

FACTORS AFFECTING THE PAROLEES' USE
OF TRADE TRAINING

By

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An Abstract
Of A Research Project

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
of the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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THESIS



ABSTRACT

It was suspected that parolees in the Michigan State Prison System do not use the vocational training they receive in prison. This study was undertaken to search out some of the factors related to the non-use of trade-training. Our group hypothesized that parolees who have used the trade-training they received while in prison are more likely to be those who have a positive attitude toward work, and parolees who are interested in trade training are more likely to use their training in employment. Observations were also made of parolees' personal characteristics.

Parolees who received trade-training while incarcerated were interviewed at various locations throughout the State. Interviews were conducted in two parts: paper and pencil tests and questioning by the interviewer.

The data showed that there was a significant relationship between positive attitudes toward work and use of trade-training. It did not show a relationship between interest in trade-training and use of that training in employment.

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INTRODUCTION

Crime in the streets! Law and order! These are familiar words in our country today. One cannot look at a newspaper or listen to a news broadcast without seeing these notions alluded to. They are on the minds of most every man and woman in this country, from the man who runs the corner store to the President. "His (President Nixon's) priorities read neatly — Viet Nam, inflation and crime" (12, p. 19). When a topic warrants one of the top positions on the President's list of priorities, it must be important to the country. Crime is this important, because it involves the criminal, the victim, the police, the press and every man who is afraid that he, too, will become a victim. This means that it involves everyone. When people are concerned about a problem, they begin to find solutions and this is what is happening with the problem of crime. There are attempts at every level of government to find some solutions to this problem. The most common means used so far has been to legislate stronger penalties for existing laws in an attempt to make a man think before he commits a crime. This has not worked, as it has been shown that a man who commits a crime is seldom aware of the penalty involved. The stronger penalties lead to longer prison sentences for the man who commits a crime and is apprehended. At this point, society has placed the responsibility for caring for the law-breaker in the hands of the prisons.

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Prisons were made to serve two purposes for society. First, and foremost to society, the prison was designed to punish the criminal for his crime. This is done by forcing him to spend some part of his life away from his "loved ones" in a situation with few personal freedoms. The second purpose society has for prisons is rehabilitation of the prisoner so that he will return to society without committing any more crimes. The prisons are to rehabilitate the man so that he can return to his community better able to cope with its demands in socially acceptable ways. One of the demands likely to be made of any returning prisoner is that he must find a legitimate means of earning a living. Since many of the men placed in prisons do not have the skills or knowledge necessary to hold a job, responsibility has long been accepted by penal authorities for attempting to train inmates who have the desire and ability to learn a trade. "When we go into the occupational history of any prisoner we find a tragic record of vocational incompetence" (8, p. 4). "A concrete contribution the institution can make toward the reduction of criminal behavior is to furnish the offender with work skills and habits which will make him employable and which will furnish sufficient remunerations to meet his needs" (7, p. 97). Thus, trade-training got its start in prisons because, "For the majority of prisoners there is real

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Unfortunately, prisons have not put forth the greatest effort to make the most of vocational training. This may be, in part, because the prevailing attitude of the public has not been most conducive to rehabilitation. The classical

hope in vocational education" (8, p. 4). Trade-training, or at least development within the prisoners of good habits of industry was one of the main means of rehabilitation of the reformatories in the 1870's (1). Vocational training was started in the reformatories then moved into the prisons as authorities realized the importance the training program had or could have. Vocational training gained additional importance when Congress passed the National Vocational Education Act in 1917 (The Smith-Hughes Act). Although this act did not provide for any direct help to the programs within the prisons, it did further the cause of vocational training in prisons by providing for the training of vocational training instructors. Many of these instructors found their way into the prison programs and these programs were vastly improved. Trade-training has grown through the years so that now "over eighty-two per cent of all institutions indicate some use of this (trade-training) program" (6, p. 614). This growth is not, for the programs and the idea of trade-training has a long history so before society can realize the fullest benefits of trade-training.

Of course, prisons have not put forth the greatest efforts toward the development of vocational training. This may be, in part, due to the attitude of the public has not been favorable to the idea of rehabilitation. The classical

principle of punishment which matches the crime with an appropriate penalty established in advance by statute is still predominant in the policy of most state correction departments (10). Also, on the other hand, many prisons attempt to do too much with a good program by allowing everyone into the program. This does more harm than good as it tends to lower the level of the program. As Barnes (1) points out, tests show that many persons are manually unfit for trade-training. This is one of the reasons that "the trade-training mania that characterized the past half century has been found expensive and futile" (1, p. 655). It is clear that the prisons need to be more selective in their choice of inmates for the vocational training programs if these programs are to be most useful. Kendall (5) points out that prisons need some practical means of selecting the prisoners for such programs. If the prisons were more selective the trade-training programs could be upgraded so that the students would receive only high grade instruction in relevant vocations.

Many prison trade-training programs seem to have a problem with the relevancy of some of the training offered to work available on the outside. It would be more than useless to give a man an extensive trade-training course in how to be a blacksmith, as this is a trade that is no longer

needed by society. On the other hand, a man who took a course in brick laying or in tool and die work would be in a very good occupational position when he was placed on parole. He has a much better chance to make a success of his parole than does the prisoner who takes a course in an unmarketable trade. It is very important for a man on parole to have a good job, as Rogers found that one of the best predictors of parole success was good non-criminal employment (11). This has many implications for the men who plan trade-training courses, as they are in a position to create programs in trades that will be in demand on the outside.

It has been suspected for some time in the State of Michigan that quite a few parolees were not using the trade-training they received while inmates in the Michigan prison system. Therefore, a study was planned to find some of the possible causes for this apparent failure of the program.

Our group felt that one of the factors of major importance in determining whether a man uses his trade-training is general attitude towards work. We feel that if a man has a positive attitude towards work he will be more likely to use the training he receives. It is obvious that Glenn Kendall feels the same way: 'Practical means should be provided to determine the individual's vocational interests and abilities, and to determine his attitude toward work'

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(5, p. 118). Our first hypothesis then is: Parolees who have used the trade-training they received while in prison are more likely to have a positive attitude towards work.

We also felt that the inmates interest in a trade before he takes the training will be a determining factor as to whether he uses that training. Therefore, our second hypothesis is : Parolees who are interested in trade-training are more likely to use their training in employment.

Finally, our group felt that it would be interesting to look at a number of personal characteristics of the men and see if there was any relationship between these characteristics and whether they used their training. We hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the use of training and these characteristics, but it was beyond the scope of this study to make detailed hypotheses concerning each one or to test each statistical significance. We will present these findings later in this paper. We felt that a parolee was more likely to use his trade training if he was white, married at the time of the interview, age twenty-four or less, has an I.Q. of 100 or over and has two or fewer felony convictions. We looked at each of these independently.

METHODOLOGY

Data was obtained by interviewing parolees who graduated from the trade-training courses of auto mechanics, auto body repair, drafting, computer programming, machine shop, carpentry, food services and welding. The interviewees received their training at four of the institutions in the Michigan correctional system (Ionia Reformatory, Michigan Training Unit, Cassidy Lake Technical School and the State Prison of Southern Michigan) between 1963 and 1968, and were on parole as of November, 1968. The original sample involved 157 parolees of which 120 were actually interviewed. The breakdown of those not interviewed is as follows: did not appear for the interview, 14; refused to be interviewed, 5; located too far up-State, 4; unable to supply sufficient information (lack of time or speech problem), 6; and interviewer missed appointment, 8. The questionnaire was assembled by Mr. James Gilham at the request of the State Department of Corrections and was designed to test the motivation of the parolees towards using their training. Each parolee who participated was told by the interviewer that his answers would be held in the strictest confidence and would not be made available to his parole officer, and that he was not required to participate in the study. We did tell each man that the study was being done so that the Department could improve the program and thus they would be helping men who

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would take the courses in the future. The present authors were given clearance to participate in this study for the purpose of this research. We assisted in the interviewing and data collection. The hypotheses, analysis and discussion contained here are entirely those of our group and have no connection with the Correction Department's project.

To test the hypothesis regarding the use of trade-training and attitude towards work, the parolee was given a paper and pencil test in which the individual was asked to answer some questions about work. There were 57 statements in this section and the respondent could either agree (strongly or mildly), disagree (strongly or mildly) or remain undecided. From the 57 statements, 21 were chosen as clearly indicating the respondents' positive or negative attitude towards that statement. If his response was that he disagreed, again either strongly or mildly, his attitude was regarded as negative towards the statement.

The total sample for this test was 116 parolees, who fall into two groups. The first group (Group I) consisted of 73 individuals who either never applied for a job in which they could use their trade training, or else applied for a job but were not employed. The second group (Group II) consisted of the remaining 43 men who, since their release from prison, had at some time used their trade-training. For each of the

21 statements, the number of respondents in each of the two groups who had a positive attitude towards that statement was counted. Table I gives the results of this procedure. The total number of positive responses for each group provides the measure of motivation.

In the second part of our investigation we were interested in looking at the relationship between parolee interest in trade-training and use of this training. We hypothesized that parolees who are initially interested in trade-training are more likely to use their training in employment.

Interest in trade-training was measured by parolee response to the items in the questionnaire, "Why did you get into this particular sort of training? Was it something you were interested in?" The responses to this item were coded into four categories. These categories were: (1) no interest in trade-training; (2) interested, but no prior related training and/or experience in their trade before imprisonment; (3) interested, and had prior related training and/or experience in their trade before imprisonment; and, (4) not interested at first, but became interested in training.

Those responding to the above item were condensed into two groups — parolees who expressed an interest in the trade-training (2 and 3) and parolees who did not express an interest in the training (1 and 4). Groups divided into interested and

not interested groups were compared with respect to their use of the training in employment.

TABLE I

Question	GROUP I		GROUP II	
	<u>Did Not Use Training</u>		<u>Used Training</u>	
	Pos. Responses	# Res.	Pos. Responses	# Res.
1	56	73	33	43
2	45	72	34	43
3	69	73	41	43
4	44	71	33	43
5	33	73	25	43
6	35	73	28	43
7	16	73	8	43
8	27	73	15	43
9	26	73	8	43
10	43	72	35	43
11	42	71	29	43
12	43	72	22	43
13	52	73	35	43
14	71	72	48	43
15	66	73	40	43
16	42	71	34	43
17	62	71	40	43
18	51	71	32	42
19	63	70	38	42
20	63	73	31	42
21	66	73	41	43
	1015	1516	644	900

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9	26	73	8	43
10	43	72	35	43
11	42	71	29	43
12	43	72	22	43
13	52	73	35	43
14	71	72	48	43
15	66	73	40	43
16	42	71	34	43
17	62	71	40	43
18	51	71	32	42
19	57	70	38	42
20	58	73	31	42
21	57	71	41	43
			644	900

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

TABLE II

	GROUP I N = 73 <u>Did Not Use Training</u>	GROUP II N = 43 <u>Used Training</u>
Positive Responses	(1015 Responses) 66.9%	(644 Responses) 71.5%
Negative or Undecided Responses	(501 Responses) 33.1%	(256 Responses) 28.5%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%

Table II summarized the results drawn from Table I. Of the individuals in Group I who did not use their trade-training, 66.9% had positive responses toward the 21 statements chosen, which indicates a positive attitude towards work. Of this same Group, 33.1% gave negative or undecided responses, indicating a negative attitude towards work.

In Group II, the parolees who are using or used their training, 71.5% made positive responses to the statements, indicating a positive attitude towards work, and 28.5% made negative responses, indicating a negative attitude towards work. When these results were tested for significance with the Chi Square test (with correction for percentage figures), the hypothesis was confirmed, i.e., parolees who used the trade-

training they received while in prison are more likely to have a positive attitude towards work ($\chi^2 = 5.75$, one degree of freedom, significant at .02 level).

TABLE III

	<u>Interested</u> <u>In Training</u>		<u>Not Interested</u> <u>In Training</u>		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<u>Training Not</u> <u>Used</u>	50	61.0	26	68.4	76	63.3
<u>Training</u> <u>Used</u>	32	39.0	12	31.6	44	36.7
TOTALS	82	100.0	38	100.0	120	100.0

Table III shows the results for our second hypothesis that parolees interested in trade-training are more likely to use their training in employment. Of the 120 respondents interviewed, 63.3% had not used their training in employment since release from prison. 36.7% had used or were still using their training experience in their employment.

When the interest variable was introduced, it was found

that 82 respondents expressed an interest in their particular training. However, only 32 (39%) of the interested group ever used the training in employment. 50 (61%) parolees who expressed an interest in the training had not used it after release. In the group which was not interested in the trade-training they received, it was found that 26 (68.4%) parolees expressed no interest in the training and had not used it. 12 (36.6%) parolees in the not interested group had used their training at some time or were still employed in training related jobs.

The findings were subjected to the Chi Square test for significance. The hypothesis that parolees interested in the trade training are more likely to use their training in employment was not confirmed ($\chi^2 = .599$, one degree of freedom, not significant at .05 level).

Additional Findings

Observations made of parolees' personal characteristics indicates that men who were still using their trade-training skills at the time of the survey tended to be white, married, had fewer than three prior convictions, had I.Q.'s between 120 and 129 and were over 25 years old.

TABLE IV

<u>RACE</u> Percentages		
	Negro (N=48)	White (N=69)
Never Applied	39.6	37.7
Applied But Rejected	27.1	23.2
Used But Left	25.0	21.7
Still Using	8.3	17.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Table IV shows that while a slightly greater percentage of Negroes never applied for trade-related jobs, those who did apply were more likely to be refused employment. It also points out that while relatively more Negroes than whites use their training, they tend to not keep their jobs.

TABLE V

<u>MARITAL STATUS</u> Percentages		
	Married (N=15)	Unmarried (N=103)
Never Applied	33.3	38.8
Applied But Rejected	20.0	26.4
Used But Left	20.0	22.3
Still Using	26.7	12.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099
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Table V indicates that similar numbers of married and unmarried men never applied, applied but were refused employment or used their training but later left. However, more than twice as many married men than unmarried men were still using their training at the time of the survey.

TABLE VI

	<u>PRIOR CONVICTIONS</u>			
	Percentages			
	0(N=31)	1(N=32)	2(N=16)	3 or more (N=39)
Never Applied	41.9	40.6	50.0	28.2
Applied But Rejected	35.5	21.9	12.5	23.1
Used But Left	9.7	21.9	25.0	33.3
Still Using	12.9	15.6	12.5	15.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The results in Table VI are interesting in that there does not seem to be any difference in the percentages except among those who used their training but later left. This means that the more convictions the man had the more likely he was to use the training but later leave.

TABLE VII

Scores	<u>I.Q.</u> Percentages				
	Below 90 (N=34)	90-109 (N=54)	110-119 (N=17)	120-129 (N=10)	130 Plus (N=2)
Never Applied	41.1	40.7	41.2	20.0	0.0
Applied But Rejected	29.4	20.4	17.6	30.0	100.0
Used But Left	14.7	25.9	29.4	20.0	0.0
Still Using	14.7	13.0	11.8	30.0	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table VII shows that those with I.Q.'s up to 119 tended to never have applied for a trade-related job. There does not appear to be any particular pattern within the I.Q. range of 120-129. It is also interesting to note that the two men with I.Q.'s of 130 and above applied, but were not hired, for trade-related positions.

TABLE VIII

	<u>AGE</u> Percentages	
	25 or Under (N=88)	Over 25 (N=31)
Never Applied	45.4	19.3
Applied But Rejected	25.0	25.7
Used But Left	19.3	29.0
Still Using	10.2	26.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

The results shown in Table VIII are interesting because 55% of those over 25 used or were still using their training at the time of the interview. Only 29% of those 25 or under had used or were still using their training. Also, a larger percentage of those over 25 never applied or applied but were refused a job than were those under 25.

The results shown in Table III are interesting because 55% of those over 25 had or were still using their training at the time of the interview. Only 29% of those 25 or under had used or were still using their training. Also, a larger percentage of those over 25 never applied or applied but were refused a job than were those under 25.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Each year just over 1,000 men graduate from trade-training programs offered through the Michigan Correctional System. Of this large number, it has been shown that few actually use their training once on parole. Our study indicates that if a parolee has a positive attitude towards work he is somewhat more likely to use this training, but that interest in a trade course is not necessarily related to use of the training received. Both of these results have implications for developing more adequate training programs.

In our interviews with parolees, we formed an impression (not documented in this report) that two major areas affect the parolees' use of training. First, many of them take a trade course to favorably impress the Parole Board, even though they are not interested in the work and have no intention of seeking employment in that area. This may account for the high number of graduates that never apply for a trade-related position. The implication here is that perhaps this waste of training time could be avoided if the selection process for courses included a test to determine interest in that area. Coupled with this, a better coordinated program with industry and parole officers in large communities to insure employment in the trades after release is needed.

The second area of concern we noted was that most parolees felt their training was inadequate, out-dated and not

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The second area of concern we noted was that most parolees felt their training was out-dated and not

applicable to most positions open in the trades, even though they were positively attracted to the course and their attitude towards work was one conducive to continual employment. This may account for those men that apply but do not receive the jobs, or who leave their trade-related positions once employed. The implications for change in this area are evident in the statement of our concern.

Through our contacts with the Corrections Department, employees, parolees and prisoners, we feel that trade programs have a great potential for resolving problems facing parolees and concerning the public sector. The parolee's positive attitude towards work must be encouraged and/or developed to insure a meaningful return to community life.

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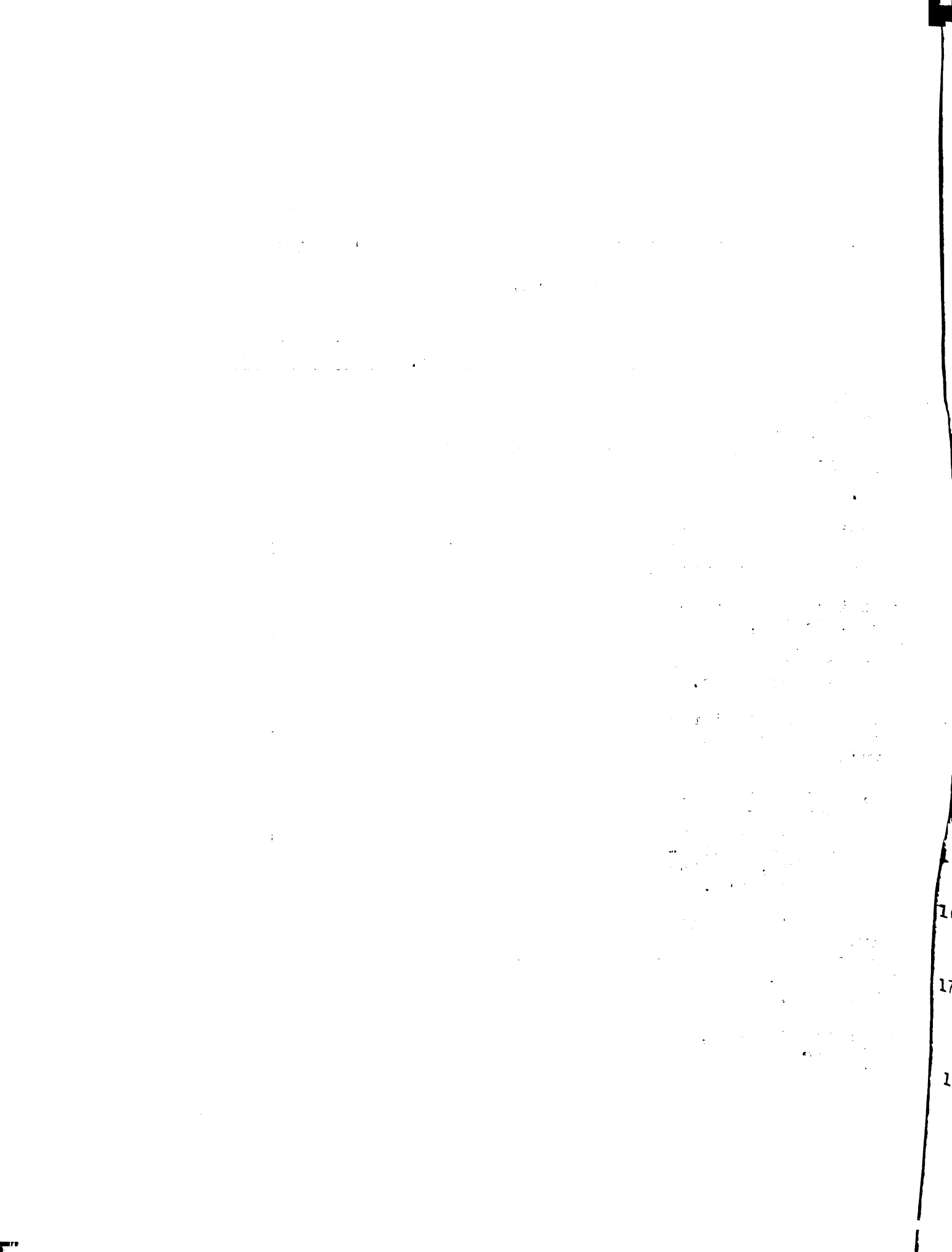
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APPENDIX A

The following questions were taken from the paper and pencil test as items indicating the respondents' positive or negative attitudes toward work.

	<u>AGREE</u>			<u>DISAGREE</u>	
	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Mildly</u>	<u>Undec.</u>	<u>Mildly</u>	<u>Strongly</u>
1. I think that one of the important things about working is that it gives me something to do all day.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I think that working makes me feel that I am somebody important.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I think that neighbors, family, friends and other people think more of me when I hold down a steady job.	5	4	3	2	1
4. It makes me feel real good after a hard day's work.	5	4	3	2	1
5. If, by some chance, somebody left me enough money to live comfortably on without working, I think I would not work.	5	4	3	2	1
6. If I didn't work all day, I would be free to do whatever I felt like doing. I would like this.	5	4	3	2	1
7. If I didn't work, I think people would think less of me	1	2	3	4	5



	<u>AGREE</u>		<u>Undec.</u>	<u>DISAGREE</u>	
	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Mildly</u>		<u>Mildly</u>	<u>Strongly</u>
8. When I am unemployed I feel ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
9. If I did not work, I think I would be fed up.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have had such a good work record in the past that it will surely help me to get work again.	5	4	3	2	1
1. Since I'll take any decent job, my chances of getting work are good.	5	4	3	2	1
2. If people only knew what I could really do, I would probably be hired on the spot.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I think there are many employers who would hire me.	5	4	3	2	1
4. If I try hard enough, I will find a job.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My chances of getting a job are good.	5	4	3	2	1
6. The jobs they offer you nowadays are few and far between.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Even if there were jobs around, I don't think an employer would hire me anyway.	5	4	3	2	1
8. These employment agencies are no good; they never find anybody a job.	5	4	3	2	1

DISABLER
 Slightly Mildly Undec. Mildly Strongly

When I am unemployed I feel ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
If I did not work, I think I would be fed up.	1	2	3	4	5
I have had such a good work record in the past that it will surely help me to get work again.	2	3	4	5	1
Since I'll take any decent job, my chances of getting work are good.	2	3	4	5	1
If people only knew what I could really do, I would probably be hired on the spot.	2	3	4	5	1
I think there are many employers who would hire me.	2	3	4	5	1
If I try hard enough, I will find a job.	2	3	4	5	1
My chances of getting a job are good.	2	3	4	5	1
The job I am offered you may not like and for that reason.	2	3	4	5	1
Even if I were not a job seeker, I would think an employer would hire me anyway.	2	3	4	5	1
These employment agencies are so good they never find any- body a job.	2	3	4	5	1

	<u>AGREE</u>			<u>DISAGREE</u>	
	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Mildly</u>	<u>Undec.</u>	<u>Mildly</u>	<u>Strongly</u>

19. The easiest way to advance oneself is to work hard and steadily.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

20. People who have jobs that they like completely are more liable to get ahead than are people who like only part of their jobs.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

1. Trying to plan how to get ahead is useless.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

ACROSS
Strongly Mildly Indec. Mildly Strongly
DISAGREE

1	The easiest way to advance oneself is to work hard and steadily.				2
	1	2	3	4	5
2	People who have jobs that they like completely are more liable to get ahead than are people who like only part of their jobs.				1
	1	2	3	4	5
3	Trying to plan how to get ahead is useless.				1
	1	2	3	4	5

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