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The extent of dropouts in public schools in Richmond and metropolitan area

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**THE EXTENT OF DROPOUTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN
RICHMOND AND METROPOLITAN AREA**

**A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of
The University of Richmond**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education**

**by
Donald Barham Beaman**

August, 1957

APPROVAL SHEET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION..... 1
	Trends on Graduation from High School..... 1
	Importance of the Problem..... 3
	Job Opportunities..... 3
	Automation..... 6
	Citizenship..... 7
	Armed Forces..... 10
	Review of the Paper..... 10
II.	REVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDIES..... 12
	Factors Causing Dropouts..... 12
	Reasons Given for Leaving School..... 19
	Factors That Distinguish Dropouts from Graduates..... 22
	Increasing Holding Power..... 25
III.	DROPOUTS IN THE RICHMOND AREA..... 32
	Trends in the Richmond Area..... 32
	Reasons Given for Leaving School..... 34
	Plans for Coping With the Problem..... 38
	Curriculum..... 38
	Guidance Program..... 39
	Visiting Teachers..... 39
	Counseling..... 40

CHAPTER		v. PAGE
IV.	AN APPRAISAL OF THE RICHMOND AREA'S METHOD.	42
V.	SUMMARY.....	47
	Conclusions.....	47
	Recommendations.....	49
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	50
	VITA.....	53

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I.	Highest Grade Reached in School of 466 Delinquent Boys.....	9
II.	Percentages of Pupils Continuing from Grade 5 to High-School Graduation 7 Years Later by Year Indicated (Actual Figures Through 1950--Estimates Thereafter).....	13
III.	Age-Grade Distribution of 1171 School Leavers.....	18
IV.	Reasons Given by Youth for Leaving School....	20
V.	Frequency of Reasons Given by 957 Youth as of First Importance in Decision to Leave School.....	21
VI.	Number of Pupils Continuing from First Grade (1944-45) Through Graduation (1956), and Percentage Graduating in Richmond Metropolitan Area (1956).....	32
VII.	Pupils Eliminations in Junior and Senior High Schools in the City of Richmond.....	35
VIII.	Reasons Given by 1135 City of Richmond Youths for Leaving School in the Class in Study, from the 7th to the 12th Grades.....	36

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.	Median Income in 1950 for Males by Education Level and Age.....	5
2.	Years of School Completion by Age Group, Color, and Sex, 1950, by Persons 25 Years of Age and Over.....	14
3.	Sex and Race as Factors in School Grade Attainment.....	16
4.	Sex and Race as Factors in School Grade Attainment, Virginia, 1944.....	17

CHAPTER I

TRENDS ON GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL

About the middle of the nineteenth century the graded school emerged, which resulted in a great number of failures, which in turn caused an overloading of lower grades and many dropouts in the upper grades.¹ Although dropouts in large numbers began at about this time it has been only in recent years that they have been classified as a problem. The problem rises largely from the concept that everyone should be in school until eighteen, or until he completes high school.² Statistics dealing with the trends of all youth show that eighty per cent enter the ninth grade and only fifty per cent remain to graduate from high school.³ This seems to be the trend all over the country. Although, in the Northwestern States, as many as sixty per cent finish high school, while in the Southern

¹Spain, Durmmond, and Goodlad, Educational Leadership and the Elementary School Principal, (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1956, pp. 137-138.

²Glen L. Weaver, "School Dropouts", Education Digest, May 1954, pp. 5-6.

³Harl R. Douglass, Education for Life Adjustment, (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), p. 7.

States the percentage may be as low as forty per cent.⁴
 According to Carl E. Bash, Principal of Presidio Junior
 High School, San Francisco, California:

Our democratic ideals, our free economy, and our tradition of extending free opportunity to all are the richest heritage any society has ever offered its youth. To preserve this heritage we maintain public schools to provide every individual with opportunity to acquire the knowledge and understanding and attitudes and skills which he needs to participate in democratic living at the highest level his abilities will permit. Making school attendance compulsory places upon society and the schools the responsibility of making certain that every student has the opportunity to spend his time in school to advantage.

The United States Office of Education estimates that, on a nation-wide basis, about 50 per cent of all children entering the first grade drop out of school prior to high-school graduation.⁵

In his State of the Union message delivered June 6, 1955, President Eisenhower declared:

It is the inalienable right of every person from childhood on to have access to knowledge. In our form of society this right of the individual takes on a special meaning, for the education of all our citizens is imperative to the maintenance and invigoration of America's free institutions.⁶

⁴Education Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Education - An Investment in People, (Washington, D. C., 1954), pp. 22-23.

⁵Carl E. Bash, The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, April 1956, v. 40, no. 219, p. 214.

⁶William E. Rosenstengel and Jefferson N. Eastmond, School Finance, (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1957), p. 4.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

There are several reasons why the problem of drop-outs is important. The first of these is the comparison of job opportunities to the level of education received. It was Horace Mann, about a hundred years ago, who vigorously defended the money value of education to the individual and to society. In the decades that followed, the earning power of the individual was one of the most frequent arguments in support of education. Of course, these early statements were based largely upon general observations. But since the beginning of the twentieth century somewhat systematic comparisons have been made.⁷ "The findings indicated that, in general, the more schooling an individual has received, the greater would be his earning power."⁸ Since 1920 a better understanding of the problem has come about and has revealed other factors that affect an individual's income, such as the number of individuals trained in a certain field of work.

⁷Walter S. Monroe, "Money Values of Education," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, American Educational Research Association, 1941, p. 733.

⁸Ibid.

For example, according to Irving Fisher and Lionel D. Edie, "who for years have been saying that increased education could actually reduce incomes in a particular occupation"; an increased schooling for a number of persons may result in lowering the income.⁹

However, the Education Department of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States study shows that "a direct relationship exists between a person's level of education and his earning power".¹⁰ (See FIGURE 1).

Census Bureau figures show 'that the men in this country with a college or high school education have'...

73% of the \$5,000 to \$6,000 incomes

77% of the \$6,000 to \$7,000 incomes

79% of the \$7,000 to \$10,000 incomes

82% of the \$10,000 or more incomes

'Those with an eighth grade education or less have'...

77% of the incomes below \$500

73% of the \$500 to \$1,000 incomes

65% of the \$1,000 to \$1,500 incomes

61% of the \$1,500 to \$2,000 incomes.

Good schools strengthen the whole economy by equipping the individual to earn more money and have more buying power.¹¹

An extensive study made by the Virginia State Department of Education in 1948-1949 of the graduates and dropouts from Virginia's high schools revealed:

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Education Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, op. cit.

¹¹Ibid.

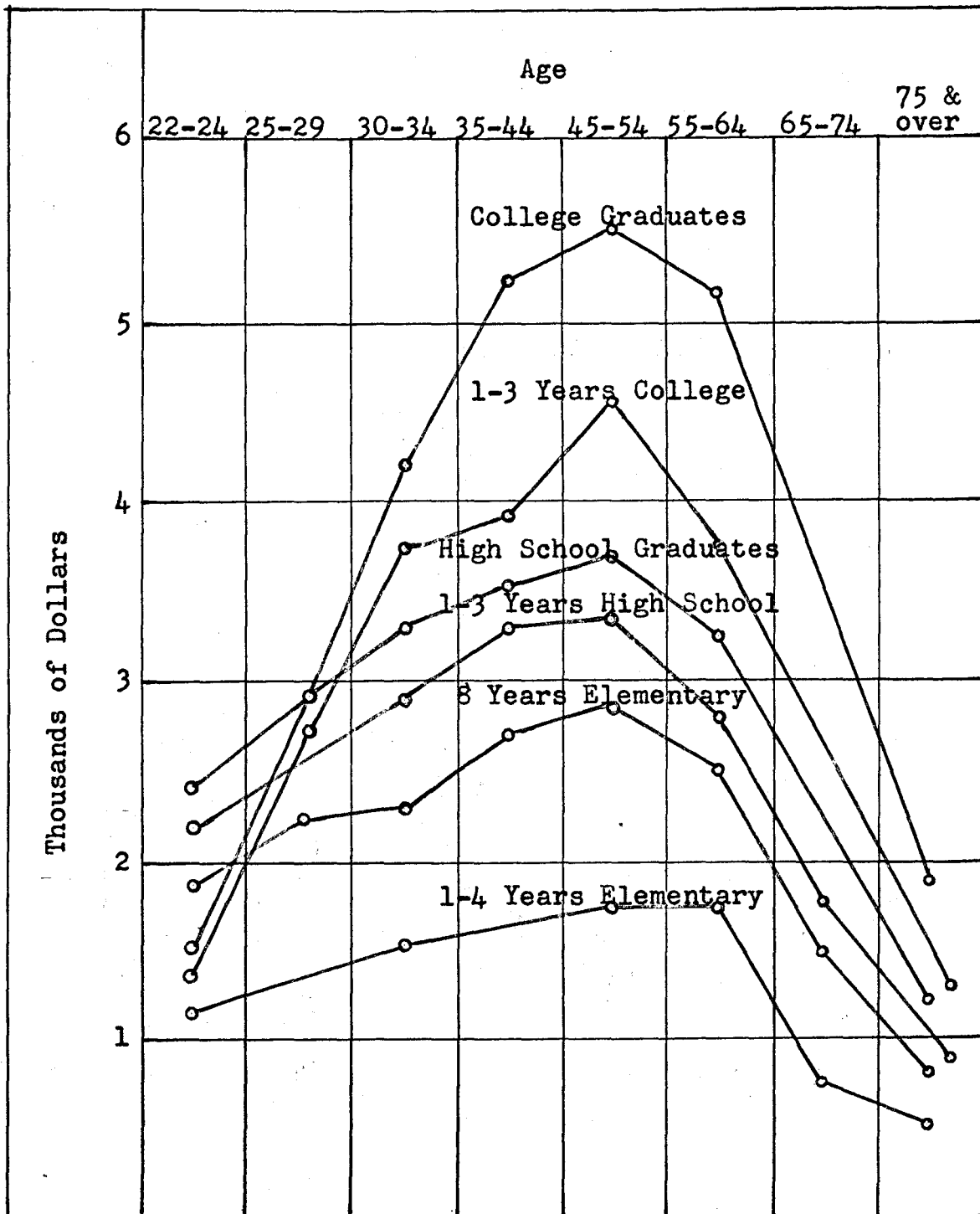


FIGURE 1

MEDIAN INCOME IN 1950 FOR MALES BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND AGE

The largest single group of employed graduates (38 per cent) were earning between \$41 and \$60 per week at the time of the study while the largest single group of employed drop-outs (34 per cent) were earning between \$21 to \$40 per week.¹²

This shows the graduates from high schools receive twice as much earning power as non-graduates.

The second factor under the importance of the problem of dropouts is automation. Has it had any effect on the problem? So far as the author has been able to ascertain, the influence of automation has not yet become sufficiently recognizable. The probability is that it will encourage people to stay in school longer, because the effect of automation will be to do away almost entirely with completely unskilled and uneducated labor, and to make more valuable the person who is able to understand, control, and maintain a complex productive system.

There is little place in the complex industrial setup of today for half-educated teen-agers. During the war they were in demand. But since then, even where business is good, they are likely to get either a poor job or none. In Louisville, Kentucky, two-thirds of the youngsters who quit school were still unemployed a month later, although jobs were said to be plentiful at the time.

But landing a job doesn't end young workers' troubles. Often a drop-out escapes an educational muddle only to get into an even more frustrating

¹²Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, Improvements of High School Education in Virginia 1944-1954, p. 22.

occupational muddle. When Louisville workers under sixteen were questioned about their jobs, only one in four reported being well satisfied and one in three was actually unhappy. Unguided and undirected, only a few of these girls and boys had any plans for improving the situation.¹³

According to Louis J. Cantoni:

Jobs calling for manual labor will continue to decline, not only in proportion, but also in number. The proportion of the labor force in unskilled jobs has dropped from 36 per cent in 1910 to less than 20 per cent today, while the proportion in semiskilled, skilled and professional jobs has risen.

Demand for specialized skills will expand. Many jobs are becoming more technical. They call for more education, and they provide greater opportunity for exercise of talent and imagination.¹⁴

Citizenship is next to be mentioned under the importance of the problem, and by far the most important phase of the problem. The first thing that comes to mind is the relationship between dropouts and juvenile delinquency. "The National Education Association said it is more than ten times cheaper to pay for a child's education than to let him become a juvenile delinquent. The delinquent, the NEA said, costs society up to \$2,500 a year, while it costs only \$288 to keep the same child

¹³Edith M. Stern, "Why Teen-agers Quit School", Woman's Home Companion, Oct., 1948, p. 90.

¹⁴Louis J. Cantoni, "Stay-ins Get Better Jobs", The Personnel and Guidance Journal, May, 1955, p. 531.

in school.¹⁵

TABLE I is part of study 466 delinquent boys from the State Home of Boys in New Jersey, and shows a definite relationship between school attainment and juvenile delinquency. There were 74.9 per cent of these delinquent boys who had not reached high school (ninth grade), and yet 55.1 per cent of them were 14 years old or older. The average (median) age was 14 years 2 months.¹⁶

The Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck study of 500 delinquents as compared with 500 non-delinquents revealed that there were twice as many delinquents that had not yet gone beyond the sixth grade in school as compared to the non-delinquents, yet the age and intelligence of the two groups were matched.¹⁷ The study also compared the attitude of the two groups toward school. There was 61.5 per cent of the delinquents who showed a marked dislike of

¹⁵Juvenile Delinquency Digest, "School Versus Delinquency", (As reported in the New York Herald Tribune, Nov. 4, 1953), Oct. 1954, p. 2.

¹⁶State of New Jersey, The Release of 466 Delinquent Boys From the State Home for Boys in New Jersey, Research Bulletin No. 131, Oct. 1955, p. 4.

¹⁷Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency, (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1950,) pp. 135-136.

TABLE I*

HIGHEST GRADE REACHED IN SCHOOL OF 466 DELINQUENT BOYS

	NUMBER	PER CENT
Total	466	100.0
Less than 6th grade	132	28.3
6th & 7th grades	157	33.7
8th grade	60	12.9
9th & 10th grades	50	10.7
11th & 12th grades	4	0.9
Ungraded Classes	63	13.5

*State of New Jersey, The Release of 466 Delinquent Boys from the State Home for Boys in New Jersey, Research Bulletin No. 131, Oct. 1955, p. 4.

school as compared to only 10.3 per cent of the non-delinquents.¹⁸ This has its implications, because a large per cent of dropouts show a marked dislike of school. To strengthen this point the Gluecks' study showed that 43.5 per cent of the delinquents had a desire to stop school immediately, as compared to only 6.5 per cent of the non-delinquents.¹⁹

Still another reason for the importance of the problem of dropouts concerns the defense of our nation. "The proportion of men rejected for military service for mental reasons was higher (1950-1951) in most of the states where high school 'dropouts' were higher."²⁰

The following sections of this study have reviewed research studies on reasons given for dropouts, and factors that affect these dropouts, such as age, grade, race, and sex. It has also reviewed the studies that have been made to improve the holding power of schools.

The study of the metropolitan area of Richmond has followed a class from the first grade through

¹⁸Ibid. p. 144.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 145.

²⁰Education Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, op. cit., p. 14.

graduation to determine what per cent actually graduated twelve years later. It has mentioned factors involved that affect these percentages. It has also tabulated the reasons given for dropouts in the City of Richmond and compared them with other studies.

Next the study has summarized what the metropolitan area of Richmond is doing to improve the holding power in the curriculum and guidance programs of the school systems.

This study has given an appraisal or evaluation of what is being done, and suggestions on what could or should be done.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDIES

The United States Office of Education has for years gathered and published statistics showing the percent of fifth grade pupils who were retained at the various grade levels in the public and private schools, and who eventually graduated from high school (see TABLE II). A review of this TABLE, presented first by decades and then projected by individual years for the period in question, reveals certain significant facts. "The most impressive fact in the proportion of youth remaining in high schools to graduation has almost doubled during the 20 years from 1932-1951."²¹ This fact is also supported in Virginia because in the ten-year interval, 1941-42 to 1951-52, the survival rate in Virginia schools did increase about seventy-eight pupils per 1000.²²

FIGURE 2 further emphasizes the fact that there has been great improvement, in the past generation, in years of school completion. This FIGURE also shows the striking

²¹Office of Education, "Emphasis on Dropouts and Holding Power Studies", A Look Ahead in Secondary Education, 1954, p. 59.

²²Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, op. cit., p. 26.

TABLE II*

Percentages of pupils continuing from grade 5 to high school graduation 7 years later, by year indicated (actual figures through 1950- estimates thereafter)

Grade	PERCENT OF PUPILS, BY YEAR ENTERING FIFTH GRADE						
	1923-24	1932-33	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46	1946-47
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elementary Schools							
Fifth.....	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sixth.....	89	93	95	97	95	96	95
Seventh.....	78	89	91	91	93	94	95
Eighth.....	72	83	85	87	86	88	92
	PERCENT OF PUPILS, BY YEAR ENTERING NINTH GRADE						
	1927-28	1936-37	1946-47	1947-48	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51
High Schools							
Ninth.....	58	79	81	83	85	87	89
Tenth.....	44	66	71	75	75	78	80
Eleventh.....	35	57	60	63	64	67	69
Twelfth.....	31	51	53	55	57	60	62
Graduates.....	27	45	51	53	54	57	59
	YEAR GRADUATING						
	1931	1940	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954

*Office of Education, "Emphasis on Dropouts and Holding Power Studies, A Look Ahead in Secondary Education, 1954, p. 59.

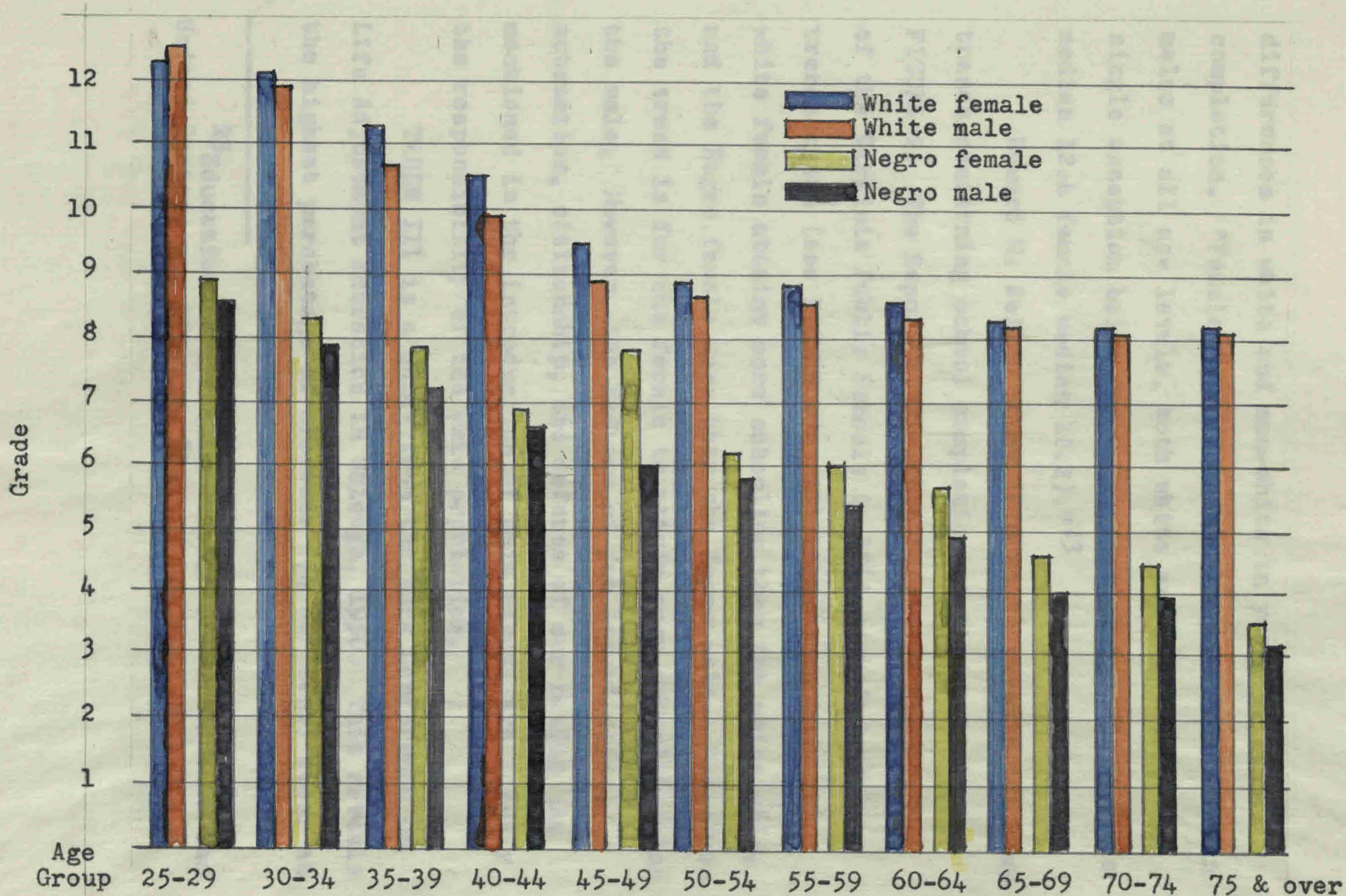


FIGURE 2

YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETION BY AGE GROUP, COLOR, AND SEX,
1950, BY PERSONS 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER

differences in white and non-white in years of school completion. "Females were somewhat better educated than males at all age levels, both white and non-white, the single exception being for white persons age 25-29 (male median 12.4 female median 12.2)."²³

Howard M. Bell's study (FIGURE 3) reveals the same trends concerning school completion as those shown in FIGURE 2. The Report of Virginia Education Commission of the Virginia Public Schools in 1944 revealed these trends again (see FIGURE 4). All these show that the white female attains more schooling than the white male, and the Negro female more than the Negro male. Therefore the trend is for the female to attain more schooling than the male. However, the factors of job opportunities, automation, citizenship, and defense of our nation, as mentioned in the introduction of this study, are largely the responsibility of the male population.

TABLE III is a study from the Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education in Chicago, 1950. This reveals the highest percentage of dropouts (54 per cent) occur at

²³Education Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, op. cit., p. 24.

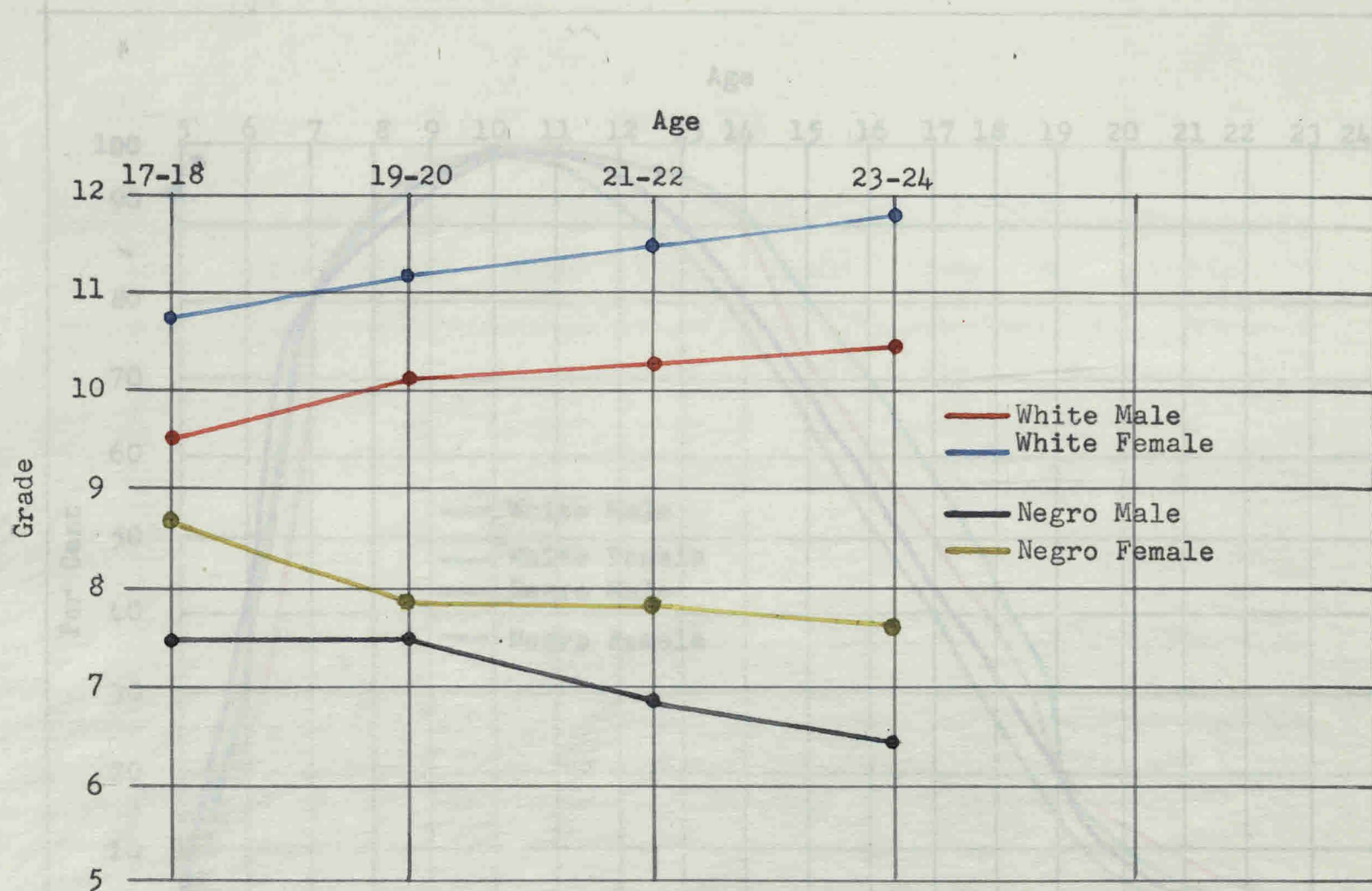
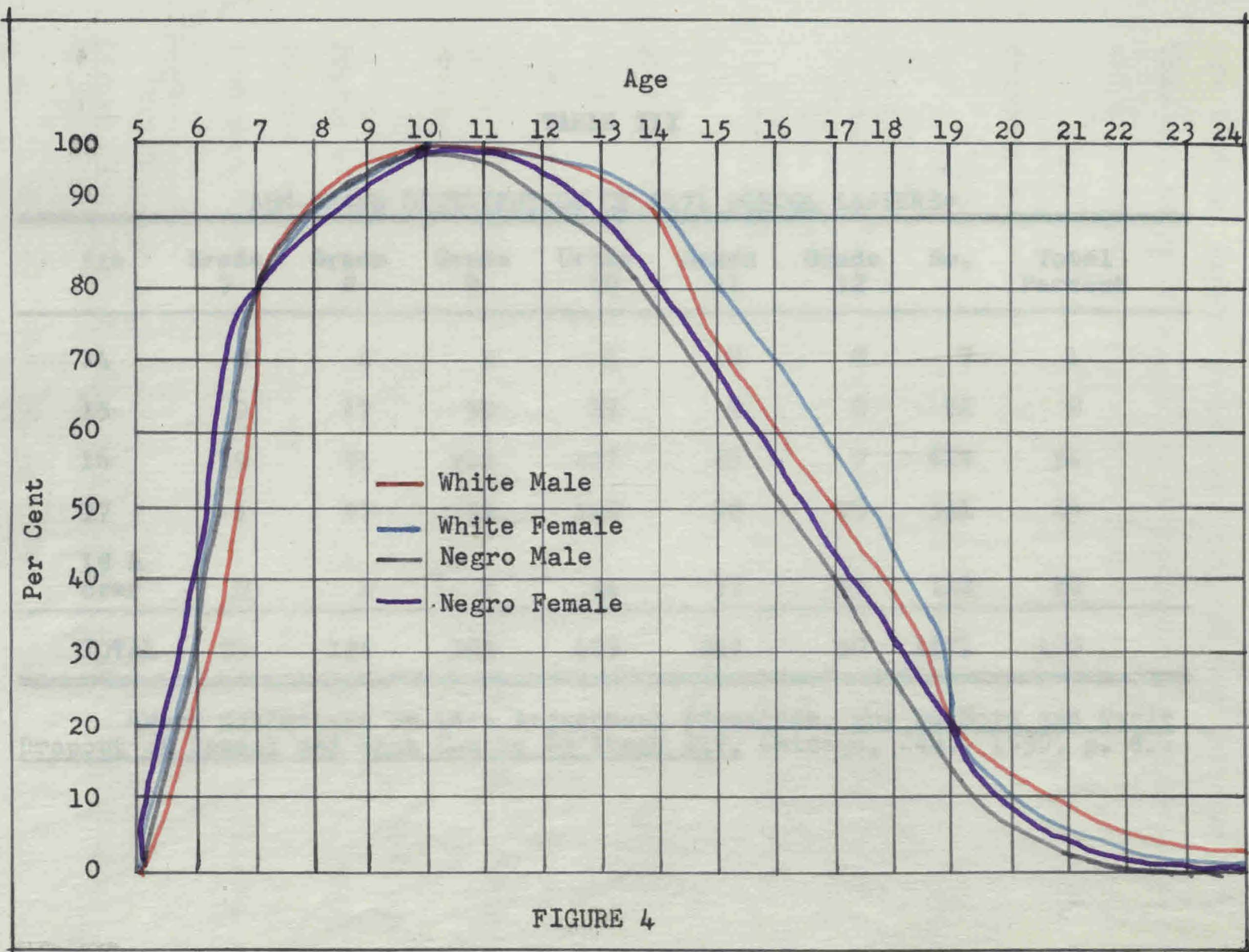


FIGURE 3

SEX AND RACE AS FACTORS IN SCHOOL GRADE ATTAINMENT



SEX AND RACE AS FACTORS IN SCHOOL GRADE ATTAINMENT

TABLE III

AGE-GRADE DISTRIBUTION OF 1171 SCHOOL LEAVERS*

Age	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	No.	Total Percent
14	0	4	2	1	0	0	7	1
15	9	17	30	27	9	0	92	9
16	19	81	212	227	83	7	629	54
17	1	17	55	140	98	20	331	26
18 & over	0	2	6	34	37	33	112	10
TOTAL	29	121	305	429	227	60	1171	100

*Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education, Why Do Boys and Girls Dropout of School and What Can We Do About It?, Chicago, Jan., 1950, p. 8.

age sixteen, and in grades nine and ten (63 per cent).²⁴
This may be explained by the compulsory attendance law,
which is discussed on pages 25 and 26.

Why is there such a great number of boys and girls
dropping out of school?

It has been customary to assign financial reasons
as the chief factor, but this is actually a superficial
excuse which glosses over the real reason. Lack of
interest, parental indifference, and the failure to
understand life adjustment education objectives and
possibilities are the main factors, and all of them
stem from the fact that the school's program and
method do not pay enough attention to modern living
conditions, needs, and interests.²⁵

TABLES IV and V show two studies that have a
disagreement in main reasons given by youth for leaving
school. It is interpreted in this way. TABLE IV is
dated in 1938, before World War II, and TABLE V is dated
1950, since the war. Therefore, in this research a marked
change in reasons for dropouts is apparent.

Among all dropouts there seems to be "a disquieting
degree of dissatisfaction with what they had been offered
in high school and a rather general belief that their
high school instruction had hardly been worth the effort,

²⁴Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education,
Why Do Boys and Girls Dropout of School and What Can We
Do About It?, Chicago, Jan., 1950, p. 8.

Harl R. Douglass, op. cit., p. 445.

TABLE IV*

REASONS GIVEN BY YOUTH FOR LEAVING SCHOOL

Reason Given	Percent of Youth
Economic reasons	54.0
Lack of family funds	34.1
Desire to earn own money	15.7
Needed to work at home	4.2
Lack of interest in school	24.6
Lack of interest	20.6
Disciplinary trouble	2.2
Subjects too difficult	1.8
Feeling of completion upon graduation	13.2
Poor health	3.2
To marry	3.0
Other reasons	2.0
Total	100.0
Number of Youth	10,858

*Howard M. Bell, Youth Tell Their Story, Washington, D. C., American Council of Education, 1938, p. 64.

TABLE V*

FREQUENCY OF REASONS GIVEN BY 957 YOUTH
AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE IN DECISION TO LEAVE SCHOOL

	Frequency	
	No.	Percent
Reasons Relating to School	660	69
Preferred work to school	342	36
Was not interested in school work	104	11
Could not learn and was discouraged	66	7
Was failing and didn't want to repeat grade	55	6
Disliked a certain teacher	47	5
Disliked a certain subject	30	3
Could learn more out of school than in school	16	1
Financial Reasons	199	21
Needed money to buy clothes and help at home	144	15
Wanted spending money	55	6
Personal Reasons	98	10
Ill Health	49	5
Friends had left school	29	3
Parents wanted youth to leave school ...	20	2
Total	957	100

* Why do Boys and Girls Drop Out of School and What Can We Do About It?, op. cit. p. 10. Source: Dillon, Harold J., Early School Leavers, New York: National Child Labor Committee. 1949. Table 24, p. 50.

time, and expense. Even in recent years, when the economic situation is such that at least ninety percent of young people could remain through high school if they wished sufficiently to do so, only one half of them actually graduated."²⁶

More important than the reasons given for dropping out of school, are the factors that distinguish dropouts from graduates. One study shows four main factors:

1. Retardation in school amounting to two or more grades.
2. An intelligence, aptitude, or achievement score on a standardized test which placed the pupil in the lowest tenth of those tested.
3. Absence from school for more than one-third of the total number of school days in the year immediately prior to the time the pupil reached maximum age of compulsory school attendance.
4. Failure in school marks in more than two subjects in the year immediately prior to the time the pupil reached maximum age of compulsory school attendance.²⁷

All these factors are closely related to the work of the teachers. Weaver listed six other factors of less importance: (1) male sex; (2) low achievement in reading measured by a standardized reading achievement test; (3) coming from a home broken by separation of divorce; (4) lack of participation in extra-class activities; (5) membership

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Glen L. Weaver, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

in a family with relatively little education; (6) and living in a home of low rental. Of course, dropouts are a complex problem; there may be several factors involved.²⁸

Dillon points out symptoms of vulnerability to early school leaving; namely,

1. Fairly consistent regression in scholarship from elementary to junior to senior high school.
2. Frequent grade failures in the elementary school.
3. High frequency of grade or subject failure in the junior and senior high school.
4. Marked regression in attendance from elementary to junior to senior high school.
5. Frequent transfers from one school to another.
6. Evidence of a feeling of insecurity or "lack of belonging" in school.
7. Marked lack of interest in school work.²⁹

The report of the Virginia Education Commission made in 1944 stated that:

While our public school system is now primarily designed to educate white-collar workers and students who are planning to attend college, it is actually true that probably not more than 50 per cent of the students who annually enroll in the public school system of Virginia have the intellectual equipment necessary to satisfactorily complete a classic type high school education. Professor Terman estimated that an intelligence quotient of at least 110 was required for the satisfactory high school student... Inability to meet the requirements of the high school curriculum of the average type in, therefore, one of the most frequent

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education, 1950, op. cit., p. 14.

reasons for dropping out of school of students coming of high school age... Economic conditions in the cities and counties and in the homes of students, and the general cultural environment of the school community, are also important factors. The student reaching high school age is a sensitive adolescent, who is inclined to be acutely aware of social differentiation between himself and other students. If he must attend school poorly dressed, he would often rather go to work than suffer the self-made comparison between his own situation and that of his more fortunate classmates.³⁰

"Such phrases as 'dissatisfaction with school', 'economic need', 'attitude of parents', and 'discouraged', really reveal little as to actual causes of withdrawals,"³¹ says Edward S. Cook Jr. He further states that these statements perhaps show a lack of insight on the part of the child as to the basic reasons for dropping out of school. Mr. Cook goes on to say that it is confined to inter-group differences which he summarizes as follows:

1. Since few students are sufficiently retarded to reach the age of sixteen while still in the eighth grade, the percentage of withdrawals who are in this grade is less than the percentage of eighth grade non-withdrawals.

2. The percentage of students who withdraw while in the ninth grade is greater than the percentage of ninth graders in the total school population. This condition probably results from the fact that the bulk of the withdrawing students reach the age of sixteen while in the ninth grade. The effects of the maximum

³⁰The Virginia Public School System, Report of the Virginia Education Commission, 1944, pp. 149-150.

³¹Edward S. Cook Jr., "An Analyses of Factors Related to Withdrawal from High School Prior to Graduation", Journal of Educational Research, Nov. 1956, L, No. 3, p. 192.

compulsory attendance age is best indicated by the fact that 54.8 per cent of all withdrawals involved in this study were, at the time of their withdrawal, sixteen years of age.

3. The percentage of male withdrawals in the ninth grade exceeds the percentage of male non-withdrawals in that grade.

4. Withdrawals in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades are older than non-withdrawals in these grades.

5. Youngest children are less likely to withdraw and children who are between other siblings are more likely to withdraw than are those in other family positions.

6. The records of withdrawals reveal more high school transfers than do those of non-withdrawals.

7. Withdrawals exhibit greater educational retardation than do non-withdrawals.

8. Non-withdrawals have earned higher scholastic marks than have withdrawals.

9. Non-withdrawals exhibit better attendance records than do withdrawals.

10. Withdrawals earn failing marks in a larger number of their courses than do non-withdrawals.

11. Non-withdrawals score higher measured IQ's than do withdrawals.

12. The personal adjustment of withdrawals toward their school, home and family, and health is poorer than that of the non-withdrawals.³²

INCREASING HOLDING POWER

The main method of increasing holding power is done legally by means of compulsory attendance laws.

Through 1955 the Virginia school law on attendance reads:

Every parent, guardian, or other person in the Commonwealth, having control or charge of any child, or children, who have reached the seventh birthday and have not passed the sixteenth birthday, shall send such child, or children, to a public school, or to a private, denominational or parochial school,

³²Ibid.

or have such a child or children taught by a tutor or teacher of qualification prescribed by the State Board and approved by the division superintendent in a home, and such child, or children, shall regularly attend such school during the period of each year the public schools are in session and for the same number of days as in the public schools.³³

Of course, this does not encourage the indifferent child who is just waiting until he reaches sixteen years of age in order to drop out of school. Dr. Harold J. Dillon, Executive Director of the Public Education and Child Labor Association of Philadelphia states: "If I could go through an elementary school and pick out which pupils were likely to be drop-outs in the future, I'd pick those who were insecure and had a feeling of failure. I don't mean academic failure. I mean personal failure".³⁴

Therefore, the thing to do at the present is to work with the potential dropout before he leaves school, because in most cases once he leaves he will not be back.³⁵ Glen L. Weaver's study of the graduating classes between 1953-1956, in Hastings, Nebraska, selected 119 students that had four or more of the factors listed on pages 22 and 23 of this study, and worked with them with special

³³State Board of Education, Virginia School Laws, Oct. 1950, p. 103.

³⁴Edith M. Stern, op. cit.

³⁵Glen L. Weaver, op. cit.

interest. "It was suggested that the teacher attempt to make the pupil feel that here was one person in the school who was particularly interested in him."³⁶ A report in 1952 showed ninety-one were still in school, only seventeen had dropped out for good. Eleven had transferred to other schools.³⁷

The manner in which this can be done with utmost efficiency will depend upon the school and the community that is involved. Leonard M. Miller has made the following suggestions that have been found to aid greatly:

Helping the slow learner continue his schooling...
 Keeping tab on pupils who leave school early to go to work... Getting summer dropouts to return to school... Arranging school and work programs...
 Providing a differentiated program of studies and a minimum of required subjects for graduation...
 Scheduling a remedial reading program for elementary and secondary schools... Providing better counseling services... Adjusting the hidden school cost.³⁸

In Conton-on-Hudson, New York, a study showed that in 1947-51, seventy-one per cent of their students finished school. A careful study revealed that few, if any, had left school solely for economic reasons, and almost all

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸ Leonard M. Miller, "How Some Schools Are Increasing Their Holding Power", Journal of the National Education Association, May, 1951, pp. 325-326.

these leaving were over-age, retarded, and failing at the time of leaving. A study in 1952 revealed that ninety-three per cent had finished school. "This increase in holding power resulted from a combination of mutually reinforcing changes and extensions of the total program, none involving a major budget increase."³⁹ The changes were:

(1) adoption of a philosophy that the school has the obligation to try to keep every single youth in school thru graduation or thru age 18; (2) modification of the curriculum and grouping of classes in the required courses to fit more closely the needs, abilities, and interest of slow learners; (3) the addition of several elective courses in business education, industrial arts, and homemaking of practical value to the potential non-graduates; and (4) increased guidance service.⁴⁰

Dillon listed seventeen recommendations for increasing holding power. They are: (1) know the student as an individual; (2) obtain the student's confidence; (3) provide an educational program wherein the students can experience achievement; (4) give grade repeaters something new; (5) demonstrate relationship between education and life; (6) provide occupational information; (7) extend social experience; (8) give some personal recognition; (9) recognize signs of trouble; (10) provide for above average students; (11) establish a good record system; (12) make use of the

³⁹George A. McGee, "We Increase Our Holding Power", Journal of the National Education Association, Nov. 1953, p. 482.

⁴⁰Ibid.

records; (13) help students select the right courses; (14) begin counseling early; (15) allow time for home visits; (16) secure parent interest and cooperation; and (17) secure public support.⁴¹

A study by Dr. Richard H. Drescher of Detroit, Michigan, listed seven factors that are conducive to holding power: (1) out-of-school employment while attending school; (2) participation in extra-curricular activities; (3) having school spirit; (4) participation in out-of-school activities; (5) good attitude of parents toward education and high school; (6) the pupil having a career plan; and (7) a desire to complete high school.⁴²

Herman L. Shibler states that there are many measures to prevent dropouts, as all these other studies show, but they are all based on three main factors. They are "adequate guidance and testing program, ability grouping, and building of a curriculum that meets the needs of youth."⁴³

It has been stated earlier that holding power should begin early in the elementary school. A good beginning

⁴¹Work Conference on Life Adjustment Education, 1950 op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁴²Glen L. Weaver, op. cit.

⁴³Herman L. Shibler, "Attaching the Drop-out Problem", Journal of the National Education Association, Jan. 1955, p. 25.

for this is a preschool roundup in the spring, during which parents and children meet members of the PTA, visit the kindergarten, and tour the building, as part of the orientation program of the school.⁴⁴ In junior high schools one can increase extra-class activities, add course to the curriculum such as driver education and auto repairs, and help plan summer activities.⁴⁵ In senior high school, as well as other grades, the student needs the teacher to show interest in him,⁴⁶ and enrich the curriculum as much as possible. Examples of this may be found at the Harry E. Wood School in Indianapolis, which has courses in barbering, dentist assistant, beauty culture, commercial cooking, cleaning and pressing, shoe repairs, and auto-body repairs.⁴⁷ If the school cannot have some of these courses, because of lack of facilities, it should set up correspondence courses with teacher supervision.⁴⁸

⁴⁴United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, op. cit., p. 66.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Herman L. Shibler, op. cit.

⁴⁸Lesley Frost, "How They Stay in School Gladly", Woman's Day, Mar. 1951, p. 69

CHAPTER III

DROPOUTS IN RICHMOND AREA

It has been stated many times that only fifty per cent of our youth receive their high school diploma. This study of trends in the Richmond metropolitan area reveals a much lower trend (see TABLE VI). TABLE VI follows the graduating classes of 1956 in the metropolitan area from the time they entered the first grade in 1944-45 school term. There are several factors that should be mentioned and kept in mind when studying the per cent that graduated. The per cent of Negroes graduating can be said to be fairly accurate, because the Negro population has been very static in the past years. If there is any migration on the part of the Negro it has been all in-migration. This is especially true within the city limits. This fact is evident in the overall population of the city, because the total Negro population within the city is increasing, not only in numbers, but also in proportion. Henrico County shows a 0.6 per cent per year in in-migration of Negroes.⁴⁹ The percentages of graduation, based on TABLE VI, for Richmond City, Henrico County, Chesterfield County and Total of the three respectively are, 31 per cent, 28.5 per cent, 20.7 per cent

⁴⁹University of Virginia, Bureau of Population Studies and Economic Research, "Probable Trends of Public School Membership in Henrico County", p. 3.

TABLE VI

NUMBER OF PUPILS CONTINUING FROM FIRST GRADE (1944-45) THROUGH GRADUATION (1956),
AND PERCENTAGE GRADUATING IN RICHMOND METROPOLITAN AREA (1956)

	Richmond			Henrico			Chesterfield			Total		
	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T
Grade 1	1541	1233	2774	477	165	642	438	242	680	2456	1640	4096
2	1591	1161	2752	498	133	631	513	181	694	2602	1475	4077
3	1537	1182	2719	565	109	674	532	173	705	2634	1464	4098
4	1526	1161	2687	504	127	631	549	143	692	2579	1431	4010
5	1430	1207	2637	540	134	674	561	130	691	2531	1471	4002
6	1424	1083	2507	583	122	705	507	126	633	2514	1331	3845
7	1352	1059	2411	592	111	703	487	117	604	2431	1287	3718
8	1242	999	2241	627	85	712	386	93	479	2255	1177	3432
9	1200	857	2057	629	76	705	357	112	459	2166	1045	3211
10	1001	587	1588	570	62	632	284	92	376	1855	741	2596
11	867	398	1265	486	54	540	241	83	324	1594	535	2129
12	803	364	1167	444	52	496	231	60	291	1478	476	1954
Graduated	647	386	1033	413	47	457	208	50	258	1268	483	1751
Per Cent Graduated	42	31	37.2	86.6	28.5	61.8	47.4	20.7	37.9	51.7	29.5	42.7

and 29.5 per cent which are greatly below all findings and estimates in Virginia as well as in other parts of the country. Therefore, because the Negro population is so static in the metropolitan area, these figures are fairly accurate.

On the other hand, the white population is not so static. The City of Richmond shows a great decline in white population proportionally. Henrico County shows a 6.6 per cent per year in in-migration of whites.⁵⁰ Likewise, Chesterfield County shows the same trends as Henrico County, but no actual figures are available. Therefore, the 42 per cent of graduation in the City of Richmond would be higher after considering that Richmond has out-migration in white population. The 86.6 per cent graduation is an inaccurate figure for Henrico County because of the factor of large in-migration. This is likewise true for Chesterfield County's 47.4 per cent of graduation.

An examination of the metropolitan areas shows that the out-migration of the white population within the city does not equal the in-migration of the two counties. This is supported by the fact that Virginia, and the metropolitan area of Richmond, form an area which

⁵⁰Ibid

is one of the highest in in-migration in the United States. Because of the migration factor the percentage of total white graduates arrived at in this study is probably less than 51.7, and when combined with the percentage of Negro graduates, the overall percentage would be lower than the reported 42.7.

TABLE VII shows the study of the research department of the Richmond Public Schools for the school year 1955-56. This does not include summer dropouts. This further points out that more white than Negro students move away. Of the 946 withdrawals probably not to return to school, ten gave the reason "lack of ability", one "deceased", twelve "home duties", thirteen "financial insecurity", and 133 "personal illness". This leaves 777 students, who left school in a single year for intangible reasons, and probably could have been persuaded to remain in school with the proper guidance and direction.

TABLE VIII shows the number of dropouts and reasons given for leaving school during the junior and senior high school years for the class in study. It is divided into White (W), Negro (N), and total (T) for each year, and also shows the total by grades. This information was not available in the two counties. Since no record was kept of what had happened to the student withdrawing from school during the summer months, such cases are not included in

TABLE VII*

PUPIL ELIMINATIONS IN JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN
THE CITY OF RICHMOND, 1955-56

	W	N	T
Moved Away	251	53	304
Went to Work	103	152	255
Private or Out-of-Town Schools	42	18	60
Military Service	26	46	72
Personal Illness	37	96	133
Financial Insecurity	1	12	13
Home Duties	7	5	12
Conduct	24	26	50
Failure in Studies	8	2	10
Indifference	77	99	176
Marriage	52	26	78
Deceased	0	1	1
Lack of Ability	5	5	10
Unable to Trace	1	3	4
Miscellaneous	72	71	144
Total Withdrawals	706	604	1310
Total Withdrawals Not to Return to Schools	413	533	946

*The School Board of the City of Richmond, Statistical Report of the Richmond Public Schools, 1955-1956.

TABLE VIII

REASONS GIVEN BY 1135 CITY OF RICHMOND YOUTH FOR LEAVING SCHOOL IN THE CLASSES IN STUDY FROM THE 7TH TO THE 12TH GRADE.

REASONS	GRADES																				
	12th			11th			10th			9th			8th			7th			Totals		
	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T	W	N	T
Moved Away	9	1	10	22	2	24	25	4	29	38	10	48	41	7	48	74	8	82	209	32	241
Henrico County	3	0	3	3	0	3	7	0	7	2	0	2	3	0	3	5	0	5	23	0	23
Chesterfield County	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	4
Out of Richmond Area	4	0	4	17	0	17	16	0	16	27	6	33	14	5	19	0	0	0	78	11	89
No Data Given	1	1	2	2	2	4	1	4	5	9	4	13	22	1	23	65	8	73	100	20	120
Private Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	3	4	1	5
Went to Work	6	22	28	29	10	39	29	19	48	33	41	74	4	36	40	2	17	19	103	145	248
Military Service	2	6	8	2	6	8	1	6	7	1	4	5	0	2	2	0	1	1	6	25	31
Personal Illness	2	7	9	11	9	20	11	19	30	12	26	38	8	17	25	6	8	14	50	86	136
Financial Insecurity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	8	8
Home Duties	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	7	10	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	10	14
Conduct	2	2	4	0	3	3	2	6	8	4	5	9	3	8	11	3	1	4	14	25	39
Failure in Studies and/or Poor Attendance	1	1	2	4	1	5	4	4	8	5	4	9	1	17	18	1	10	11	16	37	53
Indifference	2	0	2	2	2	5	9	13	22	0	28	28	2	16	18	1	4	5	16	64	80
Marriage	5	5	10	16	2	18	10	4	14	10	6	16	5	4	9	1	3	4	47	24	71
Deceased	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Lack of Ability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	1	1	1	3	4	1	8	9
Unable to Trace	0	0	0	0	6	6	1	12	13	34	15	49	29	19	48	8	17	25	72	69	141
Miscellaneous	4	3	7	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	5	8	1	6	7	10	15	25
Discouraged	0	0	0	3	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
Lack of Interest	2	1	3	0	5	5	8	4	12	8	3	11	0	1	1	0	0	0	18	14	32
Total Withdrawals, Probably Not to Return	26	48	74	69	47	116	79	100	179	108	138	246	55	130	185	24	70	94	361	533	894
GRAND TOTALS	35	49	84	91	49	140	104	104	208	146	148	294	96	137	233	98	78	176	570	565	1135

this study. Of course, some students are retained every year, therefore, it is assumed that over a period of twelve years, these retentions would balance. In the six year period from 1950-51 to 1955-56, a total of 1135 withdrew from the schools. TABLE VI, page 32, shows a drop of 1378 students in this period of time. This shows a difference of 243 students, which is assumed withdrew during the summer months. If one disregards the possible entering of new students during this period of time, this figure is correct; however, if one takes into consideration the entering of new students this would actually be a larger number.

A review of TABLE VIII shows that the largest number of dropouts who will probably not return to school occurs in the ninth grade (246), and the eighth grade is in second place (185). If this study is compared with TABLE III, page 18, which shows that the largest number of dropouts occurs in the tenth grade, and the second largest in the ninth grade, one sees that Richmond students drop out one grade lower than the students studied in TABLE III. Of course, this study does agree with the study of Edward S. Cook, Jr., page 24, where 54.8 per cent dropped out of school in the ninth grade.

Comparing these reasons for leaving school with TABLE V, page 21, the author finds them in very close agreement. The City of Richmond shows seventy-one

per cent withdrawals relating to school as compared to sixty-nine per cent withdrawals in Dillon's study. He also finds that personal reasons rank second in twenty-eight per cent of the cases as compared to only ten per cent in TABLE V, and financial reasons rank last in Richmond composing only one per cent of dropouts as compared to twenty-one per cent in TABLE V.

PLANS FOR COPING WITH THE PROBLEM IN THE RICHMOND AREA

The first, and the most needed means to cope with the problem of dropouts, is an improved curriculum. Of course, the size of the school system determines greatly the limits on what can be done in this field, which is definitely shown by the varying degree of what is done in the metropolitan area of Richmond. A review of what the three school systems have set up to improve holding power is summarized as follows: All three offer the college preparatory, business, and general diplomas. The main concern is with the general and business courses, because it is mostly the non-college student who drops out of school. Chesterfield County is limited to business courses, such as typing, bookkeeping, and etc., mechanical drawing, industrial arts, and home economics. In addition to these, Henrico County does have Vocational Office Training (VOT) in which three to four hours of the day is

spent actually on the job in a business office. The City of Richmond is able to do much more. It is able to offer classes on two levels in order to help students of varying abilities. The curriculum is more expanded also, therefore an individual is able to choose an elective course adapted to his needs and abilities. Under a co-operative program which gives classes that last longer than one hour, Richmond has expanded greatly. In addition to the VOT, there is Distributive Education (DE), dealing with the training of individuals in the selling and purchasing occupations. It also offers Diversified Occupations (DO), which deals with any field in which the individual is interested. In addition to all these and also under the co-operative program are taught drafting, auto mechanics, electricity, and machine shop in White and Negro schools. The Negro schools have more variety such as, shoe repairs, beauty culture, commercial foods, tailoring, dressmaking (commercial), and masonry. At one time barbering was taught, therefore demand and desire can set up practically any type of training possible.

The second overall means for coping with the problem of dropouts is guidance. Visiting teachers are a part of the program. Visiting teachers came about in Virginia partly as the result of the Denny Commission in 1944, pages 15, 16 and 19 of this study. The State Board of Education stressed the importance of employing visiting teachers or attendance

officers in the school districts of the State. The visiting teachers have the chief function of investigating cases of unlawful absences.⁵¹

The visiting teacher helps the regular classroom teacher ferret out the causes for a child's failure to take the fullest advantage of what the school has to offer... he provides additional ears and eyes for the classroom teacher, producing a more favorable climate for the intellectual, physical and emotional growth of the specially referred child... the visiting teacher seeks to help remove obstacles which prevent a child from satisfactorily adjusting to school life. The type of children with whom the visiting teachers deal may be described as follows; (1) those who are failing in their work; (2) those who manifest aggressive, anti-social behavior; (3) those with withdrawn, recessive behavior characteristics; (4) those who exhibit bizarre or socially undesirable behavior; (5) truants; (6) those who evidence a lack of physical vigor due to illness or neglect; (7) "drop-outs"; and (8) delinquents; (9) indigents.⁵²

The three schools system have all adopted the means of visiting teachers. Chesterfield County has two White and no Negro visiting teachers. Henrico County has two White visiting teachers and a Negro elementary supervisor assumes the duty of the Negro visiting teacher. The City of Richmond has seven White and five Negro visiting teachers. Naturally the size of the school system determines the need in this field.

Counseling the students in the right field of study

⁵¹Robert F. Williams, "Visiting Teachers Revisited", Virginia Journal of Education, Apr. 1956, p. 14.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 14-15

is the main means under guidance. Chesterfield County has no full time counselors, but uses teachers one or two periods a day in this capacity. Henrico County has four full time counselors, one in each large high school, and also uses teachers as part-time counselors. The City of Richmond has a guidance department with approximately forty counselors in the Junior and senior high schools, some full time, and some part-time, who also teach. In addition Richmond also employes four school psychologists to help with guidance. The whole metropolitan area uses the services of the Memorial Guidance Clinic as an aid in guidance.

CHAPTER IV

AN APPRAISAL OF THE RICHMOND AREA'S METHODS

This study shows that there is a need for improving the holding power in the metropolitan area of Richmond. The first is to get the teachers and administrators to subscribe to the belief that all youth should complete as much schooling as ability will allow. Too often it has been repeated, "I'm glad that Johnny has quit school". Those in the profession of teaching have an obligation to all youth, not only to the most cooperative, but also to the indifferent child. The school systems need to keep better records on the students, as already brought out concerning the ones who dropout during the summer months; what happens to them? There are also a great number of teachers who do not show enough interest in the child. A potential dropout needs encouragement and a feeling of belonging and being wanted by someone. It has been said too often that, "My day is from eight to four, and that is all". Is this professional? Therefore the beginning point is with the teachers; to improve their attitude toward the indifferent child, as well as improve the caliber of teachers. In the National Stay-in-School Campaign, Handbook for Communities, sponsored by the United States Departments of Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare, and Defense in this year (1957), points out what can be done

first by the school officials.⁵³ This handbook stresses the importances of paying particular attention to students who might be dropping out of school.⁵⁴

Along the curriculum methods, there is heard, "Well, we want to expand our curriculum, but financially we are unable to do so", or "There is not enough demand". It is the belief of the author that Richmond has an excellent scope of curriculum, and Henrico County is striving toward the goal. Henrico County is investigating the possibilities of DE and DO programs at the present time. Chesterfield County is greatly behind the rest of the metropolitan area in this respect. There is a great need and interest in the construction line of work among the youth of the county, but they find it hard to live within their budget as it is, therefore, this is no time to consider extending the scope of the program. This is one fault in education. They will wait for better times, that may never come. A philosophy of "No time like the present", or "Where there is a will, there is a way", is greatly needed in this area.

⁵³United States Department of Labor, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, in cooperation with the United States Department of Defense, National Stay-in-School Campaign, Handbook for Communities, 1957., p. 3.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 4.

An appraisal of the metropolitan area shows that counseling does not begin early enough in the child's schooling. It is very difficult to say when it should begin, and how, but as it stands now in the Richmond area it begins in the eighth grade prior to entering the ninth grade. This could have much effect on the reasons why the City of Richmond schools lose such a large number of students in the ninth grade. Not enough time is used in planning ahead for the students.

Visiting Teachers have aided greatly, but this is no definite answer to the problem, as many think it is. The counties need to add Negro visiting teachers to their staff, because the largest percentages of dropouts are among the Negroes. One stops to think if prejudice toward the Negro has any thing to do with the scarcity of Negro visiting teachers in the counties. Of course, it is possible they need more white visiting teachers also.

This study revealed that more dropouts occurred in the ninth grade, which means that in most cases these students must have been retained somewhere along the line, because the average sixteen year old is in the tenth grade. "The sense of failure, of personal inadequacy, and of frustration is, to a shocking degree, being built into the lives of our young people by their school experiences. Yet we know that successes tend to bring further successes

and failures tend to breed failures. The adolescent should have an opportunity to do something in each of his courses which is regarded by himself and others as well done."⁵⁵

"A failure experience isn't good motivation for learning, and it's much more frustrating and conducive to poor adjustment than promotion."⁵⁶ "Children do not learn more by repeating a grade" (or subject). "In fact, so far as achievement is concerned, potential repeaters (slow learners) actually seem to profit more from promotion than children of like ability who are retained."⁵⁷ Therefore there is a great need for studying the promotion and failure policies of our schools, because it may lead to personal failure on part of the child, which in turn leads to lack of interest in what the child is doing.

There is also a need for closer working between the home and the school, which is most desirable for increasing holding power. The visiting teacher plan needs to be extended to the elementary school level more, and it is necessary to work with the parents, and re-educate them

⁵⁵Harl R. Douglass, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵⁶Spain, Drummond, and Goodlad, op. cit., p. 199.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 200.

where it is desirable and possible. The author states that a large percent of the dropouts come from a home where little or no interest is shown in the school, or the child, by the parents.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The educational system is the backbone of the American way of life. The future of the American way of life depends largely upon the knowledge and training the youth receives, and if only fifty per cent or less complete high school, the future is in danger.

This study has revealed the advantages of education in job opportunity. The main factor in job opportunity is that the more education a person receives, the more his earning power is likely to be. A high school graduate earns twice as much as one who does not complete high school. The coming automation is expected to make ninety per cent of the available jobs either skilled or semi-skilled in nature. Because of imperfect holding of the secondary schools, the preparation of American youth is not keeping up with this trend.

There is a direct relationship between dropouts and juvenile delinquency. The employers do not want to hire a sixteen year old teen-ager, if older workers are available. The sixteen year old, in most cases, is unskilled and is unable to find a job. If he has left school, he becomes restless, and moves toward delinquency to satisfy his restlessness.

There is also a relationship between dropouts and rejections from the armed forces. The States with the highest rejections from the armed forces have the highest number of

dropouts.

More than fifty per cent of the reasons given for leaving school are related directly to the school. The attitude of the teacher is the most predominant factor. It is the responsibility of the teacher to show a definite interest in the pupil and to prevent "lack of interest" in the classroom on the part of the pupil.

The factors of sex and race are strongly connected in dropouts. The female attains more schooling than the male, and the white student attains more schooling than the Negro student (see FIGURES 2,3, and 4). The main characteristics that distinguish potential dropouts from graduates are retardation in school, frequent absences, and failure in school marks prior to reaching compulsory attendance age.

Although curriculum and guidance programs are important means in increasing holding power, the implementation of these is of utmost importance. The child is an individual; therefore, the teacher must know the child as such, the way he learns, and the nature of his behavior.

The study of the Richmond metropolitan area reveals that the same trends and problems exist here as in other parts of the country. A study of the classes of 1956 showed that 42.7 per cent of those who began in the first grade were graduated twelve years later in the Richmond metropolitan area. Because only 42.7 per cent were graduated as

compared to fifty per cent over the country as a whole, it is obvious that the problems in this area are greater. For the most part, educational leaders in the Richmond metropolitan area are working to improve the curriculum and guidance as a means of increasing the holding power; but much more needs to be done to develop rapport between the student and teacher.

The time to improve the holding power in the Richmond metropolitan area is now. Therefore, the recommendations of this thesis are:

- (1) To develop further studies of
 - (a) summer dropouts (to encourage them to return to school in the fall),
 - (b) following up dropouts after they have left school (to determine the results on non-completion of high school),
 - (c) special education (to determine if it is meeting the needs of all children that should come under this program).
- (2) To extend the DE and DO programs in high school.
- (3) To extend the adult education program to include day classes, and to develop a more terminal program of adult education.
- (4) To adjust hidden school cost.
- (5) To encourage teachers to take courses in ways children learn and the nature of behavior in children.

(6) To develop in the teachers a desire to encourage potential dropouts to remain in school.

(7) To work with these potential dropouts with special concern as early as the elementary school.

(8) To encourage closer relationships between the home and the school.

(9) To encourage a Stay-in-School campaign that will include the first eight recommendations.

This Stay-in-School campaign should be done, not only on the local school level, but on the entire community level. This will include the cooperative effort of all school personnel, students, labor unions, employment offices, PTAs, civic clubs, businessmen, social workers, and churches, and the services of newspapers, radios, and television.⁵⁸ A Handbook for Communities on a National Stay-in-School Campaign is available from the Superintendent of Documents Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.

⁵⁸United States Departments of Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, and Defense, op. cit., pp. 3-9.

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He married Joyce A. Smith of Oxford, North Carolina, March 6, 1954. His daughter, Karen Virginia, was born December 18, 1955.

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