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MAORI AND NON-MAORI EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING FROM
SELECTED SECONDARY STATE SCHOOLS IN THE MANAWATU
AND WANGANUI DISTRICTS.

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ABSTRACTEarly School Leaving

In September 1969, data was collected on the fourteen year old pupils from two rural and two urban high schools in the Wanganui and Manawatu region. From the school records information was obtained on race, previous attendance, date of birth, history of audio-testing, and form. Non-Maori pupils were reduced by random selection so that they make up 75 per cent of the sample. All Maori pupils were included and make up 25 per cent of the sample. The total sample of 232 pupils were given a battery of tests which included reading comprehension, verbal and performance intelligence tests, a school interest inventory, a personality test and a general questionnaire. Maori pupils had poorer reading comprehension and lower verbal and performance I.Q.'s than non-Maori pupils.

A year after testing was carried out, the schools were contacted and they indicated which of the pupils examined had left school. It was found that 21 Maori pupils (37 per cent of the Maori sample) and 20 non-Maori pupils (11 per cent of the non-Maori sample) were early school leavers. Data was then analysed.

Sex of pupil, mother's employment, attendance, the socio-economic status of the father's occupation and pupil's expressed attitude toward school were not found to be related to early school leaving. Nor was early school leaving related to sense of belonging and sense of personal worth.

When all of the early school leavers were compared to all the continuers, leavers had poorer verbal and performance I.Q.'s. Leavers had poorer reading comprehension than continuers. Early school leavers at the age of fourteen had less school interest than continuers. Early leavers showed lesser aspirations in their vocational and educational plans than continuers at the age of fourteen. Audio-history was found to be related to early leaving and those pupils who failed an audio test at some stage of their schooling had a 44 per cent chance of becoming early school leavers as compared to an 18 per cent chance for the average pupil. More early school leavers came from urban areas than rural areas.

When all the early school leavers were compared to all the continuers on personality adjustment it was found that leavers tended to have a poorer personal and social adjustment. Leavers showed poorer adjustment than continuers in self reliance, sense of personal freedom, freedom from withdrawal tendencies, freedom from nervous symptoms, and total personal adjustment. Socially leavers tended to have poorer social standards, more acting out or anti-social tendencies, poorer family, school, and community relationships than pupils who continued on at high school. Early school leavers tended to be poorer than continuers in their social adjustment and in their overall adjustment.

Maori early school leaving was found to be significantly higher for urban schools. Maori pupils were three times more likely to become early school leavers

than the non-Maori pupil. Only a few significant differences were found between Maori early school leavers and Maori continuers. Maori early school leavers scored significantly lower on performance I.Q. tests but were approximately equal to Maori continuers on verbal intelligence tests. Maori leavers had poorer reading comprehension than Maori continuers. For the Maori male, school interest was found to be negatively related to early leaving but no significant difference was found for Maori females. Maori early school leavers had poorer adjustment than Maori continuers in just two areas--social standards and total social adjustment.

The non-Maori early school leaver had a poorer I.Q. on both verbal and performance tests than the non-Maori continuer. The non-Maori leaver had poorer reading comprehension than the non-Maori continuer. When personality adjustments were taken into account, it was found that the non-Maori leaver had more withdrawal tendencies, more nervous symptoms, poorer school adjustment, poorer personal and total adjustment than the non-Maori continuer. The non-Maori leaver was more likely to see his parents as leaving the decision to him whether he left or not while the non-Maori continuer most often saw his parents wanting him to spend three full years at school. It was also found that male non-Maori leavers at the age of fourteen showed less school interest than male non-Maori continuers.

Although there were approximately equal numbers of male and female early leavers, sex differences were noted between some independent variables and early school leaving.

Audio-history was related to early leaving for the male sample. Form retardedness was found to be only related to early school leaving for the female group. The percentage of subjects liked was also found to be related to early school leaving but by only the male group. When personality differences between early school leavers and continuers were considered by sex, in most areas the results for males and females were consistent. In only two areas were sex differences noted. Female leavers had more anti-social tendencies than female continuers while the differences for the male were not significant. Male early school leavers had poorer self reliance than male continuers while the differences between the females were not significant.

Socio-economic matching showed only a minor lessening of the significance of race as a factor in early school leaving. Socio-economic factors in themselves are only one of a number of variables that influence early school leaving.

The danger of generalising from profiles was noted. While as a whole early school leavers had poorer reading comprehension, twenty five per cent of leavers scored above the mean of continuers. Although leavers generally had lower verbal and performance I.Q.'s still fifteen per cent scored at or above the mean for continuers. Early school leavers cannot be stereotyped into one pattern. It was concluded that each high school should study the needs and characteristics of its own early school leavers as the local cultural setting may have its own significant influence. There is a need for more research into the area of early school leaving in the New Zealand setting.

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