

**THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN PERSISTENCE  
IN SCHOOL AND HOME  
CONDITIONS: THESIS**

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The Relationship Between Persistence in School and Home Conditions: Thesis by Charles Elmer Holley

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# The Relationship between Per- sistence in School and Home Conditions

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
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CHARLES ELMER HOLLEY

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSISTENCE IN SCHOOL AND HOME CONDITIONS<sup>1</sup>

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## PART I

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

#### THE PROBLEM

This study is concerned primarily with the qualitative analysis of the relationships which exist between the schooling of children and their home conditions. It is concerned secondarily with a rough determination of the relative importance of the hereditary and the environmental factors involved in these relationships.

#### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

The study is an outgrowth of a social survey of the Decatur, Illinois, high school made by the writer during the school year of 1912-13. In making this survey a large amount of data was secured, most of which proved to be of relatively little importance, but among the many facts there were a few which suggested family tendencies in the matter of educating children. Some of the families gave all the older children a high-school education, while other families, of similar size and age-composition, did not have one child who had completed the high-school work. All the families having two or more children no longer in the public school were selected and examined. There proved to be 198 such families, containing 642 older children, 334 of whom had secured a high-school education. A further examination showed that 40 per cent of the 198 families furnished 72 per cent of those who had finished the high school, and 30 per cent of the families furnished 57 per cent of those who

<sup>1</sup> This study was accepted as the dissertation for the doctorate of philosophy in education by the Graduate School of the University of Illinois. The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness for counsel and suggestions given by Dr. W. C. Bagley and Dr. L. D. Coffman. Further, many useful suggestions were received from Dr. G. M. Whipple, Dr. C. H. Johnston, and the graduate students in education.

had not finished the high school. This difference suggested that there must be corresponding differences in the homes which might be ascertained. Data were secured and it was found that these two groups of homes differed markedly with respect to economic, educational, and social conditions.

Three years ago Dr. J. K. Van Denburg published the results of an investigation conducted in the New York City schools. He found that "on the whole, the economic status of these pupils (so far as it is shown by monthly rental) seems to be only a slight factor in the determination of length of stay in the high schools. The one most marked influence seems to be that the superior economic status in girls leads to a longer stay in spite of failure to progress at the 'normal' rate."<sup>1</sup>

At another place Dr. Van Denburg shows<sup>2</sup> (Table I) the percentages of the different rental groups<sup>3</sup> who graduated from the high school which

TABLE I  
PERCENTAGE GRADUATING, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO  
RENTAL GROUPS

Amount	Graduates	Total Entering	Percentage Graduating
Boys			
Not specified.....	22	.....	.....
\$ 8 to \$17.....	9	76	11.8
\$18 to \$27.....	8	34	23.5
\$28 and up.....	4	48	8.3
Girls			
Not specified.....	40	.....	.....
\$ 8 to \$17.....	14	99	14.1
\$18 to \$27.....	10	71	14.0
\$28 and up.....	4	65	6.1

they entered four years earlier. He, however, has no record of those who left the public schools and went to private schools, a group mentioned as a factor of some importance. Hence the group "28 and up," would

<sup>1</sup> *Causes of the Elimination of Pupils in Public Secondary Schools* (New York: Published by Teachers College, 1912), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> A rental group is a group of families which paid specified amounts of rent per month. All the families selected were divided by Van Denburg into three rental groups: (1) those paying \$8 to \$17 per month, (2) those paying \$18 to \$27 per month, and (3) those paying \$28 or more per month.



have to be augmented by an unknown quantity to represent the true percentage of those who received the equivalent of four years in the public high school. It is conceivable that this unknown quantity would be large enough to show a definite relationship for the boys between economic status and persistence in school. With the girls the case would not be so clear, for the two smaller groups contain the same percentage of graduates. It may be that the economic factor is of less importance with girls than with boys.

To be conservative, it might be said that the economic status of the families in Dr. Van Denburg's study is not of sufficient importance to overshadow or more than counteract other factors which make for persistence in, or elimination from, the public high schools of New York City. He has shown that the presence or absence of younger children in the family, the nationality of the parents, choice or lack of choice of an occupation, and intention with regard to graduation are factors correlated with the length of stay in the high school. A more detailed study of home conditions might reveal other factors of far greater influence in this city than economic status.

In another study<sup>1</sup> Dr. C. H. Keyes showed that acceleration or retardation were characteristic of certain families. He found that 6.8 per cent of the families produced 24 per cent of the accelerates, while 7.7 per cent of the families produced 24.5 per cent of the arrests. These facts obtained in a New England city tend to support those obtained in Decatur.

The apparent disagreement between the conditions found by Dr. Van Denburg in New York City and those found by the writer in Decatur, Illinois, raised the question: "Is Decatur representative qualitatively of the average middle western city?" With this question in mind it was decided to extend the study to other Illinois cities, and information was collected from the high schools of Centralia, Champaign, Gibson City, and Rochelle, Illinois. While these data were being collected, it occurred to the writer that this study dealt with a special class—those whose children reached the high school—and represented a special situation, and hence that it ought to be extended so as to include statistics from all levels of society. Accordingly the families residing in Urbana who had children between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one were selected, and

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Keyes, *Progress through the Grades of City Schools* (New York: Published by Teachers College, 1911).

a personal canvass was made by the writer which furnished a mass of facts from 234 homes. When these data had been tabulated and evaluated, and an interpretation was attempted, it was found that, although important relationships existed between the amounts of schooling that the children received and certain objective home conditions, it was impossible to distinguish between environmental and hereditary factors, a distinction that is very important from social and educational points of view. In order more accurately to determine the relative importance of these two types of factors it was decided to secure similar facts about the education and home conditions of adopted children.

In outline this presents the origin and development of the study. The presentation of the data will follow the same general order.

#### THE DATA

*Sources.*—The facts presented in Part II were secured from the high-school pupils of Decatur, Illinois, during the fall of 1912. Those in Part III were collected from the high-school pupils of Centralia, Champaign, Gibson City, and Rochelle, Illinois, during the fall of 1913. The main data, those in Part IV, were gathered directly from the homes and from the courthouse records in Urbana, Illinois, during the summer and fall of 1914. The information about the adopted children, given in Part V, was secured from the Urbana courthouse records and from various individuals who resided in Champaign and Urbana during the early months of 1915.

*Method of collecting.*—The original data which uncovered the problem were secured from the high-school pupils of Decatur during the fall of 1912. One morning in November the writer called at the school with a supply of blanks asking the following questions, as well as a number of others which had no bearing on the present problem:

Name ..... Sex ..... Age .....  
 Country of your mother's birthplace .....  
 Country of your father's birthplace .....  
 What language is commonly spoken in your home? .....

#### OLDER BROTHERS

No.	Age	Has he finished high school?	What is he doing now?
1.	.....	.....	.....
2.	.....	.....	.....
3.	.....	.....	.....
4.	.....	.....	.....
5.	.....	.....	.....

## OLDER SISTERS

No.	Age	Has she finished high school?	What is she doing now?
1.	.....	.....	.....
2.	.....	.....	.....
3.	.....	.....	.....
4.	.....	.....	.....
5.	.....	.....	.....

The teachers were instructed briefly as to the facts desired and the collection of data was then left in their hands. The first period of the morning was used and each of the pupils attending at that time was required to fill out one of the blanks. Through the assistance given by the room-charge teachers the entire high school furnished the desired information in a short time.

After it was discovered that one group of homes educated its children more than the other group, it was thought that an objective description of these homes might be secured from the children who attended high school. For this purpose a blank was prepared asking for the following data:

- a) Father's occupation.....
- b) Father's education..... mother's education.....
- c) What is the family income?.....
- d) What rent does the family pay per month (estimated by the kind of house in which they live)?.....
- e) Church affiliation of father..... of mother.....
- f) What newspapers does the family take?.....  
What magazines?.....
- g) What is the size of the family library?.....
- h) What clubs or organizations does the father attend?.....  
.....  
The mother?.....

These blanks were given to the pupils from the selected homes and were filled out in conference with the teachers or principal. The results were later checked up by the principal, and reports containing obvious errors were marked so that the erroneous portions could be eliminated.

As stated earlier, the facts reported in Part III were secured from the high-school pupils of Centralia, Champaign, Gibson City, and Rochelle, Illinois. A blank asking for the following information was used.