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## BOOK REVIEW: D. JEAN CLANDININ, PAM STEEVES, VERA CAINE, COMPOSING LIVES IN TRANSITION: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

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### ABSTRACT

D. Jean Clandinin, Pam Steeves, Vera Caine, *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*. U.K.: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013, 260 pp., Rs. 1208 INR (Hardback). ISBN: 978-1-78052-974-5.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The narrative accounts of eleven early school dropouts are discussed in this book. D. Jean Clandinin, Pam Steeves, and Vera Caine wrote the piece of literature. The book is broken up into seventeen segments. The author employs an intriguing technique that includes literature reviews, open-ended structured interviews, and snowball sampling, among other things. This qualitative study provides a better and more comprehensive understanding of the circumstances to analyse why people leave school early. This study uniquely includes students' opinions about their reasons for dropping out. This book illustrates how students' diverse identities, cultural origins, and hobbies greatly influence their behaviour. Most people think that students who abandon their studies during school are dropouts, yet this is a minimal definition of quitting education. Writers claim that dropout words only display numerical data. The history behind a student's decision to drop out of school is never given. A poor education is detrimental to the social fabric as it makes it difficult to obtain employment, which also affects the economy. Various researchers, including educators and academics, have contributed to this study. The province of Alberta in western Canada serves as the study's base. The experiences of early school leavers and how their identity is shaped as such are conceptualised in this study. This study investigates how early school leavers' institutional environments are shaped by their many cultural, familial, and social identities. Numerous schools have participated in this study, and researchers have gathered data from narrative inquiry projects. This research reveals the distinction between institutional knowledge and first-person narratives of early school dropouts. This study differs from previous stereotype-based research that was conducted. These studies essentially depict the limited scenario of dropout rates. Still, this book is quite different since it gives students' behavioural points of view on their early school abandonment, and the narrative inquiry presents a unique scenario.

**Chapter 1** examines the complicated and varied nature of early school departure in this chapter. The need for improved skill and development rose in the 20th century when early school departure was initially identified. Racial and cultural variety abounds in Canada, where the majority of refugee students drop out of school early. In the 2011 census, just 20% of students did not complete their education. Research has been conducted at several schools using a variety of narrative descriptions in order better to understand the experiences of early school leavers and teachers. The author investigates the identities and social contexts of early school dropouts. Schools do more than teach students things; they help shape their identities and lifestyles. The narrative narratives of Jean, Pam, and Vera, as well as their experiences throughout their research projects, are included in this chapter.

**Chapter 2** covers the methods and literature review that are completed for this research project in this chapter. This comprehensive examination of the research provides a full grasp of the effects of early school departure. The idea of early school departure is ever-evolving. 1990, a study on early school leavers in the United States began. Research has identified two variables: pull-out and push-out factors. For students, school is not always meaningful. The author offers statistical analysis through a literature survey, including the dropout rate. Native students drop out of school at a greater rate than non-Native students. Early school departure has a variety of causes, including social, racial, cultural, and economic factors. Because researchers often focus on school administrators and instructors, this work breaks the stereotype that students leave school early. Instead, the authors attempt to understand students' perspectives and reasons for leaving school early.

**Chapter 3** The author discusses the study techniques and methodology in this chapter. The author used qualitative, ethnographic, and narrative inquiry methods. To learn more about student behaviour, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews. Snowball sampling has been utilised to locate study participants. Their selection criteria included only young people without a high school diploma who were between the ages of 18 and 21. Finding participants might be

challenging; advertisements are posted at coffee shops, job agencies, etc. Scholars concentrate on the experiences of early school dropouts and how they tell their tales.

**Chapter 4** The author discusses Robert's narrative account in this chapter. Robert is a trainee mechanic. Robert talks about his experiences at school. He claimed to have repeatedly been forced out of Townsend School, where he was a student. He was frequently teased at school for wearing spectacles. He began skipping school as a result. His interest lies in technical knowledge rather than academic information, so he attended trade school instead of senior high school.

**Chapter 5** This chapter sheds light on Scott's story, as told in his interview with Marni Pearce. She has solid experience teaching in elementary school. She transferred schools, where she experienced bullying and saw a decline in her grades. She transferred schools during high school, yet she still feels uneasy here. She had to transfer schools after being expelled from her last one without any explanation. She began to miss school since she was having trouble adjusting. She finished her twelfth grade without showing up to class.

**Chapter 6** This chapter is a narrative account of Yi Li's interview with Jasmine, the subject of this narrative report. She aspires to work in third-world nations and for the United Nations. She finished her fourth grade in a country in Central Africa. She then finished the fifth through ninth grades in Northern Africa. She began focusing on her studies to get better marks. She immigrated to Canada in 2002 and was accepted, but her English is not fluent enough. She has begun her ESL studies. After graduating from high school, she began working for a machinery firm. She aspired to be enrolled in business and marketing after starting in grade 11. She desired to launch her own company as well. As a result, she decided on business studies instead of academia.

**Chapter 7** illustrates Andrew's story from his conversation with D. Jean Clandinin. Andrew is quite aware of how he dresses. He has a strong bond with his family. He sees a close relationship between athletics and religion. When he was in high school, he worked at many jobs. He loves basketball with a deep devotion. For Andrew, basketball is a link to his education. He attended school in Edmonton the entire time. He had no desire to participate in classes after being expelled from the basketball team in his senior year of high school. Andrew's connecting link, basketball, has been severed. He thus ceased attending school.

**Chapter 8** In this chapter, Clarie Desrochers is interviewed for this story on Billie Bob. Billie Bob was raised in a metropolitan suburb. Billie Bob was a mixed-race person. Her father was from West India, while her mother was Caucasian. Despite leaving her, her father paid for her schooling and other expenditures. She is excited to interview at her neighbourhood school since she is fond of it. She is interested in math and science. Her passion for sports is extreme. She is an excellent aid to those who are not as gifted. She gets along well with educators. She had to be accepted to a new school after leaving hers after her graduation. She had trouble adjusting to the new school, so her performance began to suffer. Her school attendance is becoming less and less. Her mother relocated to her birthplace. He had to switch schools yet again as a result. She finds it challenging to fit in at a new school. She succeeded in finishing the eleventh grade. She discovered she was pregnant during her final year of high school, and as a result, she had to quit school in midterm. She desired to resume her studies. Her goal is to become a nurse, and she has earned her medical aid diploma. She enjoys being of assistance to others.

**Chapter 9** is about the interview conducted by Pam Steeves with Kevlar for this narrative recollection. They were in a restaurant when they first spoke. Kevlar began to reveal his life. He was raised around computers. He was an unpopular student in seventh grade. He moved in with his mother in eighth grade after they first met. It was a little upsetting for him to switch schools while relocating. After an argument, his mother once kicked him out of her home. He was in grade 10 at the time and had to go home in a group. It's having an impact on his academic work. When he was in grade 11, he returned home with his mother. He had a wonderful time at Shaftsbury School. In grade 12, he dropped out of school. However, he began taking classes online. He had no financial assistance to pursue his studies. Thus, he was working as a Kiosk credit card agent. Using funds from BGM, he hoped to be admitted to the Sagen College of Design and Arts.

**Chapter 10** Vera Caine was interviewed for this narrative portrait of Ben. Ben was born in Burma but later immigrated to Mizoram, India, and then to Canada. Several ethnic backgrounds influence his tale. Ben enjoys sketching a lot. He started working to support his family since he was responsible for them and wanted to provide for them. Ben began grade 10 in Canada after completing his sixth grade in India. Because of his poor English, he must select ESL. He feels uneasy in class since he is older than the other students. Ben feels embarrassed when teachers ask him his age. He struggled to fit in at school due to his shyness and the linguistic and cultural barriers he faced. Ben was interested in taking an animation course in school, but it was discontinued. This is now another justification for dropping out of school early.

**Chapter 11** This chapter is about Troung as a respondent, and D. Jean Clendenin conducted the interview. Troung holds excellent significance for Hamilton School, where Sean planned their encounter. He has a unique relationship with the

gym instructor and school administration. He enjoys playing sports, mainly soccer. He was an Edmonton community soccer player. He occasionally conflicts with other groups in the area between home and school. He relocated from Thailand to Canada after moving to another nation. The Thai army abducted his father. He experienced some delinquent conduct, such as robberies and home invasions, while residing in Edmonton's inner city. Due to his financial limitations, Troung assumes responsibility for his mother and younger siblings. Troung is the parent of a 2.5-year-old girl. He talks about his experience of quitting school, citing not playing volleyball as the leading cause. He stopped being interested in school. He completed his 12th-grade education and desired to graduate but could not because of financial limitations. He held a spiritual belief as well. He is incredibly devoted to his family and friends.

**Chapter 12** Chapter relies upon the recorded narratives of Joy-Ruth Mickelson through the interview conducted by Lynn for her report. Since Lynn is timid, Sean is with her during the interview. In addition to her significant other, Edward, Lynn talks about her grandparents and boyfriend. Lynn adores Orange Way School very much. She enjoys doing sports and has made a lot of friends there. She transferred schools in her tenth-grade year. Lung cancer was identified as her grandmother's illness. Her grandma wanted her to attend school, but she had to take care of her. Her granny departed from this life. She began consuming booze. She started peddling narcotics and drugs to support her family financially. Her grades were too poor for admittance, so she decided not to return to school. She gets along well with the mother of her lover. She is making plans for the kid. Her family is essential to her. She intended to obtain a certificate in health care services to get employment and make money. She works in the kitchen right now and enjoys the compliments she receives.

**Chapter 13** In this chapter, Vera Claine interviewed Christian for this narrative report. Sean introduces Vera and Christian. Vera is shown Christian's drawing. His arms are covered in tattoos. In grade 10, he took Mandarin, but in grade 11. He gives his appearance a lot of thought. He started missing school because he was so unhappy after losing his grandma. He enjoyed using drawings to convey his emotions. His father is Vietnamese. His language and culture have shown him a great deal of affection. He wanted to return to school because he wanted to study auto mechanics. Due to his family's needs and financial limitations, he had to leave school early and began working.

**Chapter 14** Sean Lessard interviewed Skye for this narrative account and report related to the research theme. Sean is conscientious when telling Skye's tale. Sean is a teacher in central Alberta at an urban high school. After some time, Skye arrives and meets Sean at the bus station, where Sean is waiting for her. Skye is an excellent volleyball player. Sean went to Skye's house to participate in the memorial round dance. Her educational journey began in kindergarten. She attended the reserve school for her entire time, from grade 3 to grade 7. In eighth grade, her school shifted. Skye's parents taught her about sports, dance, and culture. Skye has won two gold medals at the provincial level. She failed her tenth-grade exam. She began grade 11 alongside her grade 10 classmates. She finished grade 11 with success, but she dropped out of school and returned home with her family.

**Chapter 15** The chapter is about the connecting thread between authors and different youth's stories. The author weaves a typical thread pattern of the tales of several young people about leaving schools. Transition is typically used negatively to describe young people who have not finished their education, but this book uses a different definition. The majority of young people go on to succeed in a variety of careers, including those as artists, apprentices, healthcare workers, and others. Kevlar, for example, enjoys using drawings to express his feelings. A network of ties is influencing how young people transition. Family responsibility shapes the lives of young people. Narratives of young people illustrate the various contradictory obligations—cultural, institutional, and familial—that make up their existence. The young people revealed to us via their experiences how many difficulties they had in life, including Kevlar's need to live in hotels since he has nowhere else to reside. Ben is not interested in living as a refugee. The youth have a solid commitment to their education. The term "dropout" is the institutional definition of early school leavers. However, this book offers an alternative perspective on them.

**Chapter 16** This chapter analyses the various identities that make up the lives of young people. Youth stories combine diverse life experiences, cultural contexts, and family and institutional narratives. Youth's lives are significantly impacted by their families. It can be stated clearly or implicitly, depending on the situation. A large number of participants are accountable to their families. Sometimes, it's monetary, but other times, it's different, like health problems. They would then have to provide for their family. Cultural narratives, such as language, physical type, skin tone, and place of residence, also influence youth tales. Christian uses painting as a way to communicate his feelings. His ancestry is Asian. He is aware of Asian culture and cartoons. In many childhood stories, school is a strictly defined setting where students acquire the required information, abilities, and attitudes. Because it limits the impression of early school departure, none of the participants favour the term "dropout," which is applied to those who leave school early. Various narratives provide us with a better understanding of early school departure. The author was exposed to many institutional, linguistic, social, and geographic narratives that shaped the lives of young people.

**Chapter 17** The author shares their first-hand accounts of their school in this chapter. One of the book's writers, Pam Steeves, talks about her experience of moving both her birthplace and school frequently. Mathew, her disabled kid, is her child. She is having difficulty giving her child an improved education. After reading about various youth tales, she is motivated to assist young people with their academics. Vera also gets out of school early since rules there stifle people's voices. She discovered from many youth narratives that institutional narratives, language, and culture influence young people's lives. According to Jean's experiences, there are two worlds: the first is at home, and the second is at school. Life is happening in both locations. Those that don't fit in at school will often have unpleasant experiences. I also learned about the summer teaching program from Sean. It is interesting to watch people jogging. Summer teaching programs usually include other activities, such as math, social studies, wellness, and Aboriginal studies. Sean also talked about his time in school. This chapter gives us a variety of perspectives on transition and the reasons behind their early school departures. These transitions shape different identities. Thanks to this study, we now have a better knowledge of early school departure. It primarily focuses on how young people see early school departure.

## 2. CONCLUSION

This book's narrative experiences of young people help us comprehend early school departure better. The author provides the term "dropout," which was previously defined as a new meaning. By looking at early school departure through the eyes of adolescents, they offer a fresh perspective. Youth school dropout rates can be attributed to various factors, including family, migration, language, and culture. They are shaping youth. Since this study differs from other prominent studies on early school leaving, focusing on adolescents rather than schools, administrators, and instructors, one may discover differing opinions about early school leaving. This book is considered essential reading for ethnographic research in sociology or education and for anyone seeking an alternative perspective on early school departure. That being said, this book offers no recommendations for educators or other officials. The youth's narrative is the entire content of this book. This research provides a qualitative perspective of teenage life stories but does not include any quantitative analysis. Various identities, family histories, and societal situations shape youth's life and educational experiences. This book offers diverse perspectives on how family responsibilities and culture affect young people's academic performance. This book only contains eleven narrative stories of youth; therefore, it does not detail early school departure. Various identities are rooted in diverse youth stories. Rather than presenting the popular conception of early school departure, this book gives us a view of youth upon leaving school early.

## 3. REFERENCE

- [1] Clandinin, D. J., Steeves, P. & Caine, V. (2013). *Composing Lives in Transitions: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*. U. K.: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.