

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING SCHOOL  
EARLY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD FOR  
ST. JOHN'S

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY  
IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD FOR ST. JOHN'S

by

© Pamela A. Walsh, B.Sc., B.Ed.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the leaving early phenomenon, in the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, from the perspective of both the contributing factors and the consequences. A set of 19 independent variables was identified as possible factors associated with the decision to leave school early. These included variables related to the individual, the school, the peer group, and the family. Five independent variables were used to identify consequences of leaving early. These were satisfaction with present life, job classification, occupational aspirations, number of current close friends who did not finish school, and proportion of siblings who subsequently left early.

The interview schedules designed for this study were used with a random stratified sample of 50 early leavers who left high school between June, 1983 and June, 1984 and 50 graduates of June, 1984. Multiple regression analyses (stepwise) were used to examine factors associated with the decision to leave early, while  $t$ -tests were used to determine the consequences of that decision.

The results of the multiple regression analyses led

to the conclusion that early leavers experienced more academic failure in the year prior to leaving, had more close friends who were early leavers, had a greater absenteeism rate during their last two years of school, and had mothers with lower levels of education. In addition, early leavers placed less importance on education, had experienced a greater grade repetition rate, and had parents who held lower levels of aspiration than graduates.

The results of the t-test analyses led to the conclusion that early leavers have a lower level of satisfaction with their lives than graduates, have lower occupational aspirations, have more current friends who did not finish school, and have a greater proportion of siblings who had subsequently left earlier.

The most frequently cited reasons for leaving early were desire to work, failing or doing poorly and dislike of school. The most frequently cited suggestions for improvement were smaller classes to ensure more individual help and more courses of a practical or interesting nature. Most early leavers had not completed graduation requirements or enrolled in a post-secondary or job-training program.

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CHAPTER 1  
THE PROBLEM  
Introduction

Leaving school before completing graduation requirements may be diagnosed as a problem if it is assumed that school contributes to the economic or social well being of the individual. Many researchers have reported that students who leave school before completing graduation requirements are placed at both economic and social disadvantages. Lacking credentials and marketable skills, early leavers, if employed, are likely to be engaged in low paying unskilled activities (Larter & Cheng, 1979; Peng & Takai, 1983; Wheeler & Finley, 1980). Given that the unemployment rate in Newfoundland is the highest in the country (Statistics Canada, 1983), the high school graduate, as well as the early leaver, faces the possibility of unemployment. However, it is likely that without the credentials offered by a high school diploma, early leavers are less likely than graduates to obtain employment. Statistics Canada (1986) reported that the unemployment rate in Newfoundland was 28.0 per cent for those with less than grade nine compared with 15.0 per cent for those with high school and some post-secondary education. According to Statistics Canada (1987), the

average income for those with less than grade nine was \$10,400 compared with \$13,953 for those with high school and some post-secondary education. Not only does education increase one's ability to contribute to personal earnings, it has been deemed essential for the maintenance of a sound economy (Lawton, 1987). The relationship between education and economic development is known as the "human capital" concept and has received much support in the literature (Jones, 1985). According to the Ontario Study of the Service Sector:

To compete effectively in a new knowledge-intensive global economy that relies primarily on human capital, excellence in educating our work force is our single most important strategic weapon. ... An economically advanced society's ability to compete will depend increasingly on having sufficient world-class experts to provide innovation and leadership, and a general work force with the skills and flexibility to carry out sophisticated and rapidly-changing tasks. (Radwanski, 1987, pp. 11-12)

In addition to economic benefits, education may confer societal benefits. Jones (1985) reported that "well-educated people are healthier, better parents, tend to take greater roles in civic activities, are more mobile, and adjust better to unfamiliar events and surroundings" (p. 10). Similarly, Radwanski (1987) maintained that the ability to make intelligently informed choices about policy issues is to some extent dependent upon "the shared cultural and intellectual heritage provided by a good education" (p. 21).

#### Background to the Problem

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) noted that implicit in much of the research on early leavers is the notion that a better understanding of their characteristics will provide educators and policy makers with the knowledge to develop programs specifically designed to address the needs of this group. Many researchers have found that a student's experiences at school are related to the decision to complete graduation requirements or to leave early (Gillespie, 1978; Jordan-Davis, 1984; Kennedy, 1966; Larter & Cheng, 1979; Pawlovich, 1985; Peng & Tekai, 1983). It is important, therefore, that educators become knowledgeable about the way that different groups

4

of students perceive school, as such knowledge can provide the grounds for school-based reform. Quay and Allen (1982) reported that "after-the-fact" programs for early leavers do not appear to be the best long-term approach. Rather, programs specifically designed to enhance academic achievement, attendance and social adjustment at the elementary and junior high school levels will be more successful in improving student retention.

The Royal Commission on Education and Youth (1967) reported that the early leaver problem in Newfoundland was very serious. The retention rate of pupils who were in grade two in 1952 was estimated to be only slightly greater than 40 per cent. More recently it has been estimated that between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the school population are early leavers (Gillespie, 1978; Leaving Early Report, 1984). However, there is a lack of research comparing early leavers with graduates, several years after these two groups have left school. Most researchers have studied early leavers in isolation from individuals who have successfully completed school. Furthermore, in order to assess adequately the consequences of leaving early it is necessary to allow sufficient time to elapse before comparing the two groups.



The Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1987) has recently completed a study in which descriptive information contained in the cumulative records of those students who left school early between June, 1983 and June, 1984 was compiled. This school board was interested in obtaining further information from these early leavers that can help determine factors that contributed to their decision to leave school, as such information may help to determine policies to alleviate the problem.

#### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to identify possible causes of the leaving early phenomenon in the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's. Factors investigated included those related to the individual, the family, the peer group, and the school.

A secondary purpose of the study was to assess the economic, social, and personal consequences, if any, of leaving early.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

### Research Questions

This study attempted to address the following general questions:

1. Are there differences between early leavers and graduates with respect to such things as recalled self-concept of ability and importance placed on education, occupational aspirations, occupational status and personal satisfaction?
2. Are there differences between early leavers and graduates with respect to their recalled school-related experiences?
3. What are the recalled reasons given by early leavers for their decision to leave school before completing graduation requirements?
4. What are the perceptions of early leavers about improvements in the school system that might have affected their decision to leave before fulfilling graduation requirements?
5. Are there differences between early leavers and graduates with respect to peer group?
6. Are there differences between early leavers and graduates with respect to family background?

7. What, if any, are the cited disadvantages of leaving school early?

8. What percentage of early leavers have attempted to complete graduation requirements or have enrolled in post-secondary education or job training programs.

### Hypotheses

In order to examine some of these research questions, the following eighteen hypotheses were tested. The literature that supports each of these hypotheses is reviewed in Chapter 2.

Hypothesis 1. Early leavers will rate their recalled academic ability lower than will those who have graduated.

Hypothesis 2. Early leavers will rate their recalled reading ability lower than will those who have graduated.

Hypothesis 3. There is no difference in the recalled importance that early leavers and graduates placed on education.

Hypothesis 4. Early leavers will rate their satisfaction with their lives lower than will graduates.

Hypothesis 5. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to be engaged in low-skilled job occupations.

Hypothesis 6. Early leavers have lower occupational aspirations than graduates.

Hypothesis 7. There is no difference in the recollections of early leavers and graduates of their relationships with teachers while these groups were in school.

Hypothesis 8. The recalled grade repetition rates of early leavers will be higher than that of graduates.

Hypothesis 9. Early leavers will recall higher levels of academic failure than will graduates.

Hypothesis 10. Early leavers will recall higher rates of absenteeism than will graduates.

Hypothesis 11. Early leavers will recall lower levels of involvement in extracurricular school activities than will graduates.

Hypothesis 12. Early leavers are less likely than graduates to recall that they were popular with other students.

Hypothesis 13.

1. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to recall having close friends who were early leavers.

2. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to have more current friends who were early leavers.

Hypothesis 14. Early leavers will recall that their

fathers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

Hypothesis 15. Early leavers will recall that their mothers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

Hypothesis 16.

1. At the time they left, early leavers had a greater proportion of siblings who left school early than did graduates.

2. Early leavers will report a greater proportion of siblings who subsequently left early than will graduates.

Hypothesis 17.

1. Early leavers will recall lower education aspirations for them, by their parents, than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall lower levels of parental encouragement than will graduates.

Hypothesis 18.

1. Early leavers will recall that their mothers held jobs requiring a lower level of skill or training than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall that their fathers held jobs requiring a lower level of skill or training than will graduates.

### Definition of Terms

Early Leaver:	A student who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another school.
Low-Skilled Occupation:	An occupation classified as unskilled, semi-skilled, service, or domestic work.
Grade-Repetition Rate:	The total number of years a student was required to repeat a grade or grades.
Absenteeism Rate:	The number of days of school missed.
Extracurricular Activity:	Any activity organized by the school but which takes place outside of regular instructional time.

### Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were recognized as being inherent within the present study:

1. Participants may have had difficulty responding to personal and sensitive questions.
2. Since the study was limited to one specific school board, caution should be exercised in extending

the findings beyond its immediate context.

3. Due to the possibility of inaccurate or incomplete record keeping, the identified population of early leavers may be incomplete.

#### Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations are acknowledged in the study:

1. This study was limited to individuals who left school early between June, 1983 and June, 1984 and to those who graduated in June, 1984.
2. This study was limited to early leavers and graduates from the ten high schools in one district--the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's.
3. This study was limited to early leavers who left while in Grade 9 or levels one, two or three.
4. Students who transferred out of this school system during the school year were not followed up to determine if they later left school early.

#### Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the problem, stated the purpose of the study, posed some general research questions and the hypotheses to be tested,

provided the definition of terms, recognized the limitations inherent in the study, and acknowledged the delimitations. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that supports each of the hypotheses related to the leaving early phenomenon. The design of the study, including the time frame followed and the instrumentation and statistics used, is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, while Chapter 5 lists the conclusions, provides a summary, and makes recommendations.



## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

## Introduction

Several factors have been found to be associated with the decision to leave school before completing graduation requirements. Factors that were highlighted most often in the reviewed literature are age, socioeconomic status, education of parents and siblings, attitudes of parents toward education, attitude of students toward teachers, subjects and classmates, reading ability, failure and grade repetition, attendance at school, and participation in extracurricular activities. Lowery (1985) investigated selected characteristics that have been found to discriminate between students who leave school before completing graduation requirements and those who stay in school. The results of the reviewed literature revealed ten most frequently listed characteristics which significantly differentiated leavers from non-leavers. Characteristics listed in 25 per cent or more of the 39 selected studies were (a) mental ability; (b) number of grades retained; (c) grade point average; (d) academic achievement; (e) school attendance; (f) participation in extracurricular activities; (g) number of schools attended; (h) discipline; (i) socioeconomic

level and/or parents' occupation; and (j) parents' education.

The factors listed above can be categorized under four headings (a) factors related to the individual; (b) factors related to the school; (c) factors related to the peer group; and (d) factors related to the family. These four factors constitute the framework within which the literature on the early leaver was reviewed and the hypotheses developed for this study.

#### Factors Related to the Individual

##### Ability

Although limited academic ability has been used to describe the typical early leaver, a number of researchers have reported that the majority of early leavers have at least average ability (Howard & Anderson, 1978; Lowery, 1985; Sewell, Palmo, & Manni, 1981). Research by Cervantes (1965) led him to conclude that "a majority of the dropouts throughout the nation fall within the average IQ range and have more than adequate talent to complete a high school education" (p. 197). The Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1987) investigated the cumulative records of 186 pupils who left school, before completing graduation requirements,

in 1983-84. The results of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills for this group revealed that 28.2 per cent had below average comprehension ability; 58.9 per cent had average comprehension ability; and 7.2 per cent had above average comprehension ability. The mathematics results indicated that 20.3 per cent had below average ability; 61.3 per cent had average ability; and 12.7 per cent had above average ability. Results for the non-leavers were not reported.

Poor reading ability has been cited as a common characteristic of potential or actual school leavers (Cervantes, 1965; Lowery, 1985; Mahood, 1981; Self, 1985). Cervantes (1965) described the early leaver as being two years behind in reading and/or mathematics at the seventh grade level. Mahood (1981) maintained that most researchers report that one of the most significant reasons for leaving school early is poor reading ability.

#### Self-Concept

A number of researchers have found that self-concept is a factor in student attrition. Simpson and Boyle (1975) defined self-concept as "the individual's evaluation of his overall worth as a person" (p. 897). Brady

(1985) reported that most researchers agree that high school early leavers have lower self-concepts than non-leavers. Similarly, research indicates that early leavers may feel less certain of their academic ability than non-leavers (Barr & Knowles, 1986; Duncan, 1973; Pike & Bonnell, 1982; Self, 1985).

#### Factors Related to the School

Although the leaving early phenomenon is most often described as a high school problem, the decision to leave appears to have its roots in the primary and elementary grades. Rumberger (1983) suggested that the decision to leave school begins early in a student's life. He recommended that early identification and action were necessary in order to effectively deal with the problem. A number of researchers have suggested that the academic as well as the social failure and frustration encountered by some students attending school are important predictors of attrition (Barr & Knowles, 1986; Beck & Muia, 1980; Howard & Anderson, 1978). Tinto (1975) maintained that academic institutions are made up of both social and academic systems. Social system integration is determined by an individual's social interactions and adherence to the value and social climates. Academic system

integration is determined by an individual's maintenance of acceptable standards of academic performance. Tinto further maintained that it was possible to achieve integration in one system without necessarily doing so in the other. Beck and Muia (1980) asserted that "Considering the many trials and tribulations that potential dropouts encounter at school, it comes as no surprise that the majority of these individuals will either enjoy only an extracurricular aspect of school or enjoy nothing about it at all" (p. 69).

#### Academic Performance

Academic failure is often cited by early leavers as a reason for their withdrawal from school before completion of graduation requirements (Pawlovich, 1985). Poor academic performance often results in low levels of commitment and participation which results in further deterioration of academic performance. Poor performance, therefore, becomes self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling and often results in alienation from school and more successful peers (Wehlage, 1983). Research has clearly indicated that failure and grade retention are closely related to early withdrawal from school (Arnold, 1985; Stobo, 1973; Zamanzadeh & Prince, 1978). Kennedy (1966)

reported that failure and repetition ranked second among the first choice responses for early school withdrawal, while discouragement and inability to cope was rated highest as a second choice. The Royal Commission on Education and Youth (1967) maintained that grade repetition is a major reason for leaving early. Gillespie (1978) reported that the most frequently stated primary reason for leaving school was grade repetition and difficulty with subjects. Similarly, Pike and Bonnell (1982) found that 30 per cent of the boys and 39 per cent of the girls cited grade failure as a reason for leaving early.

Pawlovich (1985) reported that research carried out in Saskatchewan found that poor academic performance was the most frequently cited reason given by early leavers for leaving school. Similarly, the Leaving Early Report (1984) found that 40 per cent of the early leavers cited academic failure as one of their three reasons for leaving school. Academic failure was the most predominant of the school-related reasons given. This study, however, had a response rate of only 46 per cent.

Pittman (1986) reported on interviews conducted with early leavers of secondary schools in a rural system in the United States. Eighty-two of the 185 early leavers

were able to be personally interviewed. Approximately 65 per cent of the reasons given for leaving school were school-related, including lack of interest, failing grades, and dissatisfaction with teachers.

The Department of Education, Washington D.C. (1982) reported on interviews conducted with early leavers from the Austin Independent School District. Ninety-five early leavers were interviewed from a total sample size of 566. Students were asked to explain factors that contributed to their decision to leave school. Nearly 54 per cent of the sample attributed their decision primarily to school-related factors. Academic concerns were the most frequently cited school-related reasons for withdrawal.

Team Resources for Youth (TRY) in the United States conducted an investigation of student attitudes at a high school in Amarillo, Texas. TRY is an agency which works with early leavers and students who are experiencing problems with school (Fulton, Devine, Luna, Hernandez, Leasure, Thurston, & Weaver, 1980). One questionnaire was administered to 746 students and another was completed by 64 of the 362 early leavers contacted. Most of the students who were in school reported feeling that they would be well-prepared for college or work after

graduation. The early leavers, however, cited low academic performance as the major reason for leaving early. Gottfredson (1980) presented the results of an eight-year longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of 2213 young men in the United States.

Interviews were conducted and questionnaires administered to the subjects three times during their high school years. The results indicated that successful academic experiences in school strengthen student bonds to the school. Failure results in drawing away and feelings of detachment and resentment.

Foley and Crull (1984) reported research findings on student achievement and retention in New York City alternative high schools serving early leavers and potential early leavers. Findings indicated that there is a very close relationship between persistence and credits attained in an alternative school. The report concluded that at least part of the motivation for leaving early comes from academic failure. Cervantes (1965) found that the failure of one or more school years--1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th grades were most commonly failed--to be a characteristic of the potential leaver. In his study, 85 per cent of the early leavers were one year behind grade level and 53 per cent were two or more years behind grade



level. Howard and Anderson (1978) speculated that the many reasons given by students for leaving school "may reflect deeper underlying factors" (p. 224). They reported that a review of the literature revealed that academic difficulties as well as family history were the two major factors affecting the decision to leave school early. Many other researchers have reported that poor academic performance was given as a main reason for early school withdrawal (Barr & Knowles, 1986; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Jordan-Davis, 1984; Peng & Takai, 1983).

#### Attendance

Most studies dealing with the leaving early phenomenon have reported that frequent absences from school are characteristic of the early leaver (Arnold, 1985; Pike & Bonnell, 1982; Stack, 1973; Stobo, 1973; Zamanzadeh & Prince, 1978). The typical early leaver, as described in the literature, appears to be isolated and socially alienated. Repeated academic failure reinforces these feelings of alienation, leads to frustration, high rates of absenteeism, and eventually culminates in leaving school early (Reich & Young, 1974).

### Involvement In Extracurricular Activities

A trait shared by many early leavers is their inability to identify with the school. Cervantes (1965) reported that while 89 per cent of those students who had graduated had engaged in extracurricular activities, not one person who had left school early had engaged in any such activity. A number of researchers have reported similar findings (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Newton, 1986; Pike & Bonnell, 1982).

### The Educational Empowerment Theory

The Educational Empowerment Theory is a useful model for examination of the interaction between the student and the school (Barr & Knowles, 1986). This interaction, according to the model, may be characterized as "empowering" or "disempowering" (p. 10). The ultimate responsibility for whether or not the relationship is empowering lies with the teacher and the school.

The model proposed two sets of factors related to school performance; school interaction factors and students experience factors. These factors are interactive and cyclically connected. Positive factors interact to produce mutual empowerment while negative factors interact to produce mutual disempowerment. The inner

circle of Figure 1 represents a student's experience cycle of interaction with the school environment. This experience cycle may be positive or negative. In a positive cycle, successful performance leads to experiences of competence and maintains or improves the student's perception of his or her ability. Improved self-image results in an increase in school-related values and commitments. Positive value commitments, in turn, reinforce the maintenance or improvement of the student's academic performance. On the other hand, in a negative cycle:

Poor performances lead to experiences of inadequacy which lead to poor self-images of abilities which lead to anti-school values which lead back to poor performances. The desire to escape an increasingly intolerable situation develops and eventually results in the choice to leave school. (Barr & Knowles, 1986, pp. 12)

The outer circle of the Figure 1 represents factors in the relationship between school personnel and the student. When the student/school interaction cycle is positive, a student's good academic performance leads to teacher's perception of competence and ability. Positive

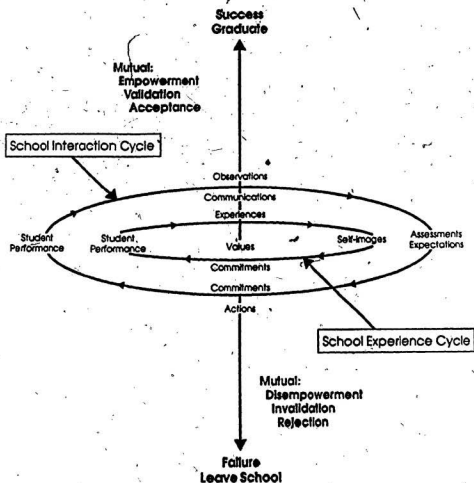


Figure 1. The Educational Empowerment Model  
(Barr & Knowles, 1986, p. 12)

assessments and expectations of student's abilities, skills, and attitudes are developed which in turn influence the teacher to maintain or improve commitment to the student. In addition, demand for good academic performance is maintained or raised. The overall result is a positive effect upon the student's performance. On the other hand,

A negative cycle, beginning with poor academic performance, may lead to lower teacher expectations and images of students as having poor abilities or attitudes. Teachers may believe that remediation is beyond their power and reserve their attention for those they perceive to be more capable.

The student experiencing this lack of teacher commitment loses respect for the teacher and interest in the subject. A cycle of mutual lack of respect, care, and commitment is established between the poorly performing student and the teacher. (Barr & Knowles, 1986, pp. 13)

This model focuses directly upon the impact that the school itself has upon the decision of the student to leave before completing graduation requirements and thus,

by inference, poses the question of how schools can take steps to reduce attrition. Larter and Cheng (1979) reported that when early leavers were asked what things could have been done to persuade them to stay in school, the most frequent responses were teacher help, involvement, and encouragement, and some form of transfer to a different school, program, or class. Pike and Bonnell (1982) reported that students said that if a more vocational-type program were offered they would have remained in school. Similarly, the Department of Education, Washington, D.C. (1982) reported that when early leavers were asked what could have persuaded them to remain in school, 65 per cent of them stated that some school-related change would have been necessary. The most frequent response was an expansion of vocational training opportunities. Responses to this question indicated a need for increased flexibility within the school system. Pawlovich (1985) cited research that concluded that early leavers are dissatisfied with, amongst other things, the perceived irrelevance of the curriculum and teacher stress on grades.

### Factors Related to the Family

Research indicates that parent and sibling education, socioeconomic factors and the educational aspirations held by the parents for their children are associated with the leaving early phenomenon.

### Parent and Sibling Education

Lowery (1985) reported that "The educational level of parents has been found to be a significant factor, possibly the most significant factor in dropping out of school. The parents of dropouts were, by and large, dropouts themselves" (p. 23). In reviewing the literature, Lowery found that the achieved educational level of the children was closely related to the educational status of the parent. Numerous researchers have reported similar findings (Duncan, 1973; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Hewitt & Johnson, 1977; Pike & Bonnell, 1982; Stack, 1973; Tsang, 1972). In addition, several studies that have investigated the educational background of the siblings of early leavers have found that a high percentage of these also left school early (Duncan, 1973; Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta, 1984; Newton, 1986; Pike & Bonnell, 1982).

### Socioeconomic Status

Boocock (1972) reported that socioeconomic status (SES) is the most powerful predictor of school performance including early leaver rates. He maintained that the relationship between SES and academic achievement seems to hold regardless of what measure of status is used (family income, parents' education, parents' occupation, or some combination of these). Other researchers have studied the contributions of SES to the leaving early phenomenon and have found a similar relationship (Arnold, 1985; Duncan, 1973; Martin, 1964; Peng & Takai, 1983; Tseng, 1972; Zamanzadeh & Prince, 1978).

### Parental Educational Aspirations

All reviewed literature dealing with the leaving early phenomenon acknowledges the important role played by the parents in the determination of a child's achievement in school. Munro (1981) reported that the most powerful determinant of a child's educational aspirations was the perceived educational aspirations of the parent, including the support given by the parents toward the education system and the subsequent encouragement given to their children to complete school. Schrom (1980) reported similar findings.



### Factors Related to the Peer Group

If students are unable to achieve status within the school environment, they may look for friends who are similarly alienated. A number of researchers have found that early leavers are more likely than non-leavers to have close friends who were also early leavers (Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta, 1984; Reich & Young, 1974; Stobo, 1973). It is likely that leaving school early becomes a more acceptable alternative when the individual has close contact with friends who have left school before completing graduation requirements. Howard and Anderson (1978) reported that:

Learning is not the only socioeconomic-academic problem; the powerful influence of the peer group demands conformity in patterns of dress, leisure activities, and possession of material goods. Being unable to meet these demands again confirms the inadequacy of the person, which may result in a decision to drop out. (pp. 225-226)

Snygg and Coombs emphasised "that a child not only values his self-identity, but will engage in activities designed to enhance it. Thus, the child may decide to leave this

disagreeable situation to join friends who validate his worth" (Howard & Anderson, 1978, p. 225).

### Hypotheses and Supporting Literature Factors Related to the Individual

#### Hypothesis 1

Early leavers will rate their recalled academic ability lower than will those who have graduated.

Duncan (1973) conducted research in Newfoundland to investigate factors relevant to the early leaver situation in schools operated by the Baie d'Espoir-Hermitage Fortune Bay Integrated School Board. A questionnaire, sent to all students aged 14 years and over, resulted in the completion of 438 questionnaires throughout the district. From these questionnaires 46 students were identified who, in their own opinion, were very likely to leave prematurely. A sample of 43 students was chosen from this group on the basis of age categories and random sampling. A matched group of "potential persisters" was selected as a control group. Individuals in the control group were selected randomly from categories matching the potential early leavers on the basis of age and sex. These samples were subjected to a more detailed study

using self-rating forms, standardized testing, teacher assessment, and several additional questionnaires. From his results, Duncan concluded that the potential early leavers did not see themselves performing as well as the potential persisters and did not see themselves as having the potential to perform as well academically.

Pike and Bonnell (1982) examined the school early leaver phenomenon within the Roman Catholic School Board for the Burin Peninsula. Students from the four largest areas of the school district, who had registered for kindergarten in September, 1970 and who had left school early in grades 7 to 11, were chosen for the study. A questionnaire-interview technique was used to obtain information from the early leavers. Of the 57 early leavers, 33 or 58 per cent, were able to be interviewed and were used in the analysis. Pike and Bonnell reported that 75 per cent of the early leavers lacked confidence in their academic potential.

Barr and Knowles (1986) conducted research involving early leavers who had left school in San Diego City School District during the 1984-85 school year. Students who had left school entirely and those who had later returned to the district's High School Diploma Program (HSDP), completed questionnaires. The researchers

reported that both groups were less certain of their motivation to learn and their ability to graduate.

An investigation carried out in Victoria, Australia, attempted to find out factors that influence student retention (Ainley, Batten & Miller, 1984). Questionnaires were administered to 892 students in year ten, and 724 students in year twelve. Sixteen schools, in total, were involved. The findings of the study indicated that the intention to remain at school to year twelve was clearly related to student perceptions of their ability as well as the quality of school life.

#### Hypothesis 2

Early leavers will rate their recalled reading ability lower than will those who have graduated.

The Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1987) investigated the cumulative records of 456 students who left school early in the years 1977-78 and 1983-84. The combined results of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills for these two groups of students revealed that 20.9 per cent had below average reading ability; 44.6 per cent had average reading ability; and 4.8 per cent had above average reading ability. The results of

the Canadian Test of Basic Skills for the 1983-84 group of early leavers alone (186 students), showed that 28.2 per cent had below average reading ability; 57.3 per cent had average reading ability; and 8.8 per cent had above average reading ability. The reading abilities of non-leavers were not reported. Self (1985) reviewed the research literature of 1975-83 on potential secondary school early leavers. A profile of the potential high school early leaver is suggested in which the characteristics of this group leave include poor reading ability. Self further suggested poor reading ability as a reason for leaving school before completing graduation requirements.

Jordan-Davis (1984) reported on research conducted by the Austin Independent School District in the United States. Ninety-five early leavers were asked why they had left school and what could have been done to enable them to stay in school. Responses indicated that inadequate preparation in reading and writing was a primary reason for early withdrawal.

### Hypothesis 3

There is no difference in the recalled importance that early leavers and graduates placed on education.

Martin (1964) surveyed factors related to grade nine early leavers of 1961-62 in Newfoundland central high schools. Most of the data was collected by means of two questionnaires: one sent to each of the 173 early leavers and one sent to each member of a random sample of 100 students from the 1961-62 grade nine class who had continued in school. Responses were received from 66 per cent of the early leavers and 96 per cent of the non-leavers. Eighty-eight percent of the early leavers and 95 per cent of the non-leavers indicated that they believed that a high school education was both valuable and necessary.

Research carried out by Gillespie (1978) focused on early leavers from schools, under the jurisdiction of the St. John's Roman Catholic School Board, having grades 7 to 11. A random sample of 30 students who had left the five senior high schools was chosen. A control group of thirty students was chosen to match the early leavers as closely as possible, on sex, age, educational achievement, grade of the early leaver upon leaving, and school last attended by the early leaver. Gillespie utilized interview schedules and pupil attitude questionnaires with each participant. In addition, information from the cumulative records of the participants was gathered.

Responses from the early leaver and control groups indicated that there was no significant difference in the degree to which early leavers and non-leavers value education. A high percentage of both groups indicated that they felt that getting a high school education was valuable.

Sister Perpetua Kennedy (1966) also conducted research on the leaving early phenomenon in Newfoundland. She selected five institutions where early leavers were employed as unskilled workers or were held for punitive purposes. Those candidates selected were early leavers who withdrew from school during grades seven to nine. Questionnaire data were obtained from 110 early leavers and another 100 early leavers were interviewed. Eighty-nine percent of the early leavers who completed questionnaires indicated that education was valuable and that they would strongly advise others to remain in school.

Beacham (1980) interviewed 116 early leavers in Leon County, Florida. Sixty percent of the early leavers stated that they would be willing to return to finish high school given the opportunity. The National Center for Education Statistics, as a part of a national longitudinal study in the United States--High School and

beyond--surveyed 30,000 sophomore and 28,000 senior high school students in 1980. These students were from a representative sample of 1,015 schools. In 1982 the center recontacted many of these students including about 50 per cent of those sophomores who had left the schools they attended in 1980. The response rate was about 90 per cent. Early leavers were identified and asked to complete a questionnaire. Fifty-one per cent of the males and 55 per cent of the females reported that leaving school was not a good decision (Peng & Takai, 1983).

Research conducted by Larter and Cheng (1979), for the Board of Education in Toronto, utilized telephone interviews with 199 students who left school early and subsequently returned to school, and 95 non-returnees. When asked whether they had learned anything about life, school and work while out of school, the most frequent response (30 per cent) was that education is necessary for a good job.

McArthur (1986) studied the leaving early problem in a selected high school in the Whitefield County public school district of the state of Georgia during the 1983-84 school year. Phase two of this research involved a total of 200 students. Thirty of these students were



interviewed, 10 of whom left school early during the 1983-84 school year and 20 of whom had remained in school. Each student was asked questions which attempted to determine reasons for leaving school early or remaining in school. Interview results indicated that students who had remained in school were generally satisfied with their decision and did not anticipate leaving early. On the other hand, early leavers were dissatisfied with their decision to leave school before completion and anticipated returning to school at some time in the future.

#### Hypothesis 4

Early leavers will rate their personal satisfaction with their lives lower than will graduates.

While no recent literature was found which discussed the overall assessment of personal satisfaction made by early leavers, there may be a significant difference between early leavers and graduates with respect to this variable. The discouragement experienced by early leavers as a result of their attempts to find satisfying employment has been well documented. Jordan-Davis (1984) reported that although the ability to work was the most

Commonly cited advantage to leaving early, unemployment concerns were listed as the main disadvantage. A study carried out in the United States provided an overview of the literature on school early leavers. It reported that labor market opportunities are poor for youth who have not completed high school (School dropouts: The extent and nature of the problem, 1986). Similarly, Peng and Takai (1983) reported that of the high school students of 1980 who left school early during or after their sophomore year, more than 27 per cent were unemployed or dissatisfied with their work and were looking for work. Unemployment statistics for graduates were not reported. Newton (1986) interviewed early leavers and non-leavers from Larkin High School in Elgin, Illinois. The early leavers were randomly selected from the 128 early leavers in 1984-85 and the non-leavers were randomly selected from the population of 16, 17, and 18 year-old students at the high school. Of those randomly selected, 87 early leavers and 88 non-leavers agreed to be interviewed. Fifty percent of the early leavers interviewed were unemployed and the early leavers who had found employment were not satisfied with their jobs.

### Hypothesis 5

Early leavers are more likely than graduates to be engaged in low-skilled job occupations.

Larter and Cheng (1979) found that the majority of the early leavers contacted had one or two jobs while out of school and most of these jobs were unskilled and low paying. Similarly, Peng and Takai (1983) reported that the majority of the early leavers who worked were engaged in low-skilled jobs. A Minnesota pilot study examined the secondary school early leaver problem from the perspective of both the education system as well as the employment-training system (Secondary school dropouts: executive summary, 1981). The study involved 24 public secondary schools and the 24 counterpart Comprehensive Employment and Training Act agencies, and findings were compared with information from national and state studies and data sources. Among the findings was that early leavers had lower occupational aspirations than their peers.

The Phoenix Union High School District investigated the early leaver problem in an attempt to identify factors associated with early withdrawal as well as the educational and job opportunities available to early

leavers (Wheeler & Finley, 1980). Early leavers were surveyed by telephone, or mail questionnaires. In addition, representatives of career schools, employment agencies, public service agencies, the armed services, labor unions, industry, and business were contacted to obtain information on entrance requirements or employment policies. The findings indicated that few educational or job opportunities exist for early leavers because they lack necessary basic skills, desirable work habits, and perseverance.

A report on early leavers in California investigated characteristics of early leavers, reasons for withdrawing from school, and the consequences of leaving early (Stern, Catterall, Alhadeff, & Ash, 1986). The findings indicated that compared to high school graduates, early leavers hold more jobs requiring unskilled labor.

#### Hypothesis 6

Early leavers have lower occupational aspirations than graduates.

Tseng (1972) reported on a study involving a sample of 77 male high school students and 72 early leavers matched with the non-leavers on age. Results indicated

that the early leavers showed a lower level of occupational aspiration than did the non-leavers. Duncan (1973) found that the potential early leaver aspired to a lower level occupation than the potential non-leaver. Reich and Young (1974) conducted a study in which they succeeded in contacting 670 of the 921 students believed to have left school early in Toronto from June, 1973 to June, 1974. Of those contacted, 544 were interviewed. Approximately 50 per cent of the former students in the early leaver sample were matched to students still in school on programme of study, grade, school, sex, age, credits, and grade point average. The control group was also interviewed. Reich and Young found that the early leavers' view of their future was more poorly defined than those who had stayed in school. More early leavers than stay-ins had no immediate or long term plans. More recently, Newton (1986) reported that a high percentage of the early leavers interviewed had no idea how they wanted to be employed ten years hence. In comparison, many of the non-leavers interviewed had specific career plans.

### Factors Related to the School

#### Hypothesis 7

There is no difference in the recollections of early leavers and graduates of their relationships with teachers while these groups were in school.

Research findings regarding teacher-student relationships, as perceived by early leavers, are not conclusive. Martin (1964) reported that 69 per cent of the early leavers and 72 per cent of those who stayed in school stated that they got along well with their teachers. He concluded that there appeared to be no relationship between leaving school early and dislike of teachers. Similarly, Duncan (1973) found no significant differences between the potential early leavers and the potential non-leavers on this variable. Ruby and Law (1983) conducted research to compare the attitudinal differences of successful students and potential high school, early leavers toward several groups, including teachers. Forty-two students in grades 9-12 completed the Demos D scale. Analysis of the results indicated that both groups held strong negative attitudes towards teachers. In contrast, Gillespie (1978) reported a

statistically significant difference in the perceptions of early leavers and non-leavers of their relations with their teachers. Early leavers reported less positive relationships than did non-leavers.

#### Hypothesis 8

The recalled grade repetition rates of early leavers will be higher than that of graduates.

Sister Perpetua Kennedy (1966) found that almost 74 per cent of the 110 early leavers who completed questionnaires had failed and were required to repeat one or more grades both at the primary and elementary level. She concluded that grade failure and subsequent retention were highly influential in contributing to the early leaver problem in Newfoundland schools. Duncan (1973) found that grade retention showed small, but significant correlations with the potentiality of leaving early. Pike and Bonnell (1982) reported that 94 per cent of early leavers had repeated one or more grades. Similarly, Martin (1964) found that 21 per cent of the early leavers, as compared with 60 per cent of the non-leaver group, replied that they did not fail any grade in school.

Stobo (1973) conducted research for the Board of Education of the Borough of York. Two hundred and ninety-five early leavers from the 1971-72 school year were selected from two secondary schools. Interviewers were able to contact 159 (54 per cent) of the early leavers. All interviews were conducted over the telephone using an open-ended and loosely structured questionnaire. Stobo reported that 38 per cent of the early leavers had failed at least once, while 36 per cent had never repeated a grade.

The West Virginia dropout study (1986) is a report of early leaver statistics in West Virginia during the 1984-85 school year. Findings indicated that approximately 64 per cent of early leavers had been retained in one or more grades. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) surveyed the entire population of two Montreal high schools in contrasting socioeconomic areas. The survey solicited demographic and social data. In total, 2105 students were surveyed and from this group those who left school early one year later were identified. Of the 199 actual early leavers from both schools, 158 had completed the original survey questionnaire. Fifty of the early leavers and 32 non-leavers, chosen as controls, were personally interviewed. Some additional information was



obtained from another 108 early leavers. Interview results revealed that 80 per cent of the early leavers and 12 per cent of the non-leavers failed one or more years. As well, 28 per cent of the early leavers compared with 8 per cent of the non-leavers reported that they found some subjects difficult.

A study of 186 early leavers, from the 1983-84 school year by the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, (1987), found that 48.6 per cent had repeated one grade, 21.4 per cent had repeated two grades, and 6.4 per cent had repeated three or four grades. In other words, 76.4 per cent of these early leavers had repeated one or more grades. The grade repetition rates of non-leavers were not reported.

### Hypothesis 9

Early leavers will recall higher levels of academic failure than will graduates.

Stobo (1973) found that 71 per cent of the early leavers were failing at least one of their courses while 19 per cent were failing everything. Only 7 per cent were passing everything. Similarly, Pike and Bonnell (1982) reported that 79 per cent of early leavers had

failed in several subjects.

McBee (1986) reported on the local early leaver trends as examined and documented by the Oklahoma City Public Schools. Characteristics of those who left school early in the 1985-86 school year were described. Achievement scores of early leavers indicated a history of below average achievement.

Arnold (1985) conducted research involving sophomores from Illinois who participated in the National High School and Beyond Study (N = 1,950). Students who became high school early leavers and students who remained in school were interviewed and tested. The responses of these students were weighted to represent the total sophomore enrollment for Illinois. In 1982, participants from the 1980 study completed follow-up questionnaires. A portion of their responses, 166, was weighted to represent an estimate of respondents who would leave school early by the spring of 1982. A comparison of early leaver profiles with profiles of non-leavers showed that early leavers were more likely to report failing academically.

Ekstrom et al. (1986) analyzed data from the National High School and Beyond Study. They reported that students who later left school early differed

significantly in their sophomore year from those who remained in school with respect to several factors including educational achievement. Similarly, Peng and Takai (1983) found that students whose self-reported grades were mostly "D's" or below had a much greater early leaver rate than those whose grades were mostly "A's".

The Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1987) reported that 61.3 per cent of early leavers from the 1983-84 school year failed one or more courses in level one, 64.2 per cent failed one or more courses in level two, and 19.2 per cent failed one or more courses in level three. The failure rates of non-leavers were not reported.

#### Hypothesis 10

Early leavers will recall higher rates of absenteeism than will graduates.

Stack (1973) conducted a study in which he attempted to identify variables that would discriminate between potential early leavers and non-leavers in one Newfoundland school district. His study groups were all of the 111 students who left school early in the district during

the 1969-70 school year and 111 students chosen, from the 1970-71 population of students in the district, using random sampling stratified by grade and sex, proportional to the grade and sex of the early leaver group. Data for the study were collected from the school records. Time absent was the second most important variable found to discriminate between the two groups, accounting for 14 per cent of the variance.

Pike and Bonnell (1982) reported that 58 per cent of the early leavers missed days from school frequently. Similarly, the study Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta (1984) utilized information from the cumulative records of identified early school leavers, from the 38 districts and 125 schools in Northern Alberta, for the 1980-81, 1981-82, and 1982-83 school years. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 126 school leavers, 56 stayers, and 50 high risk students. Parents, community organizations, teachers and administrators were also interviewed. Data obtained from the 2671 early leaver request forms sent to the 125 schools revealed that attendance at school was poor.

Stobo (1973) reported 43 per cent of the early leavers had been absent more than 10 days. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) reported that 97 per cent of the early

leavers compared to 7 per cent of the non-leavers skipped school regularly. Arnold (1985) reported that absenteeism was more prevalent among students who had quit school than those who continued. Similarly, Ekstrom et al. (1986) reported that early leavers had higher rates of absenteeism than those who remained in school. The Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1987) reported that high absenteeism in the primary and elementary grades was characteristic of the early leavers of 1983-84. It reported that in grades one and two, over 50 per cent of this group of early leavers demonstrated above average to excessive absenteeism and in grades three to five over 35 per cent exhibited above average to excessive absenteeism. The absenteeism rates of non-leavers were not reported.

#### Hypothesis 11

Early leavers will report lower levels of involvement in extracurricular school activities than will graduates.

Pike and Bonnell (1982) and Stobo (1973) reported that over 60 per cent of early leavers did not participate in extracurricular activities. Statistics from the

West Virginia Dropout Study (1986) indicated that over 93 per cent of early leavers seldom, if ever, participated in extracurricular activities. However, these studies did not report the level of involvement of the non-leavers.

Ekstrom et al. (1986) found that early leavers appear to feel alienated from school life and reported lower levels of involvement in extracurricular activities than non-leavers, especially in athletics. Newton (1986) found a statistically significant difference between early leavers and non-leavers in terms of participation in extracurricular activities with the non-leavers showing a greater level of participation.

#### Factors Related to the Peer Group

##### Hypothesis 12

Early leavers are less likely than graduates to recall that they were popular with other students.

Ekstrom et al. (1986) reported that early leavers are "less likely to feel that they are popular with other students, to feel that other students see them as good students, as athletes, or as important, and more likely to feel that other students see them as troublemakers."

D

(p. 361):

Pittman (1986) found that when early leavers were asked to list areas within school which needed to be improved, 64 per cent of the responses involved student relationships, counselling and school activities. Similarly, Foley and Crull (1984) found that the most important difference between the descriptions given by early leavers and non-leavers of their school experiences was in the quality of their social relationships. The authors reported that none of the early leavers made positive comments about other students.

#### Hypothesis 13

1. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to recall having close friends who were early leavers.
2. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to have more current friends who were early leavers.

The study Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta (1984) found that 87 per cent of school leavers reported friends who had also left compared to approximately 67 per cent of non-leavers. Reich and Young (1974) reported that most of the early leavers studied had peer support for their decision to leave and that over 60 per cent

knew other early leavers. Similarly, Stobo (1973) found that 74 per cent of the early leavers interviewed had close friends who had left school before or after them.

#### Factors Related to the Family

##### Hypothesis 14

Early leavers will recall that their fathers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

##### Hypothesis 15

Early leavers will recall that their mothers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

Newton (1986) found a statistically significant difference between early leavers and non-leavers with respect to fathers' and mothers' level of education. He concluded that "better educated parents had a positive influence on their children's educational aspirations, thereby increasing their children's ability and ultimately their likelihood of remaining in school" (p. 123). Similarly, several studies have found that parents of early leavers had a lower educational attainment than parents of students who continued in high school (Duncan, 1973; Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta, 1984;



Ekstrom et al., 1986; Stack, 1973; Tseng, 1972).

#### Hypothesis 16

1. At the time they left, early leavers had a greater proportion of siblings who left school early than did graduates.

2. Early leavers will report a greater proportion of siblings who subsequently left early than will graduates.

Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta (1984) reported that 72 per cent of leavers had at least one other family member who was also an early leaver compared to 46 per cent of non-leavers. Newton (1986) found that over 50 per cent of the early leavers had at least one sibling who had also left early compared to fewer than 10 per cent of the non-leavers. Similarly, Duncan (1973) reported that potential dropouts were more likely to have both parents and siblings who had dropped out of school.

#### Hypothesis 17

1. Early leavers will recall lower education aspirations for them, by their parents, than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall lower levels of

parental encouragement than will graduates.

Schrom (1980) reported on a study conducted in Victoria, Australia to determine what factors influence the decision of grade nine students to leave school. Twenty-six schools were randomly selected to participate in the study. The initial population of grade nine students numbered 2300, however due to missing data, only 1183 students were surveyed. Discriminant analysis was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that the major influence on students' intentions was their perception of how long their parents wanted them to stay in school. Students who intended to leave school earliest perceived that their parents had low educational aspirations for them.

#### Hypothesis 18

1. Early leavers will recall that their mothers held jobs requiring a lower level of skill or training than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall that their fathers held jobs requiring a lower level of skills or training than will graduates.

Martin (1964) found that the largest percentage of early leavers came from families where the father was employed in a semi-skilled or unskilled occupation. Similarly, Tseng (1972) reported that the early leavers, as a group, had fathers whose occupations could be characterized by lower levels of difficulty, responsibility, and prestige. Duncan (1973) reported that there was an apparent relationship between a family's source of income and the likelihood of leaving early. He found that a higher percentage of potential early leavers than potential graduates came from families receiving social assistance. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) and Peng and Takai (1983) reported that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had a higher early leaving rate than students from high socioeconomic backgrounds. More recently, Arnold (1985) found that the family income of early leavers was generally lower than the family income of students who remained in school.

#### Conclusion

The reviewed literature of the past 20 years has attributed the following characteristics or circumstances to the early school leaver as compared with the non-leaver:

1. Low self-rating of academic ability.
2. Low self-rating of reading ability.
3. High rate of unemployment and dissatisfaction with work.
4. Low level of motivation and occupational aspiration.
5. High rate of grade repetition.
6. High rate of academic failure.
7. High rate of absenteeism.
8. Low rate of participation in extracurricular activities.
9. Inability to achieve status within the school.
10. More friends who were early leavers.
11. Parents with low educational attainment.
12. Siblings who also left school early.
13. Parents holding low levels of educational aspirations.
14. Families with low socioeconomic status.

Research has therefore suggested that there are many factors associated with a student's decision to leave school before graduation, and that there are significant and measurable differences between early leavers and those who remain in school.

### CHAPTER 3

#### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

##### Introduction

This study solicited information from early leavers who left school between June, 1983 and June, 1984, regarding possible causes and their reported reasons for leaving. In addition, the study obtained information about the subsequent educational and occupational activities of the early leavers. Information obtained from the early leavers was compared to that obtained from graduates of the 1983-1984 school year.

##### Population and Sample

Two hundred ninety-six early leavers who left school, between June, 1983 and June, 1984 were identified by the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's. Of these, 262, or 88.5 per cent left while enrolled in grade nine or levels one, two, or three, in one of the 10 high schools in this system. The remaining 11.5 per cent left while enrolled in grades seven, eight, or nine in one of the elementary schools in this system.

The 262 early leavers who left one of the 10 high schools under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, between June, 1983 and June,

1984, served as the population for this study. Because a response rate of 100 per cent was not obtained, it was necessary to choose a random stratified sample of 62 early leavers in order to obtain the desired final sample size of 50. Each school was represented on a percentage basis--schools with the most early leavers provided the most early leavers for the sample.

The responses of early leavers were compared with those of graduates. It was necessary to choose a random stratified sample of 56 graduates in order to obtain the desired final sample size of 50. The graduates were chosen from the total population (966) of June, 1984 graduates of the 10 high schools within the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's. The 56 graduates chosen to participate in the study were selected from lists provided by the 10 high schools within the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's. The same number of graduates as early leavers was chosen from each school.

#### Instrumentation

##### Type of Instrument

Semi-structured interview schedules were used with both the early leaver and graduate groups. The interview schedule for the graduate group was similar to that

developed for the early leaver group. Some modifications were necessary to make the schedule useful for interviewing students who had graduated from high school. The main advantage of the interview as a research technique may be its adaptability (Borg & Gall, 1983). Unlike the questionnaire, the interview situation permits the researcher to clarify survey questions and encourage more in-depth responses.

#### Description of the Instrument

To facilitate analysis of the data, the instrument was divided into four sections, each of which contained questions that allowed testing of the hypotheses relating to the school, the peer group, the individual and the family.

While several of the items contained in the schedules were open-ended in design, most were of a rating-scale format, wherein a number of questions were asked, and participants were asked to indicate the one response, out of five, which best answered the question. An arithmetic value ranging from one to five was assigned to each of these responses. In addition, the interviewer attempted to solicit further information from the participants with respect to their responses. Several other items contained in the schedules were open-ended in

design but required the interviewer, rather than the respondent, to classify the response on a scale from one to five.

### Validity

In preparing the instrument for this study, the available literature related to early school leavers was reviewed. Hypotheses and research questions were formulated accordingly. From these an interview schedule for early leavers was designed. The initial group of interview questions was submitted to two university professors and a group of 16 graduate students at Memorial University of Newfoundland for consideration and reaction. Their responses led to several modifications. A similar interview schedule was designed for the graduates involved in the study.

A pilot study was carried out with 15 early leavers and 15 graduates from the target population. Pre-testing of the interview schedules resulted in identification of items that lacked clarity. Revision of other items was necessary because of their inability to elicit the desired information. The validity of the data obtained from four of the questions on the interview schedule for 12 early leavers was checked against available records provided by the school board. Specifically, recalled



grade repetition and absenteeism, as well as perceived academic and reading abilities, were checked against information contained on the cumulative records of the early leavers.

This information was used by the interviewer to rate the individuals on the four items. The self-ratings of the early leavers along with the interviewer-ratings were then used to calculate the Pearson product-moment correlations to confirm the validity of the responses. These correlation coefficients, provided in Table 1, are mis-

Table 1

Validity of Interview Responses for Early Leavers

Item	$r^*$
Grade Repetition	0.82
Absenteeism (last two years of school)	0.54
Academic Ability	0.36
Reading Ability	0.60

\*The magnitude of the correlation coefficients is underestimated due to range restriction of the variables.

leadingly low. Because the sample of early leavers is relatively homogeneous with respect to the variables of concern, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients in the population is underestimated. The degree of underestimation is related to the degree of range restriction of either variable (Kirk, 1984). Taking this "truncated range phenomenon" into consideration, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients may be considered relatively high. Construction of scatter diagrams confirmed this conclusion.

#### Collection of Data

In the spring of 1988 the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's provided, upon request, the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of those early leavers who left school between June, 1983 and June, 1984. In addition, the researcher sent a letter to Mrs. Geraldine Rpe, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, requesting that each of the 10 high schools provide the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of their June, 1984 graduates. Four of the schools sent this information. In June of 1988 the researcher visited the six remaining schools and obtained the necessary information from the school records.

An attempt was made to contact each member of the sample by phone in the summer of 1988 to request an interview. Ninety-seven percent of the interviews were conducted over the phone. According to Borg and Gall (1983), "research has shown that telephone interviewing reaches nearly the same proportion of the target population, obtains nearly as high a percentage of returns, and produces comparable information..." (p. 448). An advantage of the telephone interview compared with the face-to-face interview includes access to a greater proportion of the sample when members may be spread over a large geographical area. In addition, Borg and Gall reported that there is evidence to support that telephone interviews can be used to collect sensitive data. Sudman, Seymour and Bradburn reported:

One major study found that for nonthreatening questions, respondents' distortions were slightly higher for telephone interviews than for face-to-face interviews. For threatening questions, the reverse was true. Although it would seem easier to establish rapport in a face-to-face interview, the physical presence of the interviewer may stimulate response distortion. (Borg & Gall, 1983, pp. 447)

Approximately 42 per cent of the early leaver sample and 34 per cent of the graduate sample were unable to be contacted at the phone number provided by the school board, mainly because many of these phone numbers were out of service. Information found in city directories and phone books, as well as information obtained from classmates and neighbours, enabled the researcher to locate most of the current phone numbers for members of the two samples or their families.

#### Analysis of Data

The data collected can be divided into two categories: (a) variables which may lead up to, or are possible causes of students' leaving school early; and (b) variables which may be the consequences of students' leaving early (see Figure 2). In addition, further data was collected on subsequent educational and occupational activities. Table 2 specifies which research questions relate to each hypothesis and the corresponding interview schedule items.

#### Causes of Leaving Early

Multiple regression analysis was the statistical technique used to analyze data arising from the variables suggested as causes of leaving early. Multiple regres-

## CAUSES OF LEAVING EARLY

## A Priori Recalled Data

- Hypothesis 14 Father's education
- Hypothesis 15 Mother's education
- Hypothesis 16-1 Sibling early leavers
- Hypothesis 18-1 Mother's occupation
- Hypothesis 18-2 Father's occupation

## Recalled Data

- Hypothesis 1 Self-rating of academic ability
- Hypothesis 2 Self-rating of reading ability
- Hypothesis 3 Importance placed on education
- Hypothesis 7 Relationships with teachers
- Hypothesis 8 Grade repetition rate
- Hypothesis 9 Academic failure
- Hypothesis 10 Absenteeism rate
- Hypothesis 11 Extracurricular involvement
- Hypothesis 12 Popularity with other students
- Hypothesis 13-1 Number of close friends who also left early
- Hypothesis 17-1 Parental aspirations
- Hypothesis 17-2 Parental encouragement

## CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING EARLY

- Hypothesis 4 Lower personal satisfaction with life
- Hypothesis 5 Engaged in lower skilled activities
- Hypothesis 6 Lower occupational aspirations
- Hypothesis 13-2 More current friends who were also early leavers
- Hypothesis 16-2 More siblings who subsequently left early

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- #3 Recalled reasons for leaving early
- #4 Suggestions for improvements in the school system
- #7 Disadvantages of leaving early
- #8 Completion of graduation requirements or enrollment in post-secondary education or job training programs

Figure 2. Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

Table 2  
Relationship Among Research Questions, Hypotheses and  
Interview Schedule Items

Research Question	Hypothesis	<u>Interview Schedule Item</u>	
		Early Leaver	Graduate
1	1	8	7
	2	9	8
	3	10	9
	4	13	12
	5	12	11
	6	15	13
2	7	1	1
	8	5	5
	9	4	4
	10	3	3
	11	2	2
	12	16(a)	14(a)
3	-	6	-
4	-	7	-
5	13-1	17(a)	15(a)
	13-2	17(b)	15(b)
6	14	18	16
	15	19	17
	16-1	20(d)	18(d)
	16-2	20(e)	18(e)
	17-1	21(a)	19(a)
	17-2	21(b)	19(b)
	18-1	22(b)	20(b)
	18-2	22(a)	20(a)
7	-	11	-
8	-	14	11

sion analysis is a method for examining the multiple influences of several independent variables on one dependent variable using principles of correlation and regression. In addition, this technique provides information about the magnitudes of the effects of these independent variables (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973).

Data obtained from the testing of hypotheses 1 to 3, 7 to 13-1, 14 to 16-1, 17 and 18 was used to obtain a measure on each of the following independent variables: recalled (a) relative academic ability; (b) relative reading ability; (c) importance placed on education; (d) relationships with teachers; (e) grade repetition rate; (f) academic failure; (g) absenteeism rate throughout school years; (h) absenteeism rate in the two years prior to leaving early or graduating; (i) involvement in extra-curricular activities; (j) popularity with other students; (k) popularity with peers outside of school; (l) number of close friends who left early; (m) father's education; (n) mother's education; (o) proportion of siblings who had left early; (p) parental aspirations; (q) parental encouragement; (r) father's occupation; and (s) mother's occupation (see Figure 2). The dependent variable--status of the student--was assigned a value of 1 for early leaver and 2 for graduate.

In order to eliminate weak or redundant variables, a stepwise procedure was employed to select the variables that were most useful in discriminating between early leavers and graduates. Multiple regression analysis outputs a summary table which includes the multiple correlation coefficient,  $R$ , and the coefficient of determination,  $R^2$ .

#### Consequences of Leaving Early

T-tests were used to analyze data arising from the variables suggested as consequences of leaving early. The dependent variable was again the status of the student as an early leaver or a graduate. Data obtained from the testing of hypotheses 4-6, 13-2, and 16-1 was used to obtain a measure on each of the following independent variables: (a) satisfaction with present life; (b) job classification; (c) occupational aspirations; (d) number of current close friends who did not finish school; and (e) number of siblings who subsequently left early (see Figure 2). The SPSS-X program T-test was used for this purpose. This program outputs a summary table showing the t-value, degrees of freedom, and the significance level of the obtained t-value. The null hypothesis to be tested in each case was that there was



no significant difference in means on the independent variables between the two groups, early leavers and graduates.

#### Educational and Occupational Activities

Chi-Squared analysis was used to analyze data pertaining to the educational and occupational activities of the early leavers and graduates.

#### Significance Level

The level of significance for all testing was set at the .05 level. This alpha level was chosen because the study was concerned with identifying possible causes and consequences of leaving school before completing graduation requirements. A more stringent alpha level, such as .01, might have prevented the identification of these causes and consequences. In addition, the consequences of a Type I error were not deemed to be serious.

# CHAPTER 4

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter discusses the respondents and non-respondents in the study, tests the hypotheses established in Chapter 1, and reports other findings.

### Respondents and Non-Respondents

Table 3 gives the response rate of both samples.

Table 3

#### Response Rate of Early Leaver and Graduate Samples

Group	Number in Initial Sample	Number of Interviews Completed	Per Cent of Interviews Completed
Early Leavers	*62	50	80.6
Graduates	*56	50	89.3

\*These numbers were chosen in order to obtain final sample sizes of 50.

Approximately 81 per cent of the early leaver sample and 89 per cent of the graduate sample were interviewed. Two

of the 50 early leavers and one of the 50 graduates were interviewed at their homes. These face-to-face interviews were necessary because the respondents were unable to be contacted by phone. Nine of the early leaver sample and three of the graduate sample were living outside the province and were therefore contacted by long distance telephone.

In the present study, every reasonable attempt was made to contact each member of the randomly chosen early leaver and graduate samples. Although each member of both samples contacted agreed to be interviewed, not all were able to be contacted. Twelve of the early leaver sample and six of the graduate sample were not interviewed because neither a phone number nor an address could be located. A comparison of respondents with non-respondents failed to reveal any notable differences in age, sex or school attended.

#### Causes of Leaving Early

In order to assess the possible causes of the leaving early phenomenon, the following 15 hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. Multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the data arising from the variables suggested as causes of leaving early.

Hypothesis 1. Early leavers will rate their recalled academic ability lower than will those who have graduated.

Hypothesis 2. Early leavers will rate their recalled reading ability lower than will those who have graduated.

Hypothesis 3. There is no difference in the recalled importance that early leavers and graduates placed on education.

Hypothesis 7. There is no difference in the recollections of early leavers and graduates of their relationships with teachers while these groups were in school.

Hypothesis 8. The recalled grade repetition rates of early leavers will be higher than that of graduates.

Hypothesis 9. Early leavers will recall higher levels of academic failure than will graduates.

Hypothesis 10. Early leavers will recall higher rates of absenteeism than will graduates.

Hypothesis 11. Early leavers will recall lower levels of involvement in extracurricular school activities than will graduates.

Hypothesis 12. Early leavers are less likely than graduates to recall that they were popular with other

students.

Hypothesis 13-1. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to recall having close friends who were early leavers.

Hypothesis 14. Early leavers will recall that their fathers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

Hypothesis 15. Early leavers will recall that their mothers had fewer years of formal education than will graduates.

Hypothesis 16-1. At the time they left school, early leavers had a greater proportion of siblings who had left school early than did graduates.

Hypothesis 17.

1. Early leavers will recall lower educational aspirations for them, by their parents, than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall lower levels of parental encouragement than will graduates.

Hypothesis 18.

1. Early leavers will recall that their mothers held jobs requiring a lower level of skill or training than will graduates.

2. Early leavers will recall that their fathers

held jobs requiring a lower level of skill or training than will graduates.

In order to test these hypotheses, 19 independent variables were identified (see Table 3). The dependent variable--status of the student as early leaver or graduate--was assigned values of 1 and 2 respectively.

### Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Table 4 displays the zero-order correlation coeffi-

Table 4

### Correlation Between Status of The Student as an Early Leaver or a Graduate and Scores on Independent Variables

Hypothesis Number	Independent Variable	r	p
1	Academic ability	-.48	.000
2	Reading ability	-.38	.000
3	Importance placed on education	-.70	.000
7	Relationship with teachers	-.36	.000
8	Grade repetition rate	-.55	.000
9	Academic failure--year prior to leaving	-.77	.000
10	Absenteeism rate--through out school years	-.41	.000
10	Absenteeism rate--last two years of school	-.71	.000

Hypothesis Number	Independent Variable	r	p
11	Involvement in extracurricular activities	-.32	.001
12	Popularity with other student	-.06	.289
12	Popularity with peers outside of school	.14	.088
13-1	Number of close friends who left early	-.69	.000
14	Father's education	-.34	.000
15	Mother's education	-.46	.000
16-1	Proportion of sibling early leavers	-.03	.396
17-1	Parental aspirations	-.55	.000
17-2	Parental encouragement	-.52	.000
18-2	Father's occupation	-.39	.000
18-1	Mother's occupation	-.19	.029

Note: For these correlation coefficients, the n ranged between 95 and 100.

cients between each of the 19 independent variables and the dependent variable--status of the student as early leaver or graduate. An examination of the data did not indicate a violation of the assumption of linearity underlying  $r$ . There were 16 independent variables showing correlation coefficients significant at  $p < .05$ .

Several of these correlations were relatively high. The independent variables showing correlations greater than .50 were academic failure (-.77), importance placed on education (-.70), absenteeism rate--last two years of school (-.71), number of close friends who left early (-.69), grade repetition rate (-.55), parental aspirations (-.55), and parental encouragement (-.52). However, not all of these correlations registered in the regression equation. It should be noted that with a relatively small N of 100 and the rather large number of independent variables, there is the strong possibility of Type II error. With a larger N more independent variables might have contributed significantly to the multiple regression equation.

#### Multiple Regression Analysis I

Table 5 provides a summary of independent variables included in the multiple regression equation following the stepwise selection of variables. Of the 19 independent variables examined, four were included in the equation or, in other words, contributed to the multiple correlation coefficient R. These variables account for approximately 79 per cent ( $R^2 = .787$ ) of the variance in the dependent variable--status of the student as an early



Table 5

Summary of Regression Analysis I for Combined Samples of Early School  
Leavers and Graduates

Independent Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Stepwise Multiple		R <sup>2</sup> Increment	P
		Correlation (R)	Stepwise (R <sup>2</sup> )		
Academic failure	-.769	.766	.582	-	.0000
Number of close friends who were early leavers	-.694	.831	.684	.102	.0000
Absenteeism rate--last 2 years of school	-.712	.868	.745	.061	.0000
Mother's: education	-.459	.893	.787	.042	.0001

leaver or a graduate. Academic failure in the year prior to leaving is the major contribution to the variance (58 per cent) followed by number of close friends who left early (an additional 10 per cent), absenteeism rate in the last two years of school (an additional 6 per cent), and mother's education (an additional 4 per cent). Each of these independent variables was significant at  $p < .001$ .

#### Academic Failure

Recalled academic failure, as expressed by the number of courses that students failed or were failing in their last year of school, accounted for 58 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable-status of the student as an early leaver or a graduate. The mean scores for the two groups are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

#### Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on Academic Failure in the Year Prior To Leaving

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	50	3.280
Graduates	50	1.060

In these calculations, a one represented "Passing everything" and a five represented "Failing four or more." It can therefore be concluded that early leavers experienced more subject failure in the year prior to leaving school than did graduates. Hypothesis 9 can therefore be accepted.

#### Friends Who Were Early Leavers

The recalled number of close friends who were early leavers accounted for an additional 10 per cent of the variance in the status of the student as early leaver or graduate. The mean scores for the two groups are reported in Table 7. In these calculations, a one

Table 7

#### Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on Close Friends Who Were Early Leavers

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	50	2.980
Graduates	50	1.360

represented "All of my friends finished school" and a five represented "None of my friends finished school." It can therefore be concluded that early leavers had more friends who were early leavers than did graduates. Hypothesis 13-1 can therefore be accepted.

#### Absenteeism Rate

The recalled absenteeism rate, as expressed by the number of school days that students missed during their last two years of school, accounted for an additional 6 per cent of the variance in the status of the student as an early leaver or a graduate. The means scores for the two groups are reported in Table 8. In these calcula-

Table 8

#### Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on Absenteeism Rate--Last Two Years of School

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	50	4.360
Graduates	50	2.440

tions, a one represented "Excellent seldom absent (<3 days per year)" and a five represented "absent a lot (>15 days per year)." It can therefore be concluded that the early leavers had a higher absentee rate in their last two years of school than did the graduates. Hypothesis 10 can therefore be accepted.

#### Mothers' Education

Mothers' level of education, when the students were in school, accounted for an additional 4 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. The mean scores for the two groups are reported in Table 9. In these

Table 9

#### Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on Mothers' Level of Education

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	49	3.347
Graduates	49	2.408

calculations, a one represented "Post-secondary" and a five represented "Less than grade 4." It can therefore be concluded that the mothers of graduates had a higher level of formal education than did the mothers of early leavers. Hypothesis 15 can therefore be accepted.

### Multiple Regression Analysis II

A second multiple regression analysis was carried out excluding three of the 19 variables utilized in the first analysis. The three variables excluded--academic failure in the year prior to leaving, absenteeism in the last two years of school and friends who were early leavers--may be considered a part of the process of leaving rather than causes or contributors. Table 10 provides a summary of the independent variables in the multiple regression equation following the stepwise selection of variables. Of the 16 independent variables utilized, four were included in the equation and accounted for approximately 64 per cent of the variance in the status of the student. The major contributor to the variance is now the importance placed on education (51 per cent) followed by grade repetition (an additional 10 per cent), parental aspirations (an additional 1.7 per cent) and mother's level of education (an additional 1.2

per cent). Each of these independent variables was significant at  $p < .05$ .

Table 10

Summary of Regression Analysis II for Combined Samples of Early School Leavers and Graduates

Independent Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Stepwise Multiple		R <sup>2</sup> Increment	P
		Correlation (R)	Stepwise (R <sup>2</sup> )		
Importance placed on education	-.704	.717	.508		.0000
Grade repetition	-.552	.786	.608	.180	.0013
Parental aspirations	-.554	.799	.625	.017	.0427
Mother's education	-.459	.809	.637	.012	.0466

### Importance Placed on Education

The recalled importance placed on education while in school, accounted for 51 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. The mean scores of the two groups are reported in Table 11. In these calculations a one

Table 11

#### Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on Importance Placed on Education

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	50	3.080
Graduates	50	1.340

represented "Very important" and a five represented "Not at all important." It can therefore be concluded that graduates placed more importance on education than did early leavers. Hypothesis 3 can therefore be rejected.

### Grade Repetition

The recalled grade repetition rate accounted for an additional 10 per cent of the variance in the dependent



variable. The mean scores of the two groups are reported in Table 12. In these calculations a one represented

Table 12

Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Grade Repetition Rate

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	49	2.061
Graduates	50	1.120

"Never" and a five represented "Four or more years." It can therefore be concluded that early leavers were required to repeat more grades than graduates. Hypothesis 8 can therefore be accepted.

Parental Aspirations

The perceived educational aspirations of the parents for the student accounted for an additional 1.7 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. The mean scores for the two groups are reported in Table 13. In these calculations, a one represented "University" and a

Table 13

Mean Scores of Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Parental Aspirations

Dependent Variable	N	Mean Score
Early Leavers	49	3.041
Graduates	50	1.980

five represented "Junior high or less." It can therefore be concluded that the educational aspirations of the parents, as perceived by the student, are less for early leavers than for graduates. Hypothesis 17-1 can therefore be accepted.

Mothers' Education

Mothers' level of education accounted for an additional 1.2 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. The mean scores of the two groups were reported in Table 9. The mothers of graduates had a higher level of formal education than did the mothers of early leavers. Hypothesis 15 can be accepted.

### Consequences of Leaving Early

In order to assess the possible consequences of leaving school before completing graduation requirements, five hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. T-test and chi-squared analyses were carried out to identify significant differences between early leavers and graduates.

#### Satisfaction With Present Life

Hypothesis 4. Early leavers will rate their satisfaction with their lives lower than will graduates.

The mean scores for early leavers and graduates on the variable--satisfaction with present life, are reported in Table 14. In these calculations, a one represented "Very satisfied" and a five represented "Very dissatisfied."

The t-test analysis on hypothesis four showed a significant difference does exist, at  $p = .000$ , between early leavers and graduates in their rating of satisfaction with their lives. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Such a result leads to the conclusion that early leavers and graduates do differ in their level of personal satisfaction, with the graduates reporting a

Table 14

Differences Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on Personal Satisfaction

Group	<u>Satisfaction With Present Life</u>		
	N	Mean	P
Early Leavers	50	2.740	.000
Graduates	50	1.180	

higher level of satisfaction. The mean scores for both groups, however, fall within the "Very satisfied" to "Somewhat satisfied" range.

Job Classification

Hypothesis 5. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to be engaged in low-skilled job occupations.

The mean scores for early leavers and graduates on the variable, job classification, are reported in Table 15. In these calculations, a one represented "Professionals and entrepreneurs--large business" and a five

Table 15

Differences Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Job Classification

Group	Job Classification		
	N	Mean	P
Early Leavers	48*	4.021	.09**
Graduates	28*	3.750	

\*Individuals attending post-secondary education institutes or enrolled in job-training programs where excluded from the analysis.

\*\*One-tailed probability

represented "Unemployed." The mean scores for both groups fall close to the "Semi-skilled and unskilled" classification.

The t-test analysis on hypothesis five showed that there was no significant difference between early leavers and graduates with respect to their job classifications. Thus, the hypothesis cannot be accepted.

### Occupational Aspirations

Hypothesis 6. Early leavers have lower occupational aspirations than graduates.

The mean scores for early leavers and graduates on the variable, occupational aspirations, are reported in Table 16. In these calculations, a one represented "Very

Table 16

#### Differences Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on Occupational Aspirations

Group	<u>Occupational Aspirations</u>		
	N	Mean	P
Early Leavers	50	3.400	.000
Graduates	50	2.560	

high" and a five represented "No plans."

The t-test analysis on hypothesis six showed a significant difference at  $p = .000$ , between early leavers and graduates with respect to their occupational aspira-

tions. The hypothesis can therefore be accepted. Such a result leads to the conclusion, that early leavers and graduates do differ with respect to their occupational aspirations, with the graduates reporting higher levels of aspiration. The mean score of the graduates falls within the "High" to "Moderate" range while the mean score of the early leavers falls within the "Moderate" to "Low or uncertain" range.

#### Current Close Friends

Hypothesis 13-2. Early leavers are more likely than graduates to have more current friends who were early leavers.

The mean scores for early leavers and graduates on the variable, current close friends who did not finish school, are reported in Table 17. In these calculations, a one represented "All of my friends finished school" and a five represented "None of my friends finished school."

The t-test analysis on hypothesis 13-2 showed a significant difference at  $p = .000$ , between early leavers and graduates with respect to the number of their current close friends who were early leavers. The hypothesis can therefore be accepted. Such a result leads to the

Table 17

Differences Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Current Friends Who Did Not Finish School

Group	<u>Current Friends Who Were Early Leavers</u>		
	N	Mean	P
Early Leavers	50	2.9800	> .000
Graduates	50	1.3600	

conclusion that early leavers have more friends who left school early than do graduates.

Sibling Early Leavers

Hypothesis 16-2. Early leavers will report a greater proportion of siblings who subsequently left school early than will graduates.

The numbers of sibling early leavers and sibling nonleavers for both early leavers and graduates are reported in Table 18. The results of the chi-squared analysis on the variable, proportion of siblings who



Table 18

Differences Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Proportion of Siblings Who Subsequently Left Early

Group	<u>Siblings Who Subsequently Left Early</u>		
	Yes	No	Total
Early Leavers	19	234	253
Graduates	5	182	187

$$\chi^2 = 4.876$$

$$p < .05$$

subsequently left early, showed that a significant difference does exist at  $p < .05$ . The hypothesis can therefore be accepted. Such a result leads to the conclusion that early leavers have a greater proportion of siblings who subsequently left early than do graduates. Neither group, however, had a large proportion of sibling early leavers.

#### Reasons For Leaving Early

Research Question 3. What are the recalled reasons given by early leavers for their decision to leave a

school before completing graduation requirements?

Early leavers were asked why they had left school. Most gave one reason, while several indicated that there were two or three main reasons for their decision. Sixty-three reasons, in total, were given by the 50 early leavers for their decision to leave school before completing graduation requirements. Table 19 gives a summary of the responses. The three most frequently cited reasons given for leaving school were: (a) desire to work--28.6 per cent of responses; (b) failing or doing poorly--27.0 per cent of responses; and (c) dislike of school--20.6 per cent of responses. In addition, approximately 20 per cent of the early leaver girls cited pregnancy as their reason for leaving school. Of the total responses given, 55.6 per cent were directly related to the school environment while 44.4 per cent were of a personal nature.

It should be noted here that the year in which these students left school was the first year of Level III (grade 12) under the Reorganized High School System. A small percentage of students, 8.0 per cent, felt that this "extra" year was a waste of time. Consequently, they left school after completion of Level II (grade 11).

Table 19

Early Leavers' Main Reasons For Leaving School

Reasons	Frequency of Response	Percentage of Total Responses
1. Wanted to work	18	28.6
2. Failing or doing poorly	17	27.0
3. Did not like school	13	20.6
4. Pregnant	5	7.9
5. Grade 12 was a waste of time	4	6.4
6. Personal problems	2	3.2
7. Older than other students	1	1.6
8. Teachers didn't care	1	1.6
9. Most of my friends had left	1	1.6
10. Wanted to leave the community	1	1.6
Total	63	100

Early Leavers Comments

The following comments made by early leavers are representative of the responses made to the question "What were the main reasons that you left school early?"

"There were too many subjects and too much homework. I was falling behind and couldn't get enough help."

"The classes were too big. I couldn't catch on. The teachers couldn't hold up the class for a few."

"I had no reason to stay. I was failing. There was no time for discussion or explanation. It wasn't the teachers' fault. There was just too much material."

"I had too many publics in grade 12. I panicked. I couldn't get help in some classes where there was a lot of preps."

"The new courses in grade 12 were not well organized. My credits got fooled up."

"I was older than the other students - I failed two grades. I wanted to go to work."

"I got a full time job and I wanted to work."

"School wasn't for me. I got fed up and frustrated. I quit to work full time."

"Grade 12 was a waste of time."

#### Suggestions for Improvement in the School System

Research Question 4. What are the perceptions of early leavers about improvements in the school system that might have affected their decision to leave before fulfilling graduation requirements?

Early leavers were asked to make suggestions for improvements in the school system, as it existed when they left, which they thought could help encourage others to stay in school. Eight of the 50 early leavers were unable to make any suggestions. The 42 early leavers who responded gave a total of 46 suggestions which were grouped into six categories. Table 20 summarizes these suggestions. The three most frequently cited suggestions

Table 20

Early Leavers' Suggestions For Improvement In the School System

Suggestion	Frequency of Response	Percentage of Total Responses
1. Smaller classes to ensure more individual help	15	32.6
2. More courses of a practical nature should be offered. Subjects should be more interesting.	15	32.6
3. More flexibility for students to pick courses and teachers	8	17.4
4. Better organization of the high school program	6	13.0
5. More guidance for students should be offered	1	2.2
6. More provisions for extra-curricular involvement	1	2.2
Total	46	100

for improving the school system in order to encourage students to remain in school were smaller classes to ensure more individual help (32.6 per cent of responses), courses of a practical or interesting nature (32.6 per cent of responses), and more flexibility for students to pick courses and teachers (17.4 per cent of responses).

Early leavers were asked if any such improvements could have affected their decision to leave. Twenty-eight (56 per cent) said yes, while 22 (44 per cent) said no. The results of the chi-squared analysis are reported in Table 21. No significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) was

Table 21

Effect of School-Related Improvements on the Decision to Leave Early

Response	Early Leavers	
	Observed	Expected
Yes	28	25
No	22	25

$$\chi^2 = 0.72$$

$$p > .05$$

found between the number of early leavers responding that school-related improvements could have affected their decision to leave school and the number responding that such improvements could not have affected their decision.

#### Early Leavers Comments

The following comments made by early leavers are representative of the responses made to the question "What suggestions can you make for improvements in the school system, as it existed when you left school?"

"There should be some kind of program for extra help. Teachers need to spend more time with slower students."

"If I had been able to get extra help in class I would never have left. I needed help with English and never got it."

"I needed extra help during school time."

"They should offer more practical courses."

"I think they should offer job training in school."



"I didn't think the courses were interesting or useful."

### Disadvantages of Leaving School Early

Research Question 7. What, if any, are the cited disadvantages of leaving school early?

Early leavers were asked if there have been any disadvantages, for them, in leaving school before completing graduation requirements. Their responses are reported in Table 22. Twenty-eight (56 per cent) responded that

Table 22

### Disadvantages in Leaving School Early

Response	Early Leavers	
	Observed	Expected
Yes	22	25
No	28	25

$$\chi^2 = 0.72$$

$$p > .05$$

there have been no disadvantages compared with 22 (44 per cent), who responded that there have been disadvantages. A chi-squared analysis revealed no significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) between the number of early leavers who cite disadvantages and the number who cite no disadvantages. Those who said there have been disadvantages in leaving school early cited limited job opportunities, limited educational opportunities and unemployment concerns (see Table 23). The most frequently cited disadvantage was limited job opportunities.

Table 23

Disadvantages For Early School Leavers

Disadvantage	Frequency of Response	Percent of Total Responses
1. Limited job opportunities	12	52.2
2. Limited educational opportunities	6	26.1
3. Unemployment concerns	5	21.7
Total	23	100

## Subsequent Educational and Occupational Activities

Research Question 8. What percentage of early leavers have attempted to complete graduation requirements or have enrolled in post-secondary education or job-training programs?

### Completion of Graduation Requirements

Early leavers were asked if they had completed graduation requirements subsequent to leaving school. Seven (14 per cent) said yes, and 43 (86 per cent) said no. The results of the chi-squared analysis are reported in Table 24. A significant difference was found to

Table 24

### Completion of Graduation Requirements

Response	Early Leavers	
	Observed	Expected
Yes	7	25
No	43	25

$$\chi^2 = 25.92$$

$$p < .001$$

exist, at  $p < .001$ , between the number of early leavers who completed graduation requirements and the number who did not. The number of early leavers who have completed graduation requirements is less than the number who have not completed graduation requirements.

Completion of or Enrollment in a Post-Secondary  
or Job-Training Program

Early leavers and graduates were asked if they had completed or were presently enrolled in a post-secondary or job-training program. The responses are reported in Table 25. Thirty per cent of the early leavers compared

Table 25

Difference Between Early School Leavers and Graduates on  
Enrollment in or Completion of a Post-Secondary or  
Job-Training Program

Group	Response		
	Yes	No	Total
Early Leavers	15	35	50
Graduates	36	14	50

$$\chi^2 = 10.00$$

$$p < .01$$

with 72 per cent of the graduates responded yes to this question. A chi-squared analysis showed a significant difference does exist, at  $p < .01$ , between the two groups. Such a result leads to the conclusion that more graduates than early leavers have completed, or are presently enrolled in, a post-secondary or job-training program. This is not surprising since most early leavers lack the necessary prerequisites to attend a post-secondary institution.

The results of a further chi-squared analysis, comparing the number of early leavers who had completed or were presently enrolled in a post-secondary or job-training program with the number of early leavers who had not completed or were not enrolled in any such program, are reported in Table 26. Fifteen (30 per cent) early leavers responded "yes" compared with 35 (70 per cent) who responded "no". A significant difference does exist, at  $p < .01$ , between the number of early leavers who have completed or who are enrolled in a post-secondary or job-training program and the number who have not completed or are not enrolled in such a program. This result leads to the conclusion that the number of early leavers having completed or who are enrolled in a post-secondary or jobtraining program is less than the number who have not

completed or who are not enrolled in such a program.

Table 26

Enrollment in or Completion of a Post-Secondary or  
Job-Training Program

Response	Early Leavers	
	Observed	Expected
Yes	15	25
No	35	25

$$\chi^2 = 8.00$$

$$p < .01$$

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the major findings relevant to the problem under investigation, reports the conclusions reached in the study, and offers some recommendations for action and future investigation.

## Summary

The main purpose of this study was to identify possible causes of the leaving early phenomenon in the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's. Factors investigated included those related to the individual, the school, the peer group, and the family. A secondary purpose was to assess the economic, personal, and social consequences of leaving early. In addition, the study attempted to solicit information from early school leavers regarding their reasons for leaving, suggestions for improvement, and subsequent educational and occupational activities.

The interview schedule designed for this study was used with a random stratified sample of 62 early leavers who left one of the 10 high schools under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, between June, 1983 and June, 1984. The response rate was,

81 per cent. A modified interview schedule was used with a random stratified sample of 56 graduates chosen from the total population of June, 1984 graduates. The response rate was 89 per cent. Telephone interviews were utilized with most of the respondents.

This study was considered significant because it investigated both early leaver and graduate situations, several years after both had left the school system. Most previous studies carried out in Newfoundland utilized early leavers only, or early leavers and students still in school.

#### Causes of Leaving Early

A review of the current literature led to the development of 19 independent variables thought to be related to the leaving early phenomenon. These were recalled: (a) relative academic ability; (b) relative reading ability; (c) importance placed on education; (d) relationships with teachers; (e) grade repetition rate; (f) academic failure; (g) absenteeism rate throughout school years; (h) absenteeism rate in the two years prior to leaving early or graduating; (i) involvement in extracurricular activities; (j) popularity with other students; (k) popularity with peers outside of school;



(l) number of close friends who left early; (m) father's education; (n) mother's education; (o) proportion of siblings who had left early; (p) parental aspirations; (q) parental encouragement; (r) father's occupation; and (s) mother's occupation.

Linear multiple regression analyses (stepwise) were used to examine the variables that influence a student's decision to leave school before completing graduation requirements.

#### Consequences of Leaving Early

This study utilized five independent variables to assess the consequences of leaving school early. These were: (a) satisfaction with present life; (b) job classification; (c) occupational aspirations; (d) number of current close friends who did not finish school; and (e) number of siblings who subsequently left early. T-tests were used to test for significant differences between early school leavers and graduates. In addition, chi-squared analyses was used to analyze data pertaining to the educational and occupational activities of both groups.

## Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions generated by testing the hypotheses established in Chapter One and reports on the additional findings.

### Causes of Leaving Early

Sixteen of the 19 hypothesized causes distinguished between early leavers and graduates. These were recalled academic ability, reading ability, importance placed on education, relationship with teachers, grade repetition rate, academic failure in the year prior to leaving, absenteeism rate throughout school years, absenteeism rate in the last two years of school, involvement in extracurricular activities, number of close friends who left early, father's education, mother's education, parental aspirations, parental encouragement, father's occupation, and mother's occupation.

Two multiple regression analyses (stepwise) were carried out. The first analysis utilized all of the 19 independent variables that were thought to be related to the leaving early phenomenon. Four of these 19 variables contributed to the multiple correlation,  $R$ , and accounted for 79 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable --status of the student as an early leaver or a grad-

uate. Academic failure in the year prior to leaving accounted for 58 per cent of the variance, and was the strongest factor distinguishing early leavers from graduates. Early leavers recalled more subject failure, in the year prior to leaving school, than did graduates. The three other factors distinguishing the two groups were number of close friends who were early leavers (an additional 10 per cent of the variance), with early leavers recalling more friends who were early leavers than did graduates; absenteeism rate during the last two years of school (an additional 6 per cent of the variance), with early leavers recalling a higher rate than did graduates; and mothers' level of education (an additional 4 per cent of the variance), with the mothers of graduates having a higher level of education than the mothers of early leavers.

In the second multiple regression analysis, three of the independent variables were excluded from the analysis. These variables--academic failure in the year prior to leaving, absenteeism rate during the last two years of school, and friends who were early leavers--were considered to be a part of the decision to leave early rather than causes or contributions. Of the 16 variables utilized, four contributed to R, and accounted for 64 per

cent of the variance. The recalled importance placed on education was the strongest factor (51 per cent of the variance) distinguishing early school leavers from graduates. Graduates placed more importance on education than did early leavers. The three other factors distinguishing the two groups were grade repetition (an additional 10 per cent of the variance), with early leavers recalling more grade repetition than graduates; perceived educational aspirations of the parents (an additional 1.7 per cent of the variance), with early leavers recalling less parental aspirations than graduates; and mothers' education (an additional 1.2 per cent of the variance), with the mothers of graduates having a higher level of education.

#### Consequences of Leaving Early

The testing of Hypothesis 4 showed a statistically significant difference ( $p = .000$ ) to exist between early leavers and graduates on level of personal satisfaction with life. Although the graduates reported a higher level of satisfaction, both groups expressed that they were satisfied with their present lives.

No statistically significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) was found to exist between early leavers and graduates

with respect to job classification.

Significant differences ( $p = .000$ ) were found to exist between early leavers and graduates with respect to occupational aspirations, with graduates reporting higher levels of aspiration.

Significant differences ( $p = .000$ ) were found to exist between early leavers and graduates with respect to the number of their current close friends who were early leavers. Early leavers reported more friends who were early leavers than did graduates.

A statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) was found to exist between early leavers and graduates with respect to the proportion of their siblings who subsequently left school early. Early leavers reported more siblings who subsequently became early leavers than did graduates.

#### Reasons for Leaving and Suggestions for Improvement

The three most frequently cited reasons for leaving school early were desire to work (28.6 per cent of early leaver responses), failing or doing poorly (27.0 per cent of early leaver responses), and dislike of school (20.6 per cent of early leaver responses).

The three most frequently cited suggestions for

improving the school system to encourage students to remain in school were smaller classes to ensure more individual help (32.6 per cent of early leaver responses), more courses of a practical or interesting nature (32.6 per cent of early leaver responses), and more flexibility for students to pick courses and teachers (17.4 per cent of early leaver responses). No significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) was found between the number of early leavers responding that school-related improvements could have affected their decision to leave school and the number responding that such improvements could not have affected their decision.

#### Disadvantages of Leaving School Early

There was no significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) between the number of early leavers who reported that there had been disadvantages in leaving school and the number who reported no disadvantages. Of the 22 reporting disadvantages, 54.6 per cent cited limited job opportunities, 27.3 per cent cited limited educational opportunities, and 22.7 per cent cited unemployment concerns.

### Subsequent Educational and Occupational Activities

A significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) was found to exist between the number of early leavers who later completed graduation requirements and the number who did not. Most early leavers did not complete graduation requirements. A significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) was found to exist between the number of early leavers and graduates who had completed, or were enrolled in, a post-secondary or job-training program. More graduates than early leavers were enrolled in such a program. In addition, a significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) was found to exist between the number of early leavers who had completed, or were enrolled in, a post-secondary or job-training program and the number who had not completed or were not enrolled in such a program. The number of early leavers who had completed or who were enrolled in a post-secondary or job-training program was less than the number who had not completed or were not enrolled in such a program.

### Recommendations

The question of what can be done to increase the holding power of schools in the Province of Newfoundland needs to be addressed in terms of our system of education

as well as the school itself. On the basis of the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made:

Schools should be provided with the resource personnel to assist in the early identification of learning difficulties and low achievers.

Schools should be provided with the resource personnel to offer remediation or tutoring services for students experiencing difficulties. This service must be provided early enough to ensure that the need for success is addressed.

In order to foster the importance of education, schools should work within currently existing structures, such as Parent Teacher Associations, to develop programs which more extensively involve parents in the education of their children.

The various agencies involved in education should work with the corporate community to develop programs that advance the utilitarian and vocational functions of education.

There are several areas, related to the findings of this study, which might benefit from further research and



investigation. These include the following:

1. An attempt to improve the instrument used to measure the variables in the present study.
2. The extent to which alternative learning approaches have been successful in meeting the needs of a wider variety of students.
3. The extent to which alternative programs have been successful in meeting the needs of the low achiever.
4. An attempt to identify activities that can enhance parental involvement in the education of their children.
5. A comparison of the employment status and job classification of early leavers and graduates who do not attend post-secondary institutions.

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

## Interview Schedule for Early Leavers

Factors Related to the School

1. How would you rate your relationship with teachers while you were in school (how well did you get along with them)?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Good	Okay	Poor	Extremely
good				poor

(Give details)

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- 2(a). Were you involved in extracurricular activities while in school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- (b). [If yes]

What activities were you involved in? [Sports, choir, band, drama, clubs, yearbook, newspaper, student council, etc.]

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[Interviewer will rate level of involvement]

1	2	3	4	5
Very	High	Moderate	Low	Never
high				involved

(c). [If no]

Why not?"

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3(a). What was your attendance like, on average, throughout most of your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Excellent	Good	Average	Absent	Absent
seldom	absent only		a fair	a lot
absent	a few days		amount	
(<3 days	per year		(10-15	(>15 days
per year)	(3-5 days)	(6-9 days)	days)	per year)

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(b). What was your attendance like in the last 2 years that you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Excellent	Good	Average	Absent	Absent
seldom	absent only		a fair	a lot
absent	a few days		amount	
(<3 days	per year		(10-15	(>15 days
per year)	(3-5 days)	(6-9 days)	days)	per year)

---



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4. How were you doing in your courses or subjects just before you left school (in the year in which you left or the school year prior to leaving)?

1	2	3	4	5
Passing	Failing	Failing	Failing	Failing
everything	one	two	three	four or more

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5(a). How many times were you required to repeat a grade (k-9)?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	One	Two	Three	Four or more
	year	years	years	years

(b). What grades did you repeat?

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6. What were the main reasons that you left school early? List in order of importance [failing courses, wanted to work, didn't get along with teachers, etc.]

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7(a). What suggestions can you make for improvements in the school system, as it existed when you left school? [What do you think could be done to encourage students to stay in school?]

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(b). Could such improvements have affected your decision to leave early?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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Factors Related to the Individual

8. How would you rate your academic ability (ability to learn) compared with most other students who were in your class throughout your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Much	Higher	About	Lower	Much
higher		the same		lower

(Give details)

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9. How would you rate your reading ability compared with most other students who were in your classes throughout your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Much	Higher	About	Lower	Much
higher		the same		lower

(Give details)

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10. Did you think that getting a high school education was important when you were a student?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Important	Somewhat	Of little	Not at all
important		important	importance	important

(Give details)

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11. Were there, or have there been, any disadvantages for you in leaving school before completion?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

[If Yes]

What were the most important disadvantages?

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- 12(a). Are you working now? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

[If Yes] Are you working Part time \_\_\_\_\_ Full time \_\_\_\_\_

- (b). Describe your job.

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[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals	sales,	skilled-	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			

13. How would you rate personal satisfaction with your life at present?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Satisfied	Somewhat	Dis-	Very
Satisfied		Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied

(Give details)

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- 14(a). Have you completed graduation requirements since leaving school?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

(Give details)

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- (b). Have you completed any other educational or training programs?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

(Give details)

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15. What do you expect or hope to be doing in five years time?

[What are your career plans?]

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[Interviewer will rate occupational aspirations]

1	2	3	4	5
Very	High	Moderate	Low or	No
high			uncertain	plans

Factors Related to the Peer Group

16(a). How would you rate your popularity with other students while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Popular	Somewhat	Not very	Unpopular
popular		popular	popular	

(Give details)

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(b). How would you rate your popularity with other young people outside of school, while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Popular	Somewhat	Not very	Unpopular
popular		popular	popular	

(Give details)

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17(a). How many close friends did you have, when you were in school, who did not finish school?

1	2	3	4	5
All of my	One	A few	Most of my	None of my
friends	or	(3-5)	friends did	friends
finished	two		not finish	finished
school			school	school

---



---

(b) How many close friends do you now have who did not finish school?

1	2	3	4	5
All of my	One	A few	Most of my	None of my
friends	or	(3-5)	friends did	friends
finished	two		not finish	finished
school			school	school

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Factors Related to the Family

18. What was your father's level of education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Post-	High	Grade	Grade	Less
secondary	school	8-10	4-7	than
(specify)	graduation			Grade 4

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19. What was your mother's level of education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Post- secondary (specify)	High school graduation	Grade 8-10	Grade 4-7	Less than Grade 4

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- 20(a). How many brothers and sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

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- (b). How many of these have graduated? \_\_\_\_\_

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- (c). Did any of your brothers and sisters leave school before graduating?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

[If response to above question is yes, go to (d) and (e)]

- (d). How many of your brothers and sisters left school early before you did? \_\_\_\_\_

- (e). How many of your brothers and sisters left school early after you did? \_\_\_\_\_

- 21(a). When you were in school, how much education did your parents wish you to obtain?

1	2	3	4	5
University	Vocational	High	Some	Junior
	trade,	school	high	high
	business	graduation	school	or
	school, or			less
	nursing			
	school			

(Give details)

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- (b). Which of the following best describes your parents' attitude towards your education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Encouraging	Somewhat	Not very	Not at all
encouraging		encouraging	encouraging	encouraging

(Give details)

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22(a). What was your father's occupation when you were in school?

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[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals	sales,	skilled	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			

(b). What was your mother's occupation when you were in school?

---

[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals	sales,	skilled	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			

## Interview Schedule for Graduates

Factors Related to the School

1. How would you rate your relationship with teachers while you were in school (how well did you get along with them)?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Good	Okay	Poor	Extremely
good				poor

(Give details)

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- 2(a). Were you involved in extracurricular activities while in school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- (b). [If yes]

What activities were you involved in? [Sports, choir, band, drama, clubs, yearbook, newspaper, student council, etc.]

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[Interviewer will rate level of involvement]

1	2	3	4	5
Very	High	Moderate	Low	Never
high				involved

(c). [If no]

Why not?

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3(a). What was your attendance like, on average, throughout most of your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Excellent	Good	Average	Absent	Absent
seldom	absent only		a fair	a lot
absent	a few days		amount	
(<3 days	per year		(10-15	(>15 days
per year)	(3-5 days)	(6-9 days)	days)	per year)

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(b). What was your attendance like in the last 2 years that you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Excellent	Good	Average	Absent	Absent
seldom	absent only		a fair	a lot
absent	a few days		amount	
(<3 days	per year		(10-15	(>15 days
per year)	(3-5 days)	(6-9 days)	days)	per year)

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4. How were you doing in your courses or subjects when you were in Grade 12?

1	2	3	4	5
Passing	Failing	Failing	Failing	Failing
everything	one	two	three	four or more

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5(a). How many times were you required to repeat a grade (k-9)?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	One	Two	Three	Four or more
	year	years	years	years

(b). What grades did you repeat?

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6. What suggestions can you make for improvements in the school system, as it existed when you graduated?

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Factors Related to the Individual

7. How would you rate your academic ability (ability to learn) compared with most other students who were in your class throughout your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Much higher	Higher	About the same	Lower	Much lower

(Give details)

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8. How would you rate your reading ability compared with most other students who were in your classes throughout your school years?

1	2	3	4	5
Much higher	Higher	About the same	Lower	Much lower

(Give details)

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9. Did you think that getting a high school education was important when you were a student?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Important	Somewhat	Of little	Not at all
important		important	importance	important

(Give details)

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- 11(a). Are you working now? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

[If Yes] Are you working Part time \_\_\_\_\_ Full time \_\_\_\_\_

- (b). Describe your job.

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[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals,	sales,	skilled	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			

11. Have you completed any educational or training programs since you finished school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(Give details)

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12. How would you rate personal satisfaction with your life at present?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Satisfied	Somewhat	Dis-	Very
Satisfied		Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied

(Give details)

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7

13. What do you expect or hope to be doing in five years time?  
[What are your career plans?]

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[Interviewer will rate occupational aspirations]

1	2	3	4	5
Very	High	Moderate	Low or	No
high			uncertain	plans

Factors Related to the Peer Group

- 14(a). How would you rate your popularity with other students while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Popular	Somewhat	Not very	Unpopular
popular		popular	popular	

(Give details)

---



---



---

(b). How would you rate your popularity with other young people outside of school, while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Popular	Somewhat	Not very	Unpopular
popular		popular	popular	

(Give details)

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---

15(a). How many close friends did you have, when you were in school, who did not finish school?

1	2	3	4	5
All of my	One	A few	Most of my	None of my
friends	or	(3-5)	friends did	friends
finished	two		not finish	finished
school			school	school

---



---

(b). How many close friends do you now have who did not finish school?

1	2	3	4	5
All of my	One	A few	Most of my	None of my
friends	or	(3-5)	friends did	friends
finished	two		not finish	finished
school			school	school

---



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Factors Related to the Family

16. What was your father's level of education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Post-	High	Grade	Grade	Less
secondary	school	8-10	4-7	than
(specify)	graduation			Grade 4

---



---

17. What was your mother's level of education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Post- secondary (specify)	High school graduation	Grade 8-10	Grade 4-7	Less than Grade 4

---



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- 18(a). How many brothers and sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

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---

- (b). How many of these have graduated? \_\_\_\_\_

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- (c). Did any of your brothers and sisters leave school before graduating?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

[If response to above question is yes, go to (d) and (e)]

- (d). How many of your brothers and sisters left school early before you graduated? \_\_\_\_\_

- (e). How many of your brothers and sisters left school early after you graduated? \_\_\_\_\_

- 19(a) When you were in school, how much education did your parents wish you to obtain?

1	2	3	4	5
University	Vocational	High	Some	Junior
	trade,	school	high	high
	business	graduation	school	or
	school, or			less
	nursing			
	school			

(Give details)

---



---

- (b). Which of the following best describes your parents' attitude towards your education while you were in school?

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Encouraging	Somewhat	Not very	Not at all
encouraging		encouraging	encouraging	encouraging

(Give details)

---



---

20(a). What was your father's occupation when you were in school?

---

[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals	sales,	skilled	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			

(b). What was your mother's occupation when you were in school?

---

[Interviewer will classify occupations]

1	2	3	4	5
Professionals	Semi-	Clerical,	Semi-	Unemployed
and entre-	professionals	sales,	skilled	
preneurs--	and entre-	technicians	and	
large	preneurs--	and	unskilled	
businesses	small	craftsmen	workers	
	businesses			



APPENDIX B  
CORRESPONDENCE

September 27, 1987

Mrs. Geraldine Roe  
Associate Superintendent  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's

Dear Mrs. Roe:

I am presently completing a research proposal as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at Memorial. I am aware that the school board has recently completed a study in which descriptive information contained in the cumulative records of early leavers of the 1977-78 and the 1983-84 school years was compiled. It is my understanding that the school board is interested in obtaining further information, from these early leavers, that may help determine areas that may be affected by policy.

The main purpose of my proposed study is to identify those school factors related to the leaving early phenomenon. In addition, factors related to the individual, the family, and the peer group will be investigated. In order to assess the relative significance of these factors it would be necessary to compare the experiences of early leavers with those of students who have graduated. My plan is to interview a random sample of early leavers and graduates from the 1983-84 school year.

I understand that the school board is able to supply me with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the early leavers, however, the same information is not available on the graduates. I would therefore greatly appreciate your help in the procurement of this information. I thank you very much for your assistance in this matter.

Yours truly,

Pamela Walsh

June 15, 1988

Dear Principal:

Thank you very much for your prompt response to my request for the list of graduates for the academic year 1983-84. This information is crucial for the continuation of my study on dropouts and would have been impossible for me to obtain without your assistance.

I appreciate the effort that was expended on my behalf.

Sincerely yours,

Pamela Walsh

September 19, 1988

Dear Principal:

Thank you very much for your assistance in locating the names and addresses of your June 1984 graduates. I fully realize a request such as mine adds another time-consuming task to the multitude of duties attended to by the principal and office staff.

I am pleased to report that I have completed the interview phase of my study of early leavers in our school board and am presently analyzing the data. I expect to have this study completed by December.

This is due in no small part to the gracious manner in which you have provided me with assistance in this endeavour.

With warmest regards,

Pamela Walsh

cc. Mrs. Geraldine Roe

September 19, 1988

Mrs. G. Roe  
Associate Superintendent  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's

Dear Mrs. Roe:

Thank you for your assistance in locating the names and addresses of the June, 1984 graduates. All of the high school principals were very cooperative in assisting me in this endeavour. I have enclosed a copy of the letter I sent to them.

I am pleased to report that I have completed the interviewing phase of my study of early leavers in our school board. I am presently analyzing the data and expect to complete my study by December.

Again, I wish to express my gratitude for the effort you have extended on my behalf.

Yours sincerely,

Pamela Walsh









