

WAYS OF MATTERING AND MEETING STUDENT NEEDS  
IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined how students report the relationship between feelings of mattering at school and how their needs are being met while at school. The study included 134 students, in grades nine through twelve, in five alternative programs in Vancouver, B.C. The meeting of students needs and the measurement of perceptions of mattering were determined through the use of two questionnaires. The instrument measuring needs fulfilment employed scales relating to security, social, esteem and self - actualization needs. The questionnaire measuring perceptions of mattering utilized scales measuring perceptions of importance, attention, dependence and ego - extension. The results showed strong correlations between the meeting of student needs and perceptions of mattering while in attendance at school.

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## INTRODUCTION

Our society has increasingly come to recognize the necessity of seeking alternative solutions to meet the needs of society in a world of ever shrinking natural resources. During the past twenty five years, we have also found alternative solutions for the development of our most precious resource: our youth.

This study will examine an increasingly growing phenomenon in our educational system, the alternative school. From humble beginnings at drop - in centres in the late 1960's to development in the board rooms of the 1990's, the alternative school movement has shown steady growth throughout this period. Presently, alternative schools exist in almost every community in British Columbia. In the Vancouver school district alone, there are over twenty alternative programs in existence, serving over five hundred students. During the past decade, associations and annual conferences have been developed to address the specific needs in alternative education in British Columbia. It is the examination of the types of needs that these schools meet that lies at the foundation of this study.

## THE LOCAL CONTEXT IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

This study took place within alternative school programs located in the Vancouver school district. Within this district there are a number of different forms of alternative programs which target different types of students. These include "Bridge" programs which help students in transition from elementary to secondary school, treatment programs for students who exhibit severe behavioral problems or are emotionally fragile, and specific programs for delivery of service to target groups such as



aboriginal students, students attending school by order of the court, and students who have entered custodial care of the Provincial government and require temporary school placements.

The remaining two forms of alternative schools serve the large majority of students enrolled in alternative schools in Vancouver and are the focus of this study. They are the intermediate and senior secondary alternative rehabilitation programs. Intermediate programs vary from twenty to forty students in size. They generally serve students in the grade nine and ten years. Though administratively tied to the larger secondary schools, these programs are mostly located separately from their "parent" schools in portables or rented facilities located off site. The two senior programs serve from eighty to one hundred students in the grade eleven and twelve years.

Students who attend alternative schools share much in common with each other as well as with students located in the larger system. Students in alternative schools must satisfy the same core curriculum and graduation requirements as those who attend a regular secondary school. They must also write the same provincial examinations in appropriate subject areas. Rutter (1988) discussed the underlying commonalities all students share: the need for group membership, the need for positive relationships with adults, the need to acquire skills and knowledge, and the need to develop a sense of competence. While students in alternative schools share these same needs, they also share in common the fact that these needs were not being met for them in the context of the large secondary school. The purpose of this investigation is specifically to attempt to identify how these needs are met for students in the

alternative school environment.

It has been suggested that alternative schools are superior in meeting student needs than the conventional high schools (Rutter, 1988; Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981). This study will examine the role of mattering (Amundson, 1993; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989) in alternative school environments.

The primary question for this research is as follows: Is there a relationship between mattering and how students report their needs being met in alternative schools?

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms alternative school and alternate school are interchangeable for the purposes of this study. Drake's (1985) definition translates well to this study. He defined alternate schools as, "programs to provide a non - traditional school atmosphere for secondary students who wish to complete their education but are unable to function productively in their home school because of behavioral and attitudinal conflicts."

Mattering is a construct proposed by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981). It has been defined by Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) as the "beliefs people have, whether right or wrong, that they matter to someone else, that they are the object of someone else's attention, and that others care about them and appreciate them." This is the definition adopted for the purposes of this study.

In order to clearly define the terms used when discussing student needs in this study, I will borrow directly from Smith, Gregory and Pugh (1981) who operationalized Maslow's (1954)

hierarchy of needs for use in the development of the Statements About Schools Inventory ( Smith, 1975; Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981). Security needs describe students' need for, " a stable, orderly and controlled environment that minimizes physical and psychological threat and fosters a sense of well - being." Social needs describe " opportunities for students to establish friendships with peers and adults and how schools foster feelings of belonging to a group." Esteem needs describe whether students feel capable of being successful and reaching important levels of achievement. Finally, self actualization describes how students grow in personally meaningful and satisfying ways toward the goal of becoming more complete and integrated human beings.

#### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study examines how the needs of students are met in alternative education programs in Vancouver. Of equal importance is whether students who attend these programs perceive that they matter to those who provide these programs. Central to the study is an assumption / hypothesis that there may exist a relationship between mattering and how students report their needs as being met. Do students who feel that they matter also feel that their needs are being met? Conversely, do students who fail to graduate from an alternate program feel that their needs were not met or that they felt that they did not matter?

This thesis will attempt to describe this relationship if it exists by means of survey research. It is hoped that results from this study will further enhance the literature regarding alternative schools, their planning, and their implementation. It

is also hoped that the results will benefit all students, teachers and counsellors in maintaining school environments and relationships that are beneficial to all those who enter schools each and every day.

#### ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

It is assumed that, in all schools, student needs are met in many different ways. It is also assumed that many high school students feel that they matter in the context of the regular high school. Having stated this, it is also assumed that for those students who drop out of school or move into an alternative system, that these needs are not met at a sufficient level in order to maintain their attendance in a regular school, for whatever reason.

The purpose of this study is not to condemn the valuable work performed by teachers, counsellors and administrators in the regular schools. They are constrained on a daily basis by insufficient resources needed to cope with growth in class sizes and caseloads which do not allow counsellors the time or opportunity to achieve a closeness of relationship with students who require their expertise and support.

This study seeks only to describe characteristics of school environments, specifically alternative school environments, which are able to meet students needs at higher levels. This study also assumes that students who feel that they matter in their school environment will report their needs being met at a higher level than those students who experience the feeling of not mattering.

### LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study relies on self report questionnaires for collection of data. While survey data collection risks the possibility of respondents trying to respond to questions in a way which will appear socially desirable or to please those who are conducting the research, these risks of distortion are manageable. Far outweighing these risks are the benefits of this same form of research. What is attempted in this study is to have students report on their private thoughts and feelings about the schools that they attend. They will be able to respond to questionnaires which are understandable to them and which will provide a safe outlet for the reporting of their experience as students. This method holds respect for the client and their experience.

This study is somewhat limited by the sampling of students to be surveyed. The lack of a random sample is offset by the size of sample to be studied. One senior program will be surveyed as well as a core group of four intermediate programs located in differing parts of Vancouver. This will encompass over thirty percent of all students enrolled in Vancouver's alternate system. My bias in selection of this topic for study comes from fifteen years of working in Vancouver's alternative schools. During this time I have worked on site in both intermediate and senior programs as a Youth and Family Counsellor. Having extensive knowledge of all programs existing within the district gives me confidence that the same operative constructs are alive in all alternate programs and that this limited sample can be generalized to all programs.

The Ways of Mattering Questionnaire (Amundson, 1993), one of

the two instruments to be used in this study, is still being validated. This study will be one of many projects involved in the validation of the form.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The introduction to this topic, including background of the problem, definition of terms, scope of the study, assumptions and limitations of the study has been presented in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 will provide the reader with a review of the literature written on alternative education programs, and the characteristics of the students who attend them. As well, an overview of the two instruments to be used in the study will be provided along with a brief review of research on mattering.

Chapter 3 will focus on methodology of data collection, the specifics regarding the sample population to be surveyed, reliability and validity of the instruments to be used, and the data analysis procedures which will be incorporated in my analysis.

Chapter 4 of the study outlines the results of the data collected. This includes means, reliability scores and correlations of the scales of the instruments both within each questionnaire as well as between the scales of both questionnaires.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions drawn from the data and suggestions for further research.

The appendix will include references, letters used for parental consent and participant introduction as well as copies of the instruments that were used in the study.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to provide the reader with insight into four main areas:

- 1) the characteristics of alternative schools in Vancouver.
- 2) how students report their needs being met while attending these programs.
- 3) whether students report that they feel that they matter to those with whom they spend their school days.
- 4) whether there exists an identifiable relationship between mattering and student perceptions of need fulfilment.

This literature review will cover each of these areas extensively. Other related topics will also be outlined and briefly discussed.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMS

The primary motive for this study is to contribute to the literature data which describe the functioning of the many alternate programs which serve students in Vancouver. There presently exists a void in this area of the literature. I have, as was previously mentioned, worked in these programs for fifteen years. While performing my duties over the years, I have had countless discussions with regular school counsellors, teachers and administrators about how alternative schools work, which students are appropriate candidates for alternate schools, and about what makes alternative schools unique in how we address student needs. Many of the programs have generated handouts for dissemination to students who may benefit from attendance in an alternative school.

The school district has compiled manuals of program descriptions for distribution to school counsellors to provide assistance to counsellors in referral of students who are at risk of dropping out or being asked to leave a regular school for exhibition of problematic behaviours. The provincial Ministry of Education mandates that all programs in the province of British Columbia undergo rigorous program evaluation as part of the accreditation process.

However, alternative education programs are commonly included in these program evaluations as mere satellite programs of the large school, and as such only brief program descriptions, statements of goals and outcomes are included in these reports. During the period that I have worked in these programs, which began in 1980, there has been no substantial research done on alternative schools in Vancouver.

The core questions of this research study have been in development for about five years at the time of this writing. In 1989, I began gathering information about students who attend Total Education school, a senior secondary alternative program in Vancouver. This was in response to a request for creation of a new counselling position at the school to enable counselling staff to more adequately meet the needs of the students who were attending at the time. Not surprisingly, the questions began to arise: What are the needs of this population which we are trying to meet? How are we meeting them and how can we better meet these needs?

During this developmental period, I gathered basic demographic data which described the student population who attended the school. In 1990, I came upon the Statements About Schools Inventory



(Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981 ). I began preliminary investigations with this instrument in order to familiarize myself with it and to begin trying to determine whether this instrument held hope for identifying how Total Education met student needs, and to try and ascertain ways of further enhancing our program. Early data collected, while not subjected to rigorous statistical analysis, was put forth internally and subsequent changes were implemented to specifically enhance the social atmosphere of the school. Details of this instrument will be laid out in full later in this chapter.

As I entered graduate school, determined to study and report on the phenomenon of alternative education, I was aware that there was still a piece of the puzzle missing. There exists something in alternative schools that assists students in feeling that their needs are being met.

Over the years, alternative educators have talked of the smaller class sizes, about a 'humanistic' approach to working with students. We pride ourselves on relating to students on a first name basis. What I suspect that we have been trying to describe is that students who attend alternative schools matter. It matters whether they arrive on time in the morning. It matters that they acquire the basic skills necessary to move forward as individuals. It matters if they are upset or feel joyful. Having students feel that they are succeeding matters. It is this elusive construct of mattering that I hypothesize exists in relation to how students feel that their needs are being met in alternative schools.

#### Characteristics of Students Entering Alternate Schools

Describing the students who enter alternative education programs can be a complex and elusive task. There are often a

number of factors involved in a student's decision to leave the regular system. These may operate independently of each other or in tandem with other situational variables in operation at the time. What these students share in common is that they consider alternate schools when their present school placement is in jeopardy for whatever reason, they have been asked to withdraw from school, or that they have decided that attendance in a regular school program has become untenable for them.

Often one of the first signals that a student is experiencing difficulty in a regular program is a drop in school attendance or a change of school behaviours. (Barr, 1981; Drake, 1985; Rutter, 1988) Sudden changes in attendance or behaviour are often, like a weather vane, the first indicators that other life stresses may be coming into play for the student. Rutter (1988) noted that often students are affected by, " the sense of isolation that some students feel in large impersonal institutions. Students cannot shield their academic performance from the pressures of outside influences or life circumstances." Students surveyed at Total Education in the past have reported that between 75 - 85% of them had attendance problems in the regular schools. These figures are derived from surveys conducted by myself on the worksite in three different years commencing in 1989. Other information which will be described in this section related to Total Education students was also derived from this early survey research.

In her study of high school dropouts and their experience of invalidation in high schools, Thomson (1992) outlined a number of personality and social aspects of students experiencing difficulty in a regular high school and at risk of dropping out. She included,

" low self esteem and self confidence, low levels of social competence / involvement, an external locus of control, a lack of ability to defer gratification, more likely to have been labelled a behaviour problem, more likely to have friends who have dropped out, and more likely to work more than fifteen hours per week." (pg. 15) This most thorough list also fittingly describes students whose feelings of isolation and invalidation lead them into eventual enrolment in alternative schools. Information gathered at Total Education indicate that 55 - 65% of students report having felt isolated in the regular schools. Barr (1981) reported that smaller class sizes and a more caring and competent teaching staff which exist in most alternative schools helps to reduce student feelings of isolation and aggressive behaviour.

The spiral downward of performance was aptly described by Thomson (1992). After fifteen years of working with students who have spiralled out of the regular school system, I could not put forward a more accurate and descriptive picture than she painted of the students who drop out of school and who arrive in alternative programs seeking placement on a daily basis. The influence of outside factors and life circumstances that Rutter (1988) described are instrumental in the development of this spiral. A typical case may develop as follows: A student is beginning to show declines in attendance and academic performance. While noted by individual teachers, information is shared only on reports which are sent home. A declining report card erodes the students' self confidence. However, factors that contribute to this decline are often not identified and the student is left to his / her own devices to rectify this situation. Falling behind in work

often results in a student having difficulty with concepts presented in the classroom in ensuing lectures, thereby eroding the student's self esteem and self confidence further. This often results in a student beginning to feel hopeless and these feelings are often acted out through skipping classes and giving up on attempting to complete the work assigned to them. Thomson ( 1992) notes that typically a sense of alienation sets in and that students no longer recognize the school as a place where," they feel valued and that teachers and peers are not a source of validation, support and encouragement." (Pg. 16) This classic case is typically dealt with at the termination of a student's time in a regular school. By the time that the regular school counsellor becomes actively involved the student has typically suffered massive blows to their self esteem and perception of themselves as students. At this stage the student and / or the school are rarely able or willing to undertake remediation of the problems which have arisen. This is often the point where referral to an alternative school is put forward.

Thomson ( 1992) accurately placed the blame for the lack of identification of these students on society and the educational systems, and not on the individual students. Society must value the provision of resources to educators and this must be translated into action by legislators who are willing to ensure that schools can more adequately meet the needs of their students.

Students who transfer into the alternative schools often experience a general rise in their feelings of self - esteem. It has been suggested that smaller class size ( Barr, 1981; Drake, 1985) contributes to this rise in self esteem. Group membership and

feelings of inclusion were discussed by Rutter (1988). Drake (1985) cautions about the transferability of gains in self esteem, work habits and attendance from the alternate school to society at large. In contrast to the picture of a lack of structure painted by Drake (1985), Woudzia (1989) examined the relationships between student perceptions and teacher organization in seven alternate schools in the Fraser Valley of B.C. He reported student desire for task structure and structured curricula as desirable in developing cohesiveness and students satisfaction in these alternate schools. Ironically, he reports that while inflexibility of the large school was often cited as an initial source of dissatisfaction, students surveyed reported structure in their school experience as being important for them. This is reflective of the Vancouver experience as well. While the approach is different in alternative schools, universally they provide students with structured curricula and course content which meet the guidelines as outlined by the provincial government.

A unique but crucial factor often comes into play for students entering alternate schools: free choice. Many students experiencing difficulty in the regular schools arrive on the doorstep of alternative schools by word of mouth referral through friends or family. These students, often aware of their growing difficulties, choose to opt out of the regular schools by choice. This has been noted by Barr (1981) and has been cited as a profound change in perspective by Smith and his colleagues (Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981). The Vancouver alternative system offers potential students many programs which they can consider while providing alternative program staff the opportunity to place students in

their programs on the basis of mutual suitability wherever possible.

Other areas which will be explored in more detail but have only been eluded to in this preliminary literature review which outline the characteristics of students who attend alternative schools are:

- school related factors such as a history of academic failure and academic frustration.
- the lack of meaning and relevancy of curriculum to the world outside.
- personal and family issues reported by the students who attend alternative schools. These include marital disintegration and survival in a single parent home, personal or familial alcohol or drug dependency, physical, verbal and/or sexual abuse, family dysfunction as a result of psychological/ psychiatric disorders, and a factor which increasingly affects students at the basic level of survival - poverty.

### Mattering

The development of the construct of mattering began at the University of Maryland with the work of Morris Rosenberg and B. Claire McCullough (1979). Their first published study on the subject was titled Mattering: Inferred Significance and Mental Health among Adolescents ( Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Using Sullivan's (1947, 1953) term "significant others" they postulated we attribute more meaning to the views of certain others who are viewed as significant to us. They examined the obverse: the degree that we feel that we matter to others.

Mattering involves the conviction and the feeling that we:

- a) are the object of someone's attention. We feel that we are noticed or acknowledged.
- b) that we are important to that person. They care about our desires, wishes and actions.
- c) that someone is dependent on us. People rely on our contributions, actions or ideas.
- d) we are an ego - extension of another. How well we do is seen as an extension of the other, such as parental pride.

Rosenberg and McCullough's (1981) early work with the Baltimore Parental Mattering Index was a theoretical replication study examining the same propositions across diverse samples using diverse indicators of the same concepts. The results showed clear positive relationships between parental mattering and global measures of self esteem. Adolescents that felt that they mattered little to their parents were more likely to be depressed , anxious or otherwise emotionally disturbed. Small differences were reported relating mattering to social class: there was no significant relationship to sibling structure or religion. A strong empirical relationship was established between parental significance and parental mattering. Mattering was also established as a two - way obligation.

Whiting (1982) examined mattering and the adolescents' social world. She sought to replicate the work of Rosenberg and McCullough (1979) relating mattering to parents as well as to compare these results with other sources of mattering such as teachers, friends, siblings and global feelings of mattering. She examined outcome variables such as self esteem, self concept of school ability,

depression and rebellious behaviour at school. She found that perceptions of mattering to all sources except siblings do affect at least one of the outcome variables as listed above at a commonly accepted significance level. ( $p < .05$ ). She stated that these results " not only illustrate the compelling nature of the mattering motive, but they also lend support to the basic theoretical premise of this study: the close link between Self and Other.) (p. 178) She also found that mattering variables generally affect the outcome variable in the predicted direction, corresponding most frequently with high self esteem and self concept of school ability, low depression and low rebellious behaviour in school. However, her predicted effects of specific mattering variables such as to teachers, friends and siblings were weak and only sporadically present. Other findings pertinent to my project were that parental mattering exhibited the strongest and most consistent impact on outcome variables and that mattering to teachers exerted its' major impact on the self concept of school ability and not on other variables. Whiting's (1982) sample was primarily composed of tenth grade boys in 'regular' schools in the U.S.

Drake (1985) reported that schools reflect the goals of society and parents in their attitudes toward success, competition and achievement. Many students become marginalized should they have difficulty achieving these goals. He suggests that these students may perceive themselves, or be perceived by others, as losers.

The significance of peer and teacher relationships to students cannot be understated. Schlossberg (1989) examined marginality and mattering at the college level. She discussed the fact that people



in transition often feel marginalized. Studying learners in a non-traditional college program, she found that many adult learners felt that they mattered to an advisor or to the institution they attended and were engaged in their learning as a result. As a result, Schlossberg (1989) suggested that institutions focus on creating environments where all students feel that they matter and will desire to become involved.

Students who attend alternative education programs have certainly been marginalized in the educational system. They matter to their parents, to their peers, and to those who work with them in the schools. Which leads to the question: Does mattering have a relationship with a school's meeting of their needs? Mattering will be measured using the Ways Of Mattering Questionnaire: Group and Individual Forms ( Amundson, 1993) Details on this form will be provided in the methods chapter.

### The Statements About Schools Inventory

The Statements About Schools Inventory (S.A.S, Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981) was developed to measure the extent to which high schools meet the needs of their students for a safe stable environment, for interpersonal relationships, for success and achievement, and for personal growth.

The instrument was designed over a six year period to measure the operative values at work in both conventional and alternative schools. Grounded in theory to Maslow's (1954) needs hierarchy, the instrument was tested , re-written and re-tested during this period to establish reliability and validity estimates. The final document

was presented in 1981. Details regarding the technical information on the S.A.S. will be outlined in the chapter on methodology.

Four scales have been developed for the S.A.S.:

- 1) Security scale - measures the needs of students for a safe, stable environment.
- 2) Social scale - measures whether schools meet student's needs for interpersonal relationships.
- 3) Esteem scale - measures whether schools meet students needs for success and achievement.
- 4) Self Actualization scale - measures whether schools meets the needs for students' personal growth.

Smith et al. (1981) studied student needs by administering the S.A.S. in six conventional high schools and seven alternative schools in four different states. The results of the study were dramatic. Both conventional high schools scored equally on meeting student security needs. However, alternative schools were significantly more successful than the conventional schools in meeting the social, esteem and self actualization needs. School sizes, strength or weakness of any of the schools studied, and other possible variables were ruled out as influences to the results.

The results of this study, the literature on alternative schools, combined with the data that I had collected on site at Total Education regarding the student population provided the impetus for this study. I have therefore developed the following hypotheses. They are:

- H1: That there will exist no significant relationship between mattering and security and social needs on the S.A.S. - actual school form.
- H2: That there will exist a significant relationship between mattering scores and student needs measured by the scores on the esteem and self actualization scales of the S.A.S.- actual school form.
- H3: That the same relationships listed in H1 and H2 will exist in the comparisons regarding the ideal school form of the S.A.S.
- H0: That there will no significant relationship between mattering scores and scores on the S.A.S.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This study was designed as an explorative study to try and establish a relationship between mattering and the meeting of students needs in alternative schools. Data was gathered using two instruments: The Statements About Schools Inventory ( Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981) and The Ways Of Mattering Questionnaire ( Amundson, 1993). This chapter will outline the details about the population, participants, the instruments, data gathering procedures and methods of analysis.

### Population and Participants

The population from which the sample was drawn is limited to students presently enroled in alternative schools in Vancouver. Students who attend one senior alternative program, Total Education, were surveyed (n=71). This comprises approximately 40% of students enroled in senior programs in the district. A similar number of students were surveyed in various programs described as intermediate programs.

Senior programs serve students in grades 11 and 12. The student applicants for admission are screened through an intake process. They share in common appropriate reading levels to the entry grade, completion of grade 10, age to grade level appropriateness and an expressed desire to achieve high school graduation. Total Education is a district - wide resource, and as such, enters students from all geographic areas of the city, all groups in the socioeconomic strata, with attention given to inclusion of

students representing minority groups in the population. Referrals are received from all regular secondary schools in the city as well as from the system of intermediate alternative programs in existence throughout the district. All students must meet the same requirements for graduation as would any student attending any school in the Province of British Columbia.

The intermediate programs that were surveyed serve students in the grade 9 and 10 years (n=63). Students entering these programs are screened by the staff working in the program. Attention is given to placement of students appropriate to the individual school. While students in the intermediate programs share many common traits regarding skill levels, age to grade appropriateness, reasons for entry into alternative education programs and meeting grade ten requirements, there are local differences in the application of some curricula which reflect the uniqueness of the program philosophy or staff preference in application of this curricula. Examples would be involvement in the inclusion into to program work placements, outdoor education programs, or a commitment to voluntary service. These local differences can at times act as agents of attraction for certain students in seeking alternative placement. Aside from these local differences, the population of students in intermediate programs is satisfactorily homogenous.

#### Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to examine the reported experience of students who are attending alternative school programs. The focus is on their perceptions of their experiences of both mattering and how their needs are being met in these programs.

Therefore, they were surveyed using two instruments tailored to the measurements of these constructs: The Statements About Schools Inventory (Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981) and The Ways Of Mattering Questionnaire ( Amundson, 1993). Data was collected in a group setting, with no group numbering more than twenty. Due to the on - site nature of this research, proper prior consent was secured for each participant. Students who chose not to participate were offered alternative activities.

### The Questionnaires

The S.A.S. comprises two parts. Both sections of the S.A.S. ask respondents to respond to value statements which are translated into the four scales of needs being measured on both parts of the questionnaire: security, social, esteem, and self actualization.

Part 1 asks students to respond to 44 value statements relating specifically to the actual school that they attend. Four statements are included in this section are repeat statements as a check on how conscientiously the respondent is responding. Respondents are eliminated should they not meet pre - set guidelines on these items. Each statement is responded to on a five point Likert scale.

Part 2 asks the respondent to provide a picture of how they view their concept of an 'ideal' school, responding to forty similar value statements.

Two scores are derived from data collected. They are a Needs Satisfaction (Actual) score, a Needs Satisfaction (Ideal) score.

Reliability estimates were obtained for the S.A.S. using the

school as a unit of analysis. Estimates of reliability of the S.A.S. scales (Cronbach alphas) ranged from .88 to .98 for the students' actual school classifications and from .92 to .98 for their ideal school classifications. For teachers, estimates were from .87 to .97 (actual) and .80 to .96 (ideal).

The intercorrelation matrix showed that, with the exception of the security scale which bears a near zero relationship to the other scales, all other scales were highly correlated ( $r$ 's = .92 to .96).

Concurrent validity was established with The Quality of School Life questionnaire (Epstein & McPartland, 1976). Three of the four scales of the S.A.S. (Social, Esteem and Self Actualization) showed high positive correlations with the three subscales of the Q.S.L. the correlations ranged from .63 (between esteem and satisfaction) to .95 (between esteem and both social, and reactions to teachers). Six of the nine correlations were in the .90 range. The security scale reflected low correlations with the Q.S.L. measures. With the exception of security, all correlations were significant at the .01 level or greater.

#### The Ways Of Mattering Questionnaire

The Ways of Mattering Questionnaire (Amundson, 1993) is also composed as a two form questionnaire. The group and individual forms ask respondents to rate their reactions to twenty statements worded identically. The responses are rated on a five point Likert scale as to whether the individual or group that they are considering make them feel important or that they matter.

The questionnaire has four sub - scales: attention, importance, dependence, and ego - extension. Each sub - scale is

totalled and a sum of these scales becomes the overall score. The group form was employed for this study. Respondents considered two groups: the adults in their school and the other students in their school.

At proposal time, validity and reliability ratings on this questionnaire were not available. This study is part of the validation process. As well, another study is presently underway to address these concerns ( Berg, University of Saskatchewan, in progress). However, mattering has been previously operationalized in the past in the Baltimore Parental Mattering Index ( Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981) and in the Mattering Scale for Adults in Higher Education ( Schlossberg, Lasalle & Golec, 1988). It is hoped that this project will further the literature relating to mattering in differing contexts.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

The goal of this study is to examine whether a relationship between mattering and the meeting of student needs exists. Analysis of the relationship of scores between the two instruments as well as the sub - scales of both questionnaires will be done. This will permit an examination of relationship between meeting student needs and perceived mattering.

Concerns regarding generalizability from a non random sample should be overcome by the fact that between twenty and thirty percent of the total population available will be surveyed.

The complete analysis of the data was completed in six stages. Once all questionnaires were completed, all were examined in a check for consistency of responses as established for the S.A.S. by



Smith, Gregory and Pugh (1981). Those questionnaires which showed inconsistency or incompleteness were discarded.

The Ways of Mattering (Amundson, 1993) responses were then transferred from the original forms to a computerized bubble sheet containing the S.A.S. (Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981) data for ease of scoring through the use of scanning technology. Upon completion of the scanning and creation of data files, means were measured for all scales of both instruments, reliability estimates were run for the Ways of Mattering questionnaire (Amundson, 1993), and correlations were run on all sub-scales of both instruments used in the study.

## CHAPTER IV THE RESULTS

### Bio - demographic Information

At the completion of the data gathering phase of the study, I had collected data at five alternative programs in Vancouver, British Columbia. Geographically, students from all areas of the city were represented, either by attendance in their program located in their general neighbourhood of residence, or by attending a program regarded as a district - wide program which accepts students who reside within any geographical area of the school district. I felt that the sample for this study should be representative of the district as a whole, and thus be represented by students from all parts of the district who attend alternative schools. This accounted for differences reflected in the population and makeup of the school district as a whole.

Questionnaires were completed by 136 students in five school programs. Two questionnaires had to be discarded after checking for inconsistency of response. Of those which remained active for study, 73 of 134 (54%) were completed by male students and 61 of 134 (46%) were completed by female students.

The students who completed the questionnaires varied in grade level from the ninth to the twelfth grade. Those in the eleventh or twelfth grade numbered 71 of 134 (53%), while those in grades nine and ten numbered 63 of 134 (47%).

### Statements About Schools Inventory Results

The S.A.S. ( Smith, Gregory & Pugh, 1981) is comprised of two forms. The first measures how students report their needs being met

in the actual school that they attend. The second form asks students to envision an "ideal" school and to report how that school would meet their needs. Each of the forms is comprised of four scales measuring security, social, esteem and self - actualization needs. Table 1 presents the mean S.A.S. scores as reported by students in all programs studied. The mean scores exhibit the relative satisfaction of student needs in alternative schools in Vancouver compared to the vision of an "ideal" school as reported by students surveyed in these programs.

Table 1. Mean Scores of S.A.S. Inventory Scales

Actual School Results

<u>S.A.S. Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Cases</u>
Security	35.5746	5.9563	134
Social	37.7939	6.1102	131
Esteem	38.1053	6.1067	133
Self- Actualization	38.6642	6.1375	134

Ideal School Results

<u>S.A.S. Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Cases</u>
Security	37.2205	5.6651	127
Social	42.6587	5.9628	126
Esteem	44.8750	5.7274	128
Self- Actualization	44.3701	6.0734	127

\* S.D.= Standard Deviation

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Ways of Mattering Questionnaire Results

The Ways of Mattering Questionnaire ( Amundson, 1993) is comprised of twenty questions which ask respondents to consider an individual or group and to report whether they feel that they matter to that individual or group of people. The instrument has four scales: attention, dependence, ego-extension, and importance. The students surveyed for this study completed two group forms of

this instrument. The first form completed asked students to report their perceptions of mattering in relation to the adults in their school. The second form asked the students to report on mattering within the school in relation to whether they feel that they matter to the other students in their school. Table 2 summarizes the means as reported by students from all programs surveyed.

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire

Mattering to Adults

<u>W.O.M. Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Cases</u>
Attention	18.2015	3.6228	134
Dependence	16.6716	3.3036	134
Ego- Extension	18.0602	3.6820	133
Importance	18.2463	3.6179	134

Mattering to Other Students

<u>W.O.M. Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Cases</u>
Attention	16.8346	4.7855	127
Dependence	15.6693	4.7544	127
Ego-Extension	14.8740	4.9087	127
Importance	15.6850	4.4378	127

\*S.D.= Standard Deviation

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Reliability Analysis of the Ways of Mattering Scales

One purpose of this study is to assist in the validation process of the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire ( Amundson, 1993). My motivation lies in my hypotheses that the mattering motive exists in alternative schools and is related to how students report their needs as being met at school. Smith and his colleagues (1981) spent a number of years in establishment of the S.A.S. as a valid and reliable instrument to be used in schools to measure how schools meet student needs. In order to further examine the W.O.M. as an instrument, it was decided to examine the scales of the

instrument to ensure that students were responding to the questions in consistent and meaningful ways. Table 3 outlines the reliability estimates for the Ways of Mattering Scales.

Table 3. Alpha Reliabilities of Ways of Mattering Scales

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Estimates

Mattering to the group of adults at school.

<u>Ways of Mattering Scale</u>	Cronbach's Alpha
Attention	.8021
Importance	.8123
Dependence	.7201
Ego-Extension	.8192

Mattering to the group of other students at school

<u>Ways of Mattering Scale</u>	Cronbach's Alpha
Attention	.9042
Importance	.8952
Dependence	.8909
Ego-Extension	.9011

All of the scales demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency and reliability. It can be assumed that students are responding in a consistent manner to the questions posed in the instrument.

Correlations of the Instruments

The final phase of the data analysis was to calculate the Pearson Product - Moment correlations between the scales of the two instruments. These calculations lie at the core of this study in seeking to determine whether there exists a relationship between how students who attend school in alternative programs in Vancouver report their needs being met while at school and whether they experience feelings of mattering at school. Tables 4 and 5 present the correlation calculations of the scales of the two instruments.

Table 4. Pearson Product - Moment Correlations - S.A.S. Scales

	Sec	Seci	Soc	Soci	Est	Esti	Act	Acti
Sec	1.000 (134) P= .	.4528 (125) P=.000	.6378 (130) P=.000	.3851 (124) P=.000	.6645 (132) P=.000	.3144 (126) P=.000	.5768 (133) P=.000	.2287 (126) P=.010
Soc	.6378 (130) P=.000	.2949 (123) P=.001	1.000 (131) P= .	.5154 (123) P=.000	.7930 (130) P=.000	.4404 (124) P=.000	.7621 (131) P=.000	.3908 (123) P=.000
Est	.6645 (132) P=.000	.3455 (124) P=.000	.7930 (130) P=.000	.4969 (124) P=.000	1.000 (133) P= .	.4846 (127) P=.000	.7902 (132) P=.000	.4308 (124) P=.000
Act	.2899 (126) P=.001	.5768 (133) P=.000	.7621 (131) P=.000	.4094 (125) P=.000	.7902 (132) P=.000	.4391 (126) P=.000	1.000 (134) P= .	.3861 (126) P=.000
Seci	.4528 (125) P=.000	1.000 (127) P= .	.2949 (123) P=.001	.4573 (124) P=.000	.3455 (124) P=.000	.3774 (125) P=.000	.2899 (126) P=.001	.2268 (125) P=.011
Soci	.3851 (124) P=.000	.4573 (124) P=.000	.5154 (123) P=.000	1.000 (126) P= .	.4969 (124) P=.000	.8196 (125) P=.000	.4094 (125) P=.000	.7850 (124) P=.000
Esti	.3144 (126) P=.000	.3774 (125) P=.000	.4404 (124) P=.000	.8196 (125) P=.000	.4846 (127) P=.000	1.000 (128) P= .	.4391 (126) P=.000	.8547 (125) P=.000
Acti	.2287 (126) P=.010	.2268 (125) P=.011	.3908 (123) P=.000	.7850 (124) P=.000	.4308 (124) P=.000	.8547 (125) P=.000	.3861 (126) P=.000	1.000 (127) P= .

Key: Sec= Actual School Security Needs  
 Soc= Actual School Social Needs  
 Est= Actual School Esteem Needs  
 Act= Actual School Self-Actualization Needs  
 Seci= Ideal School Security Needs  
 Soci= Ideal School Social Needs  
 Esti= Ideal School Esteem Needs  
 Acti= Ideal School Self-Actualization Needs

(coefficient / (cases) / 2 - tailed significance)

A brief analysis shows strong and significant relationship between the scales of both the actual school and ideal school scores. When comparing the same scale between the two different school scores, the relationship, while remaining significant, shows correlations low enough to suggest that the scales are indeed measuring different aspects of need fulfilment at school.

There was no significant relationship between the S.A.S. scores and gender or grade. This supports the original findings of Smith and his colleagues (1981) regarding concomitant factors in the results. However, the original study found a near zero relationship between the security scale and the other scales of the instrument. In this application of the S.A.S., the security scale interacts significantly with the other scales of the instrument, and with relative strength within the actual and ideal school results.

In working with a new instrument such as the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire, it is important to establish correlation coefficients for the scales of the new instrument. Table 5 will be broken into three sub - tables for demonstration of the relationship between the scales of the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire as developed by N.E. Amundson (1993). Table 5A will exhibit the Pearson coefficients for the W.O.M. - Adult group results. Table 5b will show the Pearsons for the group questionnaire relating perceptions of mattering to the other students. Table 5C will list all correlation coefficients of both forms including all of the scales of the two forms employed in this study.

Table 5. Pearson Product - Moment Correlations - W.O.M. ScalesTable 5A. Student Mattering and the Adult GroupsMattering Scale

	Attention	Dependence	Ego-Extension	Importance
Attention	1.0000 (134) P= .	.6683 (134) P=.000	.7941 (134) P=.000	.8222 (134) P=.000
Dependence	.6683 (134) P=.000	1.0000 (134) P= .	.6352 (133) P=.000	.6780 (134) P=.000
Ego-Extension	.7941 (133) P=.000	.6352 (133) P=.000	1.0000 (133) P= .	.7610 (133) P=.000
Importance	.8222 (134) P=000	.6780 (134) P=.000	.7610 (133) P=.000	1.0000 (134) P= .

( coefficient / (cases) / 2 - tailed significance )

Table 5B. Student Mattering and the Other Students GroupMattering Scale

	Attention	Dependence	Ego-extension	Importance
Attention	1.0000 (127) P= .	.8759 (127) P=.000	.8488 (127) P=.000	.8750 (127) P=.000
Dependence	.8759 (127) P=.000	1.0000 (127) P= .	.8504 (127) P=.000	.8798 (127) P=.000
Ego-Extension	.8488 (127) P=.000	.8504 (127) P=.000	1.0000 (127) P= .	.9072 (127) P=.000
Importance	.8750 (127) P=.000	.8798 (127) P=.000	.9072 (127) P=.000	1.0000 (127) P= .

( Coefficient / (cases) / 2 - tailed significance )



Table 5C. Correlations of all Scales - W.O.M. Questionnaire

<u>W.O.M. Scale</u>								
	Att	Atto	Dep	Depo	Ego	Egoo	Imp	Impo
Att	1.0000 (134) P= .	.2153 (126) P=.015	.6683 (134) P=.000	.2408 (126) P=.007	.7941 (133) P=.000	.1538 (126) P=.085	.8222 (134) P=.000	.2407 (126) P=.007
Atto	.2153 (126) P=.015	1.0000 (127) P= .	.2401 (126) P=.007	.8759 (127) P=.000	.2119 (125) P=.018	.8488 (127) P=.000	.2762 (126) P=.002	.8750 (127) P=.000
Dep	.6683 (134) P=.015	.2401 (126) P=.007	1.0000 (134) P= .	.2785 (126) P=.002	.6352 (133) P=.000	.1575 (126) P=.078	.6780 (134) P=.000	.2383 (126) P=.007
Depo	.2408 (126) P=.007	.8759 (127) P=.000	.2785 (126) P=.002	1.0000 (127) P= .	.2379 (125) P=.008	.8504 (127) P=.000	.2745 (126) P=.002	.8798 (127) P=.000
Ego	.7941 (133) P=.000	.2119 (125) P=.018	.6352 (133) P=.000	.2379 (125) P=.008	1.0000 (133) P= .	.0966 (125) P=.284	.7610 (133) P=.000	.2345 (125) P=.008
Egoo	.1538 (126) P=.085	.8488 (127) P=.000	.1575 (126) P=.078	.8504 (127) P=.000	.0966 (125) P=.284	1.0000 (127) P= .	.2348 (126) P=.008	.9072 (127) P=.000
Imp	.8222 (134) P=.000	.2762 (126) P=.002	.6780 (134) P=000	.2745 (126) P=.002	.7610 (133) P=.000	.2348 (126) P=.008	1.0000 (134) P= .	.3276 (126) P=.000
Impo	.2407 (126) P=.007	.8750 (127) P=.000	.2383 (126) P=.007	.8798 (127) P=.000	.2345 (125) P=.008	.9072 (127) P=.000	.3276 (126) P=.000	1.0000 (127) P= .

( coefficient / (cases) / 2- tailed significance )

Key: Att= Attention - Adults  
 Dep= Dependence - Adults  
 Ego= Ego-Extension - Adults  
 Imp= Importance - Adults

Atto= Attention - Other Students  
 Depo= Dependence - Other Students  
 Ego= Ego-Extension - Other Students  
 Impo= Importance - Other Students

A brief overview of the results of Table 5A shows strong correlations between the scales of the Ways of Mattering group form relating perceptions of mattering to adults within the school

programs studied (  $r$ 's .6352 to .8222). The group form relating perceived mattering amongst the student group (Table 5B) produced  $r$ 's varying from .8488 to .9092. These figures show consistent strong correlations between the scales within each form of the questionnaire.

The correlations between both forms are shown in Table 5C. This table shows weaker but still significant correlations between most of the scales of both forms. This provides evidence that while both forms are measuring a similar construct, they are in fact measuring different aspects of the same construct.

Further examination of the statistics shows no significant relationship between the scales representing the ego - extension scale relating to other students and the attention and dependence scales of the adult form and a weak correlation to the ego - extension scale relating to adults in the schools. Finally, as was reported regarding the S.A.S., there were no significant relationships between the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire and either gender or grade level of the students who completed the forms.

#### Relationships between the S.A.S. Scales and the Ways of Mattering Scales

The previous pages have presented data relating to both instruments. Presently, an examination of the relationship between the scales of both instruments will be undertaken. Table 6 will summarize the relationships between the scales of the S.A.S. and the mattering results relating to student reports regarding feelings of mattering to the adults in the schools that they attend. The data presented in Table 7 refers to the S.A.S. scales

and correlations to the mattering results relating to other students.

Table 6. Correlations between the S.A.S. Scales and the W.O.M - Adult Scales

<u>S.A.S. Scale</u> <u>Actual School</u>	<u>Ways of Mattering Scales</u>			
	Attention	Dependence	Importance	Ego-Extension
Security	.4351 (132) P=.000	.2537 (132) P=.003	.3883 (132) P=.000	.4222 (131) P=.000
Social	.5736 (129) P=.000	.3923 (129) P=.000	.5599 (129) P=.000	.5203 (128) P=.000
Esteem	.6098 (131) P=000	.3910 (131) P=.000	.6275 (131) P=.000	.5709 (130) P=.000
Self-Actual	.5735 (132) P=.000	.4255 (132) P=.000	.5571 (132) P=.000	.5551 (131) P=.000
<u>Ideal School</u>				
Security	.3140 (126) P=.000	.2524 (126) P=.004	.3174 (126) P=.000	.2318 (125) P=.009
Social	.3125 (125) P=.000	.1865 (125) P=.037	.3287 (125) P=.000	.2346 (124) P=.009
Esteem	.2602 (127) P=.003	.1107 (127) P=.215	.3120 (127) P=.000	.1915 (126) P=.032
Self- Actual	.1919 (126) P=.031	.0690 (126) P=.443	.2459 (126) P=.006	.1327 (125) P=.140

Key= Self-Actual= Self Actualization scores

( Coefficient / (Cases) / 2 - tailed Significance )

A brief examination of the relationships between the S.A.S. actual school results and the W.O.M. - Adult scores reveal moderately strong positive correlations between the scales of the two instruments. Therefore, it appears clear that students in these alternative programs in Vancouver report that their security, social, esteem and self - actualization needs are met in conjunction with their responses regarding being the object of the adults attention, feelings of mutual dependence and importance and that they feel that they are an mutual extensions of each others egos at school.

In a similar vein, the mattering motive appears to be operant in the vision of relationships reported for the ideal school situation. Though the relationships envisioned are somewhat weaker, they are still significant with some exceptions. In this situation, students report that they will achieve satisfaction of esteem needs without depending on the adults (  $P=.215$ ). The meeting of self - actualization needs in the ideal school configuration does not correlate to dependence on adults (  $P=.443$ ) or requiring mutual extension of each other's egos (  $P=.140$ ).

When examining Table 7 below, respondents report that other students help meet their needs at a statistically significant level in their actual school with the exception of requiring the attention or dependence on other students relating to security needs (  $P's=.085$  &  $.061$  respectively). In the ideal school configuration, relationships with other students begin to show fewer correlations. The respondents report no strong correlation to meeting security needs, weak or non - existent relationship in meeting social needs. A stronger, more significant relationship

between meeting esteem and self - actualization needs was reported. The ego - extension relationship on these two scales was non - significant, however.

Table 7. Correlations between S.A.S. Scales and W.O.M. Scales - Other Students Scales

	<u>Ways of Mattering Scale</u>			
	Attention	Dependence	Importance	Ego-Extension
<u>S.A.S. Scale</u>				
<u>Actual School</u>				
Security	.1547	.1678	.1367	.1369
	(125)	(125)	(125)	(125)
	P=.085	P=.061	P=.128	P=.128
Social	.2842	.2905	.2481	.2957
	(124)	(124)	(124)	(124)
	P=.001	P=.001	P=.005	P=.022
Esteem	.2849	.2685	.2883	.2257
	(125)	(125)	(125)	(125)
	P=.001	P=.002	P=.001	P=.011
Self- Actual	.3141	.3120	.2890	.2171
	(126)	(126)	(126)	(126)
	P=.000	P=.000	P=.001	P=.015

Table 7. ( continued)

	Attention	Dependence	Importance	Ego-Extension
<u>Ideal School</u>				
Security	.1214	.1393	.1080	.1070
	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)
	P=.186	P=.129	P=.240	P=.245
Social	.1806	.1642	.1523	.0806
	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)
	P=.048	P=.073	P=.097	P=.382
Esteem	.2349	.2157	.2227	.1189
	(121)	(121)	(121)	(121)
	P=.010	P=.017	P=.014	P=.194
Self-Actual	.2201	.1972	.2148	.1231
	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)
	P=.016	P=.031	P=.018	P=.180

Key= Self-Actual= Self - Actualization scores

( Coefficient / (Cases) / 2 - tailed Significance )

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The final set of correlation statistics which were run were produced to summarize the relationships existing between the Statements About Schools Inventory and the Ways of Mattering

Questionnaire. These figures lie at the core of this study. In order to complete this calculation, the results of the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire were summarized into two sets of scores titled "Adults" and "Others". Adults once again represents how students reported feelings of mattering to the adults in their school. Similarly, the Others represent whether students report that they feel that they matter to the other students that attend their school. The results of these calculations are found in Table 6 below.

Table 8. Summary Pearson Product - Moment Correlations of the scales of the Statements About Schools Inventory and the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire.

	<u>Ways of Mattering Scales</u>	
<u>S.A.S. Scales</u>	<u>Adult Scales</u>	<u>Other Students Scales</u>
<u>Actual School Scales</u>		
Security	.4201 (131) P=.000	.1568 (125) P=.081
Social	.5737 (128) P=.000	.2705 (124) P=.002
Esteem	.6161 (130) P=.000	.2797 (125) P=.002
Self- Actualization	.5893 (131) P=.000	.2971 (126) P=.001
<u>Ideal School Scales</u>		
Security	.3118 (125) P=.000	.1255 (120) P=.172
Social	.2957 (124) P=.001	.1515 (120) P=.099

Table 8. ( continued)

	Adult Scales	Other Student Scales
Esteem	.2437 (126) P=.006	.2073 (121) P=.023
Self-Actualization	.1755 (125) P=.050	.1974 (120) P=.031
( Coefficient / (Cases) / 2 - tailed significance )		

An examination of the results represented in Table 6 shows a moderately strong positive correlation between scores of the S.A.S. actual school scores and the Ways of Mattering - Adult scales( r's .4201 to .6161). This would indicate that students report a relationship between mattering to adults and the meeting of their needs in the actual schools which they attend. Mattering to other students shows a weaker correlation (r's .2705 to .2971) to meeting student needs in actual schools and no significance of relationship to meeting of security needs at school( P=.081).

Examination of the correlations between the ideal school scores and the mattering scores shows a weak to moderate positive correlation between mattering to adults and meeting of student needs in an ideal school configuration( r's .1755 to .3118). In this ideal school configuration, students report that mattering to other students and meeting of student needs is not related regarding security needs ( P=.172) as well as the meeting of social needs (P=.099). The relationship between mattering to other students and the meeting of esteem and self - actualization needs, while positive, is a weak to moderate relationship (r's .2437 and .1755) compared to other correlations.



Summary of Significant Results and Hypotheses

H1: There will exist no significant relationship between mattering and security needs on the S.A.S. - actual school form.

Result: Significant correlations exist relating to adult mattering and security needs ( $r=.4201$ ). Reject. Relating to mattering to other students, accept ( $P=.81$ ).

H2: That there will exist no significant relationship between mattering and security needs - ideal school form.

Result: Significant correlation between adult mattering and security needs in ideal school ( $r=.3118$ ) Reject. Relating to other student in ideal school,  $P=.172$ . Accept.

H3: There will exist no significant relationship between mattering and the meeting of social needs in either the actual school or ideal school scores.

Result: Strong positive correlation between social needs and mattering to adults ( $r=.5737$ ) as well as mattering to other students ( $r=.2705$ ) in actual school. Reject. Positive correlation between mattering to adults and social needs in ideal school format ( $r=.2957$ ). Reject. No significant correlation between social needs and mattering to other students in ideal school ( $P=.099$ ). Accept.

H4: That there will exist a significant relationship between mattering scores and student esteem need scores in both actual school and ideal school configurations.

Result: Strong positive correlation between adult mattering and esteem scores - actual school ( $r=.6161$ -adults,  $r=.2797$  - other students). Accept. Significant correlation between

matter to both adults( $r=.2437$ ) as well as to other students in an ideal school setting ( $r=.2073$ ). Accept.

H5: That there will exist a significant relationship between mattering and the meeting of self - actualization needs in both school formats.

Result: Significant strong correlation to adults ( $r=.5893$ ) as well as other students ( $r=.2971$ ) in actual school self - actualization needs. Accept. Acceptable correlation to establish linkage at  $P=.050$  level in relation to adults in ideal school setting. More significant relationship regarding mattering to other students ( $P=.031$ ) in this ideal configuration. Accept.

H0: The null hypothesis states that there will not exist significant relationships between students feeling that they matter at school and whether their needs for security, sociality, esteem or self - actualization are being met.

Result: Reject the null hypothesis. Strong positive correlations exist between mattering and the meeting of student needs in the alternative schools which were studied during this research.

## CHAPTER V . CONCLUSIONS

### Discussion of the results.

This study was founded upon the broad goal of attempting to describe and measure the school environments in existence in alternative schools in Vancouver. It is hoped that it will make a contribution to the study of alternative schools, and to the relatively small core of works relating to the concept of mattering.

First among the conclusions is that the results establish a firm relationship between student needs as outlined by Maslow (1954) and represented by Smith, Gregory and Pugh (1981) in the Statements About Schools Inventory and student perceptions of "mattering" to those with whom they spend their time with each day at school. Smith and his partners (1981), reported on the superiority of alternative schools which they studied in relation to regular high schools as measured by the S.A.S. They cited "free choice" as the only possible causal link to explain this superiority, feeling that possible "ownership" accompanied by free choice may account for the differences. This study sought to add to the work done by the developers of the S.A.S. by including another possible variable to explain the differences: the reciprocal nature of the mattering motive. This study has firmly established the relationship between mattering and how students report their needs as being met while at school.

Second, the results of this study will, hopefully, add to the existing body of knowledge relating to mattering. Some of the hypotheses put forward in this study were based upon previous work done in the area of mattering. These will be outlined in detail in

this section.

Finally, this study sought to aid in the development of the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire ( Amundson, 1993) as a valid instrument for examination of mattering as an operating motive in studying our relationships with other human beings who are significant in our lives.

As outlined above, this study firmly established a strong positive correlation between the majority of scales of the S.A.S. and the Ways of Mattering Questionnaire. During the past five years this author has been seeking an elusive descriptor which assists us in not just describing at what level we meet student needs in alternative programs, but what may be an operating factor in the relationships between students and between students, their teachers and their counsellors that aids us in describing how we meet these needs. When introduced to the concept of mattering , this study came to life and has established a link between meeting student needs in this specialized school environment and the significance of the other in school relationships.

Further to the significant results, it was hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between the security scales of the S.A.S. and mattering scores. Mattering relating to security and the adults in both the actual school and ideal school reports was significant. Security needs were not significant relating to other students in either school format.

It was predicted that there would not exist any strong linkage between mattering and social needs. Whiting (1982), studying a sample of regular high school students in the U.S.A., found little relation between siblings, friends and teachers and mattering

scores in her sample. In contrast, this study found positive correlations between social needs and mattering to adults in both actual and ideal school formats and between students in the actual school. In relation to the ideal school, this study found that social needs and mattering to other students were not related in the ideal school setting. The results of this study relate to a sample of students who attend alternative schools. Whiting's sample was drawn from a normal school population. Therefore, the disparity between Whiting's (1982) results and those of this study may offer more evidence of the unique relationships which arise and contribute to the success of students in these alternative settings who have been previously unsuccessful in the regular school setting.

This research, coupled with Thomson (1992), further supports the work of Schlossberg (1989) in relation to student marginalization and the role of community in the field of education. It is clear that administrators should strongly consider training in the sensitization of teaching personnel to enhance school communities and to reduce student alienation in their home schools.

The strongest correlations found in this study existed between the esteem scales of the S.A.S. and mattering scores. This result supports those found by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) as well as by Whiting (1982) relating mattering and self - esteem. Feeling that one matters instills adolescents with feelings of significance and importance. These are the fuels which power students to overcome the marginalization which occurred in their previous schools and aid them in the process of self - actualization and

self discovery in their present schools of attendance.

#### Other Results of Significance.

When original validation work was performed by Smith, Gregory and Pugh during the late 1970's and early 1980's and reported in 1981, they reported a near zero relationship between the security scale and the other scales of the S.A.S., while other scales correlated very highly with each other.

The results of this study differ somewhat from those reported by Smith and his colleagues (1981). The security scale correlates significantly with all scales of the S.A.S. as indicated by the responses from the students in this sample. The essence of the differences seem difficult to determine. While both samples studied were in attendance in alternative schools, the programs studied by Smith, Gregory and Pugh were located in the midwestern U.S.A. in the late seventies and early eighties while the sample for this study was drawn from a Canadian group in the mid - nineties. As well, this study found correlations, between the scales of the S.A.S. slightly lower than those of the original studies.

#### Suggestions for Further Research.

This research project supported the original hypothesis that there would exist a correlation between "mattering" in the alternative school environment and how students in these settings report their needs as being met. Need fulfilment would therefore be a consequence of the perception of mattering to other people in school environments.

What this study has not established is a causal link between mattering and how students perform at school. A study which could relate need fulfilment, mattering and academic achievement would

further enhance the enquiry into the nature and consequences of mattering. Whiting (1982) suggested that further research in this area should focus on the determinants of mattering. She suggested this in relation to the development of a guide to parenting roles. Likewise, further research which is focused on behavioral patterns in the classroom and the counselling office may aid in the training of teachers and counsellors. Having established the relationship between mattering and need fulfillment, a logical step in the development of this line of research would seek to examine the linkage between mattering and school attendance, grades, involvement in school activities and student dropout rates. The development of mattering research that is inclusive of these variables would clearly establish the determinants of mattering as it operates in school environments and further establish the validity of research involving the concept of mattering. It would provide school teams with the opportunity to examine existing school programming in relation to creation and maintenance of an atmosphere that promotes feelings of mattering for both staff and students alike. School districts would benefit from a thorough examination of the mattering concept. Feelings of mattering and the need for inclusion are universal and not just unique to students. Training which promotes a sensitivity to others should be put forth and modelled from administration downward. Recognition of the mutuality involved in relation to mattering should be included in teacher training as well as graduate training for administrators. The impact educators have on their students is simply far greater than the provision of information as mandated by government. The impact of marginalization is failure, while the impact of mattering

is inclusion.

Replication of this study with a large sample of students who attend regular high school in Vancouver would be informative in examining differences between regular school populations and the alternative population which has been the focus of this research. Gaining further insights into the interaction of the mattering motive within schools would assist in program development and program evaluation within the school system.

The relationship between marginality and mattering was explored by Schlossberg (1989). Amundson (1993) has explored the relationship of mattering in the area of employment counselling and training. It has been suggested that further studies relating to mattering and retirement from the workforce (Whiting, 1982) would follow logically in to add to the research in the area of marginalization. As well, it would be informative to research the relationship between aging and the changing roles both in the family as well as in society.

Finally, the study of the role of mattering relating to inclusion within differing groups outside of the school system has been suggested by Whiting (1982). While the focus for her is sociological in nature and relating to social and religious movements, studies relating mattering to other forms of groups also seems to be indicated. In the counselling field, studies relating mattering to group formation, group cohesion and group closure would have potential therapeutic effects for counsellors working with clients in therapeutic groups.



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APPENDIX A. - PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Counselling Psychology  
Faculty of Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4  
Tel: (604) 822-5259  
Fax: (604) 822-2328

Consent Form

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

This letter is to introduce myself and my research project to you. My name is David Norton. I am a graduate student in the Department of Counselling Psychology at U.B.C. I am studying under the direction of Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia. I will be collecting information in your son / daughter's school in the near future in order to complete my thesis for a Master of Arts degree in this department. The title of my project is: Ways of mattering and meeting students needs in alternative high school programs.

During the previous two weeks, a consent form was sent home with your student for your examination and signature. At this time, we have not received your approval for their participation in the study.

We ask that this form be returned to the school by April 19, 1995. If not returned by that date, it will be assumed that you have granted permission for your student to participate. Should you wish your student not to participate, please phone the school or return this form with signature. The remainder of this letter is identical to the original form. Thank you once again.

The purpose of the study is to seek information whether the school which your student attends is meeting his/her needs. It also will examine how students feel while they are in attendance at school. It is hoped that this project will be of assistance in helping to create learning environments where students feel that they matter, and where their needs are recognized and met.

Each student will be asked to complete two questionnaires. One questionnaire measures how students needs are fulfilled. The second one asks students to report on whether they receive attention while at school and whether they feel important at school. Completing both forms should require less than ninety minutes while they are at school. There is no experimentation

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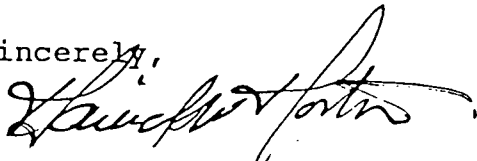
involved. Students will only complete the questionnaires which report their experiences at school. All forms are anonymous. Students will not write their names on any document which could identify them individually.

All participants will have the forms explained to them prior to completion of the forms. Any questions which may arise will be answered prior to completion of the forms. Students have the right to leave the room at any time and for any reason should they decide to withdraw from the group. Alternative activities will be available at the school to those who choose not to participate. Withdrawal from participation or choosing not to participate, either by the parent/guardian, student, or both will in no way jeopardize the student's standing at school.

Should any question arise in relation to any part of this study, please feel free to contact me. I may be reached at Total Education School at 879 - 0421 Monday through Friday. Messages can be left at this phone or at the Department of Counselling Psychology at 822 - 5259. Doctor Amundson can be reached at the department's number as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this research project.

Sincerely,



David W. Norton.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to my child's participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not consent to my child's participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent / Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date of signature.

APPENDIX B - INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Counselling Psychology  
Faculty of Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4  
Tel: (604) 822-5259  
Fax: (604) 822-2328

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in my research project. The title of my project is: Ways of mattering and meeting students needs in alternative high school programs.

The purpose of the study is to seek information whether the school which you attend is meeting your needs. It also will examine how you feel while you are in attendance at school. It is hoped that this project will be of assistance in helping to create learning environments where students feel that they matter, and where their needs are recognized and met.

Each student will be asked to complete two questionnaires. One questionnaire measures how students needs are fulfilled. The second one asks students to report on whether they receive attention while at school and whether they feel important at school. Completing both forms should require less than ninety minutes. All forms are anonymous. Please do not write your name on any document which you complete today.

I will explain how to complete the forms before you begin. If you have any questions, please ask them before we begin. Once we have begun, please raise your hand if you have further questions.

Students have the right to leave the room at any time and for any reason should they decide to withdraw from the group. Alternative activities will be available at the school to those who choose not to participate. Withdrawal from participation or choosing not to participate will not hurt your standing at school. You may leave and join in other activities.

Your parent or guardian has provided their consent for your participation in this study. Completion of these forms is your consent once completed.

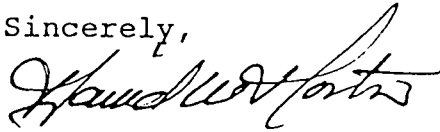
Should any questions arise in relation to any part of this study, please feel free to call me or have your parents contact me. I may be reached at Total Education School at

2 of 2

879 - 0421 Monday through Friday. Messages can be left at this phone.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this research project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David W. Norton".

David W. Norton.



APPENDIX C: WAYS OF MATTERING - ADULT FORM.

## WAYS OF MATTERING QUESTIONNAIRE

## GROUP FORM

Norm Amundson, Ph.D.

University of British Columbia

c 1993

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This questionnaire focuses on some of the ways you perceive your relationships with others. You will be asked to think about a particular group of people and then respond to a series of questions that describe aspects of those relationships. Of particular interest is the extent to which you feel that you are important or matter to the group. Think carefully about each question and choose the number that BEST describes how often each one occurs using the following FIVE POINT SCALE: 1= Very Seldom; 2= Seldom; 3= Sometimes; 4= Often; 5= Very Often.

---

Situation: Indicate below the group that you are referring to when making this assessment: The Adults

Circle the number that BEST describes how often the group responds in the following ways:

1= Very Seldom; 2= Seldom; 3= Sometimes; 4= Often; 5= Very Often

Example: They...

take my feelings into account.      1    2    3    4    5

If you think this describes your experience, and the people usually DO take your FEELINGS into account, then you would circle a 4 or a 5. IF, on the other hand, you think that they DON'T usually take your FEELINGS into account, you would circle a 1 or a 2.

Very Seldom Seldom Sometimes Often Very Often

They...

(A) take my feelings	1	2	3	4	5
into account.					
(B) respond to me in a					
way that make me	1	2	3	4	5
feel significant.					
(C) depend on me to	1	2	3	4	5
give ideas.					
(D) are interested in	1	2	3	4	5
following my progress.					
(E) value my contributions.	1	2	3	4	5
(F) support me in	1	2	3	4	5
reaching my goals.					
(G) believe in me.	1	2	3	4	5
(H) help me to feel	1	2	3	4	5
at ease.					
(I) count on my parti-	1	2	3	4	5
cipation.					
(J) take into account	1	2	3	4	5
what I want to do.					
(K) notice how I am	1	2	3	4	5
feeling.					
(L) rely on my support.	1	2	3	4	5
(M) care about my well	1	2	3	4	5
being.					
(N) listen to what I	1	2	3	4	5
have to say.					

- (O) will continue to be 1 2 3 4 5  
interested in me when  
we go our separate ways.
- (P) make an effort to 1 2 3 4 5  
make me feel welcome.
- (Q) appreciate what I 1 2 3 4 5  
have accomplished.
- (R) follow up to see how 1 2 3 4 5  
I am doing.
- (S) acknowledge my 1 2 3 4 5  
presence when  
entering the room.
- (T) are careful to get 1 2 3 4 5  
my input before  
making any decisions  
that affect me.

APPENDIX D - THE WAYS OF MATTERING QUESTIONNAIRE - OTHER STUDENTS  
FORM.

## WAYS OF MATTERING QUESTIONNAIRE

## GROUP FORM

Norm Amundson, Ph.D.

University of British Columbia

c 1993

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This questionnaire focuses on some of the ways you perceive your relationships with others. You will be asked to think about a particular group of people and then respond to a series of questions that describe aspects of those relationships. Of particular interest is the extent to which you feel that you are important or matter to the group. Think carefully about each question and choose the number that BEST describes how often each one occurs using the following FIVE POINT SCALE: 1= Very Seldom; 2= Seldom; 3= Sometimes; 4= Often; 5= Very Often.

---

**Situation:** Indicate below the group that you are referring to when making this assessment: The Other Students

Circle the number that BEST describes how often the group responds in the following ways:

1= Very Seldom; 2= Seldom; 3= Sometimes; 4= Often; 5= Very Often

Example: They...

take my feelings into account.      1    2    3    4    5

If you think this describes your experience, and the people usually DO take your FEELINGS into account, then you would circle a 4 or a 5. IF, on the other hand, you think that they DON'T usually take your FEELINGS into account, you would circle a 1 or a 2.

Very Seldom Seldom Sometimes Often Very Often

They...

(A) take my feelings	1	2	3	4	5
into account.					
(B) respond to me in a					
way that make me	1	2	3	4	5
feel significant.					
(C) depend on me to	1	2	3	4	5
give ideas.					
(D) are interested in	1	2	3	4	5
following my progress.					
(E) value my contributions.	1	2	3	4	5
(F) support me in	1	2	3	4	5
reaching my goals.					
(G) believe in me.	1	2	3	4	5
(H) help me to feel	1	2	3	4	5
at ease.					
(I) count on my parti-	1	2	3	4	5
cipation.					
(J) take into account	1	2	3	4	5
what I want to do.					
(K) notice how I am	1	2	3	4	5
feeling.					
(L) rely on my support.	1	2	3	4	5
(M) care about my well	1	2	3	4	5
being.					
(N) listen to what I	1	2	3	4	5
have to say.					

- (O) will continue to be 1 2 3 4 5  
interested in me when  
we go our separate ways.
- (P) make an effort to 1 2 3 4 5  
make me feel welcome.
- (Q) appreciate what I 1 2 3 4 5  
have accomplished.
- (R) follow up to see how 1 2 3 4 5  
I am doing.
- (S) acknowledge my 1 2 3 4 5  
presence when  
entering the room.
- (T) are careful to get 1 2 3 4 5  
my input before  
making any decisions  
that affect me.



APPENDIX E - STATEMENTS ABOUT SCHOOLS INVENTORY - ACTUAL SCHOOL  
FORM.

## Statements About Schools Inventory

### Part I

We would like to know your opinion of your school. Please read each statement and then decide how well it fits your school. If you feel that the statement almost always fits your school, blacken the circle under A on the accompanying answer sheet. If you feel it often fits, blacken the circle under B; if the statement occasionally fits, blacken the circle C and so on.

A= 1= Almost Always Fits

B= 2= Often Fits

C= 3= Occasionally Fits

D= 4= Seldom Fits

E= 5= Almost Never Fits

For example, you might read a statement like this:

1. Teachers here are helpful.

If you feel that this statement often fits your school, you would blacken circle B.

When you have completed Part I (44 items) raise your hand and we will collect it and give you part II. Do your best to respond to every statement. Please ask for help if you have any questions.

- 
1. Teachers want students to succeed.
  2. Students play an important role in what and how they learn.
  3. The teachers here are enthusiastic.
  4. Self - expression is encouraged here.
  5. Teachers relax with students.
  6. This school is well organized.

## Part I (continued)

7. Teacher and students are close.
8. Teachers enforce the rules here.
9. There are many ways for students to be recognized for their efforts.
10. People support each other.
11. Students are encouraged to use their imagination.
12. Teachers show concern for students.
13. Students are encouraged to experiment with new ways of doing things.
14. Students feel successful.
15. Helping each other is encouraged here.
16. This school provides many opportunities for personal development.
17. Students have rights in this school.
18. This school is an orderly place.
19. Each student feels worthwhile here.
20. There is an openness to new ideas here.
21. Students have lots of opportunities to display their individual talents.
22. Students usually conduct themselves properly.
23. Students are trusted to do the right thing.
24. This school has a very stable environment.
25. Controlling students is emphasized here.
26. Self - expression is encouraged here.
27. Teachers help students to feel good about themselves.
28. Students are treated as mature persons.
29. Students know what to expect here.

## Part I (continued)

30. Students are encouraged to be creative.
31. Permission is necessary to leave the class.
32. Each student feels worthwhile here.
33. Each person feels important in this school.
34. Students have opportunities to produce original ideas and materials.
35. Students are involved in the life of the school.
36. Students and teachers do things together here.
37. This school believes that students can become better people.
38. This school runs smoothly.
39. Students and teachers feel a sense of community here.
40. This school helps students feel important.
41. Teachers enforce the rules here.
42. Teachers show concern for students.
43. This is a friendly place.
44. This school provides a steady and predictable climate.

End of Part I

Please check the accuracy of your responses. Raise your hand to receive Part II.

---

APPENDIX F - STATEMENTS ABOUT SCHOOLS INVENTORY - IDEAL SCHOOL  
FORM.

## Statements About Schools Inventory

### Part II

On Part II, we have put the same statements in a different order. This time, however, we would like you to describe your ideal school --- one you would most like to attend. Please read each statement and decide how well it fits your ideal school. If you feel that the statement almost always fits your ideal school, blacken in the circle under A on the accompanying answer sheet. If you feel that it often fits, blacken in the circle B; if the statement occasionally fits your ideal school, blacken in the circle under C and so on.

Begin with item 51 on the answer sheet. Again, your opinion is what matters to us. Do your best to respond to every statement.

- 
51. Students have opportunities to produce original ideas and materials.
  52. This school has a very stable environment.
  53. Students are treated as mature persons.
  54. Students are encouraged to use their imagination.
  55. Controlling students is emphasized here.
  56. Each student feels worthwhile here.
  57. This school provides many opportunities for personal development.
  58. This school provides a steady and predictable environment.
  59. Students feel successful.
  60. Teachers and students are close.
  61. Teachers relax with students.
  62. Teachers want students to succeed.

## Part II (continued)

63. Students have lots of opportunities to display their individual talents.
64. Self - expression is encouraged here.
65. There are many ways for students to be recognized for their efforts.
66. The teachers here are enthusiastic.
67. This school helps students feel important.
68. Students play an important role in what and how they learn.
69. Students know what to expect here.
70. This is a friendly place.
71. Students usually conduct themselves properly.
72. Students are trusted to do the right thing.
73. Teachers and students feel a sense of community here.
74. This school runs smoothly.
75. Permission is necessary to leave the class.
76. Students are encouraged to experiment with new ways of doing things.
77. Students and teachers do things together here.
78. Each person feels important in this school.
79. Students have rights in this school.
80. This school is an orderly place.
81. Teachers enforce the rules here.
82. This school is well organized.
83. This school believes students can become better people.
84. There is an openness to new ideas here.
85. Helping each other is encouraged here.
86. People support each other.

Part II (continued)

- 87. Teachers help students to feel good about themselves.
- 88. Teachers show concern for students.
- 89. Students are encouraged to be creative.
- 90. Students are involved in the life of the school.

End of Part II

Please check the accuracy of your responses.

Raise your hand to have your materials collected.

Thank you for your help.



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100 1-|aNorton, David William.

Added: 960502 Checked by: 2my96psg Number: H110268000

410 2-|aUniversity of British Columbia.|bDept. of Counselling  
Psychology.|tThesis.|pM.A.,|n1995.

Added: 951219 Checked by: 19dc95ek Number: H110094372

+SER: \$N:1 mono for all locations.

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