individual develops influences perceptions of self and defines the personal interactions which contribute to the elaboration of the possible self. The meso and macro context are not the possible self. They are, rather, factors independent of the self although they may be expected to exercise a powerful influence on the development of the self, and to also influence the actual behavior of individuals in different ways.

Geography in the YTLM

Geography was a variable that referred to the rural or urban character of the environment in which the early leavers were educated. It is well understood that a number of factors are influenced by this factor; for example, the nature of the school experience, the accustomed work, and economic environment, and the role models available to young people. The YTLM study used the geographic categories for schools that were in use by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education. In 1987, urban locations were those with a population of 5000 or greater.(Spain and Sharpe, 1989)

Gender

The influence of gender on the development of the self has long been accepted. The actual nature of the influence is probably multidimensional, and includes the attitudes and values of significant others, the accepted gender roles in the local context and so forth.

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1. Why did you leave school? (Free response, with as many reasons as offered recorded)
   a. Behavioral reasons
   b. Program reasons
   b. Academic reasons
   c. Economic reasons

2. In two to three years time, what will you be doing? (One response only from the following)
   a. Working
   b. Back at school
   c. Travelling
   d. Other
   e. Don't know.

Figure 2: Possible self questions

The Sample

As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 2109 early school leavers were identified during the initial survey using the procedures described earlier. This was probably a substantially smaller number than actually left school during this period. A total of 1276 persons were actually interviewed. From these, a total of 1274 usable interviews were obtained. 60.41% of the original identified group of early leavers. Only 15.0 % of the identified early leavers declined interviews. Six hundred and thirty of the identified early leavers were away from home, most of them outside Newfoundland, at the time of the interview. Thus, 29.9 % of the identified leavers had left home, and most of those had left the province after deciding to leave school.

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Table 1
Interview status of identified early leavers
(N=2109)

Status	Site	f	%
Interviewed	At home	1110	52.6
	Away from home, in Newfoundland	30	1.4
	Away from home, outside Newfoundland	136	6.5
	Subtotals	1276	60.5
Not Interviewed	Graduated prior to interview	20	0.9
	Could not be located, living in Newfoundland	116	5.5
	Could not be located, living outside Newfoundland	348	16.5
	Returned to high school	33	1.6
	Declined to interview	316	15.0
	Subtotals	833	39.5
Totals		2109	100.0

(Spain and Sharpe, 1989 p.24)

Gender of the Initial Sample

Seven hundred and ninety- three persons, 62.1% were male. The remaining 483 (37.9%) were female (Table 2). There were no significant differences in the gender of the persons initially interviewed and those who were not interviewed.

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Table 2
Gender and interview status of the identified early school leavers
(N-2107)

Gender		Interviewed	Not Interviewed	Totals
Male	f	793	518	1311
	%	62.1	62.3	62.2
Female	f	483	313	796
	%	37.9	37.7	37.8
Totals	f	1276	831	2107
	%	60.6	39.4	100.0

Chi square=0.0075, DF=1, P>0.05

Rural/Urban distribution of the initial survey

The distribution of the initial 1276 early leavers interviewed was 69.1% rural and 30.9% urban (Table 3). It can be seen that there were proportionately more rural early school leavers than there were urban students. Also, rural early leavers were somewhat more likely to have been interviewed than the urban early leavers.

Table 3
Rural or urban status of the identified early school leavers
(N=2107)

Geographic status		Identified early leavers			Total grade 7 to Level III population
		Interviewed	Not Interviewed	Totals	
Rural	f	882	465	1347	33150
	%	69.1	56.0	63.9	52.3
Urban	f	494	366	860	29892
	%	30.9	44.0	36.1	47.7
Totals	f	1276	831	2107	63402
	%	60.6	39.4	100.0	

Chi square=14.44, DF=1, P>0.05

The Follow-up Sample

Spain and Sharpe (1989) reported that it was possible to interview 1012 of the original sample of 1276. The follow-up sample did not differ significantly from the original by gender, but again, it was possible to interview proportionately more of the rural sample than the urban (Spain and Sharpe, 1989, p.10). Table 4 shows the distribution of the final sample.

Table 4
Gender and geographic distribution of the follow-up sample

Gender		Rural	Urban	Totals
Male	f	440	187	627
	% of total	43.5	18.5	62.0
Female	f	283	102	385
	% of total	28.0	10.1	28.0
Totals	f	723	289	1012
	% of total	71.5	28.6	100

Chi square=1.30, df=1, p<0.05

Confidentiality

In order to protect student anonymity, all student forms were given a number code to correspond to their name, grade and school. All data was subsequently handled by these code numbers with the master list accessible only to the researchers.

Data Analysis Procedure

A cross tabulation analysis using log linear procedures was used in the determination of significant relationships between variables contained in the study. Log-linear procedures are multivariate procedures used when the data are categorical, to examine relationships between more than two variables.

There was one dependent variable, gainful engagement. Possible self was represented by three independent variables; (1), two to three year outlook; (2), reasons for school-leaving; and (3), grade at school leaving. In addition, there were two co-variate independent variables, geography and gender.

Each element of the independent variable (the possible self) was analysed in relation to the dependent variable (gainful engagement) and to gender and geography. Four-way, three-way and two-way relationships were investigated. A relationship was judged to be significant when $p \leq 0.05$ was found. The distribution of the sample by gender and geography has already been examined earlier in this chapter. The more interesting interactions of gender and geography with gainful engagement, separately from the possible self variables, were done as a separate analysis since this gave the same result for all three analyses of the possible self variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents an analysis of the data. First, a more detailed analysis of the derivation and distribution of the dependent variable, gainful engagement, will be presented, followed by the study of its relationship to gender and geography. Following this, each research question relating to the possible self will be examined in turn.

The Derivation of Gainful Engagement

In order to determine the degree of gainful engagement of the early school leaver in 1991, respondents to the second survey were asked what they were doing at the time of the second interview. All of the information was classified in terms of work outcomes. A total of 991 of the second sample responded. Eight hundred and sixty-five (865) gave one response, 113 gave two, and 13 gave three or four responses. Table 5 is based on one and two responses because those giving 3 or 4 responses would be gainful in at least one area.

Table 5
Participation in gainful activity

Principal activity in order of gainfulness						Other activity (frequency)			
Gainfulness	Activity	f	WO	WS	GS	HM	LW	AC	NL
Gainful	Working for others(WO)	297							
	Working for self(WS)	27	4						
	Going to school(GS)	87	16	0					
	Homemaker(HM)	20	3	0	6				
	Total gainful	431							
Marginal	Looking for work(LW)	316	12	6	12	20			
Not gainful	Accepted for a course(AC)	3	4	0	0	0	7		
	Not looking for work(NL)	115	0	2	5	12	2	2	
	Total not gainful	118							
Totals		865	336	39	126	61	375	16	136

In the Working for Others category, a total of 336 responded. Two hundred and ninety-seven (297) gave this as their only activity while another 39 who were working for others gave a second response. Of these four were working for self, 16 going to school, three in homemaking, 12 looking for work and four were accepted for a course.

In the second category, Working for Self, a total of 39 responded. Twenty-seven (27) gave this as their only activity. Another 12 respondents gave a second activity. Four (4) were working for others, six(6) were looking for work and two(2) reported not looking for work.

In the Going to School category 126 responded. Eighty-seven (87) respondents gave this as their only activity. Another 39 respondents gave a second activity. Of these 39, 16 were working for others, 6 were in homemaking, 12 looking for work, and 5 said they were not looking for work.

Homemaking was reported by 61 of the respondents. A total of 20 respondents said their only activity was homemaking. Another 41 of the respondents, while giving homemaking as an activity, reported being involved in a second activity. Three (3) of the respondents were working for others, 6 were going to school, 20 were looking for work and 12 reported not looking.

A total of 375 reported Looking for Work. Of these, 316 reported it as their only activity. Twelve (12) were working for others while looking for work, 6 were working for self, 12 were going to school, 20 were in homemaking and 7 reported being accepted for a course.

A total of 16 reported being Accepted for a Course. Of these, 3 reported it as their only activity, 4 of those accepted for a course were working for others and 7 were looking for work and 2 were in the not looking category.

In the Not Looking for Work category, there was a total of 136 responses. Of these, 115 gave this as their only response, 2 reported working for self, 5 were going to school, and 12 in homemaking while 2 reported being accepted for a course.

Gainfulness in relation to the labour market was defined with respect to work outcomes. Work outcomes were considered gainful if they contributed to the good of society as a whole. Using this definition of gainfulness, the following activities were considered gainful: full

or part time work, time in school, and time in care giving and homemaking. A total of 20 respondents were engaged in homemaking only. This small number was not considered to be a significant activity of the early leavers at this time; therefore, this gainful group was dropped from the study.

Looking for Work was considered a questionable area as to its degree of gainfulness. It is difficult to determine the degree of engagement in relation to the labour market. It is an ambiguous area and therefore for this study was placed in the Search category, placing it somewhere between total engagement and zero engagement.

The respondents in the Not Looking for Work category are clearly in a nongainful category. Theirs was a total lack of engagement.

- A total of 431 of the respondents were considered gainfully employed or engaged in gainful activities.

- A total of 316 were involved in search, which considered a questionable area of engagement.

- A total of 118 respondents were not gainfully engaged.

- The 21 persons who did not respond to this question may also be considered not gainful In the context of the survey.

Gainful Engagement, Gender and Geography

This section will report the analysis regarding the independent relationship of gainfulness to gender and geography. Actually, this analysis was an aspect of each of the three analyses of the relationship of the possible self to gainful engagement. The

independent component of the relationship of gainful engagement to gender and geography were the same in all three analyses as the cross tabulation of gainful engagement, gender and geography were the same regardless of the particular aspect of the possible self being explored. The question had to do with whether gainful engagement had any relationship to the particular combination of gender and geography.

The three-way relationship of gainfulness, gender and geography was significant as can be seen in Table 6. This means that the nature of gainful engagement was unique to the combination of gender and geography of the respondents. This finding stands separately from any additional impact of gender and geography due to its interaction with the possible self.

An additional area of uniqueness was not covered by the analysis. As explained in the preceding chapter, those persons reporting that they were homemakers only were eliminated from the analysis. In fact, of 51 persons reporting they were homemakers, even if they also reported other activity, 48 were rural females. The other categories were nearly empty.

Urban men (50.5%) were most likely to be employed at the time of the second survey, while rural men were least likely to be employed (35.4%). The employment level of rural and urban women fell between these two extremes. Urban women were most likely to be attending school (17.2%) with rural men least likely (9.9%). More rural men (39.8%) were engaged in job search than all the other categories (about 30%). Finally, persons of both genders in rural areas were more likely not to be gainfully engaged than were persons in urban areas.

Table 6
Relationship of gainful engagement to gender and geography
(N=948)

Geography	Gender		Present status				
			Working	Education	Search	Not gainful	Totals
Rural	Male	f	154	43	173	65	435
		%	35.4	9.9	39.8	14.9	45.9
	Female	f	98	30	67	35	230
		%	42.6	13.0	29.1	15.2	24.3
Urban	Male	f	93	22	57	12	184
		%	50.5	12.0	31.0	6.5	19.4
	Female	f	46	17	28	8	99
		%	46.5	17.2	28.3	8.1	10.4
Totals		f	391	112	325	120	948
		%	41.2	11.8	34.3	12.7	100.0

Chi square=5.63; df=4; p<0.05

Two to Three Year Outlook

One aspect of the possible self was the two to three year outlook at the time of school-leaving. This outlook, taken during the first interview, gave a picture of the goals that the respondents had at school leaving time. The two-way relationship of gainful engagement and two to three year outlook was significant; however, these two factors were not in turn significantly related to gender and geography. The two to three year outlook predicted gainful engagement apart from considerations of gender and geography.

Most of the total sample expected to be working (68.8 percent), or to be in school (18.9 percent), while 12.2 percent were uncertain. Another 2.2 percent made up the travelling and other category. Due to their irrelevancy to the labour market, they were dropped from the analysis (Appendix A, p. 141, YTLM).

Respondents who had a clear understanding of what they wanted to do in two to three years were more gainfully engaged at that time than those who were uncertain. Each of the intentions listed were cross tabulated with the categories of gainful engagement (see Table 7). It can be seen that 20.5 percent of those who said at the time of the first survey that they did not know what they would be doing in two to three years were not gainfully engaged after two to three years, compared to the 11.7 to 12.4 percent of those who had a plan. Considering search to be a questionable activity, the contrast becomes more interesting. Of those who said that they did not know what they would be doing in two to three years, a full 46.9 % said they were engaged in search. The group that was most gainfully engaged was those who said that they would be in school. More of these people were both working, and in school, than any other category. People who had said that they would be working did tend

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to be working more than the group of people

Table 7
Relationship of gainful engagement to the two to three year outlook
(N=921)

Intentions in 2-3 years		Present status				
		Working	Education	Search	Not gainful	Totals
Working	f	267	67	233	71	638
	%	41.8	10.5	36.5	11.1	69.3
School	f	89	33	40	23	185
	%	48.1	17.8	21.6	12.4	20.1
Don't Know	f	26	6	46	20	98
	%	26.5	6.1	46.9	20.4	10.6
Totals	f	382	106	319	114	921
	%	41.5	11.5	34.6	12.4	100.0

Chi square=36.6; df=6; p<0.05

who had said that they did not know what they would be doing.

Working in Two to Three Years

Of the 638 (69.3 percent) of the respondents who said they would be working in two to three years, 41.8 percent (267) were working, 10.5 percent (67) were in school, 36.5 percent (233) in search and 11.1 percent (71) were not gainful. Of the respondents who predicted that they would be working, 52.3 percent were actually gainfully employed. Forty-seven point six percent (47.6 percent) were not engaged in gainful activities.

School in Two to Three Years

Twenty point one percent (20.1 percent) of the respondents had predicted that they would be in school at the time of the second survey. Of the 185 respondents in this category, 48.1 percent (89) were working, 17.8 percent (33) were in school, 21.6 percent (40) were in search and 12.4 percent (23) were not gainful. Of the respondents who said that they would be students or trainees, 65.9 percent were gainfully employed. Thirty-four percent (34 percent) of the respondents, 63 were not involved in gainful activities.

Did Not Know What They Would Be Doing

There was a total of 98 respondents who did not know what they would be doing in 2-3 years. Of these, 26.5 percent (26) were working, 6.1 percent (6) were in school, 46.9 percent (46) were in search and 20.4 percent (20) were not gainful.

Summary of two to three year intentions

There was an obvious and important difference between those who were clear on what they thought they would be doing in two to three years after school leaving, and those who were not. The nature of the outlook was also important. Those looking forward to a return to some form of schooling were the most gainfully engaged, followed by those who said that they would be working. The group least gainfully engaged of all were those that did not know what they would be doing in two or three years time. A total of 55.4 percent of the sample who saw themselves as worker or student/trainee were gainfully employed. Of the respondents who did not know, 32.6 percent were gainfully engaged.

Table 8
Relationship of last grade completed to gender
(N=862)

Gender		Last grade completed					Totals
		Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	
Male	f	66	88	115	144	162	575
	%	11.5	15.3	20.0	25.0	28.2	66.7
Female	f	19	47	65	49	107	287
	%	6.0	14.8	20.5	24.9	33.8	33.3
Totals	f	85	135	180	193	269	862
	%	9.9	15.7	20.9	22.4	31.2	100.0

Chi square=15.9; df=4; p<0.05

Last Grade Completed

A second aspect of the possible self was the last grade completed before school-leaving. The level of education attained, and its relationship to economic opportunity and further educational participation was presumed to have an effect on the development of the possible self. The log-linear analysis confirmed that a significant relationship existed between the dependent variable, gainful engagement, and the last grade completed before leaving school. Again, this was independent of the involvement of either gender or geography. Table 9 shows the result of this analysis.

The highest percentage of leavers was those reporting having completed level II or grade 11, a total of 30.2 percent. At either extreme, grade 7 and 11, a significant difference existed between the male and female leavers with 5.5 percent more of females completing

grade 7 and 5.6 percent more females completing grade 11. From the total respondents (862).

85 had completed grade 7 or less; 135 completed grade 8; another 180 reported completing grade 9; a total of 223 reported completing grade 10, and 269 of the respondents reported completing grade 11. The gender differences can be seen in Table 8.

A cross tabulation of last grade completed with gainfulness shows a direct positive correlation between grade completed and degree of gainfulness. It can be seen in Table 9 that the higher the grade level completed at school leaving, the more people were working. The highest percentage working was grade eleven (50.9%) compared to the grade sevens (23.5%) About an equal proportion of each grade level were attending school again (9.6 to 14.1%) although it is suggestive that the grade with the highest percentage attendance was grade eleven.

Table 9
Relationship of gainful engagement to last grade completed
(N=892)

Grade		Level of engagement				Totals
		Working	Education	Search	Not Gainful	
Seven	f	20	11	43	11	85
	%	23.5	12.9	50.6	12.9	9.5
Eight	f	55	13	46	21	135
	%	40.7	9.6	34.1	15.6	15.1
Nine	f	75	22	61	22	180
	%	41.7	12.2	33.9	12.2	20.2
Ten	f	89	25	80	29	223
	%	39.9	11.2	35.9	13.0	25.0
Eleven	f	137	38	73	21	269
	%	50.9	14.1	27.1	7.8	30.2
Total	f	376	109	303	104	892
	%	42.1	12.2	34.0	11.7	100.0

Chi square=30.6; df=12; $p<0.05$

Gainful engagement and reasons for leaving school

The final test of the relationship between the possible self and gainful engagement were the reasons for leaving school. The implicit motives in these reasons would have reflected the possible self. As in the preceding two tests, a significant relationship was found between the most salient reason for school leaving and gainful engagement at the follow-up. Again, this was independent of considerations of gender or geography.

In an effort to determine the influence of the reasons for leaving on gainfulness,

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these categories were individually cross tabulated with areas of gainfulness. The results are shown in Table 10. In general, persons who said at the time of school leaving that they decided to leave for program-related or academic reasons tended to be working the most. Those leaving for economic reasons were working the least. The reasons for leaving school early did not seem importantly related to later attendance at school, however.

Table 10
Relationship of gainful engagement to reasons for school-leaving
(N=930)

Reason		Level of gainfulness				Totals
		Work	Education	Search	Not gainful	
Program-related	f	162	38	154	45	399
	%	40.6	9.5	38.5	11.2	42.9
Economic	f	96	25	61	27	209
	%	45.9	11.9	29.0	12.9	22.4
Academic	f	92	21	68	30	211
	%	43.6	9.9	32.2	14.2	22.6
Behavioral	f	40	15	44	12	111
	%	36	13.5	39.6	10.8	11.9
Totals	f	390	99	327	114	930
	%	41.9	10.6	35.1	12.2	100.0

Chi square=36.6; df=6; p<0.05

Program Reasons

A total of 399 or (42.9) percent of the respondents gave program related reasons for leaving school. Of the 399, 162 or 40.6 percent were gainful in the area of work. 38 or 9.5 percent were in school, 154 or 38.5 percent were in search and the remainder were not gainful. When program was given as a reason for leaving more respondents tended to be in work or work search then in school.

Economic Reasons

Two hundred and nine (209) respondents gave this as a reason for leaving. In general when this was given as a reason for leaving, more early school leavers tended to be working then not. Ninety-six (96) of the respondents giving this reason for leaving were working at the time of the interview. Twenty-five or 11.9 percent were in school and sixty- one or 29 percent were in search. Twelve point nine percent (27) were not gainful.

Academic Reasons

A total of 211 or 22.6 percent of the respondents gave this as a reason for leaving. In general when this was given as a reason for leaving more early leavers tended to be working then not. Of the 211, ninety- two or 43.6 percent were working at the time of the interview. 9.9 percent or 21 were in school and a total of 68 or 32.2 percent were in search. Those giving this as a reason tended to have more respondents (14.2 percent) in the non gainful area.

Behavior Reasons

A total of 111 (11.9 percent) of the early school leavers gave this as a reason for leaving. In general when this was given as a reason for leaving students tended to be less engaged in work. Forty or 36 percent were working at interview time, fifteen (13.5 percent) were in school and forty- four or 39.6 percent were in search. Twelve or 10.8 percent were not gainful.

Summary

Those early school leavers giving economic reasons for leaving tended to be more gainfully engaged after two to three years then those not giving this as a reason though the differences, while significant, were small. When employment and academics were given as a reason for leaving the early school leaver tended to be in work. Those giving program and academics as reasons were less likely to be gainfully engaged in school. Early school leavers giving behavior as a reason for leaving had higher percentages of respondents in the area of search and fewer working. The reason for school-leaving did not appear related importantly to later attendance in a school experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Summary

The purpose of this study was to clarify the role of the self system, specifically the possible self, as a determinant of the degree of the later gainful engagement of the early school leaver. The research revealed that the possible selves of the respondents were indeed related to their degree of gainfulness as defined by the model, and thus, to the transition into the labour market. A possible self, established at the time of school-leaving as relating to a definite intention to work, or to obtain further training appeared to be particularly important to greater degrees of gainfulness two to three years later.

Gender and geography were related to the degree of gainfulness. Urban early school leavers, both male and female, tended to be more gainful then their rural counterparts. More rural youth were living at home. No significant difference existed in the overall degree of gainfulness between males and females, however males tended to be more gainful in work where as the female early school leaver tended to be more gainful in school\training.

Reasons for leaving as reported by the leaver were found to be related to degree of gainfulness. Individuals leaving for economic and academic reasons were more gainful then those reporting leaving for behavioral or program reasons. There also existed a strong relationship between the grade existed and degree of gainfulness.

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How is the degree of gainfulness related to the Possible Self?

In keeping with the definition of gainful engagement, working for self, working for other, or going to school, would meet the necessary criteria of gainfulness. A clear and definite relationship existed between the intention to work or to pursue further schooling and the fulfilment of those intentions. Of the almost 85% of respondents who indicated they intended to work or return to school, over two thirds were gainfully engaged. These intentions can be considered an expression of the possible self, which provided the direction for the pursuit of gainful goals.

Do gender and geography influence the degree of gainfulness?

The effect of gender and geography on gainfulness was found to be significant in both work and school areas. Those working and\or in school were more likely to be from an urban setting. No difference existed between the male and female degree of gainfulness, however, males tended to be gainful in work areas while females tended more to be gainful in the area of school. It is interesting to note that the greater number of rural youth was living at home at the time of the interview.

How are reasons for leaving school as reported by the leaver related to the degree of gainfulness?

Almost half of the early school leavers gave the school program as a reason for leaving. This meant, usually, that they sensed a lack of relevance of the school's offerings when

contrasted to their own goals. Of these respondents over half were gainfully engaged. High percentages of engagement were also exhibited by respondents giving academic reasons for leaving. It must be noted that engagement for this group was in the area of work. One can suppose that as in the case of the persons leaving because of the school's programs, these persons did not feel that they could succeed in school, and that therefore they modified their own goals, and decided to leave school. In terms of the possible self, the academic experience in school possibly shaped work oriented, rather than educational goals. As would be expected those reporting leaving for economic reasons were most gainful in the area of work. This would indicate that the early leaver had a possible self which included schemas of self as "worker." Those reporting leaving for behavioral reasons were the least gainful.

Does grade at school leaving influence the degree of gainfulness?

There was a very significant relationship between the grade at the time of school leaving and the degree of gainfulness. Early school leavers with a grade eleven completion were much more likely to be gainful than those who had only attained a lower grade. Sixty-five percent (65%) of those leaving with a grade eleven completion were gainfully engaged as compared to thirty-six percent

(36%) of those leaving with a grade seven completion. Gainfulness tended to be in the area of work more then the area of school for the grade eleven completer. No significant difference existed in the degree of gainfulness when early school leaver had completed grades eight, nine or ten. Early school leavers with only a grade seven completion were for the most part not gainful.

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The Work Transition Model

Based on the findings of this study, it has been concluded that the possible self, at school leaving, of the respondents was indeed related to their degree of later gainfulness. It is important at this point to place these findings in the context of the work transition model as a whole. According to this model, the work transition is directly influenced by a number of factors, in addition to the possible self. To expand somewhat on the factors outlined in the model, past personal achievements, skills, and educational and occupational boundaries would be included. It is possible that the degree of gainfulness observed in this study could be attributed to any of these factors, working in combination with each other, as well as the possible self.

The work transition model is both dynamic and non-recursive, all aspects of the model are continually developing. In addition, all work outcomes feed back into the system, thus, influencing subsequent transition behavior. In other words, the degree to which the possible self is realized will feed negative or positive information back into the system, and this will, in turn, have an impact on the development of future possible selves. For example, in this study, persons leaving school for economic reasons were more likely to be gainfully engaged later on than those leaving for programmatic or academic reasons. If the self system is effected by a lack of achievement or success in the academic program, this information could be fed back into the system influencing the development of a possible self that is more restrictive, imposing boundaries on the future occupations it is perceived possible to hold, and restructuring the plans to achieve the restructured possible self. This perception may have a negative influence on the development of additional possible selves, thus, altering or

inhibiting a successful work transition process.

As the vocational possible self is elaborated, it gradually moves into the realm of the working self. Changes in the working self is closely related to the nature of the work outcome. The work outcome validates the working self and thus, the possible self is realized. This validation process may cause aspects of the possible self to eventually be assimilated into the core self, and thus, the life long work transition continues. The development of all the factors influencing the transition process, including the possible self, is influenced by the same past experiences, and thus, are correlated in such a way that their separation may be impossible. It is likely that the relationship between the possible self and other factors influencing the work transition is such, that any change in the elaboration of the possible self will automatically cause change in these other factors. For example, as an individual engages in work, this will lead to an elaboration of the vocational self to accommodate the new experience, changing the goals of the person from what they might have been at the time of school leaving. As the self is elaborated, the other factors in the model which directly impact on the work transition will develop as well. When viewed in this context, the relative independence of the possible self in influencing the work transition, becomes less important. The possible self becomes the key element in the work transition process.

Recommendations

Programming

1. This study demonstrated that the possible self was related to the degree of gainfulness of the early school leaver. Based on this finding, programming should be developed to ensure that the development and elaboration of the possible self is addressed throughout an individual's school career. These programs must address the developmental needs of the individual as it relates to career issues which include self-awareness and self-efficacy. These programs must ensure positive outcomes for each individual. They should aim to develop work and especially educational goals, even in individuals who are leaving the public education system before completion.

2. Nearly 50% of the early school leavers gave program as a reason for leaving. The majority of that group were gainfully engaged in the area of work. This finding would indicate that although leaving school early, these individuals possessed a possible self that led them to some form of work independent of the programs that were available to them in school. Programs must be developed within the K-12 system which create relevancy between school programs and the world of work. Comprehensive career education programs, with an experiential component, must be developed to address needs from kindergarten to grade twelve.

3. Rural youth, both male and female were more likely to be not gainfully engaged. Programming must be developed to allow rural youth to explore occupations that do not

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exist in their community. An online mentoring programming, or virtual cooperative education placements must be established to begin to address this deficiency.

4. This study demonstrated clearly that greater amounts of education lead to greater degrees of gainfulness. Education must be presented in such a way that students are continually aware of the economic value. Courses must be developed that allow students to explore the growth areas of the economy in relation to their community and the global market.

5. This study has demonstrated that individuals who departed early from school without an intention to work, or return to school were more likely then not to not be gainfully engaged in two to three years time. This applied especially to those who left early because they wanted to modify or improve their life style. Programming must be developed in the secondary school system that allows for the development and elaboration of the possible self. A comprehensive career education program incorporating cooperative education, internship or apprenticeship should be developed. These programs should focus around the development of individual portfolios for the purpose of goal setting and educational planning.

6. A provincial strategy should be developed around school- to- work transitions. This strategy would focus on the development of the possible self in relation to the social context of the school and regional economic development.

Further Research

1. Develop a study specifically designed to test the work transition model, and in particular the independence of the effect of the possible self.

2. Develop a study to determine why urban possible selves are more elaborated then rural possible selves. Which aspect of the model was most influential?

3. Develop a comparison study of students in traditional schooling and those involved in work transition programs to determine the extent of elaboration of the possible self.

4. Develop a study that compares rural parents and urban parents career intentions, for their sons and daughters.

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