Why do teens drop out?
Comparing the Views of Teen Prevention Program Participants and Non-Participants.

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US Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics, Dropout rates for 2000-2001 School Year, Grades 9-12

- Connecticut – 3%
- New Jersey – 2.8%
- New York – 3.8%
- Rhode Island – 5%
- New Hampshire – 5.4%
Dropouts in Numbers

- Connecticut – 4,694
- New Jersey – 9,882
- New York – 30,898
- Rhode Island – 2,212
- New Hampshire – 2,763
- Total – 50,449
Research Question:

How do the views of two different groups of teens differ in relation to why they think teens drop out? Furthermore, how does each group articulate to Michelle Fine’s research findings on the reasons teens are dropping out?
Thesis Statement

Upon comparing the two groups in my study, those in the program are more likely to concur with Fine and say that teens are more likely to drop out due to institutional reasons or perhaps a combination of institutional and individual reasons. Those who are not in a prevention program are more likely to attribute teens dropping out to individual reasons. I believe this is due in part because of their lack of participation in a prevention program.
Michelle Fine and *Framing Dropouts*

Initially, Fine had intended to research the reasons why teens drop out by focusing on the teens in her study.

However, after spending more time in the school with the students, faculty and administrators, she inadvertently shifted her focus from “those students” to “this institution.”

Fine argues that the lack of concern on the part of the faculty and administrators is systematically pushing students out of school.
Significance to Educational Studies:

- Pervasiveness of dropout rates
- Offers a new perspective on researching why teens dropout
- Using this angle may introduce new ways to combat the dropout rates
- Turn the focus towards the policies of the schools
Definitions for clarification:

- **Institution(al)** – refers to the school and its policies

- **Individual reasons** – refers to the most common reasons given by my interviewees: depression, drug use, teen pregnancy, lack of motivation/interest

- **Non-program participant** – a participant or group in my study who is not involved in a prevention program

- **Program participant** – a participant or group who are currently involved in a drop out prevention program
The two groups in the study

- Dropout prevention program participant teens
  - 1 – Bulkeley High School (Hartford)
  - 1 – Sports and Science Academy (Hartford)
  - 1 – Hartford High School (Hartford)
  - Two girls, one boy

- Non-participant teens
  - 2 – Rockville High School (Vernon)
  - 1 – Cheney Tech High School (Manchester)
  - Two girls, one boy
Similarities in the program group:

- All attend Hartford area schools
- All are in the same prevention program
- All of their answers given for question #5 centered around either institutional issues or a combination of both institutional and individual reasons why teens drop out
- All of the teens said that their involvement in the prevention program has changed their opinions about the importance of an education
Similarities in the non-program group:

- All attend suburban high schools
- None of them are in a prevention program
- All of their answers given for question #5 centered around individual reasons for why teens drop out
Methods:

- IRB approval
- Parental consent, Youth consent, Observational consent forms
- Devised a question set
- Became acquainted w/ program teens through my placement in the facility (I cannot disclose the name)
- Conducted phone interviews with the program teens after I received the consent forms
Methods:

- To obtain my second group I asked the high school teens in my neighborhood if they would like to participate.
- Again, I conducted phone interviews after receiving the consent forms.
- Compiled the information into the two groups and looked for trends in order to compare my results to Fine’s.
- My findings are qualitative.
Question Set:

1. What high school do you attend, and what year are you?
2. How old are you?
3. Have you ever been involved in a dropout prevention activity through school or otherwise?
4. What do you think the dropout rate is in your school?
5. Some people say that teens may drop out because of individual factors. Some may say they drop out because of institutional factors. What do you think?
6. Do you know anyone who has dropped out? Can you tell me about them?
7. What are your plans for after high school?
8. Has your involvement in the prevention program changed your opinion about school?
The most important evidence supporting my thesis

- 3 out of 3 prevention participants stated how easy it is to drop out of their school.
- 2 out of 3 prevention participants stated that the school rules are inconsistent.
- 1 out of 3 stated that teens drop out for institutional as well as individual reasons.
- 3 out of 3 prevention participants did not know what the dropout rate was in their school.
  - Implies that the school does not discuss the problem.
The most important evidence supporting my thesis

- 3 out of the 3 non-program participants stated that they think teens drop out because of individual reasons.
- 1 out of the 3 said they thought it was a combination of individual and institutional reasons.
- Again, none of the 3 knew what the dropout rate was in their school.
Conclusions

- Those involved in a prevention program were more likely to talk about institutional issues.
- Those not involved in a prevention program were more likely to talk about individual issues.
- The program participants are more closely related to Fine’s results.
THE END

QUESTIONS...