

THE COLLEGE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

REASONS WHY SENIOR STUDENTS FROM PUBLIC HIGH
SCHOOLS ON ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS DROP
THEIR SCHEDULED CLASSES

658-A

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Comparatively little research has been accomplished on the issue of why high school students drop their scheduled classes. An analysis of several research study abstracts has indicated that most studies related to this question are more concerned with reasons why students withdraw from their schools, why students fail in school, and the relationship between teacher morale and student attitudes toward their school environment. "Too little research has been done on structural characteristics of schools and even less on the active role of the school in discouraging children from continuing."¹

However, these studies are notable because they add knowledge about student attitudes toward school. They provide information as to whether the education system is responsive to the needs of the students. According to Chesler:

Even the youth who manage to stay in school find little that is meaningful to them. . . they adopt the ethics of the jungle realizing that in the fiercely competitive world in which they live, it doesn't matter how you have played the game, but whether you have won or lost.²

¹Russell Beirn et. al., Antecedents and Consequences of Early School Leaving, (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 072363, 1972), p. 7.

²Mark A. Chesler, "Shared Power and Student Decision Making." Educational Leadership, October, 1970, p. 9.

Therefore, studies which give information about students' attitudes are important since they provide insight into reasons why students drop their classes.

A study aimed at finding the reasons why high school students drop their scheduled classes is very valuable because it should: (1) provide the administration with information regarding the type of teacher to which students relate best and (2) furnish a guide which takes into account valid and invalid reasons, in formulating a policy for the dropping of classes.

The high school administration should seek to establish an orderly manner of scheduling students for classes that would not result in the mass changing of schedules which subsequently delays the beginning of the academic school year.

At this writing, Charlotte Amalie High School had the largest public school student population (1800) in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. In the class of 1975, there were 264 graduating students from twenty-four geographic areas: Anegada, Anguilla, Antigua, Aruba, Barbados, Curacao, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis, Puerto Rico, St. Croix, St. John, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Martin, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Santo Domingo, Tortola, Trinidad, United States, and Virgin Gorda.¹ This total included 146 students from the United States Virgin Islands and thirty-one students from the continental United States. This diversification of students indicates a heterogeneous upbringing and hence a possibility of many very varied and distinct reasons for the dropping of classes.

¹St. Thomas, (V.I.) Charlotte Amalie High School, "Senior Profile, C.A.H.S. 1975," (Mimeographed.)

In 1975, the Eudora Kean High School of St. Thomas had a student population of 700. The writer had an interview with the senior counselor who informed her that the students from this high school were representative of the same type of diversified areas as the students from the Charlotte Amalie High School.

To alleviate their work load, most counselors in high schools often set aside a period of time during the spring of the school year for pre-registration. In recent years, this procedure had been followed at both Charlotte Amalie High School and Eudora Kean High School.

Due to the dropping and changing of scheduled classes by students who were involved in an intensive pre-registration during the previous semester, it would seem that there is a serious breakdown somewhere.

During the school year, 1974-1975, the majority of the student population at the above high schools were pre-registered for their fall classes. At the beginning of the school year, 1975-1976, hundreds of students dropped their previously scheduled classes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, there has been a major attempt by high school counselors to pre-register students in the spring for fall classes. The pre-registration of students is done partly to relieve the pressures and responsibilities of the counselors and registrars in the fall. Additionally, pre-registration should provide a smooth commencement of the school year's academic functions.

For at least one full marking period after the fall semester begins, there is concern by administrators, teachers, and counselors, because the re-scheduling of students must take place. The widespread

practice of dropping classes in the fall is detrimental to the well-being of the school administration.

As an example, of the 337 seniors from both Charlotte Amalie High School and the Eudora Kean High School, who were surveyed by this author, 270 seniors indicated that they had dropped classes. During the fall of the 1975-1976 school year, both eleventh grade counselors from Charlotte Amalie High School estimated that four-fifths of the juniors dropped their scheduled classes and had to be re-scheduled; whereby, as a result, start of the academic school year was impeded for these students.

This study researched reasons why senior public high school students on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands dropped their classes.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the prime reasons why students of Charlotte Amalie High School and Eudora Kean High School considered dropping scheduled classes.
2. To find out if there were any significant differences, in the choice of reasons between male and female twelfth grade students.
3. To find out if the responses of the twelfth grade students who were born in the Virgin Islands differed from those of non-Virgin Islanders.
4. To compare the findings of this study with similar studies done elsewhere.

HYPOTHESES

At the .025 level of confidence:

H₀1. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons

for dropping classes by twelfth grade females and twelfth grade males.
H₀2. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons for dropping classes by native Virgin Islands public school twelfth grade students and non-Virgin Islands public school twelfth grade students.

H₀3. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons for dropping classes by twelfth grade students in 1976 and twelfth grade students in 1980.

ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that students who attend high school, do so because they are serious about getting their high school education.

It is assumed that students expect to graduate from high school and earn their diploma.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited in several ways. Only the twelfth grade students were given the questionnaire. Within the educational structure of the Virgin Islands, there is a serious need to include students and teachers, to determine attitudes and concerns about the school's academic environment. The entire school population of both schools, from grades nine through twelve, should have been randomly sampled, thus giving a more representative picture of the students, faculty, and staff of both schools. In measuring the twelfth grade population of Charlotte Amalie High School and Eudora Kean High School, there are problem areas that are not revealed, i.e., teacher-student relations.

In the light of an apparent lack of instruments to measure students reasons for dropping classes, the author found it necessary to

develop the questionnaire. The items were solicited informally from students, faculty and staff members.

The lack of a standardized instrument to study student attitudes and reasons for dropping classes may be judged as a limitation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Academically oriented: Associated with the traditional standards of education and related to the effective learning process at the secondary level.

Administrative category: The level wherein leadership, management, planning and supervision is provided for secondary school education.

Continental United States: The District of Columbia and the 49 states including Alaska on the continent of North America.

Dropping classes: The removing of or exchanging of classes assigned by the registrar or the counselors of the high school, with a drop slip signed by the registrar and the counselor.

High School Administration: Those school principals whose roles are to provide the faculty, staff, and students of the high school with leadership, management, planning and supervision at the secondary level.

Native Virgin Islands Senior Student: A twelfth grader, who was born in the United States Virgin Islands, on St. Thomas, St. John or St. Croix.

Non-native Virgin Islands Senior Student: A twelfth grader born in any geographic location outside of the United States Virgin Islands.

Responses: The replies that the twelfth grade students of the Charlotte Amalie High School and the Eudora Kean High School elicited

on the questionnaire, "Students' Selected Reasons for Dropping Their Classes."

Socially Oriented: Associated with activities or problems in human relations that deal primarily with the high school community.

Teacher Oriented: Associated with activities or problems that deal primarily with the instructor in the classroom.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire, "Students' Selected Reasons for Dropping Classes," was designed by the author to secure information from students on reasons why they dropped scheduled classes. The tabulation of data was handscored.

The administration of the questionnaire was limited to twelfth graders at the Charlotte Amalie High School and the Eudora Kean High School. Limiting the population to the group described seemed to be suitable for this study, since most twelfth graders, having been a part of the school system for four years, might be in a better position to select stated reasons for dropping classes.

The chairpersons of the English departments at Charlotte Amalie and Eudora Kean High Schools were contacted, advised of the nature of the study and requested to have the English teachers administer the questionnaire to the 337 twelfth graders.

In January 1980, the questionnaire was administered to 213 twelfth graders at Charlotte Amalie High School to update the data collection of 1976. Only the students at Charlotte Amalie High School received the questionnaire. Since the writer is employed at Charlotte Amalie High School, it was more feasible to deal with the students who were in a close proximity. Without distinction, similar methods were

effected to administer the questionnaire to the students as had been done earlier in 1976.

Of the 550 students surveyed, 459 students indicated that they had dropped classes. This study looked at the opinions of all students who responded to the questionnaire to determine the significance of reasons for dropping classes.

The questionnaire, (see Appendix) which required approximately ten minutes to complete, consisted of eighteen items. Students were asked to decide whether or not the reasons chosen by them were "extremely serious," "moderately serious," "considerably serious," "least serious," and "not serious."

In the analysis of the data, only the reasons chosen by the students as "extremely serious," were ranked. It was considered that these responses were the most informative and could contribute best to the understanding of why students drop their classes. On the other hand, it was felt that the alternative choices of "considerably serious," "moderately serious," "least serious," and "not serious," were appropriate as a background to observe the total responses elicited from the twelfth grade students.

The reasons stated on the questionnaire have been suggested by students faculty, guidance counselors and other staff members of the two high schools in informal situations. The reasons are categorized in the following manner: teacher, academic, social, and administrative.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a group of twenty eleventh grade high school students at Charlotte Amalie High School. The replies made on the pre-test sample served as a model and guide for

the final instrument as it was administered to the seniors. On the questionnaire, students were asked to identify themselves by age, place of birth, years in the Virgin Islands, years at their school and grade level.

The items on the questionnaire were ranked according to the number of responses elicited from the student groups:

Differences among individuals in many traits can be expressed by ranking the subjects in 1-2-3 order when such differences cannot be measured directly. For example, persons may be ranked in order of merit for honest, athletic ability . . . when it is impossible to measure these complex behaviors

When all of the information was collected, the data were analyzed by the Mann-Whitney U Test Method. This test is among the most powerful of the non-parametric tests. The power efficiency of this test is about 95 percent and its U value exhibits a greater power to reject the null hypothesis than the t test. The statistical treatment of the data consisted of determining whether two independent groups differ significantly from each other in their choice of reasons for dropping classes.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Many writers today tend to support the notion that our country is facing a growing educational crisis in our inability to improve the school's holding power with its students, the student's satisfaction with his school experience, his self-esteem and competence. "Overall, the U.S. Bureau of the Census estimates that at any given time, there are at least 2.4 million Americans between the ages of 17 and 20 who belong to a floating army of non-enrollees - many of whom remain out of school until they pass into adulthood - some leave because of classroom failures. . . ." ¹

The review of literature presented in this study is intended to deal directly and indirectly with research related to a student's dropping out of class. In general, it is intended that this literature will provide a conceptual framework for looking at the relationship of class dropouts to school dropouts.

In the Virgin Islands, there has been a limited amount of statistical research reported with regard to the holding power of its public school system. Notwithstanding, the Pupil Personnel Services of the Department of Education of the Virgin Islands has identified that:

. . . the large and ever growing population of

¹Gary Shulz, "The 2.4 Million Who Aren't in School, U.S. News and World Report," March 22, 1976, p. 43.

youngsters between the ages of 13 and 18 are [sic] not succeeding in the conventional educational system. [sic]

Statistics show us that the mortality figure for the present 12th grade class is 500 students. That is, the number of entering 7th graders in 1970 was 1,286 and the number of graduates in 1976 will be 786. However, the figure is distorted by a lack of knowledge of students who are dropouts, and students who have transferred in and out of the system. We can also say that the increased non-citizen population over the past five years (17,289 in-1970 and 24,512 in 1975) may have made the dropout rate look better.¹

We will keep in mind a very general assumption of approximately a 40% mortality rate. We then add to that knowledge a high proportion of students who graduate with minimal passing grades.

1974-75 figures gleaned from the Virgin Islands Juvenile Bureau indicate approximately 200 children per month, between the ages of 11 and 17, have committed offenses serious enough to involve the Juvenile Bureau. . . .

The native Cruzan and St. Thomian population constitute approximately 85% of the population committing the crimes with the Puerto Rico population 10% and the remaining, continental and other ethnic groups.

Further documentation illustrates that in a 1975 study done in the Office of Drug Education, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the school children in 8th grade showed established patterns of alienation. This pattern has already been identified with fringe group and negativistic community involvement. It also reinforces the peer group pattern that rejects the traditional education system.²

If students are dissatisfied with their school experience, it may tend to lower their self-esteem and create a feeling of alienation which is a transmittal of a feeling of powerlessness.

The concept of powerlessness has been placed in a modern context by Alvin Gouldner: By powerlessness, it is meant that men pursue goals and use means in their pursuit determined by social institutions with which they do not feel intimately identified or by forces which they may be unable to recognize at all (Gouldner, 1950, p. 86. . . .)

¹Statistics taken from the Office Of Planning Research and Evaluation, Department of Education, Pupil Personnel Services, 1975.

²St. Thomas, (V.I.) "Community School Learning Center Narrative," Office of Drug Education, Department of Education, Pupil Personnel Services, 1975.

Of potentially great importance to the school is Gallihier's (1967) hypothesis that there is a direct relationship between the learning process and feelings of powerlessness. He suggested that:

If an individual feels powerlessness to control the outcome of his actions, then it will seem of little use to him to learn materials that could conceivably help him perform more adequately. In other words, if a person does not believe his performance makes a difference in the ultimate outcome, he will be less willing to invest any significant effort in retaining materials that might improve his performance (Gallihier, 1967, p. 13).

If Gallihier is correct, the student who feels powerless in social relations may also believe that his school performance makes no difference in life's final outcome and hence that educational materials, no matter how well designed and employed will have little effect on his achievement.¹

Very little research has been done with regard to the reasons why students drop their scheduled courses. A study done by Sherry Deren, et al., Students Who Withdraw From Courses: A Descriptive Analysis, was conducted on all undergraduate students who withdrew from courses at Hofstra University in the Fall semester of 1966.² Deren's study not only looked at the reasons why students drop their classes, it examined the grade point averages of the students as well as the courses of study in which the students were enrolled. In her results, she associated student characteristics, their sex, and their grade point average as having an influence on students and their withdrawal from courses.

One of the really interesting studies to come along in recent years was one conducted by Erica Wright, et al. The study was

¹The Alienation of Youth: A Selective Review of the Literature, No. 1., (September 1972), Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland, p. 10.

²Sherry Deren, et. al., Student Who Withdraw From Courses: A Descriptive Analysis, ERIC abstract, ED 033650, (1969), p. 11.

entitled, "Survey of 1971-72 Dropouts in a Secondary School."¹ It was their intention to scrutinize school factors at the dropout level. Telephone interviews were conducted with dropouts and often as many as four interviews were conducted with each dropout. Over 115 dropouts were interviewed. Wright's research findings were categorized according to how the dropouts felt about the teaching and instruction, their academic performance, their social relationships, and their attitudes toward the administration. Following are comments made by the dropouts that indicated their negative feelings about their school experiences.

They could take more time explaining things. . . . The teachers did not know what they were doing. . . . Some teachers killed the subjects for me. . . .

The second term, I didn't do too well. . . . I bombed - my marks were in the 40's. . . . I didn't think I was going to pass. . . . I was going to fail again.

More than a quarter (28) of the respondents said that a number of their friends had also dropped out of school before, after, or at the same time as they did. . . . Others included in this group said they had no friend to tell or had not told their friends. . . . Some who were failing or had personal problems said their friends understood. . . . Typical remarks about the principal were derogatory and to the effect that they were seen as having negative attitudes toward students with bad records. . . . They were also described as being "on the backs" of some people and, in some cases, were cited as the prime reason for the student dropping out.²

Another study which revealed the various peculiarities of the individual that drops out of class was found in the work of Delaney and Tovian. This study attempted to distinguish high school dropouts from non-dropouts. They found that significant differences between dropouts and non-dropouts did exist. Some of the factors which appear

¹Erica Wright, et. al., A Survey of 1971-72 Dropouts In A Secondary School, ERIC abstract, ED 84289, (1973), p. 14.

²Ibid., pp 16-17.

They found that significant differences between dropouts and non-dropouts did exist. Some of the factors which appear highly significant included years in school, race, and number of skipped classes. Delaney and Tovian had this to say about the dropout:

The potential dropout is more likely to be frequently absent from school and skip classes when he is there. Although, he is less concerned about being treated with understanding or about doing things for other people, he is quite dependent upon his peer group for social support and is, accordingly, a more submissive person who values conformity, who worries about how he is perceived by others, and who tends to be more introverted and experiences lower levels of anxiety and tension, possibly because he has lower aspiration levels. Intellectually, he tends to think more concretely as opposed to rationally, and to be less creative.

Psychologists and sociologists generally recognize that the "self" is increasingly being recognized as a social phenomenon which cannot be properly understood without references to the social environment.

Thornburg's study showed conclusive evidence that a special academic program, in which positive techniques were used, can effectively change attitude towards school and self: "Ways should be sought in which to include a greater number of designated dropouts in the special academic program thus increasing holding power and producing more positive attitudinal systems for a greater portion of youth."²

Friedenburg has said:

The dropouts, by and large, don't like middle class culture; and they know quite well what we can do with it.

¹Daniel J. Delaney, and Steven M. Tovian, The Application of Discriminant Analysis to Determine High School Dropouts From Non-Dropouts, ERIC Reproduction Services, ED 097616 (1972), p. 16.

²Hershel D. Thornburg, "An Investigation of A Dropout Program Among Arizona's Minority Youth, Education, February/March, 1974, p. 46.

Dropping out is one way of telling us, and it is about time we turned our attention to the things about the school that are bugging them.¹

Likewise is referring to dropouts within minority cultures, Fantini and Weinstein concluded:

Many teachers unconsciously employ a "self fulfilling prophecy" with minority group students, i.e., they have limited expectations of performance from them. This leads to a cycle of low expectations - low performance which further handicaps the learner.²

Carol Talbert discussed the problem of minority group students and summarized the effect on students wherein teachers have limited expectations from their children. "The most devastating aspect of the educational problem is that the teachers themselves adhere to the stereotype of the 'uneducable' and 'unmotivated' child."³

Another example which might apply was found in the work of Adkins. She states that:

The educational goal of this country must be to fully include all students. This is not always through acculturation and assimilation. . . .The burden rests squarely upon the schools and the teachers to demonstrate to the . . .student that he is not only present but he belongs.⁴

¹E.Z. Friedenburg, "An Ideology of School Withdrawal, "The School Dropout, Washington, D.C., National Educational Association, 1964, p. 33.

²Maric Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, The Disadvantaged: Challenge to Education, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 77.

³Carol Talbert, "Studying Education in The Ghetto," To See Ourselves, (London: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), p. 271.

⁴Patricia Adkins, "Socio-Cultural Factors in Educating Disadvantaged Children, Education, September/October, 1972, pp. 33-34.

Ramirez stressed the importance of understanding cultural differences of students within a school system. Understandably, students who are experiencing the most difficulty in adjusting to the school setting are most likely to drop out. As a result of his study, Ramirez developed several measures that could assist in alleviating cultural conflicts. He concluded that the following measures could be instituted:

We must institute teacher training programs which seek to acquaint teachers with the cultural values of the various ethnic groups. Some of this is being done now, but for the most part, these programs place the teacher or student teacher in a passive role. More use should be made of role playing techniques so that the teacher can become more involved in the training and actually learn how to cope with these problems when they arise in the classroom. In addition, allowing teachers to interview children of various ethnic groups would make the problems of these children more real to the teacher in training.

In his study, "A Study of the Relationship Between Teacher Morale and Student Attitudes Toward Their School Environment," Jack DeVere Minzey measured student attitudes by a specifically designed instrument based on the incomplete sentence method similar to the "Teacher Morale Form: given to teachers."² Both instruments were judged by the same persons using the following ranking: "0 - very positive, 1 - slightly positive, 2 - neutral, 3 - slightly negative, and 4 - very negative."³

¹Jack DeVere Minzey, "A Study of the Relationship Between Teacher Morale and Student Attitudes Toward Their School Environment," (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967), p. 84.

²Ibid., p. 83.

³Lloyd Leon Coppedge, "A Study of the Causes for Pupil Failure in High School," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma,), p. 5.

Teachers were also asked to rate their student attitudes as they perceived them. This study was extremely relevant to the subject of students dropping courses. One of the findings of that study was knowledge of students' attitudes will make it possible to build better school programs and resolve many school issues.

If a cause of students dropping classes is a fear of failing, then the following study, done by Lloyd Leon Coppedge, at the University of Oklahoma in 1966, "A Study of the Causes for Pupil Failure in High School," should provide some educational insight.¹ The most recently reported causes of pupil failure in the Coppedge study were a lack of interest in the subjects, lack of study, work too difficult, and dislike for the teacher. Recommendations of the study pointed to the need for a philosophy among the staff members which recognizes the needs of all pupils as well as their individual differences. This study adds to the ideas expressed in other studies that student dissatisfaction with their courses often stems from academic as well as teacher problems.

Mitchell and Shepherd, in their findings, related that attendance was a significant factor as a predictor of the youngster who will drop out of school. "As students grow older, if they dislike school, they tend to be absent and find reasons to stay away from school."²

It has been pointed out, in the studies cited, that there are many reasons why students will exercise their prerogative of dropping

¹Sheila Mitchell, and Michael Shepherd, The Child Who Dislikes Going to School, ERIC Reproduction Service, ED 019999 (1967), p. 9.

²Alienation, pp. 27-28.

out of school or dropping courses to show their dissatisfaction with the educational system.

. . . .At the high school level, one factor which may contribute indirectly to increasing feelings of alienation is the school's apparent singularity of emphasis on academic excellence. . . .without question, there are other factors which may contribute to student alienation, including the teacher domination of the classroom, the lecture method of dispensing information, the restriction of the teacher to a specialty, the acceleration of the courses, and the failure of the school in dealing with value conflicts.

Further research indicates that:

Without regard to achievement quotients and the fact that failures tend to drop out, the older pupils who remained in school came to feel that they were doing inadequate work. According to Morse, the school appears to grow gradually less positive with time. It was generalized that the school has communicated a sense of personal failure to many of its students.¹

Dropping out of class or school seems to reflect an attitude toward school which is associated with a lack of interest as well as a feeling of not fitting in with the school's academic environment.

Additionally:

Further analysis of the dropouts indicate that they belong to underprivileged groups, are over age for their grade, are frequently absent, are failing in one or more courses and participate very little in extracurricular activities. Obviously, the secondary school must improve the adjustment of its instructional program to the abilities, interest, and needs of students particularly boys, so that it will not only educate them well, but also increase its holding power over them.²

¹William Watson Purkey, "The Self and Academic Achievement," Research Bulletin 3, (Spring, 1967). MP. 1, Florida Educational Research and Development Council, p. 13.

²Weem Saucier, Robert L. Wendel, and Richard J. Mueller, Toward Humanistic Teaching in High School, (New York: D.C. Heath and Co., 1975), p. 8.

In the summer of 1979, Dr. Asyll Warner conducted a study in the Virgin Islands, entitled "Teacher-Student Attitudes Towards Vocational Education."¹ Warner determined that teachers play an important role in a student's willingness to continue in the Vocational Education program. He alleged that teachers in the Virgin Islands Vocational Education department often want a "ready made" system. For them, he feels, if all things are not equal, the system becomes inoperative. According to the survey that he made with the students who did not complete their vocational education courses, the students felt that lack of imagination on the part of teachers to deal with the system, as well as few motivational techniques in the classroom were responsible for their dropping their vocational classes.

In summary, the studies cited in this chapter revealed that students who dropped their classes were often the students who dropped out of school. A review of the professional literature regarding students who dropped classes suggested a tendency among educators to stereotype students and to ignore the differences among individuals.

The research also supports the idea that failure in school has a decidedly negative effect on the individual and that those students who experienced failure in school were more likely to drop out before graduation or before completing a program of studies or training.

¹Asyll Warner, Ph.D., "Teacher-Student Attitude Towards Vocational Education," Department of Vocational Education, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, Summer, 1979, (Mimeographed).

Where there are students who are culturally different, it is important that instruction meet individual needs and recognize individual difference.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS

The problems of this study were to explore some of the reasons why senior high school students in St. Thomas dropped their scheduled classes as selected by the twelfth grade students of Charlotte Amalie High School and Eudora Kean High School. In agreement with the design of the study and the procedures for collecting data outlined in Chapter I, the findings are presented in this chapter.

In 1976, of the 430 questionnaires submitted to both schools, 337 (78%) questionnaires were returned. In 1980, of the 261 questionnaires submitted to Charlotte Amalie High School students, 213 were returned. After investigating to find out the reasons why the balance of the questionnaires had not been returned, it was determined that the following factors were responsible: (1) some students were absent from school on the day that the questionnaire was administered and (2) a few students refused to fill out the questionnaire because they did not want to.

After all the data were collected and tabulated, the results were treated statistically. Table 1 is a description of the criteria for the questionnaire and the designated category for each item. Table 2 is a summary of the total responses of the seniors to the questionnaire.

TABLE 1

CRITERIA FOR QUESTIONNAIRE - "STUDENTS' SELECTED REASONS FOR DROPPING THEIR CLASSES"

Description of Criteria	Category
1. Friction and hostility between you and the teacher.	Teacher
2. Friction and hostility between you and the other students.	Social
3. Teacher is usually boring.	Teacher
4. Teacher requires too much work.	Academic
5. Teacher is often vague and confusing.	Teacher
6. You'd rather take the subject next year with a different teacher.	Academic
7. In spite of all your efforts, you were unable to get a passing grade.	Academic
8. A general unfriendly atmosphere exists in the classroom.	Social
9. None of your friends were in your class.	Social
10. The class was scheduled for the first period.	Administrative
11. The class was scheduled for the last period.	Administrative
12. Administrative policy allowed the change.	Administrative
13. Parental pressure caused you to change.	Social
14. The physical set-up of the room was uncomfortable.	Administrative
15. There were no textbooks for the course.	Academic
16. The teaching techniques were unsatisfactory.	Teacher
17. You preferred a teacher of a different sex.	Teacher
18. You preferred a teacher of a different racial or cultural background.	Teacher

TABLE 2

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES MADE ON QUESTIONNAIRE BY
STUDENTS OF CHARLOTTE AMALIE HIGH SCHOOL AND EUDORA KEAN HIGH SCHOOL IN 1976

23

Item	Extremely Serious	Considerably Serious	Moderately Serious	Least Serious	Not Serious	Total
1	102	52	49	37	97	337
2	21	40	62	62	152	337
3	54	59	76	63	85	337
4	39	39	67	73	119	337
5	94	75	42	49	77	337
6	35	48	40	56	158	337
7	126	54	37	45	75	337
8	47	55	59	64	112	337
9	21	26	31	32	227	337
10	20	22	32	60	203	337
11	21	37	40	54	185	337
12	43	36	59	71	128	337
13	61	51	56	50	119	337

TABLE 2 - Continued

Item	Extremely Serious	Considerably Serious	Moderately Serious	Least Serious	Not Serious	Total
14	39	47	66	64	121	337
15	81	48	47	45	116	337
16	99	58	67	28	85	337
17	21	19	38	57	202	337
18	33	25	37	28	214	337

"moderately serious," "least serious," and "not serious."

Table 3 reports how each of the six student groups ranked the reasons for dropping classes. The figures in this table are arranged in terms of the frequently mentioned reasons down to the least frequently mentioned reasons. The major reason for dropping classes, chosen by each of the groups was, "in spite of all your efforts, you were unable to get a passing grade."

Table 4 reports the nine items on the questionnaire that were ranked the highest by the students, as well as the nine items on the questionnaire that were ranked the lowest.

Data regarding the "extremely serious" reasons why students drop their classes were tabulated for the six groups included in the study. The data were arranged for the statistical treatment by the Mann-Whitney U Test method. The eighteen items scored on the questionnaire by each of the groups are termed responses and were designated n_1 and n_2 . The frequency of the responses of n_1 and n_2 were combined and ranked from the smallest to the largest. The sum of the ranks were designated R_1 and R_2 . (See Tables 5, 6 and 7). Siegel reported that the Mann-Whitney test uses more of the information provided in the data, through consideration of the rank value of each observation instead of its location. As a result, the Mann-Whitney test is more powerful than other similar tests.

The formulas for the Mann-Whitney U test are:

$$n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_1 (n_1 + 1)}{2} - R_1 = U$$

or:

$$n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_2 (n_2 + 1)}{2} - R_2 = U$$

TABLE 3

HIGHEST TO THE LOWEST RANKED REASONS FOR
DROPPING CLASSES BY EACH OF THE STUDENT GROUPS

Item	senior female rating	senior male rating	V.I. students rating	non-V.I. students rating	senior students '76 rating	senior students '80 rating
In spite of all of your efforts you were unable to get a passing grade. (7)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Teaching techniques were unsatisfactory, (16)	2	4	3	3	3	4
Friction and hostility between you and the teacher. (1)	3	2	2	2	2	2
Teacher is often vague and confusing. (5)	4	3	4	4	4	3
There were no textbooks for the course, (15)	5	5	5	5	5	5
Parental pressure caused you to change. (13)	6	7	6	6	6	7
Teacher is usually boring. (3)	7	8	7	7	7	6
Administrative policy allowed the change. (12)	8	11	9	12	9	8
The physical set-up of the room was uncomfortable. (14)	9	8	11	18	11	13

TABLE 3 - continued

Item	senior female rating	senior male rating	V.I. students rating	non-V.I. students rating	senior students '76 rating	senior students '80 rating
A general unfriendly atmosphere exists in the classroom. (8)	10	6	8	8	8	9
Teacher requires too much work. (4)	11	9	10	13	10	10
You'd rather take the subject next year with a different teacher. (6)	12	14	13	11	12	11
You preferred a teacher of a different racial or cultural background. (18)	13	12	15	10	13	14
None of your friends were in your class. (9)	14	15	17	15	15	15
The class was scheduled for the first period. (11)	15	17	14	16	14	16
Friction and hostility between you and the other students. (2)	16	13	12	18	16	12
You preferred a teacher of a different sex. (17)	17	10	18	14	17	17
The class was scheduled for the last period. (10)	18	16	16	17	18	18

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF HIGHEST AND LOWEST RANKED ITEMS
CHOSEN BY THE STUDENT GROUP

9 Highest Ranked Reasons	9 Lowest Ranked Reasons
<p>In spite of all your efforts you were unable to get a passing grade.</p> <p>Teaching techniques were unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Friction and hostility between you and the teacher.</p> <p>Teacher is often vague and confusing.</p> <p>There were no textbooks for the course.</p> <p>Parental pressure caused you to change.</p> <p>Teacher is usually boring.</p> <p>Administrative policy allowed the change.</p> <p>The physical set-up of the room was uncomfortable.</p>	<p>A general unfriendly atmosphere exists in the classroom.</p> <p>Teacher requires too much work.</p> <p>You'd rather take the subject next year with a different teacher.</p> <p>You preferred a teacher of a different racial or cultural background.</p> <p>None of your friends were in your class.</p> <p>The class was scheduled for the first period.</p> <p>Friction and hostility between you and other students.</p> <p>You preferred a teacher of a different sex.</p> <p>The class was scheduled for the last period.</p>

TABLE 5

OBSERVED FREQUENCY AND RANKING OF RESPONSES
MADE BY SENIOR MALES AND FEMALES

Males	Rank	Females	Rank
44	31	82	36
38	29	72	35
32	27	64	34
27	24	62	33
24	20.5	57	32
21	18.5	41	30
20	17	35	28
19	16	31	26
14	15	29	25
13	14	26	23
12	12.5	25	22
12	12.5	24	20.5
11	9.5	21	18.5
11	9.5	10	5.5
11	9.5	10	5.5
11	9.5	9	3
10	5.5	8	1.5
10	5.5	8	1.5
	$R_1 = 286$		$R_2 = 380$

TABLE 6

OBSERVED FREQUENCY AND RANKING OF RESPONSES MADE BY
VIRGIN ISLANDS AND NON-VIRGIN ISLANDS SENIOR STUDENTS

Native V.I. students	Rank	Non-V.I. students	Rank
60	35	66	36
44	30.5	58	34
43	29	56	33
41	28	53	32
37	27	44	30.5
25	21.5	36	26
24	18.5	30	25
19	15.5	27	24
19	15.5	25	21.5
18	14	25	21.5
14	11.5	25	21.5
13	10	24	18.5
10	7	21	17
9	5.5	15	13
9	5.5	14	11.5
8	3.5	12	9
7	2	11	8
6	1	8	3.5
	280.5		385.5

TABLE 7

OBSERVED FREQUENCY AND RANKING OF RESPONSES MADE BY SENIOR STUDENTS IN 1976 AND SENIOR STUDENTS IN 1980.

Senior Students 1980	Rank	Senior Students 1976	Rank
95	33	126	36
79	30	102	35
71	29	99	34
51	26	94	32
40	23	81	31
38	20	61	28
36	19	54	27
31	16	47	25
30	15	43	24
26	14	39	21.5
25	13	39	21.5
16	7	35	18
15	6	33	17
11	5	21	10.5
10	4	21	10.5
9	3	21	10.5
8	2	21	10.5
7	1	20	8

$$R_1 = 266$$

$$R_2 = 400$$

These two formulas yield different U's. It was the smaller of these U's that was used in this statistical analysis. The hypotheses were tested as indicated below:

H₀1. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons for dropping classes by twelfth grade females and twelfth grade males.

The observed value of U was 115. For a two-tailed test to be significant at the .025 level of confidence, a tabled value of 99 was necessary. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted since the observed value did not justify the rejection of the hypothesis. Siegel states: ". . . if an observed U is for a particular $n_1 \leq 20$ and n_2 between 9 and 20 is equal to or less than value given in the table, H₀ may be rejected at the level of significance indicated at the head of that table."¹

It may be determined then that there were no significant differences in choices between reasons for dropping classes by twelfth grade males and twelfth grade females.

H₀2. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons for dropping classes by native Virgin Islands twelfth grade students and non-Virgin Islands twelfth grade students.

The observed value of U was 109.5. The hypothesis was accepted since there was no statistically significant difference at the .025 level of confidence between reasons chosen by the twelfth grade native Virgin Islands students and those chosen by non-Virgin Islands twelfth grade students.

¹Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 119.

H_0 3. There will be no significant difference in choices between reasons for dropping classes by twelfth grade students in 1976 and twelfth grade students in 1980.

The observed value of U was 95 and was found to be significant at the .025 level of confidence. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. (Note discussion of this procedure on page 25).

It may be inferred then that there were significant differences in choices of reasons for dropping classes between the seniors in 1976 and the seniors in 1980.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

1. While students responded to several specific reasons for dropping class, it was concluded that because the most significant cause was the inability to obtain a passing grade, emphasis should be given to mastering the subject matter rather than over-emphasizing grades.
2. It was concluded that since a significant contributing factor to students dropping out of class was that an atmosphere of friction and hostility existed between themselves and the teacher, the latter should utilize as many resources as possible to create good learning environments.
3. It was concluded that when students felt teaching techniques and textbooks were unsatisfactory, they believed their learning opportunities were reduced.
4. It was also concluded that as parents were a factor in students' reasons for dropping classes, schools should attempt to familiarize parents more regarding those factors assisting the learning process.

According to Gordon K. Lewis:

. . . .The fact that the school in the Virgin Islands is not indigenous institution created in response to local

needs but a stateside system introduced, with only slight modifications, to serve pedagogical-social purposes strictly American in their character. . . .The school is not an end in itself. It is shaped by the social, economic, and cultural forces that weigh on the society as a whole. Virgin Islanders have perhaps failed to see this because every step in their school system. . .has been taken in conjunction with American pedagogical consultants, the high mandarins of the ultra-Deweyite theory that education not merely reflect social reality, but can fundamentally reshape it.¹

If Lewis is to be believed, then, it would seem to indicate that curricula should be developed that are suitable to the needs of the students of the Virgin Islands. In addition, this writer believes that the implications of this study for the Department of Education are: (1) to look at the overall participation of students within the school setting as well as their assimilation into the culture, especially in the area of teacher-student relationships and its effects on student progress; (2) to seek accountability within the Virgin Islands school system with respect to the teacher's responsibility for student achievement and their teaching methodology; (3) look at the academic preparation of its teachers as well as their ability to accommodate the culture of the Virgin Islands; (4) to familiarize parents and the school community with courses of study being offered in the local schools and the requirements needed to fulfill each one.

Since this study has revealed that students seem to be bored, apathetic and alienated, it is believed that the role of the guidance counselor should be increased in order to help students cope with their problems. The implications of this study suggest that the task of assigning schedules for students which will not be dropped once school

¹Gordon K. Lewis, The Virgin Islands, A Caribbean Lilliput, (Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 282.

begins is an enormous one. Yet, the dropping of scheduled classes is a problem that administrators must prepare themselves to deal with; they must investigate possible alternatives to determine if there are any solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The school administration take measures to insure adequate participation among faculty members in in-service workshops designed to shape and develop instruction to the needs of individual students.
2. The school administration provide adequate and functional counseling services to those students who experience difficulty in coping with their environment as well as difficulty in their educational progress.
3. Guidance counselors be given the added role of assisting students who come from different backgrounds and experience feelings of inadequacy.
4. The administration works closely with the registrar and the Guidance department to develop a system of assigning schedules for students which will reduce the mass dropping of schedules once school begins.
5. Parent-Teacher Associations or similar groups assist parents in making accurate assessments of the school's course offerings, and the academic requirements of the school.
6. The Department of Education of the Virgin Islands develops a set of guidelines for helping new teachers and teachers that are new to the Island become acquainted with the cultural values of the Virgin Islands.
7. In educating its youth, the Department of Education seeks to find alternatives that do not demand academic excellence of every student,

thereby, communicating a sense of failure on the part of those unable to achieve.

8. The Department of Education further study teacher-student relationships as a number of questions raised by this study indicate a need for further research.

"STUDENT' SELECTED REASONS FOR DROPPING THEIR CLASSES"

Direction: Read each item quickly and carefully; then decide whether you think the item referred to is extremely serious, considerably serious, moderately serious, least serious, or not serious at all. Please use the reverse side of the page for any additional comments you may have. ANSWER EACH QUESTION.

FILL OUT THIS SECTION COMPLETELY

Age _____

Name of School _____

Sex _____

Number of classes dropped while attending this school _____

Religion _____

Birthplace _____

Years in the Virgin Islands _____

Did you drop a scheduled class because . . . ?
(Circle the appropriate number)

	EXTREMELY SERIOUS	CONSIDERABLY SERIOUS	MODERATELY SERIOUS	LEAST SERIOUS	NOT SERIOUS
1. Friction and hostility between you and the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Friction and hostility between you and the other students.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Teacher is usually boring.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Teacher requires too much work, (classroom and homework).	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teacher is often vague and confusing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. You'd rather take the subject next year with a different teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
7. In spite of all your efforts, you were unable to get a passing grade.	1	2	3	4	5
8. A general unfriendly atmosphere exists in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9. None of your friends were in your class.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The class was scheduled for the last period.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The class was scheduled for the first period.	1	2	3	4	5

Continued -

QUESTIONNAIRE

"STUDENTS' SELECTED REASONS FOR DROPPING THEIR CLASSES"

	EXTREMELY SERIOUS	CONSIDERATELY SERIOUS	MODERATELY SERIOUS	LEAST SERIOUS	NOT SERIOUS
12. Administrative policy slowed the change.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Parental pressure caused you to change.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The physical set-up of the classroom was uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There were no textbooks for the course.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The teaching techniques were unsatisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5
17. You preferred a teacher of a different sex.	1	2	3	4	5
18. You preferred a teacher of a different racial or cultural background.	1	2	3	4	5

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