AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Ronald L. Dexter for the degree of Doctor of Education
in Education presented on

Title: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN
AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL

Abstract approved: Redacted for Privacy

Dr. Carvel W. Wood

Objectives of the Study

The study attempted to accomplish the following:

1. Identify the causes of absenteeism in an inner-city high school.

2. Investigate and compare the reasons for absenteeism of: (a) boys vs. girls, (b) students with divorced parents vs. students with parents who are not divorced, and (c) bused students vs. resident students.

3. Complete a statistical study to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the mean scores of reading achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems.

4. Complete a statistical study to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the mean
scores of mathematic achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems.

5. Develop a conceptual framework which might enable parents and educators to have a better understanding of the causes of absenteeism in inner-city schools.

Conclusions

1. Students with attendance problems attribute their absenteeism to the following major factors:
   a. In-school factors
      (1) Poor relationships with teachers
      (2) Class assignments lack meaning
      (3) Unsatisfied with course schedule
   b. Personal factors
      (1) Social pressure to cut class
      (2) Lack of motivation

2. Students with divorced parents are less likely to blame the school for their absenteeism problems than students with parents who are not divorced.

3. "Caring for family members" and "Transportation" affect the attendance of bused students more than resident students.

4. Family factors contributing to poor school attendance include "Problems relating to fighting among family members" and "Problems relating to divorced parents."
5. The $F$ statistic, using the one-way analysis of variance, indicated:

a. There was no difference, at the .01 level of significance, in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for freshmen students with attendance problems and freshmen students without attendance problems.

b. There was a significant difference, at the .01 level of significance, in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for sophomore students with attendance problems and sophomore students without attendance problems.

c. There was a significant difference, at the .01 level of significance, in the mean scores of mathematic achievement tests for freshmen and sophomore students with attendance problems and freshmen and sophomore students without attendance problems.
An Investigation of the Causes of Absenteeism in an Inner-city School

by

Ronald L. Dexter

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

June 1982
Date thesis is presented:  February 17, 1982.

Typed by Lynn Hockaden for Ronald L. Dexter
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following persons whose inspiration, support, and assistance made this dissertation possible.

A special tribute goes to Dr. Carvel Wood, Chairman of my doctoral committee at Oregon State University. Dr. Wood provided me with the guidance and encouragement necessary to complete this research study.

Dr. Frank Cross, Dr. Arnold Flath, Dr. Lloyd Crisp, and Dr. Charles Warren are to be commended for their inspiration and assistance as members of my committee. Their suggestions, guidance, and time they took from their busy schedules is greatly appreciated.

A personal "thank you" is due Lynn Hockaden for editing and typing this dissertation.

Perhaps more than to any others, my appreciation goes to my family: my mother, Virginia E. Dexter, who provided the motivation and inspiration for her three children to pursue and attain degrees in higher education; my wife, Ann, and my children, Brian and Christie, who provided me with the love, understanding, and encouragement throughout the long preparation required for this work.
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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM
IN AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL

I. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The scope of the study focuses on a concern of parents, teachers, and administrators associated with our public schools today: that is, what are the causes of an increasing number of students being absent from high schools which are located in inner-city school districts?

Reports tabulated in 1978 by the Oregon State Department of Education indicate an absentee rate of 8.52 percent for both elementary and secondary schools. Nationally, a 7.9 percent absentee rate was reported by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1976.

Many inner-city school districts are averaging much higher absentee rates. Benjamin Franklin High School in New York, for example, recorded a 48 percent absentee rate in 1974. Baltimore schools in Maryland were faced with a 30,000 pupil absentee rate in 1975. In 12 Baltimore junior and senior high schools, attendance averaged only 71 percent in that year. Ten schools in the New Orleans Public Schools reported an average of 78 percent attendance in 1974-75 (41, p. 3).
Analysis of data gathered statewide in Virginia in 1976 indicates statistically significant relationships between the attendance rate and certain school factors.

The strongest correlation was between the attendance rate and the population density classifications of urban, suburban, and others. Schools in urban areas had the poorest attendance, while schools in suburban areas had better attendance, with schools in other areas having the best attendance. (62, p. 116)

To a large extent, the causes of the high rate of absenteeism in inner-city schools is baffling to many administrators, teachers, and parents.

In a report by the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research in 1977, it was found that truancy seemed to be increasing, particularly among inner-city students who are often black, low income, and handicapped by negative educational experiences. The report notes that:

Almost nothing has been done to measure the extent of truancy from school. Attempts to find some information on the frequency of truancy revealed only minimal data. (1, p. 80)

Absenteeism of students from school has been on the increase in Portland, Oregon as well as other large cities across the nation. In a paper written in 1971 by James Nagel, entitled "The Prevalence of Absenteeism in the Inner Cities," he states:

... the enormous rate of absenteeism in inner-city schools is the most underpublicized and major variable in the educational process. This variable alone could explain much of the difficulty of modern urban education. Yet its full extent, development, and ramifications appear to be part of a vast simple
secret from even those who are close to the situation. (37)

Further, Nagel stated that:

... the immediate problem appears to be that a tremendous urban educational structure exists which to a considerable extent is being used by those students who in fact would seem to need it the most to advance themselves or even to become fully functional in the current economy. As a result the present system is failing and if this trend is not reversed, it could be terminal. Thousands of students are committing mass educational suicide and thereby economic and social suicide, and we are giving it de facto sanction because of indifference or stress on other less tangible and perhaps even derived variables. The students are years behind in their achievement levels, parents are literally angry that their children are not learning, employers are finding it increasingly difficult to absorb numbers of untrained people into the economy, and taxpayers are beginning to suspect that they are not getting their money's worth. (37)

In a random sample of 500 members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1973, 1974, and 1975, student absenteeism was listed as the number one problem in the administration of public schools. In 1976 student absenteeism ranked second to vandalism as their biggest concern (41, p. 1).

**Purpose and Importance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to (1) identify the causes of excessive absenteeism in an inner-city high school, and (2) to incorporate these findings into a conceptual framework which might enable us to have a better
understanding of the reasons for excessive school absenteeism.

The conceptual framework might enable parents and educators to first of all see what the problem is—why some students are having attendance problems in school. Once the problems are clearly defined, then perhaps workable solutions can be sought.

The study serves an important function in that it investigates the relationship of poor school attendance to several variables. Some of the major variables include (1) reading skills, (2) math skills, (3) family structure, (4) ethnic background, (5) the use of alcohol and drugs, (6) relationship with teachers, and (7) busing.

The results of the study could be useful to school personnel in assessing the need for new approaches and techniques for teaching students with low math and reading skills.

Significant relationships between attendance and family structure would be useful information to counselors, teachers, and parents in understanding the effect of the home environment on school attendance.

A more complete understanding of the reasons for excessive absenteeism in inner-city schools could be useful to school administrators in developing attendance policies and procedures designed to improve school attendance.
With federal laws mandated for the integration of minority students, the relationship of ethnic background and school attendance could be valuable in assessing the educational progress of students who are bused to school. The study might be of interest to those who are concerned about the value of busing children from one area to another.

This research study may aid school personnel in designing staff workshops to teach teachers and administrators how to effectively work with students with attendance problems.

The findings in this research may be important to curriculum planners in urban school systems in the revision and development of school curriculum programs.

The study is designed to provide an understanding of the causes of truancy in urban high schools and to be useful to those who are interested in seeking solutions to the problems which are responsible for poor school attendance.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. The selection of research data from one school limits generalization from the study.

2. Math and reading achievement tests for students who participated in the study were administered in the eighth grade. Current math and reading levels may have changed in the one to one and one-half years which elapsed
since the achievement tests and the attendance surveys were administered.

(3) Threat to internal validity could be a limiting factor in that some students may not have been honest in completing the attendance survey. Before each student began taking the attendance survey, it was clearly explained to them that (1) their names would remain anonymous, (2) the result of the survey would not become a part of their personal records, and (3) complete honesty was necessary in completing the survey to validly determine the causes of poor school attendance.

(4) The incomplete math and reading achievement scores for participants in the study may be a limiting factor in the statistical analysis.

(5) Internal validity could be limited by the reading level of the attendance survey. The writer attempted to guard against this factor by asking participants to request an explanation of words they did not understand. Also, students with very low reading skills were read the survey by the writer, answering questions as needed.
Hypotheses

Of the five major hypotheses presented in the study, Hypotheses I and II are statistically testable. Hypotheses III, IV, and V are analyzed and tested using data obtained from the attendance questionnaire.

**Hypothesis I:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of reading achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems.

**Hypothesis II:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of mathematic achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems.

**Hypothesis III:** The causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are different for boys than for girls.

**Hypothesis IV:** The causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are different for students with divorced or separated parents than for students with parents who are not divorced or separated.

**Hypothesis V:** The causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are different for minority students who are bused to school than for those students who reside within the local school attendance area.
**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and concepts are defined according to usage in this dissertation.

**Administrative transfer student:** A student who has elected to be transported by bus to another school within the Portland School District. Only minority students are eligible for the administrative transfer program.

**Community agent:** A school district employee, hired to assist administrative transfer students in individual and family counseling, dispersal of bus and lunch tickets, and to build the best possible human relations among students, parents, and school personnel.

**Excessive school absenteeism:** An absentee rate which exceeds the normal rate of days missed from school due to illness, appointments, etc. In this study, an absentee rate of 11 or more days per semester is considered excessive absenteeism.

**Explanation:** An explanation is an attempt to translate the unfamiliar to the familiar.

**Feeder school:** An elementary school located within the high school attendance area boundaries.

**In-school truancy:** Unauthorized absences from certain classes at school without the knowledge and/or consent of the child's parents.
Quarter: A term used to describe the length of time of nine or ten weeks of class instruction. Grades in each class are recorded quarterly. One quarter is one-fourth of the year of the regular school session.

Reg. room: An abbreviated expression meaning registration room or home room. Routine reg. room procedures include: taking roll for the school absentee list, reading the daily bulletin, and distributing other school communications.

Resident student: A student who is not a participant in the administrative transfer program and who resides within the local school attendance area boundaries.

Semester: A term used to describe the length of time of 18 weeks of class instruction. Credits toward graduation requirements are determined by the number of courses passed in a semester with at least a "D" grade. One semester is one-half of the year of the regular school session.

Truant: A student who is frequently absent from school without the knowledge and/or consent of his parents.

Truancy: An absence from school without the knowledge and/or consent of the child's parents.

Understanding: Understanding is the conceptualizing of ideas or objects as being simple, homogeneous, coherent, intelligible, ordered, consistent, and related.
Understanding is a process which is brought about by explanations, experiences, and the organization of thought into an ordered system.
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

An investigation of the literature is presented by specific topics which relate to the problem of poor school attendance. It is hoped that the organization of the literature in this manner will aid the reader in providing a research review which is both interesting and useful.

Introduction

Research of school attendance began about 1925 when Charles H. Butler (9) noted that:

Many studies have been made for the purpose of ascertaining the effects of various factors in the lives of pupils on their achievement in the subjects which they are studying in school. (9, p. 450)

Butler contended that educational research prior to 1925 included many investigations of factors affecting scholastic achievement, such as intellect, home environment, physical condition and health, sex, nationality, special interests, and numerous other items.

Butler stated:

The item of regularity of attendance, however, has largely escaped the scrutiny of investigators. There is practically nothing in educational literature bearing on the effect which this obvious and rather important factor has on achievement. (9, p. 450)
The Effect of Absenteeism on Achievement

Butler (9) hypothesized that there probably was a definite relation between attendance and achievement. In examining data from students from the University High School in Missouri, Butler found that pupils with the lowest grades were absent from class 7.3 times as often as those who had the highest grades. He concluded that the results showed a distinct relation between achievement and attendance (9, p. 451).

Educational research on the relationship of attendance and achievement continued in 1927 by Feingold (19). He confirmed Butler's findings and further added:

Let no one make the mistake of drawing the conclusion that scholarship depends on attendance only. For it is more than likely that the conditions, physical and otherwise, which interfere with perfect attendance, also hinder scholastic achievement. Nevertheless, the relationship is too uniform not to force upon the conclusion that the frequent absence from school, whatever the cause may be, is in part responsible for poor achievement. (19, p. 335)

In 1929 Crider (14) followed up the work by Butler and Feingold and found that absences were detrimental to achievement, even to the better student (14, p. 758).

The results of 12 studies conducted from 1925 to 1960 indicate significant relationships between absences and grades when measured in the same term. However, 12 other studies administered from 1923 to 1962 could find no correlation between absences and grades (41, p. 10). This
discrepancy exists for a number of possible reasons. Studies conducted in rural areas, for example, compared to studies conducted in urban cities, may account for the differences in correlating absences and grades due to the differences in sample populations.

In an article written by Rozelle (44) in 1968, he indicated that the research in this area is inconclusive. Coldiron and Skiffington (10) found that at the elementary level attendance was not associated with achievement; higher attendance at the secondary level, however, was associated with school achievement.

In 1974 Wiley and Harnischfeger (59) attempted to "explode the myth" that school attendance has little or no effect on its students. The authors constructed a model using exposure to school as the mediating variable between the student's background data and achievement. Utilizing verbal ability, reading comprehension, and mathematical achievement as output variables, and the student's race, number of possessions in the student's home, and the number of children at home as the background variables, the authors concluded the following:

We were able to show that the amount of schooling a child receives has a tremendous effect on his achievement. (59, p. 10)

Our estimates of the magnitudes of the effects of schooling, in terms of quantity of schooling received, strongly require reconsideration of policy discussions resulting in less schooling. (59, p. 11)
The Effects of Instruction on Attendance

Allen and Main (3) focused on attempts to improve attendance by the use of innovative instructional techniques. By using a problem-generating mathematics game to increase the attendance of seventh- and eighth-graders in an inner-city Detroit middle school, the authors reported that the mean absentee rate in non-games was more than three times greater than in game classes. The mean absentee rate for students who changed at the semester from games to non-game classes almost doubled.

Roberts (42) tested a success-oriented science program on the attendance and school activity participation of junior high school underachievers. Students in the experimental group showed significant gains in attendance when compared to the control group. More students in the experimental group became involved in school activities than those in the control group.

Grant (23), studying the effect of curriculum materials upon self-concept, achievement, and attendance of black inner-city students, found that relevant material can positively affect a student's achievement and attendance but had no great effect on self-concept.
The Effects of Positive Reinforcement on Attendance

To determine the effects of positive reinforcement on attendance in an inner-city referral center in Philadelphia, Grala and McCauley (22) conducted a study on 32 black and Puerto Rican boys between the ages of 13 and 17. The results of the study indicate that supportive instruction, such as offers of help in getting back to school, extra help, and tutoring, were needed to change the attendance patterns of the subjects (22, p. 169).

Morgan (36) used material, peer, and teacher reinforcements as a stimulus to improve attendance of 89 lower-income Mexican-Americans with excessive absenteeism. All of the experimental treatment group reduced their absenteeism significantly more than the control group.

In a similar study, Brooks (7) found that contracting with truants for rewards was one way of improving their attendance records.

To determine the effects of positive reinforcement on attendance, the writer organized an attendance contest at Madison High School during the month of November 1979. Cash prizes and gift certificates from local merchants were offered as rewards to the reg. rooms with the best attendance records during November. Teacher absences were included with student absentee records in each reg room. Winning reg. rooms were determined by calculating the absentee rate based
on the number of students and teachers in the competing reg. rooms.

A significant increase in attendance was not noted during the month of November; however, several interesting things became apparent as a result of the attendance contest.

(1) Some students used peer pressure on other students to attend regularly to help their reg. room win the contest.

(2) Some teachers complained about having to count the absences of students with chronic attendance problems.

(3) Some teachers admitted they were reluctant to be absent because their absences affected the classroom attendance results.

(4) The contest proved to be fun and promoted school morale among teachers, administrators, and students.

(5) Classes which were grouped according to ethnic background, specifically the Asian bilingual classes, achieved the lowest absentee rate.

(6) Classes which were grouped according to ability, such as advanced math classes, achieved lower absentee rates than classes with a cross-section of abilities.
(7) Teacher personalities seemed to be a factor in getting students involved in the attendance contest. Teachers who were enthusiastic and used a "team approach" in improving class attendance were more successful than others.

(8) Most students with chronic attendance habits did not improve as a result of the attendance contest; however, in some cases attempts were made to attend more regularly.

(9) The attendance contest helped promote the idea that class attendance is an important part of the educational process.

The Effect of Busing on Attendance

It was suspected by the writer that bused students with poor attendance records may be absent for different reasons than those with poor attendance records who lived within the school boundaries. The attendance survey administered in this research attempted to identify and differentiate the reasons for poor school attendance of bused students and resident students.

In a study investigating the effects of busing on achievement, attendance, attitudes, and social choices of black inner-city children, Danahy (15) reported the following findings:
1. After controlling for initial differences, there was no statistically significant difference in achievement between the experimental and control groups. There was no significant association between grade level and reading achievement of transfer students. There was no significant association between years in receiving school and reading achievement of transfer students. There was no significant interaction between initial measures of reading ability and transfer status.

2. There was no significant difference between pre- and post-transfer absence of transfer students.

3. Children's attitudes were generally favorable toward the integrated school situation; however, they were somewhat less favorable than those of their parents. Most children and parents responded that the children were receiving an improved education, doing better work in school, and socializing adequately.

Danahy concluded by saying that:

"... gains in the achievement of transfer students were greater than gains in the achievement of non-transfer students; the attendance of bused students improved after transfer; and attitudes of transfer students and their parents were highly positive toward the integrated school situation. (15, p. 6030-A)

Worchester (60) found that student unrest was related to attendance area characteristics in urban secondary schools. Negro schools with 70 percent or more black students were found to be experiencing significantly more overall unrest than other types of schools. Predominantly Mexican-American schools experienced the least overall student unrest, while Anglo and mixed ethnic schools fell between these two.

In 1970, a one-way busing program of 59 white elementary students was implemented in a Minneapolis public school with a 40 percent minority enrollment. In evaluating
the results of the program, Hough and Hellervik (25) report that attendance improved for both bused and non-bused students. Negative findings indicate that bused students were a less cohesive group than non-bused students, felt more friction existed at school than did non-bused students, and were probably less satisfied than were non-bused students.

In a report by Karweit (31), entitled "Rainy Days and Mondays: An Analysis of Factors Related to Absence from School," she investigated whether or not living close to school affected school attendance. In an open enrollment school system, where students could choose their own school, Karweit discovered that there was virtually no difference in absences or lateness depending on whether or not students attended the school closest to their home (31, p. 38).

In 1976, Felice and Richardson (20) studied the effects of busing and school desegregation on majority and minority student dropout rates. Using before- and after-busing measures of dropout rates, personal interviews, and school records, the authors concluded that (1) majority dropout rates were not affected by desegregation procedures, (2) bused minority dropout rates appeared to be identical to those of non-bused minority students, and (3) more favorable expectations of teachers at higher socio-economic climate schools produce lower minority student dropout rates.
Factors Relating to Excessive Absenteeism

In a review of the literature at this point, it is apparent that many of the researchers discussed so far have investigated educational concerns which may relate to poor school attendance. It is the contention of this writer that most of the research addressing the problems of poor school attendance has circumvented a most important question; that is, "What are the causes of students not attending their classes every day?" Historically, it seems that many educators have researched the problem in bits and pieces, failing to gain a real understanding of the reasons causing some students to be consistently absent from school.

A few writers have faced the problem directly. In 1930, Hermann Cooper (12) reported that in 1915 the principal cause of absence in Delaware rural schools was work, with non-enrollment and illness listed as other reasons for non-attendance (12, p. 132).

In an article entitled, "Special Emphases to Improve Attendance" (1947), Edmiston, Hinton, and Rasor (18) cited the following reasons for excessive school absenteeism:

Poor health, distance from school, lack of laws or lack of enforcement, and parental negligence or indifference are fairly well established causes of non-attendance. (18, p. 35)

The authors suggest that remedies include better health service, transportation facilities, compulsory attendance
laws and means of enforcement, and parental education. It was also recommended from the findings that "the local school might make simpler clothing acceptable and require less materials to be paid for by the pupils" (18, p. 40).

The study was conducted in an industrial community in Dayton, Ohio which was undergoing a constant change in the pupil population in the school system.

In a more recent study (1972), Morris (35) contends that "Poverty, long cited as a cause of truancy, is less a factor today." Morris noted that more permissive school regulations regarding school dress have diminished the youths' need for expensive clothing. He stated that "Where once a new dress or sport coat was a must, blue jeans may now suffice" (35, p. 41).

In 1973, Washington (56) presented data which seemed to contradict the position of Morris. He contended that finances, living conditions, and employment were significant factors affecting truancy of students in inner-city schools. Washington notes that:

Schools in the inner-core areas of our cities are highly populated by children whose families are not in the financial position to adequately satisfy most of the financial needs and demands of their children. The children, in turn, seem not to be placing demands on their financially stressed parents, but seem to recognize the need to help themselves as well as their families. (56, pp. 254-55)

In analyzing the data from a survey collected from 56 truants attending a high school situated in the inner-core
area of a racially mixed, large, midwestern city, Washington claims:

... the implication is clear that financial situations are a significant contributing factor in motivating a student to exclude himself from school, especially for those students from the "inner-core" areas of our large cities. (56, p. 255)

Furthermore, Washington contends that a distressing financial situation of truants in inner-city schools compounds the situation in which the truant finds himself (56, p. 255).

A most important study investigating the causes of poor school attendance was conducted in 1963 by James E. Greene, Sr. (24). Greene hypothesized that there were demographic differences between students with "best" attendance records and "worst" attendance records in metropolitan schools. He contended that factors associated with school absenteeism would be significantly different in economically "advantaged" schools than in economically "disadvantaged" schools (24, p. 389).

Greene, found that in the economically "advantaged" community there was no significant difference in problem sensitivity (Mooney Problem Check List) relating to attendance among girls.

Best attending boys, however, in that school had lower scores than worst attending boys on total problems checked, adjustment to school work, finances, and living conditions and employment. (24, p. 389)
In the economically "disadvantaged" community, the "worst" attending boys scored higher on problems relating to finances, living conditions, and employment than did "best" attending boys. The "best" girls had significantly lower scores in health and physical development, finances, living conditions, and employment than did girls in the "worst" attending category (24, p. 391).

Another significant finding by Greene was that among both boys and girls in the "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" schools, good attendance was associated positively with high achievement in English (24, p. 391).

Favorable parental opinion of the school and favorable socio-economic status were also reliably associated with good attendance for both sexes in both the "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" groups (24, p. 391).

Greene concluded:

In general, the detailed findings support the conclusion that absenteeism is a symptomatic behavior associated with certain other independent variables, each of which tends to be individually symptomatic of an unfavorable adjustment between the learner and the educational and social environment in which he is operating. (24, p. 393)

Based upon the assumption that truancy is customarily treated inadequately by writers concerned primarily with delinquency, White (57) hypothesized several attributes which are related to attendance problems.

By pairing truants and non-truants in public junior schools, White reported the following findings:
(1) Broken homes appeared to be a contributing factor in the development of truancy, (2) the absence of the father appeared to be more significant than the absence of the mother, (3) the truant children were from larger families than those of non-truant, (4) the homes of the truant boys were smaller than those of non-truant, (5) more truant than non-truant children lived in apartments, (6) fewer of the parents of the truant students were home owners, (7) many of the fathers of the truant boys were employed at positions where economic returns were lower, compared with those of the non-truants' fathers. (57, p. 2256-A)

In 1978, Bardley (6) studied the relationship of school attendance patterns, attitudes toward school, self-concept, and activities participation among junior high school students.

According to Bardley, sex, grade, and school showed statistically significant relationships to school attendance. Boys were more alienated from school than girls and ninth-graders were more alienated than seventh-graders.

Bardley found that there was no significant difference between truants and non-truants in attitude toward school. A significant difference in self-concept and activities participation was determined for truants and non-truants. These findings are similar to other research studies involving self-concept, attitude, and activities participation.

Bardley concluded by saying:

In light of this study it seems that, in trying to understand the problem of truancy, the concept of implementing more programs which emphasize the affective domain merit attention and study, particularly by those persons responsible for the social growth and
academic success of junior high school students. (6, p. 6637-A)

Coleman (11) found that "upper status" pupils participated more than "lower status" pupils in the schools' extracurricular activities. He concluded that the schools' extracurricular program seemed to be organized to "fit" the children classified as "upper status" (11, p. 63).

Research by Wright (61) supports the conclusion that the size of school and the area in which a school is located strongly related to school attendance. Wright contends that the:

... scope and number of elective offerings, the pupil-teacher ratio, and the percentage of state required courses offered as electives were also related to the attendance rate but in a less powerful manner. (61, p. 359)

Wright recommended that further research be conducted to isolate certain school factors within urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The research findings by Greene, Bardley, and Wright demonstrate the need for further research investigating the factors relating to poor school attendance into area subgroups.

According to O'Brien (39), teacher perceptions of pupil behavior influence pupil achievement, attendance, and attitudes, depending upon the sex of the pupil and the teacher.
O'Brien (39) conducted a research study consisting of 30 classroom teachers and 808 fifth-grade students located in a northeastern state. O'Brien concluded that:

1. The more positively the teacher perceived pupil behavior, the greater the achievement in reading and mathematics,
2. the more positively the teacher perceived pupil behavior, the greater the attendance,
3. the less positively the teacher perceived pupil behavior, the more fearful the pupil was of failing,
4. pupil attendance was greater with male teachers than female teachers,
5. pupils had less fear of failure with female teachers than with male teachers,
6. boys had better attendance than girls,
7. girls had better reading achievement than boys,
8. boys had better mathematics achievement than did girls.

(39, p. 1222-A)

Levanto's (33) findings agree with O'Brien's conclusions that the poorer the student's personality rating by teachers, the rate of absenteeism is generally higher (33, p. 1538-A).

The effect of optional attendance classes was researched by Nelson (38) in 1937 and it was found that students in optional attendance classes did not differ greatly in their achievements from those classes where attendance was required. Nelson concluded that average and superior students will do as well or better when attendance is optional, while the poorer students are inclined to take so much advantage of the opportunity to be absent from class that their achievement suffers. Nelson noted that there
was a tendency for students to be absent more frequently on Friday than on other days of the week (38, p. 416).

In 1978, Sharp (47) investigated the effect of different high school orientation programs on grade point average and attendance. In comparing four different orientation programs, Sharp found there was no significant difference among the four schools with respect to grade point average or absences.

In examining the basic difficulties which relate directly to attendance administration in secondary schools, Stewart (51), in 1952, recommended the following: (1) a program of physical and mental health education, (2) a definite delineation and a placing of responsibility for handling attendance affairs, (3) make better use of the school census, (4) do not advocate compulsory high school attendance, (5) a definite work experience program, (6) extension of activity-type programs, (7) a study of parental opinion on attendance policies, (8) awards and recognition for regular school attendance, (9) a periodic reevaluation in each school of its attendance policies and procedures.

Stewart (51) concluded that these recommendations will not provide a final solution for all attendance problems; however, they may provide at least a limited or partial solving of attendance problems (51, p. 349).

John Hoback (29), principal of Boulder High School in Colorado, emphasized that teachers remain the key to
having successful school attendance. Hoback noted that:

Even a well-organized program can be burdened with truancy problems if a vital component is missing—the student must be given a feeling of being needed and wanted. If he feels that his presence doesn't really matter to anyone but himself, then he probably won't care sometimes whether he attends even a well-presented session or not. (29, p. 26)

Hoback contends that any remedies to school attendance should treat truancy as a symptom of a larger problem, that students should be allowed to assume greater responsibility, that schools should make use of non-educational opportunities, and that students should be allowed to become actively involved in the learning process.

In an attempt to determine the extent of truancy in urban schools, the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research (1) found that many urban school systems apparently do not have accurate information concerning the extent of truancy within their schools. One of the major findings of the report was that sometimes all absences are totaled together for reporting purposes.

In other words, there seems to be no accurate way in some school systems to separate excused absences for illness and the like from the unexcused and potentially chronic absences that may indicate the beginning or presence of truancy. A second finding is that truancy seems to be grossly underreported. (1, p. 81)

**The Effects of the Drug Culture on School Absenteeism**

Gordon T. Morris (35), a public relations specialist for the Detroit News, wrote:
... today's truant is simply a product of our frantic modern society. He is less inclined to accept the tenets of his youth culture, including "Never trust anybody over 30."

"The young truant," he stated, "has more money and more mobility and he is upset with the world today." Morris concluded that: "Today's kids are looking for kicks, and kicks too often mean drug abuse. The current drug culture is doing more than its share to increase truancy, directly or indirectly" (35, p. 41).

Living with a Single Parent and Its Effect on School Absenteeism

I remember it was near my birthday when I was going to be 6 that Dad said at lunch he was leaving. I tried to say, "No, Dad, don't do it," but I couldn't get my voice out. I was too much shocked. All the fun things we had done flashed right out of my head and all the bad things came in, like when he had to go to the hospital with his bad back and when he got mad at me. The bad thoughts just stuck there. My life sort of changed at that moment. Like I used to be always happy and suddenly I was sad. (21, p. 58) --an eight-year-old girl

In recent years, the percentage of children who reside with single-parent families has increased dramatically. A study completed in 1979 by Shaw (48) revealed that:

... in the six years between 1970 and 1976, the percentage of white children under 18 who lived in such families increased from 9 to 13 percent. For black children the increase was even greater—from 32 to 42 percent. (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1978)

Shaw notes that these figures refer to a particular point in time and therefore underestimate the percentage of children who will at some time live in a single-parent family.
There are currently 12 million children under the age of 18 whose parents are divorced--approximately 1 million children a year suffer from the separation of their parents (21, p. 58).

In 1980, a conference was held to examine the implications of the growing number of one-parent families upon schools in England and the United States. A conference participant, Mavis Hetherington, summed up the new problem confronting the schools in these words:

There is a greater probability of problems in school occurring with children from single-parent families. The achievement test scores and grades in school of children being reared in single-parent families tend to be lower than those of children living with two parents. (8, p. 537)

According to Brown (8):

... family circumstances are changing so rapidly from the traditional two-parent situation to the phenomenon of a single parent family head that the specter of lower performance by increasing numbers of students hovers over the schools. No one can say to what extent lower pupil performance results from parental separation--selection factors are obviously at work here--but we are now discovering that serious behavioral problems often characterize children of one-parent families. (8, p. 537)

The data presented by Brown (8) indicate differences in school achievement, tardiness, absenteeism, truancy, discipline problems, suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts, comparing children of two-parent families with children living with a single parent and students living with a relative or in a foster home.
From the results of the study, Brown (8) concluded that:

... there are disproportionate numbers of children from one-parent families in both the high-achievement and low-achievement groups at the elementary level. While the low numbers in the high-achievement groups are distressing, the high numbers in the low-achievement group are alarming. (8, p. 539)

SOURCE: 8, p. 539.

Figure 1. Problems and mobility among elementary school students from low-income families, by family type.

Brown's findings (see Figure 1) indicate that 57 percent of the students from low-income, one-parent
families had truancy problems, while only 33 percent of the students from two-parent, low-income families had truancy problems. These findings support the writer's hypothesis that parental background is a major factor affecting the school attendance of children.

According to Levanto (33), students who live with both parents generally have a lower rate of absenteeism than those who live with one parent or guardian (33, p. 1538-A).

Many studies have been performed investigating the effect on children of living in broken homes. Possible outcomes have been increased juvenile delinquency, poorer school achievement, future marital instability, and lower occupational attainment; however, generally, the results have been inconclusive. Ross and Sawhill (43) note several inadequacies of data that may account for some of these inconclusive findings. These include (1) inadequate controls for socio-economic status and family income, (2) the scarcity of data in which the consequences of living in different family arrangements for extended periods of time have been observed, and (3) inadequate models of child development and of measures of the amount and quality of parent-child interactions.

Wallerstein and Kelly (55) defined divorce as a "time limited crisis" and a "disorganization and reorganization process" of the family. According to Scherman (1979):
Parents in an emotional crisis are apt to function in less effective ways than usual. Therefore divorce in the family might adversely affect later emotional, social, and learning adjustment of children. (45, p. 9)

As stated previously, the writer contends that divorce may be a factor affecting the absenteeism of children in our inner-city schools. A review of studies showing the effect on children from separation and divorce is summarized by Phillips (40).

1) "Society's prejudices against the single parent family may prejudice sex role development in children and make long-range adjustment more difficult for children" (40, p. 3).

2) "Father absence from family adversely affects the self-image concepts among white boys and among black girls (a sex/race differentiation here), moreso than among the opposite sex/race categories (Hunt, 1972)" (40, p. 5).

3) Studying psychiatric/psychological problems among urban children, one study (Langner, 1969) showed that children without fathers were worse off in terms of psychological impairment or deficits than were children who had fathers in the home (40, p. 5).

4) "In the case of adolescent girls from father-absent homes (either out of separation and/or divorce), the girls tended to seek proximity
and attention from males and tended to get into earlier heterosexual behavior (Hetherington, 1972)" (40, p. 5).

(5) "In another study along the same lines by the same author (Hetherington, 1973) (28), father-absent effects showed up more noticeably among adolescent girls." Phillips observed that "girls from single-parent families were generally impatient for sexual advances and were sometimes verbally provocative as well . . ." (40, p. 6).

(6) Sciara (46) found that not only emotional problems may result from divorce, but also school achievement problems may be present among father-absent homes. In examining test scores, intelligence, and family status, from fourth-grade black youngsters from eight Model Cities located in a low-income area of a large midwestern metropolitan school system, Sciara concluded that "father absence had a much greater effect on the achievement scores of boys and girls whose measured I.Q. was above 100." (46, p. 45)

The evidence suggests that the impact of divorce and the resulting period of adjustment can be both traumatic and damaging. "The trauma of divorce is second only to death," says child psychologist Lee Salk. "Children sense a deep loss and feel they are suddenly vulnerable to forces beyond their control" (21, p. 58).
According to Rabbi Earl Grollman, divorce can be even more traumatic than death. "The big difference is, death has closure, it's over. With divorce, it's never over" (21, p. 63).

**Summary**

Some of the research studies on school absenteeism have used rather narrow approaches in identifying the causes of poor school attendance. Too often, only one or two variables have been investigated, which raises questions about the impact of other factors not considered in the study. Other studies, such as those by Greene (24), Levanto (33), Porwoll (41), and Washington (56), have approached the problem of school absenteeism with a broad and comprehensive perspective. The findings by these authors provided a sense of direction for the design of this research study.

In summary, the research findings presented in this literature review indicate that many factors can cause a child to have attendance problems in school. It is concluded that the factors affecting school absenteeism can be grouped into four general categories: (1) in-school factors, (2) personal factors, (3) family factors, and (4) environmental factors.

It is clear from the literature review that the reasons for school absenteeism have varied with the social and economic changes in our society. This may explain why
school absenteeism continues to be a complex and difficult problem to deal with.
III. DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Sample Design

The sample population for this study was drawn from freshmen and sophomore students at Madison High School during the 1978-79 school year.

Located on the east edge of the city of Portland, Oregon, Madison is one of the largest schools in the Portland School District, with a current enrollment of about 1,550 students.

Predominantly lower- to middle-class white families reside in the Madison area, with a recent influx of Vietnamese and Laotian families. The black population in the Madison district is very low; however, about 200 black students are bused to Madison High School each day from the North Portland area.

The selected sample of Madison students included only freshmen and sophomores with at least 11 absences in a semester. These students were considered to have excessive absenteeism and were referred by teachers to counselors and administrators for assistance in improving their attendance. In many cases the absences of students in the sample population exceeded 11 days in a semester. If a student was absent 11 days in one or more of his classes, he became a
candidate for the sample population, even though his absences in other classes may not have reached 11 days.

For a variety of reasons, not all freshmen and sophomore students with 11 absences in a semester were included in the sample population. After 11 absences, some students failed to return to school. Others were difficult to locate due to continued absenteeism.

Table I illustrates the percentage of males and females, freshmen and sophomores, and bused and non-bused students in the sample population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Category</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percent of N (^a)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percent of N (^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25.16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27.09</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bused students</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-bused students</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>41.93</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) N (total number in sample) = 155 students.

None of the students asked to take the survey declined; however, some students repeatedly failed to appear for their scheduled appointment to take the survey.

Development of the Questionnaire

The most logical and accurate method of finding out why students are having attendance problems in school is to ask them. As one investigative writer on the subject
of poor school attendance wrote, "We must begin to ask the students why they are not coming to school . . . ."
(5, p. 8).

Since a data-collecting instrument was not available, a questionnaire was developed to determine the reasons for excessive school absenteeism. Research by Greene (24) and others aided the writer in the development of the instrument by providing an inclusive list of reasons for poor school attendance.

A rough draft of the questionnaire was developed and examined by the Madison English Department to establish an appropriate reading level. After minor revisions by the English Department, the questionnaire was submitted to the writer's committee members at Oregon State University for further scrutiny.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 different reasons for not attending school. Students in the sample population checked the reasons which caused them to be absent from class.

The questionnaire was administered by the writer on a one-to-one basis in a closed, private office. In all cases, students were asked to be honest and to ask questions if there was something in the survey that they did not understand. It was explained that the survey was very
confidential and the results would not be revealed without the student's name being anonymous. Most students were very cooperative in completing the survey and appeared to be conscientious and sincere in their efforts.

Collection of the Data

At the bottom of the questionnaire, students were asked to give information regarding name, year in school, age, sex, administrative transfer status, and whether their parents were living together, divorced, separated, or one or more of the parents were deceased.

Math and reading scores of students in the sample population were obtained using the Metropolitan Elementary Spring Achievement Tests. Scores are interpreted as 65+, very high; 60-64, high; 55-59, above average; 45-54, average; 40-44, below average; 35-39, low; and below 35, very low. The tests were administered by Portland Public Schools to students in their eighth-grade year.

Attendance reports from the 1978-79 school year were obtained from school office records.

Data Analysis

Hypotheses III, IV, and V are tested by using the data generated by the attendance questionnaire.
The reasons for being absent from school, tabulated from the attendance questionnaire, are grouped into the following comparison groups:

A. All students
B. Boys vs. girls
C. Bused vs. non-bused students
D. Students with a single parent vs. students with parents who live together

Using the F statistic, a one-way analysis of variance is used to compare:

1. The reading ability between the groups of freshmen students categorized as those with "good attendance" or "poor attendance"
2. The reading ability between the groups of sophomore students categorized as those with "good attendance" or "poor attendance"
3. The mathematic ability between the groups of freshmen students categorized as those with "good attendance" or "poor attendance"
4. The mathematic ability between the groups of sophomore students categorized as those with "good attendance" or "poor attendance"

A significance level of .01 was arbitrarily set to determine whether or not a significant difference exists.
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

One of the major hypotheses of this study is that it is expected that students with irregular attendance in an inner-city school are more likely to have lower reading skills than students with regular attendance. To test this hypothesis, a statistical analysis is presented using the one-way analysis of variance computed to compare reading scores between groups of students with good attendance records and those students with at least eleven absences in two classes in a semester. A similar statistical analysis is presented comparing math scores with the same groups. The data comparing reading and math scores with attendance records is kept separate for freshmen and sophomore students.

The data from the questionnaire, indicating the reasons why students are absent from school, is organized into the following analysis groups: (1) all students, (2) boys vs. girls, (3) administrative transfer students (bused students) vs. resident students (non-bused students), and (4) students with divorced parents vs. students with parents who are not divorced.
Graphs of the questionnaire data are presented for each subgroup illustrating the type and frequency of responses indicated in the questionnaire.

Tables compiled from the graphs represent the ten most frequently checked responses in ranked order of frequency.

Tables are presented for each subgroup which separates the ten most frequently checked responses into three major categories: (1) in-school factors, (2) personal and family factors, and (3) environmental factors.

Statistical Analysis

A Comparison of Reading Scores of Students with Good and Poor Attendance Records

The sample population for this section of the study is composed of freshmen students who attended Madison High School in the 1978 school year. From the freshman class of slightly more than 300 students, 272 reading scores were available from the Metro Achievement Test results. Using none to ten absences in two classes in one semester as a criterion establishing "good attendance," and eleven or more absences in two classes in one semester as "poor attendance," 164 students were grouped as those with "good attendance" (Group A) and 108 students with "poor attendance" (Group B).
The interpretation of scores of the Metro Achievement Tests is as follows:

- **65+** Very high
- **60-64** High
- **55-59** Above average
- **45-54** Average
- **40-44** Below average
- **35-39** Low
- **Below 35** Very low

**Analysis I**

The mean reading score of Group A freshmen (good attendance) is 49.85. The mean reading score of Group B freshmen (poor attendance) is 47.13 (see Table II).

**TABLE II. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND VARIANCES OF FRESHMEN METRO ACHIEVEMENT TEST READING SCORES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Good attendance)</td>
<td>49.85</td>
<td>9.036</td>
<td>81.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Poor attendance)</td>
<td>47.13</td>
<td>12.190</td>
<td>148.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one-way analysis of variance computed to compare the reading scores between the groups of freshmen with "good attendance" and "poor attendance" provided an $F$ ratio of 1.82. In view of the interpolated critical $F$ value of
1.64, the two groups revealed significant differences in the variance of reading scores at the .01 level of confidence.

If homogeneity in the variances is assumed, the t statistic can be used to test the differences between the means of Group A and Group B reading scores. A critical t value of 2.576 was necessary in order to obtain a significant difference at the .01 level of confidence. In view of the obtained t value of 1.76, there is not a significant difference in the reading mean scores of Group A and Group B freshmen students.

Analysis II

The mean reading score of Group A sophomores (good attendance) is 52.48. The mean reading score of Group B sophomores (poor attendance) is 47.66 (see Table III).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Good attendance)</td>
<td>52.48</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>100.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Poor attendance)</td>
<td>47.66</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>88.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 130</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The one-way analysis of variance computed to compare the reading scores between the groups of sophomores
with "good attendance" and "poor attendance" provided an $F$ ratio of 1.13. In view of the interpolated critical $F$ value of 1.61, the two groups did not reveal significant differences at the .01 level of confidence.

Since no difference was found in the variances, the $t$ statistic was used to test the differences between the means of Group A and Group B sophomore reading scores. A critical $t$ value of 2.576 was necessary in order to obtain a significant difference at the .01 level of confidence. In view of obtained $t$ value of 4.07, there is a significant difference in the reading mean scores of Group A and Group B sophomore students.

A Comparison of Mathematic Scores of Students with Good and Poor Attendance Records

The sample population for this section of the study is composed of the same freshmen and sophomore students participating in the previous investigation and analysis comparing reading scores and attendance patterns. The same criteria of less than ten absences in two classes in a semester was used to classify students as those with "good attendance," and more than ten absences in two classes in one semester as those with "poor attendance."

The mathematic scores were obtained from the same Metro Elementary Achievement Tests used to obtain the reading scores.
Analysis III

The mean mathematic score of Group A freshmen (good attendance) is 52.29. The mean mathematic score of Group B freshmen (poor attendance) is 47.24 (see Table IV).

TABLE IV. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND VARIANCES OF FRESHMEN METRO ACHIEVEMENT TEST MATHEMATIC SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Good attendance)</td>
<td>52.29</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>75.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Poor attendance)</td>
<td>47.24</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>92.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one-way analysis of variance computed to compare the mathematic scores between the groups of freshmen with "good attendance" and "poor attendance" provided an $F$ ratio of 1.22. In view of the interpolated critical $F$ value of 1.64, the two groups did not reveal significant differences at the .01 level of confidence.

Since no difference was found in the variances, the $t$ statistic was used to test the differences between the means of mathematic scores for Group A and Group B. A critical $t$ value of 2.576 was necessary in order to obtain a significant difference at the .01 level of confidence. In view of the obtained $t$ value of 4.39, there is a significant difference in the mathematic mean scores of
freshmen students with "good attendance" and "poor attendance."

Analysis IV

The mean mathematic score of Group A sophomores (good attendance) is 54.13. The mean mathematic score of Group B sophomores (poor attendance) is 46.70 (see Table V).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Good attendance)</td>
<td>54.13</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>108.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Poor attendance)</td>
<td>46.70</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>64.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 151</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one-way analysis of variance computed to compare the mathematic scores between the groups of sophomores with "good attendance" and "poor attendance" provided an $F$ ratio of 1.66.

Although the $F$ ratio of 1.66 slightly exceeded the interpolated critical $F$ value of 1.61 by .05, it was assumed that the two groups did not reveal significant differences in the variances of mathematic scores at the .01 level of confidence.

Since no difference was found in the variances, the $t$ statistic was used to test the differences in the means.
of Group A and Group B sophomore mathematic scores. A critical value of 2.576 was necessary in order to obtain a significant difference at the .01 level of confidence. In view of the obtained t value of 7.05, there is a significant difference in the mathematic mean scores of Group A and Group B sophomore students.

Group Data Analysis

Presentation and Analysis of Questionnaire Data for All Students

The data collected from students who were administered the questionnaire indicate that both in-school factors and personal and family factors contribute to excessive absenteeism at an urban school (see Table VI).

An analysis of the data from the questionnaire indicates that for all students surveyed, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent in school are (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Social pressure to cut class
3. Poor relationships with teachers
4. Lack of motivation
5. Class assignments lack meaning to me
6. Unsatisfied with course schedule
7. Transportation
8. Problems relating to fighting among family members
9. Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol
10. Ineffective teaching

(see Graph No. 1).
**TABLE VI. GROUPING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FROM SUBGROUP 1--ALL STUDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Reason for Absenteeism</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-school factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ineffective teaching</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social pressure to cut class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently checked factor, other than illness, was "social pressure to cut class." Analysis of these particular data is of utmost importance and requires an understanding of the student's experiences before he/she enters Madison High School.
GRAPH No. 1
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR
ALL STUDENTS

RANK
1 Illness
2 Social Pressure to cut class
3 Poor Relationships with Teachers
4 Lack of Motivation
5 Class Assignments lack meaning to me

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
Many of the students attending Madison have grown up in the community. They have attended elementary schools, grades 1-6, and middle schools, grades 7-8, prior to entering high school. A *group identification process* develops with most students as a result of experiences attained at home, in school, and in the community.

From the writer's observations and experiences, it is expected that group relationships among children have been strengthened in middle schools due to the emphasis on group activities and athletics. Among most students entering high school there exists a need to (1) belong to a group, (2) be accepted by a group, (3) be liked by a group, and (4) participate in activities enjoyed by a group.

There is no question that many students entering high school are somewhat apprehensive. The complete structure of the students' educational setting is entirely new to them and changed from what they are used to.

Inner-city schools, being larger and having more diversified ethnic populations, are probably more likely to generate a higher level of apprehension in incoming students than in other schools.

With most incoming students, the apprehension of starting high school is nothing more than a brief period of tension and anxiety, overcome after a few days of classes. The truant, however, is usually not able to overcome this initial period of adjustment. Very early in the year, the
truant finds himself in the halls or out of the school building instead of being in class. Safe havens of refuge are sought in bathrooms, halls, and outside the school buildings. The truant soon learns which places in and around the school are safe from patrolling teachers and administrators. Frequently a pattern of truancy develops whereby students meet together at the same time and place and engage in the same activity every day. Some might smoke cigarettes or marijuana, while others play "hacky sack." Others listen to music. In the majority of cases, a great deal of conversation takes place, regardless of the type of activity engaged in.

A "common ground" is established where the truant finds other students like himself. A feeling of camaraderie usually develops among most truants who group together while cutting classes. According to Teachman:

Students, like adults, prefer doing what is most enjoyable, which means that a class may be interesting to a student but not as interesting as hanging around the school talking to friends, just as a job may be interesting to an adult but not as interesting as an afternoon off. (52, p. 205)

Another important finding of this study is that students with attendance problems rate "Poor relations with teachers" as one of the most significant reasons for their not attending school regularly.

From the data collected in this study, it can be stated that many students with school attendance problems
feel that one of the major causes for their excessive absenteeism is that they have poor relationships with their teachers. This statement raises a most important question. Assuming a poor relationship between the truant and teacher does exist—why? And secondly, if a poor relationship between the truant and teacher does not exist—why does the student believe that it does?

To answer these questions, one must perceive the problem through the eyes of both the student with an attendance problem and the teacher faced with the student who does not attend class regularly.

Most teachers work hard at preparing their lesson plans for instruction in the classroom. A lot of time is spent by teachers, who are constantly trying to improve their teaching materials and methods of instruction. In addition to perhaps more than one teaching preparation, teachers are required to take additional classes in the evening to continue their professional growth. This is after years of preparation in college and possibly completion of a Master's degree. Through this extensive course work and prior teaching experiences, most teachers develop expertise in their subject area.

With all of the course study, hard work, and money spent in preparation for the teaching profession, it can be frustrating for teachers to deal with students who do not want to attend their classes. The teachers' task, as they
see it, is to teach, and most prefer to work with students who want to attend and have a good attitude toward learning.

It is time consuming for teachers to have students miss their classes. Absences, for any reason, usually require additional time on the teacher's part. In some cases this is teaching time taken away from students who attend regularly. In a recent study by Gerald W. Teachman, he notes that:

Since most teachers feel obligated to provide make-up work to absent students, the teacher's workload increases. Frequently, the teacher finds himself reviewing previous lessons during much of the normal class time. This bores the student who is always present. It may help the student who is sometimes absent and who will do the make-up work, but it has almost no effect on the chronic truant. He is absent too often ever to catch up. (52, p. 204)

After a student has had numerous unexcused absences and the teacher and other staff and parents have tried to work with the student and encourage him or her to attend class regularly, some teachers become frustrated and irritated with the student. The teacher usually does not know why the student continues to have an absenteeism problem and sometimes frustration and resentment toward the student may develop.

From the writer's experience and observations, most students with attendance problems do not realize the importance of regular school attendance. They start off missing a class or two, perhaps to be with their friends. When the time comes the following day for that class to begin, it is
sometimes easier for them to cut class again rather than face the teacher and perhaps be embarrassed about being behind in class. If the student decides to attend class, he runs the risk of the teacher confronting him in front of the class. If confrontation between the student and teacher does occur, this may indicate to the student that he is not liked by the teacher. As the student continues to be absent, and confrontations occur, the student-teacher relationship will most likely continue to break down.

Whereas the initial causes of the student to be absent from class may not have been due to poor relationships with teachers, this factor may compound the reasons for the student to miss school. Keeping in mind that a high school student is normally enrolled in five or six classes, this could mean several "poor teacher relationships," as the student with attendance problems views it.

The fourth most frequently checked factor for being absent from school is "lack of motivation."

From working with many high school truants, it is apparent that most of these students lack an inner drive to do well in school. The lack of inner drive makes regular school attendance a very difficult task to achieve. When the truant does attend school, his/her lack of motivation is usually reflected in his/her classroom performance.

Not having an inner drive to do well in school results in the truant being easily distracted. The
distraction might be staying at home to watch television, socializing with friends, using alcohol or drugs, engaging in some sort of recreation, or doing something else which is more interesting to the truant than attending school.

From the writer's observations, the overuse of marijuana and other drugs adds to the truant's problem of not having an inner drive. In some chronic cases, it appears that the main cause of the lack of inner drive to do well in school is from the overuse of marijuana.

This contention is supported by a recent report by the State of Oregon Department of Human Resources. The report indicates that the effects of marijuana, as with all drugs, vary with individuals. The effects of using marijuana vary from:

... pleasant, passive reactions, to paranoid behavior, agitation and, rarely, aggression. Generally, the physiological effects at low dosages are: initial euphoria, enhanced congeniality, and a mood of relaxed passivity. At moderate doses, these effects are intensified. In addition, some impairment of short-term memory, disturbances in thought patterns, lapses in attention, subjective feelings of unfamiliarity, depersonalization, and sensory distraction may occur. High doses further increase these effects, and produce marked sedation. (45, p. 1)

The physical effects of smoking have been found to have an initial stimulant effect followed by depressed activity of parts of the brain and nervous system. A current study on the effects of smoking, reported by the Mental Health Division of the State of Oregon, indicates that:
Nicotine acts on the heart, blood vessels, digestive tract, and kidneys. Users will experience an increase in pulse rate, a rise in blood pressure, and a drop in body temperature. These effects are followed by a feeling of relaxation and a slight mental euphoria. A number of studies now suggest that nicotine may produce a mild physical dependence as well as psychological dependence. (45, p. 20)

Item #14 in the questionnaire, "Habits—smoking, drugs, alcohol," ranked #9 in frequency responses for all students as a reason for not having regular attendance.

It is the writer's contention that many truants are involved in smoking cigarettes, and using drugs and alcohol because (1) they have so much free time when they are missing class that their involvement in these habits helps pass the time, (2) there is social pressure among their peers to participate in whatever the group is doing, and (3) in some cases, a physical and/or psychological dependency on the cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol develops from continued use.

The fifth most frequently checked factor for missing school was "Class assignments lack meaning to me."

Careful analysis of this response requires an understanding of the attitude which most truants have toward school. As mentioned previously, most students with attendance problems lack motivation and do not have a goal which they are working toward. Most lack a plan for their future. This lack of direction sometimes results in the student having
a difficult time understanding the relevancy of class assignments to his or her personal needs.

Another possible reason for the truant to view class assignments as meaningless is that previous absences can prevent the student from understanding the assignment. In a sense, it is like turning on a television in the middle of a movie and trying to understand what is happening. In some cases, the truant is correct—class assignments may not be relevant to his future needs.

The fact that one out of three sampled students responded to "Class assignments lack meaning to me" as a reason for being absent from school indicates that many students who miss a lot of school view traditional curriculum as irrelevant and meaningless to their lives. These data also suggest the need for alternative schools, designed to meet the individual needs of students who have difficulty adapting to traditional curriculum.

The Focus Program, an alternative school at Madison, was established in 1973 for students with low achievement and attendance rates and/or behavioral problems. The curriculum is so flexible that it is revamped monthly by students and staff. The five study areas of the Focus Program are: (1) communication labs—reading, writing, speech, economics, employment, and politics; (2) analysis labs—sciences and math; (3) value labs; (4) realities lab—emphasizing valuing and self-concept improvement. (Note: 20
out of the 155 students taking the questionnaire were enrolled in the Focus Program at Madison High School. Eleven out of the 20 Focus students responded to "Class assignments lack meaning to me" as a reason for being absent from school.

Another in-school factor affecting absenteeism, ranked sixth in the questionnaire, is the factor "Unsatisfied with course schedule." The fact that 55 out of 155 students sampled indicated they were unhappy with their schedule might at first suggest that the school is doing an inadequate job of proper placement. From the writer's observation, however, there is more to it than that. Success in school depends to some degree on the ability of the student to plan and organize. Most truants simply do not have these necessary skills. Many students with attendance problems, as pointed out previously, do not have a plan of courses leading them toward a goal. Some truants are absent when forecasting and course counseling sessions are held. In some cases the student is absent when placement tests are administered, making it difficult if not impossible to place the student at the appropriate level. When actual scheduling occurs, the truant sometimes will miss his scheduled time to sign up for classes, resulting in classes being closed, and signing up for classes in which he or she is not interested.
Twenty and six-tenths percent of all sampled students indicated that transportation was a factor causing them to be absent from school.

Inner-city schools depend on a variety of different kinds of transportation to transport students to school. Public bus systems, automobiles, motorcycles, bicycles, and walking are the methods most commonly used. Each has its inherent problems. With the high costs of operating an automobile, more people are using public bus systems to commute to and from work. This has caused overcrowding on public buses, especially in the morning hours, when students are going to school. In some cases, students waiting for a scheduled bus are passed by with a capacity-filled bus. Then too, public bus transportation has become more expensive to use. In Portland, for example, the current student bus fare is almost $1.00 a day to go to and from school. For a low-income family with several children going to school, the cost of transportation to school can be a financial burden.

The writer suspects that there are times when "Transportation problems" are given as an excuse for a student not making it to school, when in fact, perhaps there is another reason. However, it is contended that in many cases "Transportation problems" is a valid excuse for being late or absent from school.
A significant finding in this study is that some of the subgroups ranked "Transportation" at a different frequency level as a reason for being absent from school. Administrative transfer students, for example, ranked "Transportation" as the second highest reason for not attending school. This same item ranked thirteenth with resident students.

Presentation and Analysis of Questionnaire Data--Boys vs. Girls

An analysis of the data from the attendance questionnaire is presented using a comparative approach to demonstrate the similarities and differences of responses from the different subgroups.

Boys indicated that more in-school factors caused them to be absent from school than did girls. Girls responded to more personal and family factors in the attendance questionnaire than did boys.

Table VII is presented to illustrate the similarities and differences of the survey responses of boys and girls. Table VIII shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 2--boys, and Table IX shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 3--girls.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Boys Responding</th>
<th>Percentage of Girls Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>21</td>
<td>44.5</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
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</table>
### TABLE VIII. GROUPING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FROM SUBGROUP 2--BOYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Reason for Absenteeism</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-school factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ineffective teaching</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor learning environment in the classroom</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal and family factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, and alcohol</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE IX. GROUPING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FROM SUBGROUP 3--GIRLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Reason for Absenteeism</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-school factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor learning environment in the classroom</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>5 (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for family members</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut classes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>5 (tie)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

An analysis of the data from the questionnaire indicates that for boys the most frequently checked reasons for being absent in school were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Poor relationships with teachers
3. Social pressure to cut class
4. Lack of motivation
5. Class assignments lack meaning to me
6. Transportation
7. Unsatisfied with course schedule
8. Poor learning environment in the classroom
9. Problems relating to fighting among family members
10. Ineffective teaching

(see Graph No. 2).

For girls, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Social pressure to cut class
3. Poor relationships with teachers
4. Class assignments lack meaning to me
5. Transportation; Lack of motivation
6. Unsatisfied with course schedule
7. Caring for family members
8. Problems relating to fighting among family members
9. Poor learning environment in the classroom
10. Habits—smoking, drugs, alcohol

(see Graph No. 3).

It is interesting that 79 percent of the girls indicated that "Illness" is a factor causing absenteeism from school and yet only 52.7 percent of the boys responded to this item in the attendance questionnaire. One reason for this difference could be due to the fact that girls are
GRAPH No. 2
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR BOYS

RANK
1 Illness
2 Poor Relationships with Teachers
3 Social Pressure to cut class here
4 Lack of Motivation
5 Class Assignments lack meaning to me

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
GRAPH No. 3
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR GIRLS

RANK
1. Illness
2. Social Pressure to cut class
3. Poor Relationships with Teachers
4. Class Assignments lack meaning to me
5. Lack of Motivation
6. Transportation

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE
sometimes faced with problems associated with monthly menstrual cycles.

Almost 46 percent of the boys attributed "Poor relationships with teachers" as a reason for being absent from school compared to only 33.3 percent of the girls responding to that item. The writer suggests the following reason for these differences. In general, most girls with attendance problems are not perceived by teachers as being disruptive in class. From the writer's experience, boys with attendance problems are more likely to be disruptive in class. Boys are more likely to be involved in fights, disagreements, and general horseplay. Because of the aggressive tendencies of boys and the potential disruption in the classroom which may result from these aggressive tendencies, perhaps teachers perceive truant boys less positively than truant girls.

The results of the attendance questionnaire indicate that a higher percentage of boys (43.2 percent) attributed "Lack of motivation" as a cause for school absenteeism than did girls (29.6 percent). While it is unclear why this difference exists, the survey also indicates that a higher percentage of boys (21.6 percent) miss school from using drugs and alcohol than do girls (14.8 percent). The writer suspects that the use of drugs and alcohol affects the motivation of children in school and may, in part at
least, explain the difference in the lack of motivation between boys and girls.

Approximately one out of every four students surveyed indicated that he/she was unsatisfied with his/her course schedule. Twenty-two and nine-tenths percent of the boys and 27.1 percent of the girls surveyed responded to this item as a reason for their being absent from school.

A higher percentage of girls (23.4 percent) attributed "Caring for family members" as a reason for missing school than did boys (9.4 percent).

"Problems relating to divorced parents" was responded to more by girls (14.8 percent) than boys (9.4 percent).

More boys (13.5 percent) attributed "Poor educational preparation in reading skills" than girls (2.4 percent). "Poor educational preparation in arithmetic skills" was also checked more frequently by boys (8.1 percent) than girls (3.7 percent).

A significant finding of this study is that "Problems relating to fighting among family members" affects the school attendance of both boys and girls. Twenty and nine-tenths percent of the 81 girls surveyed indicated that this problem was causing them to be absent from school and 17.5 percent of the boys considered this to be a factor affecting their school absenteeism.
Both boys and girls attributed "Social pressure to cut class" as a significant reason for being absent from school. Thirty-four and five-tenths percent of the girls checked this item, while 44.5 percent of the boys indicated that this factor caused them to miss school. For girls, "Social pressure to cut class" ranked second to "Illness" as a reason for school absenteeism. For boys, the item ranked third, behind "Poor relationships with teachers" as second, and "Illness" as #1.

A significant number of the students surveyed thought that their attendance was affected by their teachers assigning "Class assignments which lack meaning to me."

Thirty-five and one-tenth percent of the boys responded to this item and 30.8 percent of the girls indicated this was a factor in their missing school.

More boys (12.1 percent) felt that employment was a factor affecting their absenteeism than did girls (4.9 percent). Since the students surveyed were freshmen and sophomores, the writer predicts that for junior and senior students the percentages would increase due to the fact that more upperclassmen are employed.

Five times as many girls responded to "Physical, mental, and emotional handicaps" as a reason for being absent from school than did boys. Thirteen and five-tenths percent of the girls checked this item, while only 2.7
percent of the boys felt this factor affected their attendance in school.

Also, a higher percentage of girls (7.4 percent) checked "Poor self-concept" than did boys (4.1 percent). However, more boys (13.5 percent) felt that their attendance was affected by a "Lack of self-confidence" than did girls (9.8 percent).

"Transportation" was checked frequently by both boys and girls as a reason for being absent from school. Twenty-nine and six-tenths percent of the girls and 27 percent of the boys considered transportation an important factor affecting their attendance in school.

Presentation and Analysis of Questionnaire Data--Bused Students vs. Resident Students

From the 155 students who were administered the attendance questionnaire, the ethnic composition consisted of 122 Caucasian students, 30 Black students, 1 American Indian student, and 2 Spanish-American students.

Thirty-two of 155 students surveyed were administrative transfer students who participated in the district's busing program to achieve district-wide desegregation. All 30 of the Black students surveyed were administrative transfer students, along with 1 American Indian and 1 Spanish-American student.
Table X is presented to illustrate the similarities and differences of the attendance questionnaire responses of administrative transfer students and resident students. Table XI shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 4--administrative transfer students, and Table XII shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 5--resident students.

For administrative transfer students, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Poor relationships with teachers
3. Transportation
4. Social pressure to cut class
5. Caring for family members
6. Lack of motivation
7. Unsatisfied with course schedule
8. Class assignments lack meaning to me
9. Poor learning environment in the classroom
10. Lack of self-confidence

(see Graph No. 4).

For resident students, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Social pressure to cut class
3. Poor relationships with teachers
4. Lack of motivation
5. Class assignments lack meaning to me
6. Transportation
7. Unsatisfied with course schedule
8. Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol
TABLE X. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE ATTENDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES OF ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSFER STUDENTS AND RESIDENT STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Administrative Transfer (Bused) Students Responding</th>
<th>Percentage of Resident Students Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>8.1</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>15.6</td>
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<td>Reason for Absenteeism</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-school factors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor learning environment in the classroom</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of self-confidence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Caring for family members</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Poor learning environment in the classroom (tie)
10. Problems relating to fighting among family members (tie)

(see Graph No. 5).
TABLE XII. GROUPING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FROM SUBGROUP 5--RESIDENT STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Reason for Absenteeism</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-school factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor learning environment in the classroom</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(tie)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRAPH No. 4
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSFER STUDENTS

RANK
1. Illness
2. Poor Relationships with Teachers
3. Transportation
4. Social Pressure to cut class
5. Caring for family member

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
GRAPH No. 5
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR RESIDENT STUDENTS

RANK
1. Illness
2. Social Pressure to cut class
3. Poor Relationships with Teachers
4. Lack of Motivation
5. Class Assignments lack meaning to me

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
It was expected that the reasons for excessive school absenteeism would be different for administrative transfer students and resident students. The researcher expected that more administrative transfer students would attribute "Transportation" as a reason for being absent from school than resident students. Results of the survey confirmed this expectation with 34.3 percent of the administrative transfer students and 26 percent of the resident students attributing "Transportation" as a cause for their school absences.

The findings from this study indicate that both administrative transfer students and resident students blame "Poor relationships with teachers" as a major factor affecting absenteeism. Thirty-four and three-tenths percent of the administrative transfer students and 37.3 percent of the resident students responded to this factor in the questionnaire.

A slightly higher percentage of administrative transfer students (21.8 percent) indicated that their attendance was affected by a "Poor learning environment in the classroom" than did resident students (19.5 percent).

"Lack of motivation" was checked frequently by both groups. Administrative transfer students responded
to this item less frequently (28.1 percent) than did resident students (34.9 percent).

Another significant difference in the survey responses of these two groups was that "Caring for family members" was a factor causing absenteeism more often with administrative transfer students (28.1 percent) than resident students (12.1 percent). From the results of this finding and the researcher's experience working with both groups, it appears that administrative transfer students feel more of a sense of obligation and responsibility to miss school to care for family members than resident students.

A significantly larger percentage of resident students (21.9 percent) attributed "Habits--smoking, drugs, and alcohol" as a cause for school absences than did administrative transfer students (6.2 percent). These data correspond to the fact that at Madison High School a larger percentage of white students are referred to the administration for violating school rules regarding smoking, drugs, and alcohol than black students.

Fewer administrative transfer students (25 percent) thought that their attendance was affected by "Class assignments lack meaning to me" than did resident students (34.1 percent). These data suggest that resident students tend to blame the school for their absences more than administrative transfer
students. However, the two groups were in agreement in responding to "Ineffective teaching" as a cause for school absences. About one out of every eight students in each group considered this to be a factor affecting his/her attendance.

On a percentage basis, twice as many resident students (13 percent) attributed "Lack of support from home" as a reason for their absences than did administrative transfer students (6.2 percent).

The results of the attendance survey reveal that about one out of every five administrative transfer students thought his/her absences were affected by a lack of self-confidence, compared to about one out of ten for resident students. Correlating to these data, more administrative transfer students (15.6 percent) indicated that "Poor self-concept" was affecting their absences than resident students (3.2 percent).

A higher percentage of resident students (8.1 percent) surveyed attributed "Problems relating to divorced parents" as a reason for school absences than did administrative transfer students (3.1 percent). Also, 15.6 percent of administrative transfer students checked "Problems relating to fighting among family members" while 19.5 percent of resident students responded to this item as a factor affecting school attendance.
"Social pressure to cut class" was a significant factor affecting absenteeism for both administrative transfer and resident students. More than one out of every three students considered this item to be a reason for missing class. "Social pressure to cut class" was the second most frequently checked item by both groups with 39.8 percent of resident students and 34.3 percent of administrative transfer students responding. This difference suggests that resident students with attendance problems may view their school as being a more familiar and comfortable social setting than do administrative transfer students with attendance problems. Being raised in the neighborhood, resident students might be more familiar with the "social distractions" around the school.

Another reason that a higher percentage of resident students find social pressure affecting their attendance is that they are not limited as to the time they can arrive at school. Some arrive at school as early as 7:15 A.M. or 7:30 A.M. to meet their friends. When the bell rings at 8:15 A.M., some of these students find it difficult to go to class. Usually there is not much support from the group to terminate the socializing. The tendency is usually for the group to support each other to cut class.

Administrative transfer students, on the other hand, usually socialize at their bus stops, and talk with each
other on the bus while they are being transported to school. They usually arrive at school just a few minutes before the bell rings. With just enough time for them to go to their lockers, they are less likely to be distracted from attending their first period class.

While some resident students spend time socializing after school, administrative transfer students who are not participating in an after-school activity or sport are immediately bused home. Transportation therefore limits the amount of time that administrative transfer students have to socialize at school. Also, many administrative transfer students at Madison and other Portland high schools do not usually come back to school in the evening for home games, dances, or other school activities. They are more likely to attend games and social events at a school close to where they reside.

It is intended that these reasons will help explain the differences in the conditions for the two groups to socialize at school. The researcher does not contend that administrative transfer students do not view the school as a friendly setting to socialize with their friends, for that is not the case. The findings of this study reveal that the attendance of both administrative transfer and resident students is affected by social pressure by peers.
Employment was rated as a factor affecting the attendance of 15.6 percent of the administrative transfer students and 4.8 percent of the resident students who were surveyed. On the basis of personal conversations with each student surveyed, the researcher contends that about the same percentage of students in each group were employed when the survey was administered. This research indicates that the attendance of administrative transfer students is affected more by employment than for resident students who are employed. Employment for 15- and 16-year-old students who reside in the inner city consists mainly of jobs related to restaurant work. Some of these jobs require working late in the evening during the week. The researcher contends that employment of administrative transfer students is more of an "interference factor" affecting school attendance than it is for resident students.

Presentation and Analysis of Questionnaire
Date--Students with Divorced Parents vs.
Students with Parents Who Are
Not Divorced

One hundred forty-eight of the students surveyed responded to the data section requesting information about the marital status of their parents. The data indicate that 46.45 percent of the surveyed students were from divorced parents, 49.03 percent either had parents who lived
together or had one or more parents deceased, and 4.52 percent did not respond to this part of the survey.

Table XIII is presented to illustrate the similarities and differences of the survey responses of students with divorced parents and students whose parents are not divorced. Table XIV shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 6--students with divorced parents. Table XV shows grouping of questionnaire data from Subgroup 7--students with parents not divorced.

For students with divorced parents, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Poor relationships with teachers
3. Social pressure to cut class
4. Class assignments lack meaning to me
5. Lack of motivation
6. Transportation
7. Unsatisfied with course schedule
8. Problems relating to fighting among family members
9. Problems relating to divorced parents
10. Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol

(see Graph No. 6).

For students with parents not divorced, the most frequently checked reasons for being absent were (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Illness
2. Social pressure to cut class
3. Poor relationships with teachers
4. Lack of motivation
5. Class assignments lack meaning to me
6. Transportation
7. Unsatisfied with course schedule
### TABLE XIII. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE SURVEY RESPONSES OF STUDENTS WITH DIVORCED PARENTS AND STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS ARE NOT DIVORCED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Students with Divorced Parents</th>
<th>Percentage of Student with Parents Not Divorced</th>
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<td>71.05</td>
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TABLE XIV. GROUPING OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FROM SUBGROUP 6--STUDENTS WITH DIVORCED PARENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Reason for Absenteeism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>In-school factors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Class assignments lack meaning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems relating to divorced parents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

8. Poor learning environment in the classroom
9. Problems relating to fighting among family members
10. Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol

(see Graph No. 7).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Poor relationships with teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
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<td>Unsatisfied with course schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor learning environment in the classroom</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal and family factors</td>
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<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>Problems relating to fighting among family members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social pressure to cut classes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRAPH No. 6

FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR
STUDENTS WITH DIVORCED PARENTS

RANK
1 Illness
2 Poor Relationships with Teachers
3 Social Pressure to cut class
4 Class Assignments lack meaning to me
5 Lack of Motivation

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
GRAPH No. 7
FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR STUDENTS WITH PARENTS NOT DIVORCED

RANK
1. Illness
2. Social Pressure to cut class
3. Poor Relationships with Teachers
4. Lack of Motivation
5. Class Assignments lack meaning to me

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSE

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM NUMBER
In-school Factors

Examining the data from the questionnaire which pertains to "in-school factors" for being absent from school, reveals that more students without divorced parents (43.42 percent) blame their poor attendance on "Poor relationships with teachers" than did students with divorced parents (34.72 percent). The hardships, personal difficulties, and adjustments which usually result from the divorce process may explain why students with divorced parents are less likely to blame their teachers for their attendance problems. The researcher suspects that in some cases teachers may fill a void for the child with divorced parents.

A higher percentage of students with parents who were not divorced (27.63 percent) rated "Unsatisfied with course schedule" as a significant reason for being absent from school than did students with divorced parents (22.22 percent).

According to the survey, school activities interfere more with the attendance of students with parents who are not divorced (15.78 percent) than students with divorced parents (8.33 percent). These data may be partially explained by the fact that more students with divorced parents (11.11 percent) attributed employment as a reason for their absences while only 3.94 percent of the surveyed students with parents not divorced responded to this factor. These
data add support to the researcher's contention that some students from divorced families are probably expected to work to help out financially at home. Employment after school would decrease the chance of being able to participate in after-school activities and athletics.

About one out of every eight students in both groups of students with divorced parents and students without divorced parents attributed his/her absences to "Poor educational preparation in reading skills." However, the survey revealed that a higher percentage of students from divorced parents (9.72 percent) blamed "Poor educational preparation in arithmetic skills" as a reason for their absences than did students without divorced parents (3.94 percent).

In summary, the results of the attendance survey indicate that students with divorced parents are less likely to blame the school for their absenteeism problems. Of the nine items in the survey categorized as "in-school factors" causing absences, the group of students without divorced parents ranked higher in six of these factors.

Personal and Family Factors

According to the survey, students with divorced parents thought their absences from school were less likely to be from "illness" than students without divorced parents. This is somewhat puzzling to the researcher, but perhaps this can be explained by the fact that the group of students
with divorced parents ranked higher in 10 out of 15 of the "personal and family factors" in the survey. With such a strong emphasis on personal and family-related factors causing absenteeism, perhaps some students with divorced parents are not as likely to attribute illness as a reason for their absences.

As stated previously, "Lack of motivation" was the fourth most frequently checked response by all students taking the survey. When analyzing this response in comparing the groups of students with and without divorced parents, some interesting data are revealed. While 42.10 percent of the students without divorced parents checked "Lack of motivation" as a reason for missing school, only 29.16 percent of the students with divorced parents responded to this factor. As stated earlier, the researcher contends that a characteristic of many truants is a lack of inner drive to do well in school. The data from this research add support to this contention. When examining the data comparing the groups of students with and without divorced parents, it is indicated that students from divorced families feel their absences are not as likely to be caused from "Lack of motivation" than students without divorced parents. These data correspond to the researcher's belief that a divorce in a family may result in a child becoming more motivated through the experiences endured in the years of growing up with a single parent or new stepparent.
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study was designed to provide an understanding of the causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school. The review of the literature and the findings of this study should assist educators in grasping a more complete understanding of the reasons for excessive school absenteeism and to enable them to seek solutions to the problems which are responsible for poor school attendance.

A review of the literature provided an historical perspective of investigations relating to school attendance. It is clear from the literature review that the reasons for school absenteeism have varied with the social and economic changes in our society. In 1915, for example, Cooper (12) reported that the principal cause of absences in Delaware rural schools was work. In 1947, poverty, poor health, distance from school, lack of laws, and parental negligence were cited as established causes of non-attendance.

Recent studies in the literature indicate that broken homes appear to be a contributing factor in the development of truancy. The estimated figure of 12 million children under the age of 18 whose parents are divorced is
indeed a shocking statistic. According to Brown (8), the traditional two-parent situation is changing very rapidly and no one can say to what extent lower pupil performance results from parental separation.

Research studies indicate that poverty in inner cities is a significant contributing factor in motivating a student to exclude himself from school. The literature does not indicate that poverty in suburban or rural areas is a major factor affecting school attendance.

Educational research in the area of school attendance has concentrated on the relationship of attendance to (1) achievement, (2) effect of instruction and other in-school factors, (3) busing, (4) social and economic factors, (5) sex, grade, and school, (6) teacher perception of pupil behavior, (7) use of drugs, (8) divorce and other personal and family problems, and (9) environmental problems.

It is generally agreed by writers on the subject of school attendance that (1) truancy should be treated as a symptom of a larger problem, (2) more research is needed to isolate certain school factors with urban, suburban, and rural areas, (3) there is no one single answer to the problem of school attendance, and (4) we need to continue to seek solutions to the problems causing excessive school absenteeism.

The research in this study dealt with identifying the causes of excessive absenteeism in an inner-city school. The questionnaire was developed by the writer to determine
the reasons for poor school attendance. One hundred fifty-five students at Madison High School were administered the questionnaire. Students taking part in the questionnaire were selected as described under "Sample Design" in Chapter III.

In testing Hypothesis I, the statistical study determined whether there was a significant statistical difference between mean scores of reading achievement tests of students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems.

Analysis of the data, utilizing the F statistic and the one-way analysis of variance, indicated that the null hypothesis in Analysis I was accepted. The null hypothesis stated, "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of reading achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems."

In Analysis I, there was not a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for freshmen students with attendance problems and freshmen students without attendance problems.

In Analysis II, there was a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for sophomore students with attendance problems and sophomore students without attendance problems.

The null hypothesis for Analysis II is therefore rejected.
In testing Hypothesis II, the statistical study determined the relationship of mathematic achievement test scores to school attendance patterns. The null hypothesis stated, "There is no significant difference between the mean scores of mathematic achievement tests for students with attendance problems and students without attendance problems." In Analysis III there was a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of mathematic tests for freshmen students with attendance problems and freshmen students without attendance problems. In Analysis IV, there was a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of mathematic tests for sophomore students with attendance problems and sophomore students without attendance problems. The null hypothesis for Analyses III and IV is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis III of this study stated, "It is expected that the causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are different for boys than for girls." The findings of this study indicate that the major reasons for absences are generally similar for both boys and girls; however, there are contributing factors which affect school attendance which are different for boys than for girls. These similarities and differences will be presented in the "Conclusion" section of this chapter.

Hypothesis IV of this study stated, "It is expected that the causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are
different for students with divorced or separated parents than for students whose parents are not divorced or separated." The results of the attendance questionnaire indicate that students with divorced parents seem less likely to blame the school for their absenteeism problems than students with parents who are not divorced. "Poor relationships with teachers" was checked more frequently, on a percentage basis, by students without divorced parents than students with divorced parents. The findings of this study indicate that the major reasons for absences are generally similar for students with divorced parents and students with parents who are not divorced; however, there are contributing factors which affect school attendance which are different for these two groups. These similarities and differences will be presented in the "Conclusion" section of this chapter.

Hypothesis V of this study stated, "It is expected that the causes of absenteeism in an inner-city school are different for minority students who are bused to school than for students who reside within the local school attendance area." The findings in this research indicate two major different reasons for school absenteeism for students bused to school and those not bused to school. "Transportation" and "Caring for family members" were checked more frequently by bused students than by resident students. "Lack of motivation" and "Poor relationships with teachers" were
checked almost equally, on a percentage basis, by both groups. The findings of this study reveal other contributing factors which affect school attendance which indicate different reasons for bused students and resident students to be absent from school. These differences will be presented in the "Conclusion" section of this chapter.

Conclusions

In the analysis of any empirical research study, the greatest potential for error lies in the interpretations of the data and in conclusions drawn from the study. Care must be taken to not generalize beyond the limitations of the research.

The following are conclusions that may be drawn from the research:

1. The statistical study found no significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for freshmen students with attendance problems and freshmen students without attendance problems.

2. The statistical study found a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of reading achievement tests for sophomore students with attendance problems and sophomore students without attendance problems.
3. The statistical study found a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of mathematic achievement tests for freshmen students with attendance problems and freshmen students without attendance problems. Freshmen students with attendance problems had statistically significant lower mean mathematic scores than freshmen students without attendance problems.

4. The statistical study found a significant difference at the .01 level of significance in the mean scores of mathematic achievement tests for sophomore students with attendance problems and sophomore students without attendance problems. Sophomore students with attendance problems had statistically significant lower mean mathematic scores than sophomore students without attendance problems.

5. From analysis of the questionnaire data, it is concluded that the major causes of excessive school absenteeism are as follows (in order of significance--illness excluded):
a. **Causes of absences for boys and girls**
   (1) Social pressure to cut class
   (2) Poor relationships with teachers
   (3) Lack of motivation
   (4) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (5) Unsatisfied with course schedule

b. **Causes of absences for boys**
   (1) Poor relationships with teachers
   (2) Social pressure to cut class
   (3) Lack of motivation
   (4) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (5) Transportation

c. **Causes of absences for girls**
   (1) Social pressure to cut class
   (2) Poor relationships with teachers
   (3) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (4) Transportation; Lack of motivation
   (5) Unsatisfied with course schedule

d. **Causes of absences for bused students**
   (1) Poor relationships with teachers
   (2) Transportation
   (3) Social pressure to cut class
   (4) Caring for family members
   (5) Lack of motivation
e. **Causes of absences for resident students**
   (1) Social pressure to cut class
   (2) Poor relationships with teachers
   (3) Lack of motivation
   (4) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (5) Transportation

f. **Causes of absences for students with divorced or separated parents**
   (1) Poor relationships with teachers
   (2) Social pressure to cut class
   (3) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (4) Lack of motivation
   (5) Transportation

g. **Causes of absences for students with parents not separated or divorced**
   (1) Social pressure to cut class
   (2) Poor relationships with teachers
   (3) Lack of motivation
   (4) Class assignments lack meaning to me
   (5) Transportation

6. **Students with attendance problems attribute three major in-school factors as reasons for their absenteeism:** (1) "Poor relationships with teachers," (2) "Class assignments lack meaning to me," and (3) "Unsatisfied with course schedule."
7. Students with attendance problems attribute two major personal factors as reasons for their absenteeism: (1) "Social pressure to cut class" and (2) "Lack of motivation."

8. The reasons for poor school attendance of bused students and resident students are different. "Caring for family members" and "Transportation" affect the school attendance of bused students more than students who are not bused to school.

9. Family factors contributing to poor school attendance include (1) "Problems relating to fighting among family members" and (2) "Problems relating to divorced parents."

10. Students with divorced parents are less likely to blame the school for their absenteeism problems than students with parents who are not divorced.

Throughout the research project, an underlying goal of the writer was to conceptualize previous investigative findings about the causes of excessive school absenteeism and the findings of this study into a conceptual framework which might enable us to have a more complete understanding of the reasons for poor school attendance. In this conceptualization process, it was not intended that one simple solution would be discovered, but rather the organization of ideas, thoughts, theories, experiences, and explanations
into an integrated system to enable us to perceive the problem of poor school attendance in a simple, coherent, intelligible, consistent, and related manner.

From the literature review and the findings in this study, it became apparent that four general factors affect school absenteeism: (1) in-school factors, (2) personal factors, (3) family factors, and (4) environmental factors. Using these four general categories, the findings of this research are presented in Figure 2.

Recommendations

It has been said that the person who solves the problem of poor school attendance will surely win the Nobel prize for his/her efforts. There is, however, no one answer to the problem of excessive school absenteeism, because all children are different, and the reasons for their attendance problems are not the same. This study has attempted to identify these differences and similarities to assist educators, parents, and students in seeking solutions to the problems of poor school attendance in inner-city schools.

From the findings and conclusions in this study, the following are recommendations to improve excessive school absenteeism.

1. Improve reading and mathematic curriculum programs for students with math and reading skill deficiencies.
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Causes of School Absenteeism
Students with math and reading skill deficiencies need to be identified early on in elementary school. More emphasis needs to be placed on the math and reading skill development for the average, below average, and borderline child. Additional staff need to be hired to individualize instruction for students with math and reading skill deficiencies.

2. Develop and implement parent and staff training workshops to teach techniques and skills in working with children with attendance problems. Changing the attendance pattern of a truant is a difficult task. It needs to be realized that to correct poor school attendance requires a team effort of teachers, counselors, administrators, parents and the student. Improving a child's poor school attendance is everyone's responsibility.

3. Implement effective counseling programs for students with attendance problems. Most truants really need to feel that someone in the school cares for them, trusts them, and is concerned about what happens to them. Keeping in mind that truancy is a symptom of a larger problem, "helping approaches" should be used initially rather than "punishing approaches." Punitive measures to improve school attendance should be taken only after "helping approaches" have not been successful.

Participation of parents in conferences regarding poor school attendance is critical.
4. Assess current curriculum programs in view of the needs of students. Revise curriculum materials and teaching methods which are irrelevant, boring, and meaningless to students.

5. Expand effective alternative education programs offering instruction in occupational skills. It is clear that not all students can be successful in a traditional educational program. Effective alternative education programs can meet the needs of many students who have difficulty in adjusting to a traditional high school.


APPENDIX

Attendance Survey

This survey is intended to determine the reasons why some students at Madison High School do not attend classes on a regular basis.

Instructions:

1. Please check the reasons which you feel may be the cause of your absences from classes at Madison this year.

   ___ 1. Illness
   ___ 2. Accidents
   ___ 3. Poor relationships with teachers
   ___ 4. Ineffective teaching
   ___ 5. Poor learning environment in the classroom
   ___ 6. Lack of motivation
   ___ 7. Lack of self confidence
   ___ 8. Unsatisfied with course schedule
   ___ 9. Problems relating to divorced parents
   ___10. Transportation
   ___11. Caring for family members
   ___12. Vacations
   ___13. Lack of money
   ___14. Habits--smoking, drugs, alcohol
   ___15. Poor educational preparation in reading skills
   ___16. Class assignments lack meaning to me
17. Poor instruction due to absences of regular teachers
18. Lack of support from home
19. Poor self concept
20. Physical, mental, emotional handicaps
21. Social pressure to cut class
22. Employment
23. School activities--music, drama, athletics, etc.
24. Poor educational preparation in arithmetic skills
25. Problems relating to fighting among family members
26. Other reasons--please comment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year in school</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Administrative Transfer: yes
no

Parents are: Living together
Divorced
Separated
One or more deceased