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PARENTAL VALUES AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

By

Stephen Richard Hecker

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Administration

1994

ABSTRACT

PARENTAL VALUES AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

By

Stephen Richard Hecker

A small proportion of students account for a large proportion of the overall days of absence from school. Of this small proportion, many are absent for no verifiable reason. The purpose of the study was to identify which parental values, if any, were related to the school-absence behavior of students in kindergarten through grade three.

The study was conducted in a midwestern city with a population of just over 100,000. The Rokeach Value Survey was mailed to 226 homes randomly selected from among 1,604 homes in which there was both a mother without a high school diploma and a child in kindergarten through third grade. Ninety families returned the survey.

The Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to test for relationships between parental value rankings and days of student absence. The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used to uncover differences in the way parents ranked values.

Parents who ranked more highly values related to immediate gratification (*a comfortable life, an exciting life*, and *pleasure*) had children who missed more school. Parents ranking more highly values related to delayed gratification (*a sense of accomplishment, wisdom,* and *intellectual*) had children who missed considerably less

school.

The major implication of these findings is that improving the attendance patterns of students exhibiting extreme absenteeism in their earliest school years requires changing the value systems of their parents. Parents of high-absence students tend to have value systems which are at odds with schools and social norms. Very young students who are only marginally socialized in school as a result of absenteeism are thus being raised by parents who are very different from the mainstream. And although not all high school dropouts began their school careers as high-absence students, most early high-absentees eventually drop out. The consequences of early school absenteeism are serious, both for the student and society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the support and counsel of the committee members. Drs. James Costar, Phil Cusick, Dan Kruger, and George Sherman each provided specific suggestions throughout the project. Committee chairman Dr. Fred Ignatovich was particularly helpful in the planning of the study and in providing critical analysis throughout the research and writing phases. Sue Cooley edited the dissertation and added clarity, organization, and polish to the final edition. I am solely responsible for any errors or omissions, but am indebted to each of these individuals for their significant contributions.

I am also fortunate to have had strong family support. Parents Dr. Stanley and Mary Hecker and in-laws Joseph and Mary Azzarello are ardent advocates of education for all of their children, as evidenced by the 20 other college degrees held by their nine children and five spouses of their children. This strong valuing of schooling was inherited by Linda (Azzarello) Hecker, who as a wife and professional colleague was instrumental in allowing this research to come to a conclusion. I am both appreciative of and humbled by the contributions made by my family.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The major themes of the philosophy of public education, ranging from providing for an enlightened citizenry to supplying a productive work force, are based on a fundamental assumption: School will benefit children. However, if children are not in school, the institution is unlikely to benefit them or society. The hopes and dreams attached to education are irrelevant for absent children.

This study is an investigation into one reason for absenteeism among urban elementary school students. The problem is that a small proportion of students account for a large proportion of the overall number of days of absence. The researcher's premise was that parental values have a significant influence on this phenomenon. This chapter contains a discussion of the problem of absenteeism, the theoretical background of the study, a statement of the problem and purpose of the study, the research questions and hypotheses tested in the study, and limitations of the research.

Absenteeism

For too many young children, classroom life is not a daily occurrence. Their attendance is occasional, even though they are "regularly enrolled." Teachers are particularly aware of this problem. They often cite the frustration of trying to help a student who frequently misses school. School districts are aware of the problem, as many employ attendance officers to encourage students to be in school. Absenteeism cases have been brought to local courts. States have enacted compulsory attendance laws, and the Supreme Court has adjudicated cases relating to the problem. In Goss v. Lopez (1975), the Court even prescribed a number of days (10) beyond which school absence (in this case due to suspension) was excessive.

There is evidence that frequent absence can be detrimental socially, economically, and educationally. Many researchers have found a relationship between truancy and delinquency (Dawson, 1896; Healy, 1915; Reid, 1985). Robins and Ratcliff (1978) reported that school absenteeism is the childhood symptom most reliably associated with an increased rate of adult deviant behavior. Similar conclusions were reached by Ferguson (1952), Hersov (1960), Stott (1966), Tennent (1971), May (1975), and Farrington (1980). Robins and Ratcliff also reported that absenteeism in grade school "did powerfully predict truancy in high school" (p. 70), and Galloway (1980) also found that the two were significantly related.

Truancy in secondary school, in turn, influences graduation rates "greatly" (Robins & Ratcliff, 1978, p. 73), which has a substantial subsequent economic effect. Adams (1978) conducted a seven-year study in which he found a positive relationship between years of school completed and the number of weeks worked per year and hourly wages. Duncan and Hoffman (1991) found severe economic consequences of dropping out for females. Jencks (1991) reported that jobless poverty increased for male dropouts between 1967 and 1987.

Other researchers have described the academic consequences of school absence. Jencks (1972), Fogelman (1978), and Sinclair and Ghory (1987) are among the investigators who found strong positive relationships between school attendance and academic achievement.

Critical to the study of absenteeism is the definition of the term itself. In Webster's New World Dictionary (1988), absenteeism is defined as "absence from work, school, etc., *especially when deliberate or habitual*" (p. 5, emphasis added). This is contrasted with the definition, but particularly with the etymology, of the word "absence." Its origins are traced to Middle English, then Old French, then to the classical Latin root *absens*, which is the present participle of the verb *abesse*. This word combines *ab-*, meaning "away," and *esse*, meaning "to be" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1988, p. 5). It is important to note this difference between the words "absence" and "absenteeism." The former refers to a state of being, whereas the latter introduces the notions of recurrence and purposefulness. This distinction is central to an understanding of the problem.

A third term that is important to this study is "truant." The etymology of this word is also Middle English and Old French, with a meaning of beggar and "vagabond." The root is Celtic and Irish, with a meaning of "wretched." The first definition of "truant" given in Webster's is "a lazy, idle person (now obsolete)." The second is "a pupil who stays away from school without permission." The third is "a person who neglects his or her work or duties" (p. 1434).

Application of these definitions promotes a greater degree of understanding in the study of the phenomenon of students missing school. Absence can be viewed as simply the state of not being in school. It does not connote habituality or deliberateness. Absenteeism involves some measure of willfulness or premeditation, and it adds the idea of repetition. Truancy involves a more negative social connotation (beggar, lazy, wretched) than the other two words and suggests culpability (pupil who stays away, person who neglects).

In general, the word "truancy" is used to describe older students who are not in school for long periods of time or who are absent for many short periods, without a verifiable excuse. Older students are more often away from school without parental knowledge or permission than are younger students. Also, the definition and etymology of the word are more negative in tone, which agrees with the generally more immediate, if not more serious, consequences of missing school as an older student (Gray, Smith, & Rutter, 1980).

Truancy, then, describes students who stay away from school of their own volition. Older students (ages 10 and older) who often are not in school

frequently make this decision themselves, and commonly their parents do not know that they are missing school. Younger students (under 10 years old) typically do not absent themselves from school; when younger students miss school, their parents very often know when the absence is occurring. It is hard to imagine a second-grade student setting off for school and then going elsewhere and "hanging out," yet that scenario is common among high school students. This is due, in part, to the fact that younger children generally are more closely supervised by their parents. Also, elementary schools typically contact students' homes the day of an absence, whereas secondary schools mail absence reports with grades every six or eight weeks. In addition, younger students are not influenced by their peers to the extent that older students are.

Therefore, to examine more directly the relationship between parental values and students' absenteeism, this study involved students in the five- to eight-year-old range, or kindergarten, first, second, and third graders. The focus was on the issue of absenteeism, not on the nature of truancy, because few young children can be said to be truant, given the aforementioned definition.

The issue of meaning, particularly when discussing children who are not in school for long periods of time, is problematic in the literature. Although many reasons for school absence exist, two distinct patterns have been reported among younger children. The first is absence involving verifiable excuses, such as bona fide medical illness including school phobia and other events such as family vacations or out-of-town trips by families for business, funerals, and so on.

This pattern is marked by parental efforts toward getting the child back in school or maintaining the continuity of the child's school-related activity, and usually both. This pattern, even when it results in absence for extended periods of time, is most closely related to the definition of "absence" discussed above, in that the child simply is not in school.

The second pattern of absence involves unverifiable excuses and a lack of parental effort to return the child to school or to support academically related work for the child. Terms such as "avoidance of school" (Klein, 1945, p. 263), "inappropriate 'home-bound' school absence" (Waller & Eisenberg, 1980, p. 210), "voluntary withholding by a parent" (Galloway, 1980, p. 150), "abscondings" (Clarke, 1980, p. 111), and "fail to attend school regularly without adequate reason" (Berg, 1980, p. 137) characterize the difficulty researchers have had in agreeing on a single definition for this second pattern. The pattern conforms to the definition of "absenteeism" as previously detailed, so the term is used herein to represent this model of school absence.

Regarding the frequency of absence, the Goss v. Lopez decision suggests that an absence rate of more than 5.5% is excessive. Cherry (1976) determined "poor attendance" at the 7% absence rate. The Scottish Education Department (1977) defined "prolonged truancy" as more than one month over the course of a school year, an absence rate of 12%. Robins and Ratcliff (1980) defined "high absence" as missing more than 20% of the school days within a ten-week period three times in a school year. They explained, "We are including

only those youths with rates of absence so high that they are unlikely to be explained by illness or parents' keeping the child at home" (p. 68). Farrington (1980) set the threshold of high absence at 21.3%. Galloway (1976) cited 50% absence rates as excessive. Berg (1980) reported on attendance cases coming to courts involving children missing 75% of possible school days. Although this range in excessive-absence rates (5.5% to 75%) is large, in the bulk of studies on absenteeism, a rate of about 20% has been cited as the point of excess.

The behavior of particular interest in the current research is absenteeism coupled with unverifiable excuses, which suggests a sociological rather than a psychological or medical inquiry. Other studies into these sociological cases have been undertaken partly because of the known negative consequences of excessive absences for the child and partly because of a more general interest in the characteristics of poverty, delinquency, deviance, and so-called family dysfunction. The Children's Defense Fund (1974), Galloway (1982), and Walberg, Bakalis, Bast, and Baer (1988) are among those who have found strong relationships between absenteeism and social, economic, family structure, and other family background factors. Poverty, racial and class differences, and cultural conflict frequently have been invoked in discussions of absenteeism. The reported correlations tempt one to assume that these conditions cause high absenteeism. However, there are poor children, hungry children, children of physically abusive families, children of substance-abusing families, and children of broken homes who do manage to get to school regularly. Clearly, some

parents, even in the face of difficult life circumstances, send their children to school regularly. Others do not. The current research was undertaken to investigate the relationship between absenteeism and a specific set of parental differences (parental values) rather than other possible causes.

Theoretical Background of the Study

The fact of absenteeism invites an investigation into its cause. It would appear that parents would want their children to be in school. There are negative social, educational, legal, and economic consequences for missing school. Likewise, there are relatively strong societal norms censuring school absenteeism, for both the child and the parent. In addition, it is stressful just having children around the house when they should be at school. Why would parents allow their children to stay home from school so often, in the face of seemingly compelling reasons supporting school attendance?

Deviant behavior, indeed all behavior, has been viewed as having been caused by society, the individual, the gods, and combinations of these and other inducements. For centuries, the issues of free will and determinism have fueled religious, economic, sociological, psychological, philosophical, and many other debates. The theories of Tönnies, Durkheim, Parsons, and Rokeach underlie the present research. These writers have provided considerable evidence in support of general principles upon which the hypotheses formulated for this study were

based. This theoretical setting provides both a logical/rational background for the study and a comparatively direct path through circuitous ideological terrain.

The general theory upon which this study was based is that human behavior results from a complex interplay of individual, family, and other social circumstances, including the structure of the society in which the behavior is observed. Humans are not totally passive, simply responding to stimuli, nor are they totally active in the sense of conducting their affairs in isolation from external influences. In the current inquiry into school absenteeism, the writer relied on this interrelatedness between the individual and society as a fundamental basis for explaining the behavior. A major component of this symbiosis is the value pattern of parents and its subsequent effects on children's behavior. The selected theorists whose works are cited herein provided support for this line of thought.

Tönnies (1957) described two different social structures, which he called *gemeinschaften* and *gesellschaften*. Behavior and beliefs are markedly different under each of these hypothetical orientations. *Gemeinschaften* structures involve small, communal relations that are characterized by face-to-face interaction. There is an emphasis on collectivism and present (as opposed to future or past) orientation. The importance of the group, and the secondary role of the individual, is evident. There is demonstrable resistance to change. In general, this structure represents agrarian or village-style communal life.

Gesellschaften, on the other hand, is a structure characterized by an acceptance of the value of change. The emphasis is on the furtherance of individual ends, not collective activity. Relations between people are brief and are of secondary importance to the pursuit of idiosyncratic goals. Change is believed to be good. This logical-rational structure emphasizes differentiation and working toward the future.

Tönnies's treatment of the concept of human will thus involved the consideration that the individual and collective aspects (hence the two structural types) influence one another. The main contribution of his work to the present study is the introduction of the theory that there is a relationship between social structure and human behavior.

Durkheim advanced the idea of an interplay between the individual and society in developing his notion of the "collective conscience." Pitts (1961) summarized this aspect of Durkheim's theory:

> Society is essentially a set of ideas shared by individuals. Social facts are *things*, but things that exist only in the minds of individuals. Society, like religion, is abstract, normative, and emotional. As an object of investigation it is influenced by physical facts, size of collectivity, existential values, complexity of the division of labor, and the characteristics of individual psychology, but it is not reducible to any one of these factors. The maintenance of consensus and the maintenance of order are the organizing principles of Durkheim's society. . . . Each society will have the collective representations and the values that it needs in order to operate in its milieu. Society has an inherent authority. (p. 686)

Later, Pitts elaborated on Durkheim's position regarding this social authority: "Society constrains the individual through the attitude of moral respect.

This moral respect is not derived from intrinsic properties of the ideas that are shared, but from the fact that they are shared" (p. 719). Durkheim (1951) himself was clear about this point:

> As a matter of fact, the empire which [society] holds over consciences is due much less to the physical supremacy of which it has the privilege than to the moral authority with which it is invested. If we yield to its orders, it is not merely because it is strong enough to triumph over our resistance; it is primarily because it is the object of a venerable respect. (p. 720)

Thus, the search for causality in the study of social problems must include attention to the relationships among the larger society, the individual, and the level of the individual's identification with the collective conscience.

Talcott Parsons advanced the theory of the nature and extent of this interrelatedness. Toward a General Theory of Action (Parsons & Shils, 1951) and The Social System (Parsons, 1951) served to integrate the prevailing theories on the interaction of culture, social systems, and the personality. Parsons (1955) developed the concept that four functional imperatives are associated with all systems of action, and he investigated the process of socialization. He later described the relations of a social system to all of its subsystems (Parsons, 1956). Only a fraction of his contributions can be discussed here, but that portion is fundamental to the theoretical background of this study.

Parsons (1961) described the four functional imperatives of any social system as pattern maintenance, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation. Around these functional imperatives Parsons wove the concepts of role,

collectivity, norm, and value. It is at this point that the linkage is established between the individual (more particularly, the systems [personality, psychology] *within* the individual) and the larger social system. Parsons defined values as shared patterns of normative culture. Roles are normatively regulated behaviors, and collectivity is the system of interaction of two individuals. Parsons then stated, "The social systems with which the sociologist normally deals are complex networks of many different types or categories of roles and collectivities on many different levels of organization" (pp. 42-43). Of particular significance for this study, Parsons wrote that "values define the direction of orientation that is desirable for the system as a whole" (p. 44).

The imperative of pattern maintenance has one primary component, called socialization. For Parsons, the primary focus of socialization is the personality. Early socialization, or development of the personality, is universally accomplished by a "kinship unit," which always includes the nuclear family. And although the family may operate at a low level of generality regarding specific value patterns, it nonetheless has a critical role in the process of socialization and internalization of values (p. 58).[1] Thus, Parsons showed that the relations

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[1]Parsons argued that the family in a highly differentiated society has passed most of its historic kinship structures to nonkinship units, which has weakened its effect. Formal education supplants kinship units in the process of personality development in highly differentiated societies. However, it is proposed in the present study that in such societies some families allow children to stay home from school, so the kinship unit in this case must necessarily exert an influence because the child is not in school.

among the individual, the family, and the larger society are complex and interactive at many levels.

Regarding the family and the socialization process specifically, and the relationship of both to the concept of values, Parsons (1955) wrote:

> The central focus of the process of socialization lies in the internalization of the culture of the society into which the child is born. The most important part of this culture from this focal point consists in the patterns of value which in another aspect constitute the institutionalized patterns of the society. The conditions under which effective socialization can take place then will include being placed in a social situation where the more powerful and responsible persons are themselves integrated in the cultural value system in question, both in that they constitute with the children an *institutionalized* social system, and that the patterns have previously been internalized in the relevant ways in their own personalities. The family is clearly in all societies, and no less in our own, in this sense an institutionalized system. (p. 17)

Thus, the parental pattern of values is controlling in the socialization of the child. Maximum effectiveness, from an integrative point of view, occurs when the parental-values pattern reflects the values of the larger society. Especially significant for the current study, Parsons (1951) noted that "patterns of value-orientation have been singled out as the most crucial cultural elements in the organization of systems of action" (p. 159). Action, or behavior, results in large measure from value patterns, and parents play a key role in transmitting values as well as in controlling the "action" of their children.

It is within this context of the institutionalizing, socializing, and internalizing of values that Rokeach introduced his concepts. He defined a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is

personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Parsons's definition involved shared patterns of normative culture. Both his and Rokeach's definitions relied on the concept of "valuing" (appraising) social goals or standards as an antecedent to behavior. This is the core of the theoretical basis for the present study. Given all of the possible reasons for parents' not ensuring their children's school attendance, and given the complex variety of possible causes, the values of the parents were investigated as one logical explanation for excessive absence.

Rokeach made several critical assumptions about values. Consistent with the line of thought presented here, he wrote, "The antecedents of human values can be traced to culture, society and its institutions, and personality" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 3). Values come from these elements, and these elements in turn shape values. Rokeach described how social situations often present the individual with several competing values, a predicament that can only result in the modification of the hierarchy of values (p. 6).

Rokeach also assumed that all people possess similar values, but to different degrees. These values are organized into systems. And although the number of values is relatively small, the consequences of values will be evident in all behavior (p. 3). Rokeach reminded the reader of the means-ends dichotomy, which he related to an individual choosing a particular mode of conduct or looking toward a particular end-state of existence. This formed the

basis for his development of two lists of values–those classified as instrumental, or relating to modes of behavior, and those seen as terminal, or tied to end-states.

Terminal values comprise some social and some personal values. Some are society centered, and others are self-centered. Rokeach argued:

> It seems reasonable to anticipate that persons may vary reliably from one another in the priorities they place on such social [brotherhood or world peace] and personal [salvation, peace of mind] values; that their attitudes and behavior will differ from one another depending on whether their personal or their social values have priority. (p. 8)

There are two kinds of instrumental values. Classified as moral values and competence values, these are seen as emphasizing either the interpersonal or the intrapersonal, respectively. An example, Rokeach offered the competence/moral dilemma. Should one offer intellectual criticism (the competence value) or be polite (the moral value)?

Rokeach formulated two lists of values, one the terminal values and the other the instrumental values. He relied on the following logic in performing that task:

> If it is indeed the case that the maintenance, enhancement, and transmission of values within a culture typically become institutionalized, then an identification of the major institutions of a society should provide us with a reasonable point of departure for a comprehensive compilation and classification of human values. The approach to the measurement of values described in the next chapter is based, in part, upon an informal attempt to identify the main values that the various institutions of a society appear to have specialized in. (p. 25)

Specifically, Rokeach's selection of 18 terminal values resulted from a review of the literature, a study involving 30 graduate students, and interviews with a sample of 100 adults in the Midwest. Rokeach reduced the several hundred values thus collected

> . . . on the basis of one or another consideration: We eliminated those values judged to be more or less synonymous with one another (e.g., freedom and liberty, brotherhood of man and equality, peace of mind and inner harmony), those which were empirically known to be more or less synonymous (e.g., the correlation between rankings of salvation and unity with God was over .80), those which overlapped (e.g., religion and salvation), those which were too specific (e.g., spousehood is more specific than family security), or those which simply did not represent end-states of existence (e.g., wisdom is an end-state but education is not). (p. 29)

The 18 instrumental values were selected in a different way. Rokeach relied on Anderson's (1968) list of 555 personality-trait words derived from Allport and Odbert's (1936) list of 18,000 such words. Because the survey Rokeach was constructing was intended to be self-attributing, only positive words would be used. With the elimination of extreme words, sex-linked words,and others, the Anderson list was reduced to about 200. This number was further reduced using the following criteria:

- Retaining only one from a group of synonyms.
- Retaining those judged to be minimally correlated
- Retaining those judged to be most important in America.
- Retaining those deemed to be most discriminating across SES, race, sex, etc.
- Retaining those judged to be meaningful in all cultures.

- Avoiding vain or boastful terms (brilliant, etc.). (pp. 29-30)

Rokeach admitted that the process of selecting both lists was intuitive. His subsequent evaluation of the lists included varimax rotation to determine factors. Seven factors were found, but they accounted for only 41% of the variance, with the largest single factor accounting for 8.2%. Thus, he argued that the intuitive attempt to eliminate duplication was successful. In addition, an initial 12-value form (a total of 24 values combining both lists) was expanded because it was thought that "too many important values had been left out" (p. 31). The limit of 18 (total of 36) was imposed because more than 18 seemed burdensome and because the 18 (36 total) selected seemed sufficiently comprehensive (p. 29). Several years' research were required to select and test the lists of values.

The 12-Value Model

Rokeach maintained that the value patterns held by all people emphasize certain values over others. If varying patterns or systems of values exist, and if such systems underlie behavior, then the task becomes one of identifying the value patterns that are associated with certain behaviors. Rokeach (1973) and others have used the Value Survey in just such a manner, investigating civil rights, religion, politics, honesty, conflict, academic and life-style pursuits, occupational roles, and other behaviors. "Values are also significantly related to all kinds of behavior [as well as attitudes]," Rokeach (1973, p. 158) concluded.

However, it is not common for a great number of values to correlate with a specific behavior:

> It is possible to specify in advance not all the values that will be predictably related to a given behavior, but only the main ones. Those that are the most substantively or logically related to a given behavior should be the ones that will best predict it. Thus, religious values should best predict differences in religious behavior, political values should best predict differences in political behavior, and so on. (p. 122)

Two questions guided this study. First, do systematic or patterned differences exist among parents relative to their values generally? Next, do these value-system or pattern differences correlate or associate in any systematic way with the absence patterns of the children in the family?

To investigate these questions, a logical framework is provided by Rokeach's notion that there are "main" values predictably related to the behavior of interest. In the current study, children's school attendance was the behavior of interest, with the parental value pattern considered as controlling. Are there then "educational values" in the same sense that Rokeach wrote about political values and religious values? If parents value school, schooling, or education generally, it seems that they will ensure their children will be schooled. Is there some subset of the 36 values in the Rokeach Value Survey that is predictably related to the valuing of education?

Rokeach did not detail a single value or subset of the 36 values in his survey as relating directly to the valuing of education. It seems logical, though, that a pattern of "education values" exists, which are held by institutions of

education generally (a "school culture" or collective conscience) and by the individuals most invested in it. Rokeach (1973) defined an institution as "a social organization that . . . specializ[es] in the maintenance and enhancement of selected subsets of values and in their transmission from generation to generation" (pp. 24-25). Thus, an educational institution supports and promotes a certain subset of values.

An agreement in values between the institution and the individuals comprising it would support a longer-lasting relationship between students and their schools. People who are socialized through regular school attendance would reflect the norms of schools, norms that these people in turn shaped. People who spend little time in school likely are not well socialized by the experience, and they probably develop different, if not opposing value patterns. People holding these alternative value patterns, ones that conflict with the education pattern, would likely sever their relationships with schools or limit them as much as possible.

This is not to say that people who leave school early fail to value schooling. Nor does the researcher intend to engage in the debate regarding the difference between schooling and education. The point is that some parents are adamant about their children's school attendance precisely because of their own unexemplary educational experience. Conversely, other parents who spent many years in school but did not acquire a strong sense that education is important may not be highly concerned about their children's school attendance.

Still other parents could strongly value education but never send their children to public schools, choosing private or home schooling instead. The Amish, for example, shun not only public education but all other mainstream American institutions as well. Yet the Amish, and other parents without much schooling, and still others with advanced degrees, regard school as important for their children. These parents, through whatever mechanism (family, social, or institutional interaction), have acquired a commitment toward, or support for, education.

A value pattern may exist that underlies this support for education. The "educational value pattern" might be more prevalent among people with more years of schooling and less common among people with less schooling, due to the socialization effects of the educational institution. Are there some values that, according to Rokeach, discriminate between the less-educated and the well-educated? If so, do these values, taken together as a model for an educational value pattern, vary among parents? If that variance exists, can it be linked to the school attendance patterns of children?

Twenty-five of the 36 values included in Rokeach's Value Survey "distinguished significantly" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 63) between groups of well-educated and less-educated people, the difference between "well" and "less" defined by years of school completed (Appendix A). The use of these values (or some of them) as a model of educational values was guided by the logic discussed above. One danger of using values held by those with schooling to

represent values held by those who think school is important (or, more precisely, values held by those who think school is important for their children) is that these might be two distinct groups of people. However, Rokeach did not establish an educational value pattern, so the best existing model is that suggested by the value-pattern differences that exist among people with various years of schooling.

If an educational value pattern is uncovered in this study, it would be logical then to test the model on various populations, including people who evidence strong support for schooling in other ways (voting history or volunteering, for example) but who did not go far in school themselves, against the years-of-schooling model suggested by Rokeach. The researcher's purpose in the current study, however, was to determine whether variations in parental value patterns were linked to elementary school students' attendance patterns.

Just how many of these 25 values ought to be included in a model of educational values? Rokeach devoted two chapters to the concept of a two-value model of political ideology. Tapping only two terminal values, *freedom* and *equality*, Rokeach analyzed orientations toward communism, socialism, fascism, and capitalism. He was confident in the identification of just two words that differentiated among these ideologies. These relationships are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Rokeach's two-value model of political ideology.

	Freedom--Low	Freedom--High
Equality--Low	Facism	Capitalism
Equality--High	Communism	Socialism

Although not as parsimonious as Rokeach, the present investigator proposed a 12-value model of educational predisposition. The model was constructed from the values Rokeach found to discriminate between well-educated and less-educated people. The researcher used two guidelines in choosing the specific values to test in the investigation:

1. The p-value reported by Rokeach as discriminating among varying levels of education was .001.

2. The rankings relationship is essentially stepwise across the educational levels.

Of the 25 values Rokeach found to distinguish significantly between the less-educated and the well-educated, five were significant with p-values of .05 or .01, and they were excluded from the current study because they were not significant at the .001 level (*national security, self-respect, social recognition, true friendship,* and *courageous*). Six more were excluded because the rankings did not rise or fall in an essentially stepwise fashion across the educational levels (*a world at peace, family security, inner harmony, forgiving, helpful,* and *polite*). As an example of this group, the median rankings reported by Rokeach for *family*

security were 4.5, 4.6, 3.7, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, and 6.6 across the seven educational levels (see Appendix A for the value medians for all values across the seven educational levels). Two other values (*happiness* and *cheerful*) have been dropped from the instrument since Rokeach's national survey. The remaining 12 values, six terminal and six instrumental, comprise the proposed model for this study (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: A 12-value model of educational predisposition.

TERMINAL VALUES	INSTRUMENTAL VALUES
A comfortable life	*Clean*
A sense of accomplishment	*Imaginative*
Mature love	*Intellectual*
Pleasure	*Logical*
Salvation	*Obedient*
Wisdom	*Responsible*

The value pattern held by people who are well educated serves as a proxy for a general school culture, particularly as the pattern contrasts with that held by people who did not spend much time in school. Parents who do not send their children to school on a regular basis do not support schooling and thus are likely to exhibit a value pattern similar to that of parents who did not spend much time in school. Parents who do send their children to school regularly support schooling and thus are likely to have value patterns similar to those of the well-

educated, even if they (the parents) are not well-educated themselves. Shared values, which are so important to socialization and cultural integration (Parsons, 1955), do not exist between the school culture and the parents of children who miss a lot of school. Therefore, school attendance, although powerfully mandated by the prevailing mainstream culture, becomes optional for some families. The conflict in values is controlling.

Statement of the Problem

A small proportion of students account for a large proportion of the overall days of absence from school. Poorer students in urban areas, even very young students, are more likely to be among the highly absent. Yet not all poor students miss a lot of school. In fact, many students who come from the poorest families attend school regularly. In reviewing the literature on absenteeism, the researcher noted few investigations on this problem. Much more common is research on older students who drop out of school. Thus, the current study was undertaken to explore the issues surrounding excessive school absenteeism among young children in order to better explain the phenomenon, focusing on the values held by the parents as a primary determinant.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher's primary purpose in this study was to identify which parental values, if any, are related to the school-absence behavior of children.

The findings may provide insights into a problem that persists over time and across cultures.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed to provide a framework for the study on the relationship between parental values and the school absence of young children:

1. How did parents in the current sample rank the values on the survey?
2. How do these results compare to those from other samples?
3. Are these rankings by parents related to the school attendance patterns of their children?
4. As parents are grouped on the basis of their children's school attendance rates, are differences in value rankings evident?
5. How accurately does the 12-value model predict the value-ranking differences found in the study?

Research Hypotheses

The first hypothesis resulted from the question of whether a relationship existed between the rankings of values by parents and the school attendance records of their children. The hypothesis was:

> Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between parental value rankings and their children's school attendance patterns.

Hypothesis 1a: There is a relationship between parental value rankings and their children's school attendance patterns.

The second hypothesis was founded on the question of whether differences existed in the rankings parents ascribed to the values on the survey when the parents were grouped according to their children's school attendance patterns. The hypothesis was:

Hypothesis 2: When grouped on the basis of their children's school attendance patterns, there are no differences in parental value rankings.

Hypothesis 2a: When grouped on the basis of their children's school attendance patterns, there are differences in parental value rankings.

The third hypothesis was proposed as a result of the logic of the construction of the 12-value model of educational predisposition. The researcher hypothesized that the value patterns of parents whose children have varying patterns of attendance would vary in a manner similar to the value differences found in people having different levels of education. The 12-value model describes these differences. The researcher hypothesized that parents who sent their children to school on a regular basis (low-absence parents) would rank more highly the values *a sense of accomplishment, wisdom, imaginative, intellectual, logical, mature love,* and *responsible*). It was also hypothesized that parents whose children missed a lot of school without substantive excuses (high-absence parents) would rank these values low. It was thought that the opposite trends would hold for *a comfortable life, pleasure, salvation, clean,* and *obedient;* high-absence parents would rank these as more important. In both cases, it was

sensible that parents whose children had absence patterns that were neither high nor low would rank these values between the rankings of the high- and low-absence parents. It was thought that two distinct value patterns would emerge, one for the parents of high-absence students and a different one for the parents of low-absence students, as these are extreme groups. As parental value patterns varied, so too would student absence.

The hypothesis suggested by the proposed relationship among the groups of parents relative to the 12-value model was:

> Hypothesis 3: The rankings of low-absence parents (R_{Low}) for *a sense of accomplishment, wisdom, imaginative, intellectual, logical, mature love, responsible, a comfortable life, pleasure, salvation, clean,* and *obedient* (educational values) will be the same as those of the medium-absence (R_{Med}) and high absence (R_{High}) parents:
>
> R_{Low} for all educational values = R_{Med} = R_{High}
>
> Hypothesis 3a: The rankings of *a sense of accomplishment, wisdom, imaginative, intellectual, logical, mature love,* and *responsible* (educational values set 1) will be highest for the low-absence parents, less high for the medium-absence parents, and lowest for the high-absence parents:
>
> R_{Low} for educational values set 1 > R_{Med} and > R_{High}
>
> Hypothesis 3b: The rankings of *a comfortable life, pleasure, salvation, clean,* and *obedient* (educational values set 2) will be highest for the high-absence parents, less high for the medium-absence parents, and lowest for the low-absence parents:
>
> R_{High} for educational values set 2 > R_{Med} and > R_{High}

Limitations

The concerns for the limitations of a study include generalizability, reliability, and validity. Each is discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

The design of this study controlled for known differences in value patterns across income levels by limiting the sample to families in which it was indicated that the mother had not completed high school. By intentionally truncating the income range by this proxy, the confidence to infer that results might apply to other income groups was reduced. Similarly, the sample was limited to families with children in kindergarten through grade 3 so as to ensure that truancy was not involved as a reason for school absence. This restricts the opportunity to generalize any findings to populations involving older children. In addition, as a result of time and financial limitations, the sample involved families from one urban school district at one time (one school year). This reduces the certainty with which one can apply any findings to nonurban situations in other time frames.

Kitwood (cited in Buros, 1978) and Cohen (cited in Buros, 1978) raised the reliability questions. These involved the ipsative nature of the RVS and the test-retest correlations reported by Rokeach. The reliability problem presented by the ipsative nature is that one cannot compare the relative strengths of two respondents' rankings. Kitwood's suggestion that a Likert-type scale would solve this problem is not convincing. He did state that the test-retest reliability of the RVS is low, but not unduly so.

Kitwood (cited in Buros, 1978) and Mueller (1974) also mentioned the main concern regarding that validity issue, that being the use of the RVS with respondents whose academic attainment is below average, or who may have difficulty understanding the terms or directions included in the RVS. The concern is that the respondent have sufficient reading skills, and powers of judgment, to understand and complete the survey. However, the writer did investigate the ability of mothers without high school diplomas to understand the values and the requirements and directions of the survey directly with a group of these mothers in a pilot study before administering the instrument. In addition, other researchers have successfully employed the RVS with other samples, including respondents without high school diplomas (Carroll, 1973; Feather & Cross, 1975; Jenkins, 1974; McCarthy, 1972; Toler, 1974).

Organization of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter II contains a review of the literature on school absenteeism and school dropouts, the argument for the 12-value model, and an extensive review of the theoretical background for the study. The methodology of the study is explained in Chapter III. Results of the data analyses are included in Chapter IV. The results are discussed as they relate to the hypotheses formulated for the study. Chapter V contains the conclusions drawn from the study findings, practical and theoretical implications, and the researcher's reflections relative to the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this study, the researcher was concerned with the relationship between the school absence behavior of early elementary school students and the value systems held by the parents of these students. The existence of absenteeism as an enduring problem across grade levels has been well established. A focus on early elementary students, though, has been comparatively rare. Research on absenteeism generally has centered on older students and the problems of truancy and dropping out of school. Yet there are indications that early absenteeism is related to truancy and dropping out. Furthermore, there is a logic that connects the three, as shown in this review. Thus, the first section of the literature review is focused on absenteeism. Evidence of the prevalence and frequency of absenteeism, discussion of the causes of absenteeism (with initial support for the parental-values-based hypothesis as contrasted with other possible causes), and research into the negative effects of absenteeism as defined in the present study are provided.

Literature regarding the notion of values is discussed in the second section. The general concept of cultural conflict is explored, as is the central role

of values, both within such conflict and as an antecedent to behavior. Also, literature discussing the differentiation of attitudes, beliefs, and values is presented.

The work of Milton Rokeach in defining the value-pattern concept and in designing a measurement instrument is central to the present study. Therefore, the issues surrounding the measurement of values are examined in this final section, and the Rokeach Value Survey is reviewed.

Absenteeism

The Prevalence and Frequency of Absenteeism

In the late nineteenth century, Dawson (1896) studied 52 "juvenile delinquents" (p. 227). The average age of the 26 boys was 15, and that of the 26 girls was 16. Dawson concluded that there were both hereditary and environmental causes for the delinquency ("delinquent parentage" [p. 248] and "bad environments" [p. 253]). As part of the description of bad environments, Dawson referred to the children's being allowed to "run the streets in idleness" (p. 254), and he described their "irregular attendance at school" (p. 255). Although Dawson did not specify the ages at which these behaviors were observed, he made obvious his overall impression of early childhood for these youths: "The first elements to be noticed in the early surroundings of these delinquent children are the poverty and improvidence of the parents" (p. 254).

L. W. Kline (1897), a contemporary of Dawson, wrote an article detailing the relationship of truancy to the migratory instinct. His primary argument was

that excessive school absence was the result of a biological imbalance involving fluctuations in the metabolic rate. As an organism's metabolic rate changes and action is needed, the organism will change its surroundings in lieu of changing itself. Thus, "running away and truancy are forcible protests against the narrow and artificial methods of the school room, a rebellion against suppressed activity, and a denial of free outdoor life" (p. 417). But, Kline noted, "the intimate correlation between the child's home and its emotional and ethical life suggest some very fundamental questions concerning the connection between property and good citizenship" (p. 418).

Migratory-instinct causation gave way, for Kline, to a social explanation, touching on the role of the parent and poverty. Later, he detailed the explanations 9 to 14 year olds gave their teachers regarding school absence. Among the excuses given before the turn of the century were headache, sick, mother sick, father in hospital, teeth pulled, measles, cramps, disease in house, earache, pain in stomach, running errands, kept home to mind the baby, and had to help wash; the list has a familiar ring to the current practitioner.

More recently, researchers have probed the severity of the problem of absenteeism in the urbanized postindustrial society, a society that now includes compulsory attendance laws and significantly higher school attendance rates than those before the turn of the century. Other changes include a decrease in manual-labor opportunities and increase in the importance of literacy. School

achievement, and its corollary school attendance, became strong mainstream cultural norms.

As evidence of this trend toward greater school attendance, the Educational Research Service (1977) reported average daily attendance rates (ADA) nationwide as improving from 1929-30 to 1975-76. The ADA as a percentage of enrollment rose from 82.8% in 1929-30 to 92.3% in 1975-76. The report continued: "In many areas, however, absentee rates average 10-15%, with the problem most acute in urban schools. Some inner-city schools have registered absenteeism rates of 30% or more" (p. 3).

In other industrialized cultures, the attendance trends are similar. Berg, Brown, and Hullin (1988) reported that school attendance in Britain, overall, has remained at close to 90% for most of the twentieth century; secondary school attendance in London has remained at about 80% over the same period. Moore (1966) found significant reluctance to go to school among one-third of a group of 160 London school children. By age 11, about 20% of this sample still exhibited reluctance to attend school. Newson and Newson (1977) found that 70 of 700 seven year olds in Nottingham often did not want to go to school, and they frequently pretended to be sick. The Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE, 1967) undertook a longitudinal study of a cohort of children born in a single week in 1958. It was found that 11 year olds were in school between 90% and 95% of the possible days of attendance, and that there was considerable

variation in attendance among children in various areas of the country and among those in different types of schools.

In examining absenteeism among secondary school students in England and Wales, Hansard (1974) found that 9.9% of the student body was absent and that 2.2% (22.7% of those absent) had no legitimate reason for their absence. In a similar inquiry in Scotland, the Scottish Education Department (1977) found that 15% of all students had "skipped" school at least once, and that 1.6% of the boys and 1.1% of the girls had been absent without excuse for at least half of a six-week period. The Bolton Metropolitan Education Committee (cited in Hersov and Berg, 1980) discovered that an average of 6.9% of seven year olds were absent from any half-day session.

Farrington (1980) reported 5.9% of a sample of 411 males as truant in elementary school. Of particular interest for the present study, he wrote:

> The primary school truancy rates of the present sample are about twice as high as those found in the National Child Development Study in the Isle of Wight survey of Rutter et al. (1970), possibly because our children are urban and working class. (p. 50)

Farrington then mentioned that, in addition to the 24 "truants," 15 other students had been absent because of lax parental attitudes and another 103 boys had been absent "because of illness or injury or *with no explanation*" (p. 50, emphasis added).

In a study of 235 black males in St. Louis, Missouri, Robins and Ratcliff (1980) found that 45% had been "often truant" (p. 68), which they defined as missing more than 20% of school in at least three different quarters of the school

year. Reynolds, Jones, St. Leger, and Murgatroyd (1980) studied nine secondary schools in South Wales and found that attendance rates averaged 80.9% to 84.1% over seven years. Reporting on students aged 10 to 17 who were assigned to residential educational centers for delinquent behavior, Clarke (1980) found that 5% of boys and 10% of girls persistently left the facilities ("absconded"). The population in this study averaged 9,000 for each of the 14 years in the period of analysis.

Galloway (1980) wrote about students in Sheffield, England, who missed more than half of a 6-week period in 1973 and a 14-week period in 1974. For students aged 5 to 12, the persistent-absence group represented 0.4% of the total group (N = 5,825) in 1973 and 0.3% of the total group (N = 5,033) in 1974.

Dillon (1949) investigated the school-attendance histories of some 1,200 early school leavers. He found that the elementary school attendance of students who eventually dropped out "compare[d] favorably with the attendance of non-school leavers in the average elementary school system" (p. 29). However, he berated the poor recordkeeping at the elementary level (the elementary attendance records for 438 of the school leavers were not available) and pointed out the difficulty of drawing conclusions about the relationship of attendance to dropping out when such a large chunk of data was unavailable.

The main conclusions regarding absenteeism that can be drawn from the literature pertinent to the current study are as follows:

1. Absenteeism persists across time.

2. Absenteeism persists across cultures.

3. Absenteeism is more prevalent in poor, urban populations than in more affluent, suburban or rural groups.

Causes of Absenteeism

Because absenteeism exists and persists, a search for causes is appropriate. A substantial number of studies have been conducted on the truancy, dropping out, and achievement behaviors of secondary school students, but there has been comparatively little academic inquiry into the problem of persistent absenteeism among elementary-aged children. Attempts to understand and explain dropping-out behavior do provide, however, a gateway to developing an understanding about absenteeism among younger students, so such efforts are reviewed in this section.

Traditional studies of school dropouts have relied on associating dropping-out behavior with a constellation of life circumstances. Race, family income, parents' level of education, neighborhood composition, whether the student lived with both father and mother, and peer influence are among the conditions that have been posited as helping to explain and predict dropping-out behavior (Crane, 1991; Hecker, 1953; Henneghan, 1984; Hollingshead, 1949; Jencks, 1991; McMillan & Behrman, 1987; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1985; U.S. Department of Education, 1984; Wetzel, 1987).

Some studies have been undertaken to discover the major "cause" of dropping out behavior, whereas other researchers have attempted to explain such behavior on the basis of a collection of risk factors. The greater the number of precipitating or antecedent circumstances, the greater the risk, and the more likely aberrant behavior (in this case, dropping out) will persist. These analyses have been useful in describing which factors are closely associated with the phenomenon, but they have not explained in any substantive detail the mechanism or process involved in the actual decision to drop out. Unexplained are the situations of risk-laden students who do not drop out, and virtually risk-free students who do. Stories of disadvantaged children who eventually "make it" and of those others who "had it all" and subsequently failed are key testimony here.

This method of identifying and assessing a variety of risk factors, therefore, imperfectly explains dropping-out behavior. Neither can it fully explain high absence among young children, the juvenile version of dropping out. Three studies in particular are cited in this section in formulating the logic of the current study and its reliance on the critical role of the family.

Cervantes (1965) investigated school dropouts and their peer relations, school experiences, the youth culture, economic-need factors, psychological tendencies, and the primary group (family). He wrote:

> That the enduring core of the "school personality" is primarily fashioned within the home as the mirror of the specific domestic subculture existent there is becoming more obvious. The fact that the youth who continues in school has his origins in a family where personal acceptance,

> communication, and pleasure are staples is particularly noteworthy. . . . Our conclusion from our first chapter is that no matter what other variables are at work, the nuclear family is of critical import in the consideration of the dropout problem. (pp. 37-38)

Clark (1983) theorized that family life better accounted for student achievement than did the usually cited risk factors. Although he did not address the problem of dropping out, Clark described the mechanism of the family's contribution to the behavior of the student, a basic tenet of the current study. He examined students coming from matched backgrounds (i.e., the same high-risk-factor types of families) with similar cognitive abilities. Of the ten families Clark studied in detail, five had high-achieving high school seniors and five had low-achieving seniors. The risk-factor explanation cannot account for these high-achieving, high-risk students. Clark reported that different expectations, cultures, values, beliefs, and daily actions of parents better explained the differences in student achievement than did any other single risk factor or combination of factors.

In a study of the families of 12 high school dropouts, Okey (1990) explored the critical role played by family acceptance of dropping-out behavior. He illuminated the importance of the role of family life and culture as these interact with school life and culture. Although risk factors play a stage-setting role, in the end the family's influence is critical in students' decisions to drop out.

Galloway's research (1976, 1980, 1982) in Sheffield, England, extended this line of thought to the phenomenon of absence among elementary school

children. In Schools and Persistent Absentees (1985), he reported eight categories of absence for students aged 5 to 11:

- mainly illness
- some illness but with other factors present also,
- absent with parents' knowledge, consent, and approval,
- parents unable or unwilling to insist on return,
- truancy absence without parents' knowledge or consent,
- socio-medical reasons (e.g., infestation, scabies, etc.),
- school phobia or psychosomatic illness,
- other/could not be rated. (p. 31)

The first and second reasons (primarily illness) accounted for nearly 55% of the absences of both boys and girls in this age group. The third and fourth reasons cited (with parent knowledge and parent unable/unwilling to insist on return, but not medical in nature) accounted for 30% of boys' absences and 20% of girls' absences. The fifth reason, truancy, accounted for less than 5% of boys' absences and for no girls' absences. Galloway pointed out that there might have been school influences on parents' unwillingness to keep their children in school ("bullied [by other students] . . . personality clash with teacher" [p. 37] were two such possibilities). Yet it appears that it was the action of the parent in choosing to keep the child at home rather than dealing with the problem at school that contributed to the absenteeism. School personnel may, in fact, be insensitive or ineffective. But some parents escort their children to school for safety, and talk with school officials regarding relations with teachers, whereas other parents simply keep their children at home. The issue is not one of blame, so much as it is a matter of focusing on the behavior of the parent. After Cervantes, Clark, and Okey, it is this parental action that is of interest.

Galloway was clear in summing up his analysis of school and community influences, and the idea that family orientation is among the major factors associated with school attendance among elementary students. However, he chose to pursue the schools' contribution:

> The research has shown a consistent tendency for absentees to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The association between absenteeism and delinquency is similarly consistent. Yet the evidence is equally clear: (i) that only a fairly small minority of poor attenders gets into trouble with the police, and (ii) that a much smaller minority of children from socially disadvantaged homes are persistent poor attenders. The evidence that schools themselves exert an important influence over their pupils' attendance, independent of the catchment area, is not particularly extensive but all points in the same direction: it would be as myopic to ignore school influences on attendance as it would be to ignore personal, social, and family background influences. (pp. 52-53)

Other possible causes of absenteeism among elementary students also have been studied. Macmillan (1968) investigated socioeconomic factors and achievement of Spanish-speaking first graders and found a relationship with attendance. Frerichs (1969) looked into psychosomatic ailments among sixth graders, noting that the condition was worse if the student came from a broken home. Bury (1970) found a relationship between air-pollution levels and attendance among fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in California. Such studies are examples of efforts to relate certain risk factors with attendance. Although relationships have been found between a variety of stimuli and the behavior of interest, the quest for a predictive explanation has not been nearly as well served by such research as it has by investigations into the role of the family in relation to school-attendance behavior.

Effects of Absenteeism Among Elementary School Students

Absenteeism among elementary school students has been reported to have both short- and long-term effects. The short-term consequences of school absenteeism primarily concern academic achievement, and the long-term consequences are involved with continuing absenteeism, truancy, delinquency, and reduced adult income.

Rozelle (1968) reported 24 studies that were conducted from 1923 through 1962. In half of these studies, significant relationships were found between absence and grades; in the other half, no such relationship was found. Summers and Wolfe (1975) reported that unexcused absences among Philadelphia sixth graders (N = 627) had a negative effect on their achievement as measured by the California Achievement Test and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. That negative effect was greater for higher-income white students, for whom five unexcused absences translated into a decline of 2.13 months of growth. For poor students, the five unexcused absences were associated with a loss of 1.32 months of growth.

Coldiron and Skiffington (1975) found no association between school attendance and achievement for Pennsylvania fifth graders in the years 1969 to 1973. They suspected such a link, but attributed their findings to the low variability in attendance at the fifth-grade level (pp. 36-37).

Douglas and Ross (1965) reported their work with data from the British National Survey of Health and Development. School absences were grouped

into seven categories on the basis of both frequency and time of absence. Comparisons were made, controlling for socioeconomic status and cognitive ability. The researchers concluded that school absenteeism was associated with declining test scores for students in all social classes below the upper middle class. Scores could improve if attendance improved, but not for children of the lower classes. This last finding differs from Summers and Wolfe's conclusion that absence had a more negative effect on the higher social classes.

The report by Jencks (1972) on school attendance is pertinent. He wrote:

> Taken as a whole, evidence about the effects of school attendance on test scores is woefully inadequate. Such evidence as there is suggests that preschooling has few permanent effects, that elementary schooling is quite important to the development of the skills measured on standardized tests, and that secondary schooling and college also boost test scores to some extent. (p. 85)

Jencks examined the effects of wholesale school closings in Holland during World War II, Prince Edward County in the early 1960s, and New York City in the fall of 1968 on the students who were excluded from school. He commented:

> These findings imply that if all elementary schools were closed down, so that growing up became an endless summer, white middle-class children might still learn much of what they now learn. Some of these children are taught to read before they enter school anyway, and some of them read a great deal at home, developing their skills without any help from school. But most poor black children would probably not learn to read without schools. The cognitive gap between rich and poor and between black and white would thus be far greater than it is now. (p. 88)

At the time of his study, Jencks was primarily interested in examining inequities between blacks and whites in America, so his writing reflects that

orientation. Yet he also discovered that within-group disparities were much greater than between-group differences. Thus, Jencks might agree that dropping the words "black" and "white" from the preceding quotation would not change the meaning greatly. In other words, school attendance is particularly important, in an academic-achievement sense, for children from poor families.

The long-term effects of elementary school absenteeism are primarily residual to the academic losses sustained by absentees, and secondarily result from the social isolation associated with not being in school. It is difficult, particularly for children of lower socioeconomic status, to have high academic achievement while missing a lot of school. Lacking academic skills, students struggle with increasingly difficult school-day challenges and eventually decide to drop out before learning the minimal skills. And by missing a lot of school before eventually severing the relationship altogether, absentees fail to acquire the mainstream cultural, linguistic, and behavioral habits many employers seek. Several researchers have provided background and support for these assertions, most notably Robins and Ratcliff (1980).

In their 1968 study of 235 black males born in St. Louis, Missouri, between 1930 and 1934, Robins and Ratcliff reported findings that corroborate the foregoing argument:

> We have shown that elementary school truants accounted for the excess mortality in black schoolboys, as compared with expected figures based on a national white male cohort (Robins, 1968). The excess mortality was accounted for principally by homicide, but truants also had an excess of deaths by natural causes. Among those who survived past the age of 25 and so were included in the follow-up, we have shown that elementary

> school truancy significantly predicted four subsequent childhood events: being held back in elementary school, dropping out of high school, leaving the parental home before age 18, and marriage before age 18 (Robins & Wish, 1977). Truancy predicted these subsequent childhood behaviours at a statistically significant level even after we took into account the number and kinds of other deviant behaviours that preceded the truancy and so might have explained the subsequent behaviour. We have also found that men who were truants in elementary school tended to marry women who truanted in elementary school and that truancy in either parent was associated with an excess rate of truancy in both sons and daughters, although transmission of truancy to the sons was more striking (Robins, Ratcliff, & West, 1979). When we compared school records of the wives and children with those of our index fathers, we found that elementary school truancy did not predict high school dropout at a statistically significant level for females in either generation, but that truancy in the sons of our subjects did predict high school dropout in just the way that it had for their fathers. This suggested that our finding in the white child guidance clinic study that truancy is a more potent predictor of outcome for males than females probably holds in black non-patient samples as well. (pp. 67-68)

This link between absenteeism in elementary school and problems later in life was investigated by Robins and Ratcliff in other ways as well. It is instructive to discuss first the difficulty they had in defining the word "truancy." They used the criterion of missing more than 20% of school days within three 10-week periods, believing that "we are including only those youths with rates of absence so high that they are unlikely to be explained by illness or parents' keeping the child at home" (p. 68). This last point is contrary to the thesis presented in the current study, and Robins and Ratcliff were

> . . . surprised, therefore, to learn that two-thirds of the children who qualified as often truant in elementary school had at least one truant quarter in first grade. Thus, even if absence in first and second grade does occur more often because of illness or with parental consent than because of truancy, it seems to establish an attendance pattern that later is a truant one. (pp. 68-69)

Although Robins and Ratcliff's intention was to investigate the results of excessive school absence, and not the reasons for the absence, these researchers uncovered a fundamental problem in the framing of questions surrounding the phenomenon, that of the definition of terms. In the end, as they noted, early patterns of nonattendance have significant implications for later attendance patterns. Parentally instigated absence, which for Robins and Ratcliff was not technically truancy, in fact was difficult to separate operationally. Their distinction between the two was unnecessary.

Returning to the issue of effects of absenteeism, one of the first results of truancy, and a rather direct one, is that students who are out of school tend to stay out of school:

> Only 13% of those with no truancy in elementary school became truant in high school. For those mildly truant in elementary school, the rate of high school truancy (23%) was almost twice the rate for good elementary school attenders. Those often truant in elementary school became truant in 39% of cases in high school, three times the rate for elementary non-truants. . . . The effect of truancy in elementary school on truancy in high school is even more striking when we restrict the sample to those whose truancy was evaluated. For those often truant in elementary school, 49% were also truant in high school, 3.5 times the rate of those not truant in elementary school. (p. 69)

However, Robins and Ratcliff reported that "a number of children often truant in elementary school became good attenders in high school" (p. 70), so they looked at other deviant behaviors. Being held back in elementary school; drinking and having sex before age 15; using marijuana, amphetamines, barbiturates, and/or opiates, or having problems with alcohol before age 18;

leaving home; being arrested; and marrying before age 18 comprised their list of deviant behaviors. The researchers found that:

> Students who were not truant or only mildly truant in elementary school had fewer of these other deviant behaviours than did those frequently truant in elementary school. . . . We found . . . that juvenile deviance was associated with the continuation of truancy from grade school in high school. Children who were often truant in grade school usually truanted in high school *unless* they had very little deviant behaviour of other kinds. Juvenile deviance was also associated with *beginning* truancy in high school among those who had not truanted or were only mildly truant in grade school. Those who did little truanting in grade school rarely began truanting in high school unless they were extremely deviant in other ways, in which case almost half became truant. . . . Elementary school truancy has an impact on high school truancy even when we controlled for other childhood deviance. Those often truant in grade school were more likely to truant in high school at each level of our deviance scale . . . [but] we will need to be careful when we look at the impact of truancy on later outcomes that we are not simply using truancy as an indicator of the general level of juvenile deviance. (pp. 70-71)

Given the relationship between early and later truancy, Robins and Ratcliff turned to the influence of early school truancy on final educational level, adult earnings, adult deviant behaviors besides drug abuse, adult drug abuse, and adult psychological status. Their findings were generally in the expected direction (that truancy was linked to each), with some unanticipated facets.

Regarding completion of high school, "of those often truant in elementary school whose truancy continued into high school, 75% failed to graduate" (p. 71). And, "while the relationship between high school truancy and dropout seems inevitable, it is of interest that dropping out of high school was also influenced by the level of elementary school truancy both among those who did and those who

did not truant in high school" (p. 71). Mixing in the level of deviance as previously defined,

> At each level of deviance, the chances of graduating from high school decreased with an increase in the amount of truancy. The difference is particularly striking for those with mild amounts of deviance, where more than 90% graduated without any significant truancy but less than 40% graduated if they had been truant in high school. . . . [And of the high deviants] who were not truant in high school, [33% did graduate, but] only 6% did so if they were truant in high school, and [none graduated] if they had been both truant in high school and often truant in elementary school. Thus truancy greatly influenced high school graduation at all levels of deviance. (p. 73)

Concerning the matter of adult earnings, Robins and Ratcliff conducted a multiple regression analysis on the effect of high school truancy, graduation, and juvenile deviance. They reported that, "with respect to low earnings, high school truancy was the only important one of the three variables, alone accounting for 10% of the variance after adjustment for the impact of the other two variables" (p. 80). The researchers had excluded consideration of elementary truancy from this analysis "because high school truancy was a stronger predictor of adult outcomes than elementary school truancy" (p. 78) and because it was necessary to simplify the analysis.

Regarding adult deviance, Robins and Ratcliff probed the relationships among elementary truancy, secondary truancy, and nine deviant behaviors, including criminality, job problems, violence, and regular illicit drug use. In all cases, secondary truancy predicted each of these behaviors far better than did elementary truancy, but this was not true for the deviant behavior of "parental irresponsibility." This they defined as either fathering illegitimate children or not

supporting legitimate ones. Elementary truancy was much more strongly related to this adult deviance than it was to any of the others. As expected, those who were truant in both elementary and secondary school had a higher incidence of parental irresponsibility than did those who were truant just in elementary school. "Parental irresponsibility is the only behaviour more closely associated with elementary than high school truancy" (p. 76).

In analyzing the effect of truancy on adult drug abuse and adult psychological dysfunction, Robins and Ratcliff found moderate effects. Drug use was not predicted by high school truancy,and psychological disturbance was predicted only slightly. Summing up their findings, the authors wrote:

> We have shown that truancy had important implications for both childhood and adult outcomes of our sample of young black men. Elementary school truancy, often beginning in first grade, forecast continued truancy in high school, particularly in those who had other kinds of deviant behaviour such as early drinking, early sexual activity, illicit drug use, and delinquency. Boys not truant in elementary school seldom became truant later unless they began this set of adolescent deviant behaviours at the same time. Both elementary and high school truancy were associated with dropping out of school before completing secondary education, and also with low earnings as an adult. High school truancy was strongly related to a variety of adult deviant behaviours, and somewhat associated with psychological disturbance. (pp. 80-81)

In 1978, Farrington (1980) investigated a sample of 411 males in London. All were about 25 years of age at the time of the study, and longitudinal data were available since the time the subjects had been about eight years of age. The link between truancy and delinquency was clear: "Given the overlap between truancy and delinquency, and the fact that general truancy precedes convictions, another question which can be asked is whether there are any

important differences between truants who become delinquents and truants who do not" (p. 60). Farrington's answer was that there is a difference in degree but not in kind.

The findings from others studies by May (1975), Tennent (1971), Stott (1966), Hersov (1960), and Ferguson (1952) supported the notion of a relationship between truancy and delinquency. Healy, in a 1915 work entitled The Individual Delinquent, also mentioned such a link.

Regarding the issue of income and years of schooling completed, Adams (1978) conducted a study for the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. He found a significant linear relationship between the two; as years of schooling increased, so did income. Cherry (1976) found a relationship between poor school attendance and subsequent frequent job changes as adults, but the job changing did not result in poorer earnings. Yet Gray, Smith, and Rutter (1980) summed up the relationship as follows: "We may conclude that truancy, absenteeism, and school dropout seem to have few effects on employment or incomes in early adult life, but that there is a substantial association with higher unemployment and lower social status when older" (p. 347).

It should be noted that the analyses by Adams (1978), Cherry (1976), and Gray et al. (1980) were conducted on samples "coming of age" in the 1960s and 1970s. Freeman (1991) observed that "economic opportunities for young male graduates deteriorated greatly in the 1970's and 1980's" (p. 103). Jencks (1991) noted that "the [long-term jobless rate] among 25- to 54-year-old men [rose] in

both the 1970s and 1980s" (p. 94). Thus, in analyzing joblessness in 1959, 1969, and 1979, Jencks wrote, "Jobless poverty increased substantially among both blacks and whites without high school diplomas" (p. 54). Duncan and Hoffman (1991), in interpreting national data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, supplied a picture of the same problem for women:

> An economic model of teenage behavior should focus on the relative payoff for good behavior--that is, the difference in likely poverty or median income between teenagers who did and did not follow the rules. Here the poverty trends are striking: the difference in poverty rates between the two groups of women has increased substantially because both black and white teenagers who dropped out of school or had babies out of wedlock were much worse off when they reached their mid-twenties in the early 1980s than were such women twenty years earlier. Poverty rates of white women who either dropped out of high school or had a child out of wedlock more than tripled and nearly doubled for black women. Median family incomes at age 25 for these groups dropped sharply as well. In the 1980s the median income at age 25 for black women who dropped out of school or had a child out of wedlock was only $8300. (p. 162)

Thus, in both the American and British societies, there are long-term consequences, often severe ones, of missing school. The relationship between poor school attendance early in life and subsequent truancy and eventual dropping out is strong enough to warrant concern. Secondary school truancy and dropping-out behaviors have been found to be related to a variety of subsequent adult problems, and these relationships have been well supported in the literature. Throughout the many investigations that have been conducted on these topics, the influence of the family often has been cited--hence the current study into the value patterns of parents as one possible cause for the school-attendance behavior of young children.

Values

One of the most striking observations that has been made concerning the involvement of school personnel with the parents of young children exhibiting high absenteeism is the frequency of high levels of parental hostility toward the school, the representatives of the school, and the world in general. School secretaries, teachers, principals, school social workers, and truant officers calling on these families to check on reasons for children's school absence often encounter suspicious and evasive if not rude, angry, and verbally abusive parents. The main complaint of many of these parents is that the school is prying into the family's affairs and that the reasons for school absence are not the school's business. Indeed, the reasons behind these excessive absences are often poverty ("We don't have money for shoes"), family violence ("His daddy was causin' trouble here, keepin' us up all night long"), and other matters that would be embarrassing to the family if widely known. In this sense, from the family's perspective, the school personnel are invasive. And although not all students exhibiting patterns of high absenteeism have this type of family life, such conditions are sufficiently prevalent to stimulate an investigation into the nature of the relationship between parental values and student absenteeism.

Cultural Conflict

The conflict between the school and the families of high-absence students can be viewed as being lodged in the cultural differences between the family and the larger society. In Webster's New World Dictionary (1988), culture is defined

as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a people or group that are transferred, communicated, or passed along" (p. 337). Johnson (1985) wrote that "culture is a fairly persistent patterned interaction of distinctive behaviors, ideas, and physical objects" (p. 7). As the conflict with school personnel regarding school attendance appears to be a "custom" and "fairly persistent" for many families in the high-absence subgroup, it is possible that the problem represents a more general pattern of cultural conflict between the poor (who tend to be overrepresented in the high-absence category) and the larger society. Therefore, the literature regarding cultural conflict was reviewed because it provides one component of the logic of this study. If cultural differences exist between some families and the school, the school-absenteeism phenomenon might be better understood through exploring those differences and their general effect on behavior.

Large-scale immigration into the United States, which ended in the 1920s, gave rise to interest in the problems of people who were raised in one culture and then lived in another. Mumford (1926) supplied a preliminary definition as he dealt with one of the problems of the day--that of displaced people seeming to have no roots:

> Unfortunately, a man without a background is not more truly a man: he has merely lost the scenes and institutions which gave him his proper shape. If one studies him closely, one will find that he has secretly arranged another background, made up of shadows that linger in the memory, or he is uneasy and restless, settles down, moves on, comes home again, lives on hopeless tomorrows, or sinks back into mournful yesterdays. (pp. 38-39)

Stonequist (1938) wrote about the cultural assimilation of the "marginal man"—one who is "of" one culture but living in another. Although referring to a different problem (immigration) at a different time, the implications for the current study are clear:

> In the family and under the influence of the tribe, the sect, or the local community . . . the individual acquires those habits, sentiments, attitudes, and other personality traits that characterize him as human. . . . The marginal man is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic, cultures. . . . [Conflict is] an incidental product of a process of acculturation, such as inevitably ensues when peoples of different cultures and different races come together to carry on a common life . . . for it is not the mere mixing of cultures which creates the marginal man, but rather the experience of conflict of group attitudes flowing from the cultural differences. (p. 88)

Sociopolitical history includes many examples of clearly defined cultural differences driving significant levels of conflict. Fagan (1984) reviewed the European exploration and settlement movement from 1488 through the 1900s. In Clash of Cultures, he cited "progressive confrontation between an expanding, sophisticated civilization with radically alien beliefs and dozens of societies that lived in careful balance with the natural resource of their environment" (p. 5). He also detailed the carnage and annihilation that took place as Europeans "discovered" the bounty of the New World.

As an example of this conflict phenomenon on the individual level, Seward (1958) detailed case studies of clinically defined psychological problems resulting directly from cultural conflict. Significantly for the current study she wrote, "Since the first impact of culture comes through the home, the earliest and most serious forms of conflict with it are reflected in children's problems" (p. ix).

In The Culturally Deprived Child, Riessman (1962) stated, "We view culture as an effort to cope with the surrounding environment" (p. 6). Consistent with the logic of the current study, he developed the notion that there is indeed a separate culture among the poor, a culture that is different from that of the larger society. Differences between the two cultures are fertile ground for the development of a variety of negative consequences, and knowledge of the nature of both the differences and the consequences is suspect: "The understanding and treatment of juvenile delinquents from disadvantaged backgrounds has been something less than earthshaking, and the cleavage between the deprived child and the school appears to have reached new heights" (Riessman, 1962, p. xiii).

Some families have cultural orientations that are significantly different from that of the larger society. Families who experience such differences also may experience the accompanying conflict. If the family happens also to face problems of poverty and racial discrimination, whether they are blacks in urban settings (Gilbert & Gay, 1985; Villegas, 1988), Mexican-Americans in border states (Buenning & Tollefson, 1987; Mendelberg, 1986; Trueba & Delgado-Gaitan, 1985), Asians in many parts of the country (Blakely, 19874; Wehrly & Nelson, 1987), or Native Americans in the western United States (Chilcott, 1985; Clark, 1983; Courtney, 1986; Cuch, 1987; James, 1988), the problems are magnified. The conflict resulting in large measure from cultural differences, compounded by ethnic/racial and income differences, has thus been well

supported in the literature as a continuing problem, and it is advanced here as one factor contributing to school-attendance behavior.

Values as Antecedents to Behavior

If, in fact, cultural conflict is controlling, the components of "cultural orientation" require definition and examination in order to formulate a testable hypothesis. In nearly all of the works cited in this review of the cultural-conflict explanation of student-absence patterns, the concepts of behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and values have been cited as indicants of "culture." Johnson's (1985) definition of culture ("a . . . fairly persistent patterned interaction of distinctive behaviors" [p. 7]), Riesman's (1952) assertion that "society is . . . instilling a particular mode of conformity in its members, who then perpetuate the society as they go about its business, including the rearing of the young" (p. 5), and the Parsonian concept of pattern-maintenance (see Chapter I) all require certain indicants of "culture."

To study the conflict associated with suspected cultural variance, one must direct attention toward behavior, beliefs, attitudes, and values. It is this path that leads directly to the current study. The behavior is defined (high absenteeism of young children for no "good" reason). The assessment, then, of beliefs, attitudes, and/or values of the parents, who control the behavior of the children, is thus strongly suggested in order to investigate the phenomenon of variance in school attendance.

It is important to note that no judgment is made here regarding the "worth" or "goodness" of one cultural perspective over another, or that there is some "lack of culture" in any case. The premise is that all behavior is associated with cultural antecedents, and that understanding the behavior requires an understanding of that cultural lineage and/or context. Anderson (1991) was instructive on this point in discussing what he called "neighborhood effects" on teenage pregnancy. He described the mechanism of cultural effect as follows:

> The girls who graduate to the street are products of homes in which they have relatively little parental supervision and limited family support to strive for a life much different from the one they are currently living. Hence, as indicated earlier, decent[1] parents often forbid their own children from regular participation in such groups and label such children street kids. . . . The girl primarily raises herself with the help of her street-oriented peers and her mother say[s], "she just grows up." . . . Left largely to their own devices, these children play with their peers on the street corners in mild weather, at times until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning on school nights. . . . By the age of eleven or twelve many of the street girls are aware of their bodies and beginning to engage in sexual relations. . . . [They] become committed to their peer groups, learning to survive by their wits. . . . Increasingly they "talk to people" (boys), whose sexual desires begin to mesh with the social needs of the girls. Some members of this group begin to have babies by the age of fifteen, and soon others follow. . . . For some, becoming pregnant may be viewed as normal and as only a matter of time. . . . In time, this primary group can become something of a family for many of its members who grow up lacking the emotional supports of one. When this group wins the girl's allegiance, it works to shape her dreams, social agenda, values, aspirations, and goals. At times, it competes strongly with the inner-city family, "decent" or "street." (pp. 387-388)

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[1]Anderson was careful to note that the term "decent" was not his term, but was defined and used in just this sense by the residents in the black underclass neighborhoods in which he had conducted ethnographic studies for more than 20 years.

The formation of a perspective from which one selects behaviors occurs in many ways, both in and out of the family. A classroom, a clan, and/or a neighborhood group can each have an influence.

It is logical, then, to examine the "perspective" from which one operates when deciding on a particular action. Are action choices based on beliefs about the world, attitudes regarding choices and consequences, morality and ethics, or some hierarchy of values? According to the theoretical perspective on which the current study was based, it is assumed that there is some interaction between the individual and the larger society regarding action, and that values play a significant role.

Supporting this central role of values, von Mering (1961) wrote, "Our basic premise is that knowing and valuing are social facts and, therefore, analyzable within a scheme of social action" (p. 13). He proposed three types of values, including existential (cultural), normative (morally directive), and idiosyncratic (projective) values. He suggested that people operate within the constraints of a particular grammar of values:

> Such a particular hierarchy of "personalized" values is always to be regarded as a product of an individual's biographical and cultural situation. Thus, the individual value profile tends to reflect the cumulative, preferential trending to certain values and not to others that are characteristic of the culture as a whole. (p. 243)

Although von Mering maintained that "human value patterns are neither very simple nor easily predictable" (p. 242), the classification of values he proposed was successful in helping to differentiate among the five cultures he

studied. And, significantly for the logic of the current investigation, his study "made it possible to demonstrate with reasonable confidence that a high degree of association between certain value clusters is not a chance occurrence but has experiential meaning to the valuer" (p. 245). Meanwhile, von Mering acknowledged that "today, social scientists are conducting extensive and intensive studies in the formation and role of attitudes, interests, and values in social perception and action" (p. 5). His work helped establish that values play a major role in determining social action.

Sigel (1985) edited a volume of articles in which parental beliefs were linked with variance in a variety of children's characteristics and behaviors, including the child's cognitive level, cognitive development, socioeconomic status, and mathematics performance. In his own article, Sigel argued for the centrality of belief. He contended that a belief is a "cognitive representation of reality" or "a cognitive construct with content" (p. 357). His example of a belief was the statement, "I believe children learn through experimentation" (p. 357). "Attitude" introduces the affective component, referring to one's feelings about the cognition (belief). "Value," then, refers to "the importance of the intended action relative to the [actor's] . . . goals" (p. 357). Although Sigel argued that "belief" is the core of action, he noted that "beliefs [are] attenuated by attitude and value" (p. 357). Whether belief, attitude, or value is more fundamental, or a better predictor of behavior, remains problematic in this definition. The

centrality of parental influence is supported, but the causal key remains undetected.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) provided an argument that addresses the problem presented by this critical reading of Sigel and is consistent with the overall theoretical basis for the current study:

> Directiveness appears to be causally important in at least two senses. First, although the several writers cited above have argued strongly and convincingly that the cognitive and affective elements are inextricably interrelated, they do not go far in indicating the "why" of this relationship other than stating that it appears an irrefutable fact that what a people believe to be true (existential premises) is strongly influenced by their normative judgments and that contrariwise the normative assumptions as to what is right and proper are never truly separable from the existential premises. Selectivity is discussed as an element of the total process, but it is not clearly defined as an element which is distinctive in having relating (integrating) and directive (processual guiding) influences upon the other elements. It is our view that to the extent that the cognitive and affective aspects of the process are a unity it is because of the directive element, which is as much, or perhaps even more, biologically given than are the capacities for either intellection or affectivity.
>
> It is on this basis that we state that in the concept of a value orientation as a guiding principle, it is the directive element which is of primary interest. This is the second way in which the element may be considered as a critically causal one. Any given value system of human beings has both a content and a direction which derive from biologically given capacities and predispositions but are not instinct bound, but it is the directive aspect which is the most crucial for the understanding of both the integration of the total value system and its continuity through time.
>
> In the realm of observed behavior the integration effect is the thematic one. All or almost all aspects of the social life of a people give expression, in varying ways and varying degrees to be sure, to the basic values which are characteristic of one culture as opposed to another. (p. 9)

Values as Distinguished From Other Concepts

Rokeach (1973) took issue with the concept of value orientation as advanced by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, arguing that their value orientations were "more aptly described as basic philosophical orientations" (p. 22) in the motivational-causal path. In support of his own conceptualization, Rokeach detailed the differences between values and a variety of other concepts, beginning with attitude:

> An attitude differs from a value in that an attitude refers to an organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation (Rokeach, 1968a, 1968b). A value, on the other hand, refers to a single belief of a very specific kind. It concerns a desirable mode of behavior or end-state that has a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgments, and comparisons across specific objects and situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate goals. (p. 18)

Rokeach mentioned seven respects in which values and attitudes differ. Values are single beliefs, whereas attitudes refer to several beliefs focused on one object or situation. Values are not attached to specific situations or objects, as are attitudes. Values serve as standards, whereas attitudes do not. Values, because they relate to modes of conduct and end-states, number "only in the dozens, whereas attitudes number in the thousands" (p[. 18). Values are more central to a person than attitudes. Value "is a more dynamic concept than attitude, having a more immediate link to motivation" (pp. 18-19). Last, "the substantive content of a value may directly concern adjustive, ego defense, knowledge or self-actualizing functions while the content of an attitude is related

to such functions only inferentially" (p. 19). Rokeach then described differences between values and social norms, needs, traits, interests, and value orientations.

Rokeach (1980) later clarified his position that values are "shared prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs about ideal modes of behavior and end-states of existence that are activated by, yet transcend object and situation" (p. 262). Indeed, his opening sentence in this article was, "While I have had a long-term commitment to furthering our understanding of the role of beliefs and attitudes in human affairs, I have at the same time, perhaps more persistently than others, deplored the fact that social psychologists continue by and large not to appreciate the importance of values in human affairs" (p. 261). Rokeach devoted considerable space to the concepts of attitude and belief and their roles in the shaping of behavior, but he stated, "In my view, the attitude-behavior relation question is a narrow one that can be subsumed under the broader question of the relation among values, attitudes and behavior" (p. 271).

Social scientists are not in agreement regarding a single component of human nature that might serve to predict subsequent behavior. The debate regarding free will and determinism, as noted earlier, will not end soon. However, consistent with the theoretical background provided in Chapter I, and a review of the literature regarding culture, values, and the relationship between values and behavior, the idea has been supported that values, and more particularly value patterns, are one possible explanation for the variance in

school-absence behavior. Value patterns guide the behavior of parents, who, in turn, guide (or in the case of small children, control) the actions of their offspring.

The Assessment of Values

Given that there is sufficient support for the investigation of parental value systems relating to the school-absence behavior of young children, a problem arises concerning the measurement of those values. Underlying this measurement is the definition of values, for there can be no precise appraisal without such a definition.

Rokeach's (1973) definition of values relied on the concept of "enduring beliefs" regarding desirable end-states or modes of behavior. Thus, values are in fact beliefs, but they are a special variety of beliefs. Values are beliefs that have a greater degree of longevity, although they are changeable for an individual, and they have a greater degree of generalizability, in that they account for or "cover" a greater number of social behaviors than lower-level, less-enduring beliefs.

The preceding definition is one of several in the field. The Allport-Vernon-Lindzey (1960) instrument, though purported to be a values survey, was designed to assess "the dominant interests of the personality" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 36). The difference in levels of abstraction between this and the Rokeach concept is revealed in the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey instrument asking the respondent to tell "what I like," whereas the Rokeach survey involves judgments of relative importance. Allport-Vernon-Lindzey "values" are captured in the

Rokeach definition of attitudes, particularly as the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey "values" relate to comparatively specific social behaviors.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) advanced a definition of values that relied on opinions related to the fundamental nature of reality. Their five dimensions (good or evil human nature; subjugation to, harmony with, or mastery over nature; past, present, or future time perspective; being, being-in-becoming, or doing; and linearity, collaterality, or individualism) are, in Rokeach's (1973) words, "somewhat far removed from what we ordinarily mean by a 'conception of the desirable'" (p. 22). In other words, the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck concept of values is perhaps one level of abstraction higher than Rokeach's. In 1973, he wrote that the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck dimensions "can be more aptly described as basic philosophical orientations than as value orientations" (p. 22).

The definition of values used in the current study, including the notion of being somewhere between beliefs and philosophical orientations on a continuum of abstraction, is Rokeach's. Rokeach's definition was used because no other conceptualization or instrument combines as concise a format with as comprehensive an approach.

The Rokeach Value Survey

The 194 citations in Buros (1978) regarding the Rokeach Value Survey include 116 journal articles and 78 theses. Thesis topics included the relationships among value systems, attitudes, and interpersonal attraction (Beech, 1967); the developmental structure of moral judgment (McLellan, 1970);

value systems and the priesthood (Hague, 1968); value systems and behavioral change following a public executive workshop (Henderson, 1973); and value patterns as they relate to social inheritance and educational systems (Robinson, 1977). The journal articles covered a wide range of topics, such as values and job motivation (Brown, 1976), self-actualization and value structure (Mahoney, 1974), and values and neurosis (Mahoney, 1977). However, there was no treatment of the topic at hand--the relationship of parents' value systems to the school-attendance behavior of young children.

A body of literature exists concerning the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) itself. Cohen (cited in Buros, 1978) described the ipsative nature of the instrument and argued that this flaws the measurement accuracy because an observer cannot discern the absolute strength of conviction expressed by two people responding to the instrument. The first person's fourth rank may equate with the other person's fourth, eighth, or fifteenth rank; one cannot tell. However, Cohen (cited in Buros, 1978) later wrote, "Many research studies are reported and the infirmity of the ipsative measures is successfully overcome by the typically large sample sizes to produce statistically significant results" (p. 1032). Cohen said that the RVS could be an effective research instrument, but he warned against its use "in individual assessment in counseling, psychotherapy, and selection" (p. 1032).

Kitwood (cited in Buros, 1978) also was concerned with the ipsative structure of the RVS, again because the instrument cannot be sensitive to

differences in the intensity with which respondents hold values. Of course, the assumption that Likert-type scales avoid this problem altogether is true only if one person's "Strongly Agree" is as strong as another person's.

Kitwood also mentioned that the test-retest reliability of the RVS is low, but not unduly so. He acknowledged that the items are not easily reducible to a smaller number because of small correlation coefficients. He argued that the strict rank ordering of each value relative to the others lends an artificiality to the scale, citing the lack of conflict between, say, *inner harmony* and *wisdom*. Kitwood also believed that there are some problems with the RVS items being somewhat general in nature, and thus open to a variety of interpretations by respondents with dissimilar backgrounds.

Mueller (1974) supported this last argument with his work on *equality* and *freedom*. He fleshed out definitions for the two words, making sure his college-attending respondents clearly understood both terms. Mueller's own equality and freedom scales then intercorrelated .43 ($p < .01$), whereas Rokeach reported an intercorrelation half that size. This result can only be interpreted to mean that, with the additional definition Mueller gave to the constructs, the respondents viewed them less distinctly. This does not help his argument that Rokeach's scales are invalid because of the fuzzy definition of the terms.

Kitwood (cited in Buros, 1978) also mentioned that there are "some curious omissions" (p. 1033) from the RVS, yet he mentioned only one--"truth" is not on the list. However, Kitwood went on to say:

> Despite these weaknesses, the Rokeach Value Survey is more directly concerned with values, as philosophically understood, than most, if not all, other available instruments. It can at least be recommended as a general probe into values for use with respondents whose academic attainment is average or above. (p. 1033)

The concern that the RVS not be used with respondents whose academic attainment is below average is countered by its frequent successful application in studies involving just such populations. Feather and Cross (1975) studied the generation gap between the value patterns of delinquent and nondelinquent boys and their parents. McCarthy (1972) also studied the generation gap, but among Catholic high school seniors and their parents. Toler (1974) analyzed the value patterns of alcoholics aged 22 to 49 averaging 11.5 years of schooling, and of addicts aged 21 to 35 averaging 12.4 years of schooling. Most participants were Vietnam veterans. Carroll (1973) administered the RVS to high school students, the public, and school officials in Appalachia. Jenkins (1974) used the RVS to study the differences between drug abusers and nonabusers in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades in Arizona. Thus, there is ample precedent for using the RVS in the current study with a population of mothers who had not completed high school.

Kitwood and Smithers (1975) collaborated on an appraisal of the Rokeach approach. In addition to the criticisms contained in Buros's (1978) work, they took issue with Rokeach's assertion that the ranking task fell within Miller's (1956) suggestion that the human mind can process seven categories simultaneously, give or take two. Kitwood and Smithers mentioned that the scale

is, in fact, 18 items long, and they argued that about half of the job (the first half, when the choices are many) is beyond people's powers and half within. However, there have been no reports of difficulty from thousands of respondents, many with limited schooling.

Kitwood and Smithers also argued that there is "yet little evidence about the way values are related to . . . human action" (p. 178). They believed that Rokeach was operating on too many assumptions and cited their own work (Kitwood, 1974) as an indication that "behavior is rarely a direct expression of values" (p. 178). They pointed to new approaches (notably their own) and cautioned those who study values that an instrument may not reveal what it purports to show, although they were not explicit in accusing the RVS of this. Counter to their argument is the theoretical framework of this study as described in the first chapter, which supports a strong relationship between values and behavior.

Greenstein and Bennett (1974) studied order effects in Rokeach's survey. Their concern was that Rokeach examined the problem only indirectly, and that he used only one ordering (alphabetical) of the six thousand trillion (18 factorial) possible orderings. Greenstein and Bennett therefore generated 218 different random orderings of the RVS for 218 respondents. They then correlated the vector of orderings for each respondent's questionnaire with the vector of rankings each person assigned to the items. Their results were unambiguous:

> The fact that the observed mean correlations are so small allows us to conclude that, for all practical purposes, Rokeach's Value Survey is free

> of order effects. In fact, only about .1% of the variation in responses may be directly attributable to such bias. This amount of bias due to presentation order seems acceptable. (p. 395)

Mahoney and Katz (1976) conducted an investigation to "explore the structural bias of the survey, countenancing the ipsative nature of the data" (p. 205). They hypothesized that the analysis would yield a relatively small number of factors that would relate closely to what they termed "established differences in ideological orientations" (p. 205). The researchers administered the RVS to 120 volunteers from introductory psychology classes in a mass-testing procedure. They then calculated Spearman rank-order correlations for each pair of values in the 36-by-36 matrix. Factor extraction was performed on the correlation matrix, and the factors were then subjected to varimax rotation. This procedure yielded 13 factors. Mahoney and Katz concluded that the RVS could be reduced to a smaller number of "underlying structural factors" (p. 210). The problems with this conclusion are how to label these factors, how then to measure them, but most important whether they in fact exist.

For example, the first factor identified through this process accounted for 19.2% of the variance. The positive pole was defined by *imaginative, intellectual, independent,* and *inner harmony.* The negative pole consisted of *clean, polite,* and *a comfortable life.* Mahoney and Katz argued that this factor reflects an "education versus economic" orientation, and they acknowledged that Rokeach thought so too. But what to name this factor? And how, besides the Rokeach method, is one to measure it?

A second example is their second factor (15.7%), with *an exciting life, imaginative,* and *courageous* on the positive side and negative loadings on *forgiving, salvation,* and *helpful.* Again, Rokeach (1973) mentioned this factor as "personal competence versus religious involvement." Although these two factors accounted for more than one-third of the variance using the Mahoney and Katz method, the authors put forth no suggestion as to how either factor might be measured more effectively.

There is a more fundamental problem with the Mahoney and Katz logic. Although it is admirable for the points made from a strictly measurement perspective, the authors missed an important finding in their own data. *Imaginative* appears on both Mahoney and Katz factors 1 and 2, yet the researchers offered no explanation for how one value can represent, in part, both "personal competence" and "education." Is there some relationship between "education" and "personal competence" that Mahoney and Katz missed? The arguments set forth in the first chapter of the current study regarding the five-value model suggest that indeed there is. Mahoney and Katz's attempt to separate their factors 1 and 2 on the basis of factor analysis erred on the basis of a correlation between personal competence and education that people express when they rank *imaginative* on the RVS. If in fact *imaginative* is a "member" of both the "education" and "personal competence" camps, as Mahoney and Katz's data suggest, their factors 1 and 2 are not separate. Yet neither their data nor their conclusions suggest a "super factor" linking the two.

The argument that the RVS is reducible to a smaller number of factors is laudable but untenable given this conflict.

The most serious criticisms of the Rokeach instrument center on ipsativity and whether a different number of values, or other values, exist. Regarding the former, Rokeach argued that uncovering a pattern or hierarchy necessarily involves choosing one over another. But the survey is as comprehensive and as manageable as possible, given the complexity of the constructs under study. Thus, the Rokeach Value Survey stands as a reasonable instrument to use in measuring value patterns.

Summary

In the literature reviewed in this chapter, absenteeism from school was seen as a problem that exists across time and cultures; this problem is more prevalent among poor, urban populations than more affluent suburban groups. Some investigators have posited that the causes for absenteeism are lodged in parents' orientation toward the value of schooling and the importance of school attendance. The effects of high rates of absenteeism were reviewed as being essentially negative, including short-term academic deficits and long-term problems such as continued school absence, delinquency, and reduced adult income.

Values were described in the literature as being controlling in the determination of behavior. Research regarding a subculture (the poor) interfacing with the mainstream culture was discussed as a model for the role of

cultural conflict, the context of the current hypotheses. Literature detailing the notion that values can be defined, and therefore assessed, was reviewed. Finally, studies regarding the Rokeach Value Survey were discussed; the instrument was considered to be useful for its intended application in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The researcher's purpose in this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between parental values and children's school absenteeism. The theory is that it is possible to predict or explain the school-attendance behavior of early elementary school children given the value patterns held by their parents. The methodology used in conducting the study is explained in this chapter. The setting in which the study was carried out is described first, followed by a description of the population and the sample-selection process. The distinction made between excused and unexcused absences also is discussed. The survey techniques are explained next, followed by a description of the data-analysis methods.

The Setting for the Study

The school district in which this study was conducted is located in the center of a metropolitan area with a population of more than 250,000, a little over half of whom reside in the city. The major employers in the area are an automobile manufacturer, the state government, and a major university. The

school district includes 33 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools; it employs 1,200 teachers and serves about 20,000 students.

Pilot Study

The selection of the Rokeach Value Survey as the instrument to assess the values of parents in this study resulted in the need to pilot the survey with a group of mothers who had not finished high school. The potential problem was that the reading and comprehension requirements of the instrument might be too high for nonfinishers of high school.

The researcher had a group of five mothers, none of whom had high school diplomas, who worked as volunteers in an elementary school. The RVS was administered to them with no verbal directions. Following their completion of the instrument, a debriefing conversation was used to probe any difficulty the subjects might have encountered.

The problems expressed by the subjects related to the difficulty of choosing between two values thought to be close in ranking. There were no comments regarding any of the terms, and no other comments regarding the difficulty of the task. The pilot allowed the researcher to proceed with greater confidence regarding the appropriateness of the instrument.

The Population and Sample

The population from which the sample was drawn comprised all kindergarten through third-grade students whose mothers had not completed high school, a total of 1,604 cases.

In selecting the sample, the researcher addressed several problems that were central to the questions of interest. There was the need to identify a sufficiently large number of persistent absentees, so that enough "no excuse" subjects could be found. And it was clear from the theoretical background that the youngest elementary school students would be the focus of the investigation because the researcher wanted to be as certain as possible that parental influence was paramount in controlling school absence. In addition, some mechanism for controlling for income differences had to be determined because Rokeach (1973) found that such differences were strongly associated with variations in value patterns.

Regarding the issue of how many persistent absentees were likely to be found, and of those the number whose absences would be considered unexcused, Hansard (1974) found that 2.2% of the secondary students studied had no legitimate reason for absence; the Scottish Education Department (1977) found 1.6% of male absences and 1.1% of female absences to have been without excuse; and Galloway (1980) reported a persistent-absence group of elementary students to be about 0.35% of the total group (N = 10,858). These proportions were expected to be somewhat higher in urban areas and among the

poor (see Chapter II), so a figure of 5% was used in planning for this study, based in part on the literature and in part on the writer's observations relative to the prevalence of high-absence patterns in the school district involved in the study.

Cohen (cited in Buros, 1978) suggested that "the infirmity of the ipsative measures [of the RVS] is successfully overcome by the typically large sample sizes to produce statistically significant results" (p. 1032). He mentioned the multitude of studies in which the Value Survey has been used. In those studies (cited in Chapter II), and including Rokeach's national sample, no subgroup had fewer than 30 members. This number was selected as the minimum target for each subgroup in the current study.

Given a minimum of 30 high-absence, poor-excuse students' mothers participating in the study, and using the estimate of 5% as the proportion of these in a poor, urban student body, a population of at least 600 mothers would need to be identified (600 x .05 = 30). But low-absence students and medium-absence students were needed as well, so the figure was doubled to 1,200 to ensure a large enough population from which to secure the sample.

To control for value-pattern differences that are known to occur due to income differences (Rokeach, 1973, p. 144), the study population was drawn from mothers with similar incomes. Coupled with the indication that high absenteeism is more prevalent among the poor, mothers with the lowest incomes were selected for the study. To select mothers with the lowest incomes, and

because income information was not directly available, a proxy was used. Mothers who reported not having attained a high school diploma formed the population for the study.

Absence Rate

Some method had to be devised to ensure a range of absence rates among the students included in the study. Thus, the concept of low-, medium-, and high-absence categories was employed. Sampling from the three categories was necessary to ensure proportionate representation and a range as desired.

After Hansard (1974), the Scottish Education Department (1977), Galloway (1980), the Educational Research Service (1977), the Children's Defense Fund (1974), Berg, Brown, and Hullin (1988), Moore (1966), Newson and Newson (1977), and the Central Advisory Council for Education (1967), the researcher established definitions of low, medium, and high rates of attendance. These rates were somewhat arbitrary, based on the wide variances reported in the literature (see Chapter II). However, combining the logic in the literature with the researcher's field experience supported the definitions used in this study.

In conversations with the writer, teachers frequently have claimed that students who miss a day of school each week are more difficult to teach than students who are usually in school. Often a particular student will be gone every Monday, or every Friday, or will arrive at school mid-morning or later twice or three times a week, and thus will miss a significant amount of important

instructional time. This suggests that missing school one day out of five, or an absence rate of 20% or so, would be an appropriate limit to define the high-absence student. This rate is also generally consistent with the definitions given by the authors cited above. However, the researcher decided on 16% for the high-absence rate, to ensure that all students who missed a lot of school would be included in the study. From a 180-day school year, this translates to 30 days of absence, which became the line separating high absence from medium absence.

The line differentiating low absence from medium absence was drawn at the 5% level. Thus, students missing from zero to nine days of school during a 180-day school year were judged to have a low absence rate. Students missing from 9.5 to 29.5 days had a medium absence rate. Students with 30 or more days of absence were members of the high-absence group. Viewed another way, students who missed school less than a day per month were low absence, those who missed more than a day a month to almost a day every week were medium absence, and those who missed close to a day every week or more constituted the high-absence group. These categories are detailed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Definitions of absence categories, based on 180 days of possible attendance.

	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence
Days	0-9.0	9.5-29.5	Over 29.5
Percent	0-5%	5.3%-16.4%	Over 16.4%

Absence information was collected at the elementary school buildings and entered into a central computer. At the time of this study, the school district was in the process of having secretaries change from pencil-and-paper reporting (encoding "bubble sheets") to entering the information directly onto a computer. All data regarding absences were then available through the central database.

An initial computer search for students in grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 (kindergarten was added and grade 4 discarded later) whose mothers reported no high school diploma yielded 1,529 cases, which compared favorably with the target of 1,200 cases. Of these, 812 were low-absence, 619 medium-absence, and 98 high-absence students. The proportion of high-absence students was slightly greater than predicted (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Distribution of the population by absence category: Grades 1 through 4 (N = 1,529)

	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence
Number of cases	812	619	98
Percent of total	53.1%	40.5%	6.4%

Kindergartners were not included in the initial search because the absence coding for this grade was different from the others. The discovery that a correction could be used to equate kindergarten absence reporting with the other grades prompted a second search, which resulted in the inclusion of kindergartners and the exclusion of fourth graders.

The use of the youngest students possible as the study population was critical. This study was concerned with students who were allowed to be away from school with their parents' consent (detailed as the concept of "absenteeism" in Chapter I), whereas the notion of "truancy" involves students staying away from school on their own. The researcher's experience with elementary school students has shown that truancy is known at the fifth-grade level, rather uncommon at the fourth-grade level, and rare among third graders. Thus, by excluding fourth graders and including kindergartners in the population, greater assurance was provided that school absence is absenteeism controlled by the parent, and not truancy controlled by the student.

Given the results of the initial computer search of grades 1 through 4, the writer was confident that changing to a K-3 population would still provide an adequate population for the study. The kindergarten group with mothers reporting no high school diploma (n = 420) was thus included in the study, and the corresponding group of fourth graders (n = 345) was excluded. The sample could then be drawn from the new population of 1,604 cases. It is interesting that the high-absence category gained 50 cases when the 420 kindergartners were

included in the study. The proportion of kindergartners in this high-absence group, 11.9%, was nearly double the proportion of older students who were highly absent, which was 6.4%. The kindergarten through grade 3 population from which the sample was finally drawn is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Distribution of the population by absence category: Grades K through 3 (N = 1,604)

	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence
Number of cases	775	701	128
Percent of total	48.3%	43.7%	7.9%

To secure a sample of at least 30 cases in each of the three absence categories, systematic sampling (Hopkins & Glass, 1978, p. 187) was employed in the low- and medium-absence groups. All cases in the high-absence group were included in the initial sample (where absence was unexcused--see discussion below).

The systematic sampling technique involves selecting a random number between 1 and 10 from a table of random numbers, picking the case that corresponds to that number as the starting point, and then selecting every *n*th case to arrive at the desired number of cases. Because 30 respondent cases were needed in the low-absence category, and because response rates are generally 70% in studies involving questionnaires (Babbie, 1973), and

anticipating that the response rate for the target population in this study might well be lower than usual, the researcher decided to select every ninth case from the close to 800 cases in the low-absence category. It was thought that this process would yield close to 100 cases for the sample.

The medium-absence category consisted of two groups of students--those whose absences were excused, for the most part, and students whose absences were not generally excused. Of primary interest in this study was the group of students whose absences were not generally excused, for the reasons discussed below. Thus, faced with a population of some 700 students in this medium-absence category, the researcher selected every fifth case, generating more than 150 cases, some of which subsequently were eliminated on the basis of reason for absence.

All cases in the high-absence group were included in the preliminary sample; that is, no systematic sampling was employed. Instead, reasons for absence were determined, and those students whose absences were primarily unexcused were included in the final sample. Also, some sibling duplications and blended-family situations (students with different names living in the same household) further reduced the number of cases in all absence categories before the Value Surveys were mailed.

Names of the 1,604 population cases were arranged on the computer printout by school, then on the basis of absence category, then in alphabetical order by the last name of the student. When systematic sampling was employed,

a school with only six low-absence students whose mothers reported no diploma may have contributed no students to the sample, or perhaps one, depending on where that school was "positioned" along the continuum of absence categories.

The population represented 31 of the 33 elementary schools in the urban district where the study took place. Two schools were excluded from the study to ensure complete separation between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher was the principal at one building and was to be transferred to the second building for the next school year.

The final sample to whom surveys were mailed numbered 226 cases. When the techniques described above were used, the low-absence group included 84 cases, the medium-absence group had 64 cases, and the high-absence group included 78 cases (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Distribution of the sample by absence category (N = 226)

	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence
Number of cases	84	64	78
Percent of total	37.1%	28.3%	34.5%

Excused Versus Unexcused Absences

The question of whether a student's absences are essentially excused or not seems easily answered. All one needs is a doctor's note or a note from the

parent detailing the reason for absence. And, in fact, among low-absence and many medium-absence cases, this procedure is common. However, among some medium-absence students and many high-absence students, such is not the case.

Because many families of high-absence students and some families of medium-absence students rarely support their children's absences with documentation, knowledge of the true reason for absence typically is not known. Thus, one must rely on a more intimate knowledge of the family and child than is commonly supposed. This is why many authors (Bolton, 1977; Farrington, 1980; Fogelman, 1976; ISTD, 1974) have recognized the teacher as a reliable reporter of the "real" reasons behind absence patterns. The relationship between the teacher and the student, and at least at the elementary school level between the teacher and the parent, is intimate enough to allow the teacher to determine with some certainty why a student is absent.

In the district in which this study was conducted, school secretaries routinely call parents when students are absent. Some years ago, several incidents of temporarily "lost" elementary students, along with changes in secondary student attendance-tracking practices, resulted in clear directives to the elementary schools to contact families when children were absent. Subsequently, secretaries acquired knowledge of family circumstances as they communicated with both the family and the teachers regarding student attendance. In addition, many school secretaries in this district work closely with

lunchroom cashiers to establish accurate counts for the number of hot lunches to be ordered from central suppliers. This task must be done daily, and the counts must be accurate. Therefore, nearly every secretary knows on a given day who is in school, who is not, and who is likely to show up just before lunch.

Accordingly, the researcher spoke with secretaries in every building in which medium- and/or high-absence students had been identified for the sample. All of the secretaries knew the writer, so introductions were brief and initial rapport was high. Each secretary was told that the call concerned a study the writer was conducting regarding students who missed a lot of school. Many secretaries immediately expressed interest and appreciation that someone was looking into the problem. Each secretary was told that the writer would read her a list of names and, if she was willing, would ask her to indicate whether the students' absences were mostly excused or unexcused. Every secretary was willing to proceed. The writer then read the following text to each secretary to ensure that all of them were given the same directions:

> Some students are gone a lot, but you know there's a good reason. Chicken pox or a long flu bout, a cold and cough that won't go away--you know the illness things. Also, some kids may have gone on a trip with their parents--a vacation--but you know the parents got work from the teacher and did "school stuff" with the kids when they were gone. So these kids are excused--out of school, but with good reason. There are others I'll name, however, who are out a lot but really don't have excuses. They say they're sick, but you know they're not. They miss a half day because "it was just too hard to get awake." They go on trips with Mom, but it's no vacation. Mom had to get away from the boyfriend who was threatening her, or she's temporarily with her girlfriend because the rent is due. These kids should be in school, but they're not. Their absences are primarily unexcused. All you need to do, when I read the names, is

> to say either "excused" if the student is mostly excused, or "unexcused" if that's the case.

After the first few calls, it was obvious that the secretaries had the working knowledge to support their judgments regarding the reasons for students' absences. In case after case, they knew not only the name of the student, but they also could guess the number of days absent, the given reason, and the real reason; also, the secretaries remembered such details as difficulty reaching the home, the absence patterns of siblings, the teachers' reactions, and the effect on the students' school progress. In fact, the secretaries were so enthusiastic in sharing their knowledge about the cases that the writer added the following sentences to the directions:

> I selected only a few students from each school, so perhaps I don't have your toughest cases. When I finish with my list, feel free to tell me about who I missed.

Any additional students the secretaries mentioned were not added to the sample, but the extra discussion was allowed in order to extend the initial rapport between the writer and the secretaries. In fact, additional time had to be budgeted into this phase of the research due to the interest and volubility of the secretaries on the topic. Because of this turn of events regarding the determination of reasons for absence, the resultant sorting of students into the "unexcused" category proceeded with greater certainty than anticipated.

Survey Techniques

On the Rokeach Value Survey, each respondent is asked to arrange 18 terminal values in order of importance to the individual (see Appendix B). The terminal values are arranged alphabetically on 18 gummed labels, which can be peeled off the right column and stuck to the left column. After placing the labels in the preferred order on the left column, the respondent may change the order simply by removing and reapplying the labels. The labels are not permanent. The respondent then turns the page and repeats the process with 18 instrumental values.

A total of 226 surveys were mailed to the parents selected for study; in most cases, the surveys were addressed to the mother. In a few instances the father was listed as "Parent 1" on the student enrollment card as the parent to call first in an emergency, the data from which the mailing list was culled. The intention was to connect with the parent having the most day-to-day contact with the student so as to maximize the effect of the parents' values on the student. A letter explaining the study (Appendix C) was included with the survey. The letter included an invitation to the parent having the most interaction with the student to complete the survey. Also included in the mailing was a return-addressed, stamped envelope in which respondents were asked to return the completed instrument.

The surveys were mailed in late November 1992. By mid-December, 14 surveys had been returned. Ten other surveys were returned by the post office,

stamped "undeliverable" or "addressee unknown." The addresses were double-checked in the computer system, and three of the surveys were remailed. Seven families had left the area, and no forwarding address was available for them.

For the next seven months, the researcher made a series of telephone calls and home visits to secure additional returns. The writer hired and trained an assistant, who followed up on nonrespondents in the same manner. The two main problems encountered during this collection phase were the number of residence and telephone changes for the families, as well as respondents who agreed to complete and mail the survey but never did so.

Among the three absence-rate groups there were 108 residence changes, including 21 families who moved twice and one family who moved three times over the nine months of the study. There were 102 telephone problems, including new acquisition (46), no telephone or wrong number reported to the school (21), and phones being disconnected (35). Thus, simply locating a family to encourage return of the survey was difficult. This problem was not unanticipated, however, which was why a general follow-up mailing was not conducted. Rather, subsequent mailings were made only to those families contacted by telephone, and home visits were made to those not spoken with by telephone.

An interesting facet regarding the number of moves and telephone problems was the disproportionate number of such cases within the high-absence group. More than half of that group moved, whereas just over a third

of the medium-absence group did, and fewer than a fourth of the families in the low-absence group changed residence in nine months. Overall, 42% of the sample of 226 families moved during the study period, and 45% either had no phone or had a phone change during that time (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Residence changes and telephone problems within the three absence groups.

	Moved	New Phone	No Phone	Phone Disconnected
Low absence (n = 84)	25 30%	12 14%	2 2%	8 10%
Medium absence (n = 64)	27 42%	13 20%	4 6%	12 19%
High absence (n = 78)	43 55%	22 28%	15 19%	15 19%
Totals (N = 226)	95 42%	47 21%	21 9%	35 15%

Note: Figures do not add to group size or 100% because any family could be in no cell, any cell, or all cells appropriate to the group.

The task of collecting surveys from this population became one of checking the latest school district computer update of nonrespondent parents. Then, if a phone was listed, a call (and in some instances several calls) was placed to the parent. The writer or assistant reminded the parent about the mailing and asked if they could provide any help so that the finished survey would be mailed. In many cases, parents remembered the survey but had

thrown it out, so a new one was either mailed or delivered to them, depending on their preference. In some cases, respondents remembered the survey and promised to complete it. A date was mutually established in these cases, and if the researcher did not receive a completed survey, another contact was made. Still other respondents did not remember the survey, so another was either mailed or delivered to them.

If the computer check showed no telephone, the "Emergency Contact" data screen was accessed for the family. If a number could be found at which a message could be left for the parent, this was done. If not, the writer or assistant visited the family's home and tried to have the parent complete the survey at the time of the visit. In several cases, the family did not live at the given address, and neighbors were asked about their location, but generally to no avail. In these cases, the school secretary (at the school where the child still attended) was contacted; in every case the secretary suspected that the family had moved but had no way of confirming it. No further attempt was made to get these parents to complete the survey.

As a result of these efforts over a nine-month period, 90 surveys were collected--32 from the low-absence group, 30 from the medium-absence group, and 28 from the high-absence group. Efforts to secure additional surveys were suspended at that point because there were enough returns to proceed with the study. The numbers and percentages of surveys returned by respondents in the three absence groups are shown in Table 3.6. As can be seen in the table, the

low- and high-absence groups had return rates exceeding one in three, whereas the medium-absence group returned nearly half of the surveys. The overall return rate, 90 surveys from the 226 that initially were mailed, was 39.8%.

Table 3.6: Surveys sent and returned (N = 226).

	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence	Totals
Number sent	84	64	78	226
Number returned	32	30	28	90
Return percentages	38.1%	46.9%	35.9%	39.8%

One question of interest was the ethnicity of the sample as compared with the larger group of families where there was a report that the mother had not finished high school. The ethnicity of parents was not identified, but the information parents supplied to the school regarding the child's ethnicity was available. Tables 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 show the ethnic composition of the population, the sample, and the returns, respectively, through the use of data regarding the ethnicity of the child.

Table 3.7: Ethnicity of the population (N = 1,604).

Ethnic Group	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence	Totals (%)
Native Amer.	12	12	0	24 (1.5%)
Black	160	205	37	402 (25.1%)
Asian	138	28	3	169 (10.5%)
Hispanic	134	169	39	342 (21.3%)
Caucasian	329	287	51	667 (41.6%)
Totals (%)	773 (48.2%)	701 (43.7%)	130 (8.1%)	1,604 (100%)

Table 3.8: Ethnicity of the sample (N = 226).

Ethnic Group	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence	Totals (%)
Native Amer.	0	1	0	1 (0.4%)
Black	20	25	27	72 (31.9%)
Asian	11	1	1	13 (5.8%)
Hispanic	12	7	22	41 (18.1%)
Caucasian	41	30	28	99 (43.8%)
Totals (%)	84 (37.2%)	64 (28.5%)	78 (34.5%)	226 (100%)

Table 3.9: Ethnicity of the returns (N = 90).

Ethnic Group	Low-Absence	Medium-Absence	High-Absence	Totals (%)
Native Amer.	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)
Black	7	11	13	31 (34.4%)
Asian	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)
Hispanic	9	4	6	19 (21.1%)
Caucasian	16	15	9	40 (44.4%)
Totals	32 (35.6%)	30 (33.3%)	28 (31.1%)	90 (100%)

Interpretation of Table 3.10, which shows the combined ethnicity analysis, reveals that the ethnic composition of the group that returned surveys was not unlike that of the original population from which the sample was drawn. Blacks, Caucasians, and Hispanics were slightly more numerous among the returns than among the population. Native Americans and Asians accounted for a combined 12% of the population, but only 6.2% of the sample. No surveys were returned from these groups. With regard to the Asians in the sample, the investigator made several home visits in order to secure survey returns. In each case, the parents' limited proficiency in English required extensive translation through their elementary-aged children. The researcher concluded that the potential for bias and/or miscommunication was too great, so no further attempt was made to complete surveys from this group.

Table 3.10: Combined ethnicity analysis (in percent).

Ethnic Group	Population (N = 1,640)	Sample (N = 226)	Returned (N = 90)
Native Amer.	1.5%	0.4%	0.0%
Black	25.1%	31.9%	34.4%
Asian	10.5%	5.8%	0.0%
Hispanic	21.3%	18.1%	21.1%
Caucasian	41.6%	43.8%	44.4%

Data-Analysis Techniques

The first two research questions suggest descriptive analysis. Those questions were:

1. How did parents in the current sample rank the values on the survey?

2. How do these results compare to those from other samples?

Respondents ranked the terminal values from 1 through 18, with the rank of 1 being the most important value. The process was repeated for the instrumental values. A mean ranking for all parents in the study (N = 90) for each value on the survey was then calculated. This was performed separately for the terminal and instrumental lists. An ordering of the values from most to least important could then be accomplished, given the mean ranking for each value. Two lists (one for terminal and one for instrumental values) of "composite" rankings were then available for examination.

These overall rankings were then compared to the composite rankings reported by Rokeach (1973). The purpose of the comparison was to determine whether the current sample resembled Rokeach's national sample and to note any differences. The comparison employed Rokeach's non-high-school-graduate respondents because that was the educational attainment of the current sample.

Regarding the hypotheses, the analyses performed relied on nonparametric statistics. The Rokeach Value Survey yields ordinal data because respondents rank the various values included in the survey, so nonparametric statistics were appropriate for these data (Hopkins & Glass, 1978; Siegel, 1956).

The test for the first hypothesis, which addressed the possible relationship between rankings of values and student days of absence, was accomplished through the use of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient, or rho. It requires a calculation involving the sum of squares of differences between the ranking of a value by parents and the rank of a student's absences. Thus, all parental rankings of each of the values were analyzed against the ranking of each student's days of absence. It should be noted that information within the absence data was lost in the conversion to ranks. The absence data are of interval scale; thus parametric statistics could have been used. However, the other variable in the comparison, value rankings, was only of ordinal level, so the nonparametric statistic was appropriate (Siegel, 1956).

The test used for the second hypothesis, concerning the possible variation in the way parents ranked the values on the survey, was the Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA. All respondents' rankings (from 1 through 18, inclusive) for a given value were arranged from the highest to the lowest ranking. Each was then reassigned a new rank corresponding to its position among all 90 respondents. The computer then calculated group means for the three absence groups (low-, medium-, and high-absence), which were then analyzed to determine whether any differences existed.

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed whether differences existed among the three groups, but it did not provide sufficient precision to ascertain whether differences between any two group means were significant. The Mann-Whitney *U* two-sample test is an appropriate test to use "if the data are observed as ranks and not as test scores or some other measured variable" (Marascuilo & McSweeney, 1977, p. 6). Thus, the Mann-Whitney was used as a follow-up test to compare pairs of means where the Kruskal-Wallis revealed values were ranked differently among the three groups of parents.

The third hypothesis focused on the 12-value model. Directional predictions for those values were made based on Rokeach's results considering years of schooling of the respondents. The accuracy of the 12-value model was assessed given the combined results of the Spearman, Kruskal-Wallis, and Mann-Whitney tests.

Results of all analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The researcher's purpose in this study was to examine the possible relationship between parental values and student absenteeism. Five research questions were posed. The first two suggested descriptive analysis, and the final three resulted in testable hypotheses. In this chapter, results of the administration of the Rokeach Value Survey and subsequent inquiries are presented. The chapter is organized into five sections. The first section provides a preliminary analysis, which presents the general survey results and compares these results to the Rokeach national sample of 1973. The second section addresses the first hypothesis, and the next two sections treat the second and third hypotheses, respectively. The findings are summarized in the final section.

Initial Findings

In this study, 90 parents responded from families in which the mother did not hold a high school diploma. Each parent ranked 18 terminal values in order of importance to them from first, or most important, to eighteenth, or least important. The process was repeated for the instrumental values. The arithmetic mean rank was calculated for each value. Table 4.1 contains these results for

the terminal values, and Table 4.2 contains these results for the instrumental values. Included in the tables are the highest rank received by each value, the lowest rank received, the standard deviation, and the derived "composite rank." This last item denotes the arrangement of the values according to the mean rank. The lowest numerical mean rank (that value rated "most important") was assigned the composite rank of 1, the next 2, and so on, including the highest numerical mean rank (rated "least important") assigned the composite rank of 18.

The rankings for the terminal values are presented in Table 4.1. The rank of mean rankings for the terminal values was from a mean ranking of 6.49 for *health* (the most highly ranked value to a mean ranking of 14.38 for *national security* (the least highly ranked value). The mean ranks for the values dropped about four- or five-tenths of a point, progressing from most important to least important. The exception was a drop of three points (from a mean rank of 11.36 to a mean rank of 14.38) between *a world of beauty* and *national security.*

Standard deviations ranged from a low of 3.44 (*national security*) to a high of 6.10 (*a world of beauty*). Ten values were ranked with a standard deviation between 4.16 and 4.93.

For 15 of the 18 values, the highest rank was first. For all values, the lowest rank was seventeenth or eighteenth. The highest ranking for *wisdom* was third, for *a sense of accomplishment* fourth, and for *national security* the highest rank assigned by a parent was sixth.

Table 4.1: Means and composite rankings: Terminal values for total sample.

Value	Mean Rank	Std. Dev.	Minimum Rank	Maximum Rank	Composite Rank
A comfortable life	8.24	4.48	1	17	6
Equality	6.76	3.62	1	17	2
Exciting life	10.38	4.74	1	18	13
Family security	7.17	4.77	1	18	3
Freedom	7.98	4.38	1	17	5
Health	6.49	4.53	1	17	1
Inner harmony	11.03	4.64	1	18	15
Mature love	9.64	4.93	1	18	9
National security	14.38	3.44	6	18	18
Pleasure	10.10	4.90	1	18	11
Salvation	9.14	5.41	1	18	8
Self-respect	7.39	5.10	1	17	4
A sense of accomplishment	11.09	4.29	4	18	16
Social recognition	10.83	5.31	1	18	14
True friendship	9.79	5.57	1	18	10
Wisdom	10.37	4.16	3	18	12
A world at peace	8.87	5.95	1	18	7
A world of beauty	11.36	6.10	1	18	17

The rankings for the instrumental values are presented in Table 4.2. The range of mean rankings for the instrumental values ranged from 6.36 for *clean*, the most highly ranked value, to a mean ranking of 13.29 for *obedient*, the least highly ranked value. The differences in mean rankings between adjacent values ranged from as little as one hundredth of a point (between the most highly ranked *clean*, 6.36 and second-place finisher *honest*, 6.37) to nearly two points (fourteen place *self-controlled* at 10.29 against fifteenth-place *logical* at 12.28). Standard deviations ranged from a low of 3.55 for *imaginative* to a high of 6.05 for *polite*. Thirteen values were ranked with a standard deviation of between 3.55 and 4.84.

The highest ranking for 16 of the 18 values was first. The lowest ranking for all values was eighteenth, except *honest*, which had a lowest ranking of seventeenth.

The analysis must first take into account the educational levels of the different samples. Rokeach's national sample ranged in years of education from zero years to post-college degree. The current sample ranged from zero years to "some high school," meaning the respondent had not completed high school. Table 4.3 shows the number and percentage of respondents in Rokeach's national sample who had not completed high school. Table 4.4 shows the same information, with slightly different categories for years of education, for respondents in the current study.

Table 4.2: Means and composite rankings: Instrumental values for total sample.

Value	Mean Rank	Std. Dev.	Minimum Rank	Maximum Rank	Composite Rank
Ambitious	7.43	3.97	1	18	4
Broad-minded	9.84	4.82	1	18	12
Capable	8.86	4.53	1	18	8
Clean	6.36	4.77	1	18	1
Courageous	9.73	4.66	1	18	11
Forgiving	8.60	4.46	1	18	7
Helpful	8.42	5.20	1	18	5
Honest	6.37	4.74	1	17	2
Imaginative	13.23	3.55	5	18	17
Independent	9.42	5.31	1	18	10
Intellectual	12.62	3.56	1	18	16
Logical	12.28	3.57	2	18	15
Loving	6.57	4.34	1	18	3
Loyal	9.40	4.84	1	18	9
Obedient	13.29	4.79	1	18	18
Polite	9.87	6.05	1	18	13
Responsible	8.43	5.63	1	18	6
Self-controlled	10.29	5.78	1	18	14

Table 4.3: Years of schooling (lowest of seven categories) of Rokeach's national sample.

Years of Schooling	Number (%)
0-4	64 (4.6%)
5-8	263 (18.7%)
Some high school	320 (22.8%)

Table 4.4: Years of education of the current sample, by absence group (N = 90).

Years of Schooling	Low-Absence	Med.-Absence	High-Absence	Totals (%)
0 years	1	0	0	1 (1.1%)
1-6 years	2	1	2	5 (5.6%)
7-8 years	4	4	3	11 (12.2%)
Some h.s.	25	25	23	73 (81.1%)
Totals	32	30	28	90 (100%)

In both samples, the single largest category of respondents was "some high school." The apparent spike in the percentage of "some high school" respondents for the current study is explained by the controlled sampling, in which only families in which the mother's level of education was less than high school completion were selected.

As shown in Table 4.4, the numbers of mothers reporting no high school were similar for all absence groups. Combining the three levels of schooling

from zero to eight years inclusive, the low-absence group had seven members and the medium- and high-absence groups had five members each at these low levels of schooling.

To compare the Rokeach sample to the current sample, the composite ranks were used. These ranks were generated from the median rankings (Rokeach sample) and mean rankings (current sample). The rankings were arranged in numerical order, with the highest-ranked value being assigned the composite rank of one. All other values were assigned a composite rank in order, ending with the lowest-ranked value, which was assigned the rank of 18. Because Rokeach did not combine the three subgroups representing "no high school diploma" and because the present researcher did, Table 4.5 shows the figures for three of Rokeach's groups in three columns and reserves a single column for the current sample for the terminal values.

In alphabetical order (not in order of importance), the first difference of note was the rankings for *equality*. Rokeach's groups ranked this value seven ranks lower than did the current sample. The current sample ranked *health* at the top of the list (Form G) in importance, but that cannot be compared to the national sample because *health* did not appear on Form D, which was administered to them. The current sample ranked *mature love* ninth, whereas the highest ranking in Rokeach's three groups was fourteenth. In the opposite direction, the current sample ranked *national security* eighteenth, at the bottom of the list, whereas the national sample ranked the value tenth, about in the

middle. A corollary value, *a world at peace*, was ranked first by the national sample but only seventh by the current sample. Finally, the current sample ranked *pleasure* somewhat more highly and *a sense of accomplishment* somewhat less highly than did the national sample.

Table 4.5: Terminal value composite ranking comparison.

Value	Rokeach 0-4 (n = 64)	Rokeach 5-8 (n = 263)	Rokeach Some H.S. (n = 90)	Current Study (N = 90)
A comfortable life	3	6	7	6
Equality	12	9	9	2
Exciting life	18	18	18	13
Family security	2	2	2	3
Freedom	4	3	3	5
Health	NA	NA	NA	1
Inner harmony	9	13	13	15
Mature love	17	15	14	9
National security	10	10	10	18
Pleasure	14	16	17	11
Salvation	8	4	6	8
Self-respect	7	8	5	4
A sense of accomplishment	13	12	11	16
Social recognition	15	17	16	14
True friendship	6	7	12	10
Wisdom	11	11	8	12
A world at peace	1	1	1	7
A world of beauty	16	14	15	17

Table 4.6 contains the composite ranking comparison for the instrumental values. Both the national sample and the current sample ranked *honesty, clean, ambitious,* and *helpful* among the top five on the instrumental list.

Table 4.6: Instrumental value composite ranking comparison.

Value	Rokeach 0-4 (n = 64)	Rokeach 5-8 (n = 263)	Rokeach Some H.S. (n = 320)	Current Study (N = 90)
Ambitious	3	3	2	4
Broad-minded	10	7	8	12
Capable	11	13	11	8
Clean	2	4	7	1
Courageous	13	6	6	11
Forgiving	4	2	4	7
Helpful	7	5	5	5
Honest	1	1	1	2
Imaginative	18	18	18	17
Independent	15	14	14	10
Intellectual	16	16	16	16
Logical	17	17	17	15
Loving	6	10	10	3
Loyal	NA	NA	NA	9
Obedient	14	15	15	18
Polite	12	11	13	13
Responsible	9	9	3	6
Self-controlled	8	12	12	14

Compared with the national sample, the current sample valued less highly *broad-minded, forgiving,* and *obedient*. The current sample valued more highly *capable, independent,* and *loving*. However, none of these differences was as great as the differences found among the terminal values. Only four ranks separated the current sample from the national sample in the cases of the widest differences among the instrumental values (*broad-minded* and *independent*), whereas eight ranks separated the two samples in the most-different terminal values (eight ranks separated the groups regarding *national security*, and seven ranks separated them in the case of *equality*).

Among the terminal values, there are two groups of differences of special interest in the comparison of the current sample with the Rokeach national sample. One is the lower rankings by the current sample of *national security* and *a world at peace*. These two values were ranked eight and six ranks lower, respectively, by the current sample. This signals that, among this group, concern regarding the possible imminence of war has declined over the past 20 years.

A second comparison of interest is that linking the differences between the current sample and Rokeach's sample regarding the ranking of the values *exciting life, mature love,* and *pleasure*. Each of these values was ranked more highly by the current sample by about five ranks than by any of the three Rokeach groups. This suggests that self-indulgence or immediate gratification may have become more important to people without high school diplomas over the years since Rokeach's initial study.

Among the instrumental values there was one value with differences between the current sample and Rokeach's results that approached the numerical distances evident in several terminal values. *Loving* was ranked third by the current sample and sixth, tenth, and tenth by the three Rokeach groups.

To analyze more fully the relationships between the three Rokeach groups and the current sample, Spearman rank correlation coefficients were calculated. *Health* replaced another value on the terminal list after Rokeach's administration of the RVS, so an adjustment of the composite ranks was necessary. With this value eliminated from the analysis, there were 17 values to study. Each value affected by the elimination of *health* was then reassigned the appropriate new rank order. These adjusted rank orders were then analyzed with the Spearman. The researcher was interested in knowing how similar the current sample was to each of the three non-high-school-completing groups in the Rokeach sample. The results are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Correlation of selected Rokeach groups with the current sample in ranking terminal values.

	0-4 Years Ed.	5-8 Years Ed.	Some High School
Spearman rho	.55	.63	.65

As can be seen in Table 4.7, the correlation in rankings between the group with the fewest years of education in Rokeach's sample and the current sample

was the lowest, at rho = .55. The two groups with more years of education had higher correlations (rho = .63 and .65, respectively) with the current sample.

A similar analysis of the instrumental values was conducted. From this list of 18 values, *loyal* had replaced another value since the Rokeach administration. Composite rankings were then adjusted for this list, resulting in 17 values to be analyzed. The question of interest again was how the Rokeach groups compared with the current sample. The results are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Correlation of selected Rokeach groups with the current sample in ranking instrumental values.

	0-4 Years Ed.	5-8 Years Ed.	Some H.S.
Spearman rho	.86	.80	.81

The correlations between each of the three Rokeach groups and the current sample were at rho = .80 or greater for the instrumental values. The highest correlation was that between the group with the fewest years of education in Rokeach's sample and the current sample.

This analysis confirmed the earlier observation that differences between the 1974 sample and the current sample were more pronounced among the terminal values than the instrumental values. Applying Rokeach's means-ends conceptualization, there is support for the argument that, among high school dropouts, in 20 years there has been little change in the perception of how to

achieve or advance, and more change in the perception of which goals should be pursued.

These data also indicate that there was substantial agreement in values between the Rokeach groups and the current sample. The correlations support the argument that, among nonholders of high school diplomas, there has not been a wholesale change in the perception of values in the past 20 years. The differences that do exist, a lessening of concern with global peace and an increased interest in or valuing of hedonism, are encapsulated in a general trend of similarity in the rankings of other values.

In sum, the national sample and the current sample had some differences in the way they ranked the values. Seven terminal and six instrumental values were separated by three or more ranks when comparing the current absence-rate groups. The greatest differences were found among the terminal values. Overall, the current sample could not be readily distinguished from the national sample in the cases of 23 of the 36 values on the RVS.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between parental value rankings and their children's school attendance patterns.

All parental rankings (N = 90) of each of the 36 values were analyzed against the ranking of each student's days of absence, matching the particular parent with the particular student. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient, or

rho, was the appropriate test for this question (Siegel, 1956, p. 202). Table 4.9 shows the results for the terminal values.

Table 4.9: Correlation of terminal value rankings with attendance rates.

Value	Spearman Rho	Significance
A comfortable life	-.5579	.000*
Equality	-.1117	.295
Exciting life	-.4221	.000*
Family security	-.1636	.123
Freedom	-.0912	.393
Health	.0140	.896
Inner harmony	.0220	.837
Mature love	-.0618	.563
National security	.1171	.272
Pleasure	-.4122	.000*
Salvation	-.2581	.014
Self-respect	.2463	.019
A sense of accomplishment	.5500	.000*
Social recognition	.1874	.077
True friendship	-.0682	.523
Wisdom	.5436	.000*
A world at peace	.2981	.004*
A world of beauty	.1120	.293

*Significant at the .01 level.

In interpreting the table, the comparison is between varying levels of parental rankings and varying numbers of days of student attendance (as represented by days of absence). A positive correlation means that as parents ranked the value more highly, their children were more often in school. A negative correlation means that as parents ranked the value more highly, the children were less often in school.

There were 12 terminal values for which no correlations were found between the way parents ranked the value and the school attendance record of the children. The low correlations among this group of 12 values, ranging from absolute values of .06 (*mature love*) to .25 (*salvation*), were not significant at the .01 level. In fact, of these 12 values, 9 had correlations of .16 or less. This suggests that, for half of the terminal values, there was no relationship between the way parents ranked the values and the level of student school attendance.

However, variations in the parental rankings of six terminal values were found to correlate with student attendance rates. The highest correlations were for *a comfortable life* (-.56), *a sense of accomplishment* (.55), and *wisdom* (.54). The next highest correlations between parental rankings and student school attendance were for *an exciting life* (-.42) and *pleasure* (-.41). The lowest correlation of significance was for *a world at peace* (.30). There were no other value rankings that related to school attendance rates at the .01 level of significance or less.

Of these six values, all appeared to correlate in a linear fashion. There were, however, two different linear directions. For three values (*a sense of accomplishment, wisdom,* and *a world at peace*), student attendance increased as the parental ranking of the value increased. For three other values (*a comfortable life, an exciting life,* and *pleasure*), student attendance dropped as parental ranking increased.

This finding was a preliminary indication of whether a particular pattern of parental values was related to student school attendance. The direction and magnitude of the correlations for these values are shown in Table 4.10. These results were particularly intriguing, given the theoretical basis for the study and the research questions.

Table 4.10: Terminal values correlated with student attendance.

Higher Parent Ranking, Increased School Attendance	Higher Parent Ranking, Decreased School Attendance
A sense of accomplishment (.55)	*A comfortable life* (-.56)
Wisdom (.54)	*An exciting life* (-.42)
A world at peace (.30)	*Pleasure* (-.41)

The three terminal values correlating in a positive direction with students attendance, as shown in Table 4.10, were future-oriented. The three terminal values correlating in a negative direction (as parents ranked these higher, their

children were less often in school) were present-oriented. The magnitudes of the relationships were similar in both directions and were sufficiently high to suggest moderately strong relationships.

Among the instrumental values, 11 values did not relate to student school attendance. As with the noncorrelated terminal values, the correlations for these 11 instrumental values were low and not significant at the .01 level. Seven of these 11 values had correlations of .16 or less, suggesting weak if not random relationships to school attendance. Examples of these values are *honest, helpful, capable,* and *polite.* Table 4.11 shows the results of the Spearman analysis for the instrumental values.

But for seven instrumental values, correlations were discovered with student school attendance. The two strongest correlations were for *logical* (.47) and *imaginative* (.45). The next most strongly related values were *intellectual* (.38), *courageous* (-.35), and *ambitious* (.35). The final value that related to school attendance at a level of significance less than .01 was *forgiving* (.28).

Among the instrumental values correlated with student school attendance, five (*logical, imaginative, intellectual, ambitious,* and *forgiving*) displayed positive correlation coefficients. As parents ranked these values more highly, their children were more often in school. Two values (*courageous* and *self-controlled*) had negative coefficients, meaning that parents who ranked these values more highly had children who were less often in school.

Table 4.11: Correlation of instrumental value rankings with attendance rates.

Value	Spearman Rho	Significance
Ambitious	.3458	.001*
Broad-minded	-.0685	.521
Capable	.0375	.725
Clean	-.1249	.241
Courageous	-.3621	.000*
Forgiving	.2843	.007*
Helpful	-.1944	.066
Honest	.0663	.535
Imaginative	.4501	.000*
Independent	-.0892	.403
Intellectual	.3766	.000*
Logical	.4708	.000*
Loving	.0880	.410
Loyal	-.2023	.056
Obedient	-.1703	.109
Polite	-.0541	.612
Responsible	.2102	.047
Self-controlled	-.3540	.001*

*Significant at the .01 level.

As with the results reported for the terminal values, these results for the instrumental values provided additional insight into the questions of interest. Table 4.12 contains details about the direction and magnitude for each instrumental value found to relate to student school attendance.

Table 4.12: Instrumental values correlated with student attendance.

Higher Parent Ranking, Increased School Attendance	Higher Parent Ranking, Decreased School Attendance
Logical (.47)	*Courageous* (-.36)
Imaginative (.45)	*Self-controlled* (-.35)
Intellectual (.38)	
Ambitious (.35)	
Forgiving (.28)	

Being logical and being imaginative were increasingly important to parents whose children attended school with increasing regularity. So were being intellectual, ambitious, and forgiving. For parents whose children missed more and more school, being courageous and being self-controlled were increasingly important. In comparison with the terminal values, the magnitudes of the relationships found among the instrumental values were not quite as large. There were no .5 correlations among the instrumental values, whereas there were three correlations of that magnitude among the terminal values. This finding suggests that the way parents rank the terminal values might be a better overall indicator of their children's school attendance patterns than the parental ranking of the instrumental values.

Considering all 36 values on the Rokeach Value Survey, the way parents ranked 23 values showed no relationship to their children's school attendance rates. However, the parental rankings of 13 values did relate to differences in their children's school attendance rates. Eight of the correlations were in the direction that, as parents ranked the values more highly, their children were more frequently in school. Five of the correlations were in the opposite direction, such that, as parents ranked those values more highly, their children were less often in school. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed for these 13 values, 6 of which were terminal values and 7 of which were instrumental values.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: When grouped on the basis of their children's school attendance patterns, there are no differences in parental value rankings.

The results reported for the first hypothesis suggest that there were some relationships between the rankings parents assigned to certain values and their children's school attendance patterns. The second hypothesis was formulated to investigate whether differences in value rankings existed when the parents were grouped according to their children's school attendance rates.

The 90 parent respondents were sorted into three groups on the basis of their children's days of absence from school. The Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether the groups differed in ranking the values. Results of the analysis are presented in Tables 4.13 and 4.14. The terminal values are shown in Table 4.13, and the instrumental values appear in

Table 4.14. The .01 level was established as the criterion for statistical significance.

Table 4.13: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA: Terminal values.

Value	Mean Rank Low-Absence	Mean Rank Med.-Absence	Mean Rank High Absence	Chi-Square	Signif.
A comfortable life	11.28	8.33	4.68	32.27	.0000*
Equality	7.66	6.30	6.21	3.90	.1422
Exciting life	13.34	9.97	7.43	23.91	.0000*
Family security	8.13	6.53	6.75	1.08	.5825
Freedom	8.88	7.03	7.96	3.26	.1962
Health	6.78	5.50	7.21	3.69	.1583
Inner harmony	10.59	11.83	10.68	1.28	.5283
Mature love	10.81	8.23	9.82	4.02	.1342
National security	13.59	15.27	14.32	2.98	.2255
Pleasure	13.34	8.97	7.61	22.45	.0000*
Salvation	11.00	7.87	8.39	5.83	.0541
Self-respect	5.66	8.93	7.71	7.18	.0276
A sense of accomplishment	8.28	11.00	14.39	31.00	.0000*
Social recognition	9.91	9.87	12.93	4.82	.0890
True friendship	8.63	12.33	8.39	9.48	.0087*
Wisdom	7.16	10.87	13.50	35.13	.0000*
A world at peace	5.72	10.93	10.25	14.28	.0008*
A world of beauty	10.31	11.20	12.71	1.03	.5988

*Significant at the .01 level.

Table 4.14: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA: Instrumental values.

Value	Mean Rank Low-Absence	Mean Rank Med.-Absence	Mean Rank High-Absence	Chi-Square	Signif.
Ambitious	5.69	8.27	8.54	9.69	.0079*
Broad-minded	10.59	8.57	10.36	3.37	.1859
Capable	8.84	8.97	8.75	0.20	.9059
Clean	7.16	6.77	5.00	1.62	.4440
Courageous	11.84	9.27	7.82	11.92	.0026*
Forgiving	7.03	8.40	10.61	9.23	.0099*
Helpful	10.78	7.33	6.89	9.63	.0081*
Honest	5.75	7.57	5.79	3.60	.1653
Imaginative	11.75	12.60	15.61	19.93	.0000*
Independent	10.25	9.10	8.82	1.53	.4665
Intellectual	10.63	13.20	14.29	18.00	.0001*
Logical	10.19	12.90	14.00	21.62	.0000*
Loving	5.91	6.57	7.32	0.93	.6295
Loyal	10.75	9.20	8.07	4.68	.0964
Obedient	14.19	13.70	11.82	4.42	.1098
Polite	10.06	10.23	9.25	0.72	.6967
Responsible	6.50	9.07	9.96	6.25	.0438
Self-controlled	13.13	9.30	8.11	11.13	.0038*

*Significant at the .01 level.

As shown in Table 4.13, there were seven terminal values that were ranked differently by the three parent groups. *A comfortable life, an exciting life, pleasure, a sense of accomplishment, true friendship, wisdom,* and *a world at peace* all showed statistically significant differences. Among these seven values, three different patterns were observed as the parent groups ranked the values. In some cases, the parent group rankings appeared linear, having stepwise increases in rankings. In other cases, the rankings appeared linear, but decreasing among the groups. Finally, other relationships appeared to be curvilinear, evidencing no linear pattern.

These relationships for these seven terminal values are presented in Figure 4.1. Note that an increased ranking for a parent group is represented by a larger bar on the chart, in that a ranking of 1 is high, or most important, on the Rokeach Value Survey. Similarly, a decreasing ranking is represented by a smaller bar because a ranking of 18 is low, or least important.

The values ranked less important by the parents of low-absence students, more important by the parents of medium-absence students, and most important by the parents of high-absence students are shown on the left column of Figure 4.1. These values, *a comfortable life, pleasure,* and *an exciting life,* demonstrated an apparent linear increase in ranking as student school attendance dropped. Parents who ranked these values more highly had children who were less often in school.

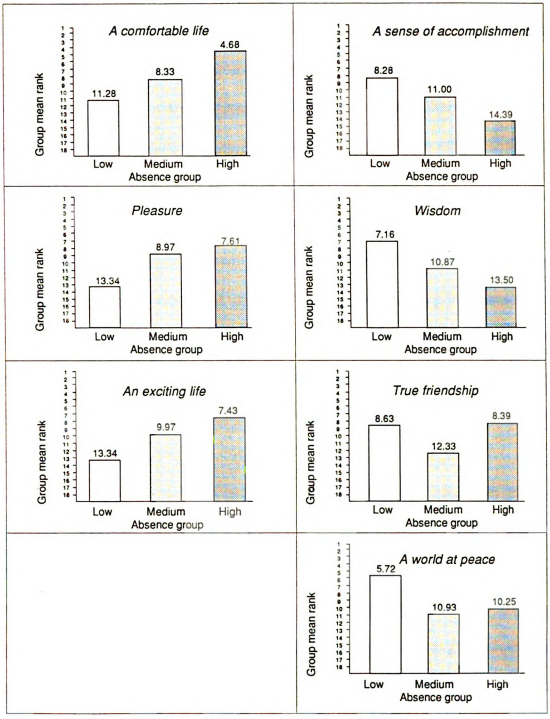

Figure 4.1: Parental mean rankings, by absence groups, for terminal values ranked differently as tested by the Kruskal-Wallis.

The two values ranked in the opposite direction are shown at the top of the second column. *A sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom* both displayed an apparent linear progression of being ranked less important by parents as their students' school attendance dropped. Stated conversely, these two values seemed to increase in importance to parents as their children attended school more frequently.

Two other values appeared to display the third pattern, that of being curvilinear. *True friendship,* shown by the Kruskal-Wallis to be ranked differently among the parent groups, was ranked as less important by the parents of medium-absence students, and as more important by the parents of both low- and high-absence students. *A world at peace* was seen as more important by the parents of low-absence students, but as less important by the parents of the other two groups.

The magnitude of the differences in rankings by the three parent groups are also of interest. On Figure 4.1 it can be seen that the low-absence parent group's mean ranking of *a comfortable life* was lower than the mean rankings of the other two parent groups. A mean ranking of 11.28 for the low-absence group is lower than the mean ranking of 8.33 for the medium-absence group, which in turn is lower than the mean ranking of the high-absence group (4.68).

These relationships are contrasted with those for *true friendship,* for example. Note that the bars for the low-absence group (mean rank 8.63) and the high-absence group (mean rank 8.39) are similar in size.

Thus, Figure 4.1 also illustrates that, for some terminal values found to be ranked differently by the parent groups, the magnitude of the differences among the groups was greater (note *a comfortable life, pleasure, an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment,* and, in particular, *wisdom*). For other values, the magnitude of the differences was not so great (see *true friendship* and *a world at peace*).

A similar analysis was conducted for the instrumental values that the Kruskal-Wallis had indicated parent groups had ranked differently (see Table 4.14). Eight values showed statistically significant differences in the way the parent groups ranked them. Those instrumental values were *ambitious, courageous, forgiving, helpful, imaginative, intellectual, logical,* and *self-controlled.*

As with the terminal values, the patterns of positive and negative linearity were evident in examining the differences among the parent groups in the way they ranked the instrumental values. For the values *helpful, self-controlled,* and *courageous,* parents ranked each as being more important as their children missed more and more school. For *ambitious, intellectual, logical, imaginative,* and *forgiving,* parents ranked each as being less important as their children missed more and more school. However, the magnitude of the differences

became problematic in interpreting this analysis for the instrumental values. Figure 4.2 is helpful in describing these results.

From Figure 4.2, it appears that the trend for the value *helpful* was linear and positive, such that as student absence increased, parental ranking of the value increased. Yet the magnitude of the difference between the mean rank of the medium-absence parent group (7.33) and that of the high-absence group (6.89) was not great. Thus, the question was raised as to whether the relationship was linear or curvilinear.

This problem is an artifact of the use of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The test was valuable in that it could be used to analyze the three parent groups jointly. Statistically, this pooled the variance due to error for all three groups, thus increasing the confidence that any differences found were not attributable to chance. However, it did not allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding differences between any pair of groups.

When comparing any pair of groups in this analysis, error variance due to the absence of the third group could not be calculated. A typical adjustment is to change the alpha level on a follow-up test in order to be more certain that results are not due to chance. This has the effect of partitioning the variance, even though that is not precisely what has been done. In the case of comparing these three groups, dividing the alpha level by three would provide the required standard. However, when the Mann-Whitney was used to compare pairs of

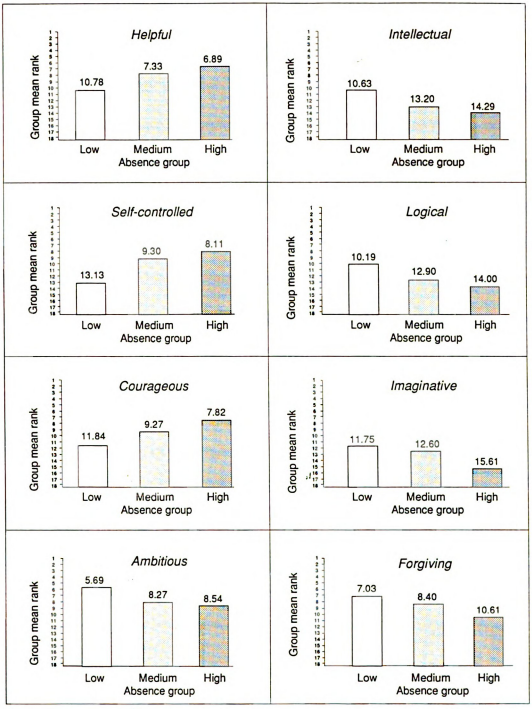

Figure 4.2: Parental mean rankings, by absence groups, for instrumental values ranked differently as tested by the Kruskal-Wallis.

groups, the significance values were so low (ranging from .0000 to .0099) that there would have been little practical significance in using the procedure.

When the Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the groups in this pairwise fashion, the intention was to determine to what the aggregate differences found through administration of the Kruskal-Wallis could be attributed. It was possible that two parent groups were quite similar to each other and quite different from the third group as they ranked the values (the curvilinear model). Or it could have been that all groups were different from each other (the linear model). The Mann-Whitney was performed on each of the 15 values, 7 terminal and 8 instrumental, which had been found to be ranked differently under the Kruskal-Wallis. The results of the Mann-Whitney are shown in Tables 4.15 and 4.16.

Table 4.15: Results of the Mann-Whitney test: Terminal values.

Value	Low-Absence vs. Medium Absence	Medium-Absence vs. High-Absence	Low-Absence vs. High-Absence
A comfortable life	+	+	+
Exciting life	+		+
Pleasure	+		+
A sense of accomplishment	+	+	+
True friendship	+	+	
Wisdom	+	+	+
A world at peace	+		+

Note: + denotes values on which significant differences were found.

Table 4.16: Results of the Mann-Whitney test: Instrumental values.

Value	Low-Absence vs. Medium-Absence	Medium-Absence vs. High-Absence	Low-Absence vs. High-Absence
Ambitious	+		+
Courageous	+		+
Forgiving			+
Helpful	+		+
Imaginative		+	+
Intellectual	+		+
Logical	+		+
Self-controlled	+		+

Note: + denotes values on which significant differences were found.

From Table 4.15 it can be seen that *a comfortable life* was ranked differently in all three comparisons. The mean ranking increased about four ranks in comparing the low-absence (11.28) and medium-absence (8.33) groups, and it increased another four ranks in comparing the medium-absence (8.33) and high-absence (4.68) parent groups. A lower value means a higher ranking, with a rank of 1 being the highest or most important value and a rank of 18 being the lowest or least important value. Thus, *a comfortable life* was ranked significantly differently by each parent group, and the mean ranking increased as the children's school attendance decreased. As parents thought *a comfortable life* was more important, their children were less likely to be in school.

An exciting life, pleasure, and *a world at peace* were ranked differently by the low-absence group when compared with both the medium-absence and high-absence groups, but no difference was found in comparing the mean rankings of the medium- and high-absence groups. For *an exciting life,* the low-absence group's mean ranking of 13.34 was significantly lower than the mean ranking of either the medium-absence (9.97) or high-absence (7.43) group. Again, a difference of about four ranks in the mean ranking statistic was a significant difference. Yet the 2.5 ranks separating the medium- and high-absence groups was not a significant difference. *Pleasure* displayed a nearly identical pattern to *an exciting life* in the way it was ranked by the parent groups, as the mean ranks were very similar (the low-absence group mean rankings were tied for *pleasure* and *an exciting life* at a mean ranking of 13.34 for each). *A world at peace,* although once again seen differently by the low-absence group but similarly by the medium- and high-absence groups, was ranked much higher (being more important) by the low-absence group. More than five mean ranks separated the low- from the medium- and high-absence groups for this value.

A sense of accomplishment was ranked differently in all comparisons. The relationship was linear; as student attendance decreased, so did parental rankings. The low-absence mean ranking of 8.28 was higher than the medium-absence mean ranking of 11.00, which in turn was higher than the high-absence mean ranking of 14.34. Parents who thought this value was important had children who were more often in school. The terminal value *wisdom* had the

same pattern, with the low-absence mean ranking (7.16) higher than the medium-absence mean ranking (10.87), which in turn was higher than the high-absence mean ranking (13.50).

True friendship exhibited a ranking pattern unlike that of the other terminal values. For this value, the differences between the mean ranking by the low-absence (8.63) and high-absence (8.39) groups were insignificant. But both of these groups ranked the value as more important than did the medium-absence group (12.33).

Turning to the instrumental values (Table 4.16), it is first noted that there were no instrumental values for which significant differences were found among all three parent groups. For all eight tested instrumental values, a significant difference was found between the mean ranking of the low-absence group when compared with the mean ranking of the high-absence group. For six of the values (*ambitious, courageous, helpful, intellectual, logical,* and *self-controlled*), differences were also found between the mean rankings of the low- and medium-absence groups. For one value (*imaginative*), a difference in mean rankings was found between the medium- and high-absence groups. Thus, for the instrumental values, none of the relationships that appeared to be linear when observing Figure 4.2 were found to be so. Most of the differences among the parental mean rankings for the instrumental values were found under the Mann-Whitney to be differences between the low-absence parent group and the other two groups, the medium- and high-absence groups.

For *helpful, self-controlled,* and *courageous*, the low-absence group mean rankings revealed that these parents thought these values were less important than did the other two parent groups. In general, the differences for these three values were about three ranks separating the low- from the medium- and high-absence groups.

For *ambitious, intellectual, logical,* and *forgiving,* the low-absence parent group mean ranking was higher than that of the other groups, meaning that the low-absence parents thought these values were more important than did the other groups. *Logical* and *intellectual* displayed nearly identical profiles. For all four of these values, the magnitude of the differences in mean rankings was again generally on the order of three ranks separating the groups.

Imaginative was the anomaly among the instrumental values. This was the one value the low- and medium-absence parents ranked similarly (mean ranking of 11.75 by the low-absence parents and 12.60 by the medium-absence parents). The high-absence parents (mean ranking 15.61) saw this value as much less important than did the other two groups.

Considering both terminal and instrumental values, the use of the Mann-Whitney revealed that the majority of differences in the way the three parent groups ranked the values resided in the differences between the low-absence group when compared with the other two groups. Three values, *a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom,* all terminal values, were confirmed as having linear relationships across the parent groups. For *a comfortable life,*

as parents thought the value was more important, their children were less often in school. As parents assessed *a sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom* as more important, their children were more often in school. Hypothesis 2 was rejected for the 15 values, 7 terminal and 8 instrumental, as described above.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: The rankings of low-absence parents (R_{Low}) for *a sense of accomplishment, wisdom, imaginative, intellectual, logical, mature love, responsible, a comfortable life, pleasure, salvation, clean,* and *obedient* (educational values) will be the same as those of the medium-absence (R_{Med}) and high absence (R_{High}) parents.

There were three tests for this hypothesis. The Spearman, the Kruskal-Wallis, and the Mann-Whitney each provided some indication as to whether the values in the 12-value model of educational predisposition were associated with group differences and school absence behavior. The results from each of these tests on the terminal values are shown in Table 4.17.

Six terminal values were predicted to be related to school-attendance behavior by the logic of the 12-value model. The model was based on Rokeach's (1974) findings relative to values that discriminated among respondents with varying years of education (see Chapter I). The predicted terminal values, as shown in Table 4.17, were *a comfortable life, mature love, pleasure, salvation, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom.*

As shown in Table 4.17, variations in the parental rankings for *a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom* were correlated with

Table 4.17: Summary of results–terminal values.

Value	Predicted by 12-Value Model?	Spearman Rank Correl.	Kruskal-Wallis	Mann-Whitney Low/Med.	Mann-Whitney Med./High	Mann-Whitney Low/High
A comfortable life	Yes	-.56	+	+	+	+
Equality						
Exciting life		-.42	+	+		+
Family security						
Freedom						
Health						
Inner harmony						
Mature love	Yes					
National security						
Pleasure	Yes	-.41	+	+		+
Salvation	Yes	-.26				
Self-respect						
A sense of accomplishment	Yes	.55	+	+	+	+
Social recognition						
True friendship			+	+	+	
Wisdom	Yes	.54	+	+	+	+
A world at peace		.30	+	+		+
A world of beauty						

Note: + denotes value on which significant differences were found.

children's school attendance, with coefficients of -.56, .55, and .54, respectively. Each of these values was also ranked differently by the parents when grouped according to their children's school attendance rates as tested by the Kruskal-Wallis. Further, one parent group ranked each value differently from the other two parent groups as tested by the Mann-Whitney.

In the case of both *a sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom,* parents whose children were in school more often ranked these values as more important, which was in the predicted direction. The mean ranking for *a sense of accomplishment* for the low-absence group was 8.28, for the medium-absence group 11.00, and for the high-absence group 14.39. This means that the high-absence group ranked six other values as more important than *a sense of accomplishment* when compared with the parents of low-absence students. Similar rankings existed for *wisdom,* as reported above.

In the case of *a comfortable life,* the relationship was opposite; parents whose children were in school more often ranked this value as less important, which again was in the predicted direction. The magnitude of differences here was somewhat larger, with the low-, middle-, and high-absence groups' mean rankings calculated at 11.28, 8.33, and 4.68, respectively.

For the values *an exciting life, pleasure,* and *a world at peace,* the rank correlation coefficients were -.42, -.41, and .30, respectively, so each had a relationship with student school attendance. These three values were found by the use of the Kruskal-Wallis to be ranked differently by the parent groups. Use

of the follow-up Mann-Whitney revealed that differences existed in the mean rankings of these values when comparing the low-absence group with both the medium- and high-absence groups, but not when comparing the medium- and high-absence groups. The direction of differences was the same for *an exciting life* and *pleasure* (as predicted), in that parents whose children were in school more often ranked these values as less important. Parents whose children were in school more often ranked *a world at peace* as being more important. It should be noted that neither *an exciting life* nor *a world at peace* was predicted by the logic of the 12-value model to be related to school-attendance behavior.

Salvation was related to school attendance, with a rank correlation coefficient of -.26, in the predicted direction. Parents whose children were more often in school ranked this value as being less important. However, this moderate correlation was not accompanied by any detected differences in the ways the parent groups ranked the value.

Variance in the parental rankings of *true friendship* was not related to school-attendance patterns of their children. However, as shown in Table 4.17, there were differences in the ways parents ranked the value as found under the Kruskal-Wallis. This can be attributed to differences in the rankings when comparing the low- and medium-absence parents, and when comparing the medium- and high-absence parents. The low- and high-absence parent groups' mean rankings were 8.63 and 8.39, respectively. The medium-absence parents ranked this value lower than did the other two groups, with a mean ranking of

12.33. *True friendship* was not one of the values predicted by the 12-value model.

Variations in parental rankings for *mature love,* although predicted by the logic of the 12-value model to correlate with school attendance, did not demonstrate such a relationship. Nor did any of the parent groups rank it differently from one another.

The summary of results for the instrumental values is presented in Table 4.18.

Six instrumental values were predicted to be related to school attendance: *clean, imaginative, intellectual, logical, obedient,* and *responsible.* For three values, *clean, obedient,* and *responsible,* no relationships were discovered under any of the tests.

For three other values, *imaginative, intellectual,* and *logical,* relationships were found in the predicted directions. The correlation coefficients for these values were .45 (*imaginative*), .38 (*intellectual*), and .47 (*logical*). Parents whose children were in school more often ranked these values as more important than did parents whose children missed school more often. In the case of *imaginative*, the differences in mean rankings between the medium- and high-absence groups, and between the low- and high-absence groups, were significant. In the cases of both *intellectual* and *logical,* the differences between the low- and medium-absence groups, and between the low- and high-absence

Table 4.18: Summary of results--instrumental values.

Value	Predicted by 12-Value Model?	Spearman Rank Correl.	Kruskal-Wallis	Mann-Whitney Low/Med.	Mann-Whitney Med./High	Mann-Whitney Low/High
Ambitious		.35	+	+		+
Broad-minded						
Capable						
Clean	Yes					
Courageous		-.36	+	+		+
Forgiving		.28	+			+
Helpful			+	+		+
Honest						
Imaginative	Yes	.45	+		+	+
Independent						
Intellectual	Yes	.38	+	+		+
Logical	Yes	.47	+	+		+
Loving						
Loyal						
Obedient	Yes					
Polite						
Responsible	Yes					
Self-controlled		-.35	+	+		+

Note: + denotes value on which significant differences were found.

groups, were significant. In all three cases, the mean rankings for the low-, medium-, and high-absence groups were about 10, 13, and 14, respectively.

Among the nonpredicted values, *self-controlled, ambitious,* and *courageous* were found to exhibit similar patterns. All had correlation coefficients of about .35. The correlations for *self-controlled* and *courageous* were negative, meaning that parents who ranked these values as more important had children who missed school often. For *ambitious,* the correlation was positive, meaning that parents who ranked this value as more important had children who were in school more often. In the comparisons between the low-absence group and both of the other groups, the parental mean rankings were significantly different (but not when comparing the medium- and high-absence parent groups) for these three values.

The value *forgiving,* another nonpredicted value, had a correlation coefficient of .28, indicating that parents who ranked this value more highly had children who were more likely to be in school more often. Although found to be ranked differently by the parent groups using the Kruskal-Wallis, the follow-up of the Mann-Whitney revealed that only the low- and high-absence groups were significantly different (mean ranks of 7.03 and 10.61, respectively) in the ways they ranked this value.

Finally, ranking of the value *helpful,* although not related to children's school attendance, was different for some of the parent groups. The low- and medium-absence groups ranked it differently (mean ranks of 10.78 and 7.33,

respectively). So did the low- and high-absence groups (mean ranks of 10.78 and 6.89, respectively).

Considering the 36 values on the Rokeach Value Survey, higher parental rankings for two terminal values were predicted and found to have comparatively strong relationships to increased student attendance: *a sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom.* Three values were also predicted and found to have this pattern. Those values were *imaginative, intellectual,* and *logical.*

Two other terminal values were predicted and found as having the opposite pattern, that being a higher ranking by the parent and decreased school attendance by the child, and a comparatively strong relationship. Those values were *a comfortable life* and *pleasure.* Another terminal value, *salvation,* was predicted to have this pattern, but it was found to have only a slight relationship. No instrumental values were both predicted and found to have this direction of a relationship.

Several nonpredicted values did evidence a relationship to school attendance. The ranking of *an exciting life* (terminal list) and *courageous* and *self-controlled* (instrumental list) were related to school attendance in the negative pattern (higher ranking by parent, less school attendance by the student).

The opposite relationship existed for the nonpredicted values *a world at peace* (terminal list) and *ambitious* and *forgiving* (instrumental list). As parents

ranked these values as being more important, their children were more often in school.

The 12-value model was confirmed in the cases of five of six predicted terminal values (*a comfortable life, pleasure, salvation, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom*), and in the cases of three of six predicted instrumental values (*imaginative, intellectual,* and *logical*). Research results also illuminated four other terminal values and five instrumental values not included in the model that exhibited relationships similar to those predicted by the model.

Summary

Initial findings and results related to the three hypotheses were described in the four preceding sections. Nearly all values had been ranked either first or last by at least 1 of the 90 respondents, and standard deviations for mean rankings ranged about three points for both lists of values. Differences between the current sample and the Rokeach national sample (nonholders of high school diplomas) were found in the rankings of 13 of the 36 values, with the greatest differences among the terminal values.

The first null hypothesis was rejected for 15 values regarding the association between parental ranking and student days of school absence. Three correlation coefficients exceeded the .5 level, four were between .4 and .5, and five were between .3 and .4. A single value ranking correlated with school absence with a coefficient of .28. The majority of the highest coefficients were among the terminal values.

In comparing groups of parents sorted on the basis of their children's absence rates, the null hypothesis was rejected for 15 values, 7 among the terminal and 8 among the instrumental values. In a follow-up analysis, three terminal values (but no instrumental values) were demonstrated to have been ranked differently in all comparisons of the three parent groups, four terminal and six instrumental values were ranked differently in two of the three parent-group comparisons, and one instrumental value was ranked differently in one of the three parent-group comparisons.

In examining the 12-value model of educational predisposition, the null hypothesis was rejected for five of six terminal values and for three of six instrumental values. The evidence was a combination of the results presented for the first two hypotheses.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a summary of the study and a review and discussion of the major findings. The implications of the findings and recommendations for further research are presented next. The chapter ends with a section concluding the study.

Summary

The theories of Tönnies, Durkheim, Parsons, and Rokeach suggest that social/institutional or commonly held values are interdependent with personal or individually held values. Parsons and Rokeach, in particular, discussed the idea that values are antecedents to behavior. A review of literature related to school absence revealed that the problem of school absenteeism has been pervasive across time and cultures. No studies were found that addressed the possible relationship between parents' value patterns and their children's school absence patterns. Some investigators have found that early school absenteeism had a serious negative influence on subsequent school achievement, adult income, and other life circumstances.

The perspective of the family as it contributes to students' academic life, a line of investigation developed in research into high school dropping-out behavior (Okey, 1990) and high school achievement (Clark, 1983) was adopted for the current study. The researcher's purpose in this study was to identify which parental values (representing the family perspective), if any, related to the school-absence behavior of children.

Five research questions guided this study. Three hypotheses were formulated to investigate those questions. The study was conducted in a midwestern urban school district enrolling 20,000 students in kindergarten through grade 12. A random sample of children enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 was selected from among families in which the mother had not completed high school. The sample consisted of 226 children from the population of 1,604 cases. Rokeach Value Surveys were mailed to the parents of these children. The response rate was 39.8%, reflecting 90 survey returns.

Parents' rankings of the values on the survey were analyzed using SPSS on the mainframe computer at Michigan State University. The rankings were compared to those of Rokeach's (1973) non-high-school-graduate groups. Subsequently, the Spearman rho, or rank correlation coefficient, was used to determine whether the current parent rankings of the values were related to their children's school-absence rate. The Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA was then employed to examine parent rankings for differences between groups when parents were sorted according to their children's absence rate (low, medium, or

high). The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used as a follow-up to this analysis. A 12-value model of educational predisposition was developed, based on results obtained by Rokeach (1973). The three nonparametric statistical analyses were then used to examine the accuracy of the model developed for this study.

The analyses revealed that some differences did exist between the non-high-school graduates surveyed by Rokeach and those in the current study. Further, some parental value rankings were correlated with students' absence rates. Also, when grouped on the basis of their children's absence rates, the parent groups differed significantly in their patterns of value rankings. Finally, the 12-value model was partially confirmed.

Review and Discussion of the Major Findings

The researcher's purpose in this study was to investigate the possible relationship between parental values and elementary students' school absenteeism. It was thought that a description and explanation of such a relationship would illuminate one facet of a problem that has persisted over time and across cultures.

The first two research questions focused on describing the way members of the current sample ranked the values and comparing these rankings to those of other samples. The first two questions were:

1. How did parents in the current sample rank the values on the survey?

2. How do these results compare to those from other samples?

The terminal values ranked most highly by the current sample were *health, equality,* and *family security.* The instrumental values ranked at the top were *clean, honest,* and *loving.* The terminal values receiving the lowest rankings by the current sample were *a sense of accomplishment, a world of beauty,* and *national security.* The instrumental values ranked lowest were *intellectual, imaginative,* and *obedient.*

Nearly every value on both lists was ranked first or last by at least one respondent, and the standard deviations of the mean rankings for each value were often similar. In the cases of the terminal values *a world of beauty* and *a world at peace,* and the instrumental values *polite* and *self-controlled,* the standard deviations were somewhat higher than those for the means of the other values. This suggests that respondents had somewhat more differing opinions, hence somewhat less agreement, regarding the relative importance of these values as compared with the other ones. Yet these differences of opinion were not significantly greater than others observed. Overall, the responses of the current sample demonstrated sufficient variability to lend greater confidence to subsequent analysis.

Given that the current sample was restricted to non-high-school graduates, it was important to compare their responses to some other sample, in order to provide a context for more informed analysis. Thus, the responses of

Rokeach's non-high-school respondents of 1973 were employed as a way of explaining and describing the current results.

The parents in the current sample ranked the values on the survey in a similar way, but not exactly as did Rokeach's non-high-school respondents in 1973. For example, the current sample was far less concerned with the issue of war than was Rokeach's sample. This finding can be attributed to the fact that the 1973 sample was responding at the time of both the Vietnam War and the Cold War. The current sample responded years after these ended.

The current sample ranked *equality* much higher than did Rokeach's sample. This may be due in part to Rokeach's observation from his data that blacks tended to rank this value more highly than did Caucasians, as the current sample included proportionally more blacks than Rokeach's.

Three other terminal values--*an exciting life, mature love,* and *pleasure*--were ranked higher by the current sample. This indicates that the current sample was more hedonistic or more concerned with immediate gratification than were Rokeach's respondents 20 years ago.

Among the instrumental values, differences between the two groups were not as pronounced as for the terminal values. Only one value, *loving*, was ranked much higher by the current sample than by Rokeach's sample. *Capable* and *independent* were also ranked more highly by the current sample, but not markedly so.

When compared with the Rokeach sample, the responses of the current sample exhibited several differences. These differences seem sensible, given changes in society over time and the differences in racial composition between the two samples.

The third research question was posed to investigate whether there was a relationship between parents' rankings of the values and the school attendance behavior of their children. The question was:

3. Are these rankings by parents related to the school attendance patterns of their children?

Null Hypothesis 3 stated that there was no relationship between the parents' rankings and the children's days of attendance. This null hypothesis was rejected for 15 of the 36 values on the survey--eight terminal and seven instrumental values. Among these 15 values, the strong relationships between the parental ranking of the value and the school attendance of the child were for the terminal values *a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom.* The relationship was negative for *a comfortable life,* meaning that school attendance dropped as parents ranked this value more highly. For *a sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom*, the relationship was positive; that is, a higher ranking of the value was associated with increased school attendance. The relationships for the other five terminal values and the seven instrumental values, although significant, were not as strong as for the above-mentioned three values.

The second hypothesis was formulated to answer the fourth research question. This question was:

4. As parents are grouped on the basis of their children's school attendance rates, are differences in value rankings evident?

The parents were partitioned into three groups, based on their children's school attendance patterns. The partitioning was done to investigate more fully the relationship between parental value rankings and school attendance, as confirmed under the first hypothesis. The researcher was now able to compare a group of parents whose children were highly absent with a separate group of parents whose children were moderately absent, and then with a group of parents whose children were not often absent from school. The null hypothesis was that no differences in rankings would be found.

A number of differences were found in the way parents ranked the values when they were grouped according to their children's school attendance patterns. Under the first test, using the Kruskal-Wallis, 15 values (seven terminal and eight instrumental) were ranked differently by the three parent groups. Those 15 differences were then investigated to determine whether the variances in rankings were due to differences between one pair of groups (between the low- and medium-absence parent groups, for example), between two pairs of groups, or among all three combinations of groups.

Use of the Mann-Whitney for this follow-up analysis revealed that three terminal values were ranked differently in the comparisons among all three

groups (*a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment,* and *wisdom*). Eleven other values four terminal and seven instrumental) were ranked differently in comparing tow pairs of groups. Two of the terminal values in this second tier, *an exciting life* and *pleasure,* and four of the instrumental values from this set, *ambitious, imaginative, intellectual,* and *logical,* are of particular interest when considered in concert with the findings under the first hypothesis.

The combined results of the tests for the first and second hypotheses supported the logic that certain ranking combinations by parents (value patterns) might indicate a particular subset of values that could be considered the "educational values." Future-oriented or delayed-gratification types of values (*a sense of accomplishment, wisdom, intellectual*) related to school attendance in a positive way, for as parents ranked these values more highly their children were more often in school. The converse was also true. As parents ranked these values as less important, their children were less often in school.

In addition, the parental rankings for such present-oriented or hedonistic types of values as *a comfortable life, an exciting life,* and *pleasure* also related to their children's school attendance, but in the opposite direction. As these values were ranked more highly, the children were less often in school. And when parents ranked these values lower, the children were more often in school.

Subsequently, the 12-value model of educational predisposition was formulated in response to the last research question. That question was:

5. How accurately does the 12-value model predict the value-ranking differences found in the study?

The model supported predictions of the direction of parents' rankings of values for certain values that were ranked differently by people varying in years of schooling, based on the results from Rokeach's national sample.

The model was confirmed in the cases of 8 of the 12 predicted values. For six of those eight values, the model was particularly accurate. The analysis employed a combination of the three tests performed under the first two hypotheses. The strongest relationships were noted between increasing school attendance and higher parental rankings for the values *a sense of accomplishment* and *wisdom*. Medium relationships in the same direction were noted for *imaginative, intellectual,* and *logical*. A strong relationship was noted between decreasing school attendance and higher parental rankings for *a comfortable life*.

In addition, there was one other major finding that was not directly related to the hypotheses, but that did relate to the logic of the study. The families whose children missed school often were nearly twice as likely to have moved their residences over the course of the school year, to have had their telephones disconnected, and/or not to have had telephones, than were families whose children were usually in school. Families with high-absence children had considerably more difficulty paying rent and telephone bills than did families with

low-absence children, although family income did not vary greatly across the sample.

This investigation revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the way parents ranked certain values. Those differences were associated with their children's school absence rates. As discussed above, the findings generally confirm the hypotheses as posed. In addition, the findings help describe and explain the relationship between parental value patterns and student absenteeism in a manner consistent with the theoretical background of the study, as discussed below.

There are parents who ranked more highly such values as *a comfortable life, an exciting life,* and *pleasure*. The same parents ranked less highly such values as *a sense of accomplishment, wisdom,* and *intellectual*. Application of the Tönnies (1957) dichotomy precisely predicts these ranking differences. People who value more highly the present (*gemeinschaften*) logically value less highly the future (*gesellschaften*). The findings of this study clearly imply that the dichotomy exists.

The *gemeinschaften* social structure emphasizes collectivism and an orientation to the present. People imbued with this outlook are typified by an agrarian- or village-style communal life. The alternative structure is that of *gesellschaften,* emphasizing the furtherance of individual ends. This structure is common in bureaucratic, urban lifestyles.

Schooling in urban settings generally emphasizes the latter structure. Thus, a potential for conflict exists when a person with the *gemeinschaften* orientation interacts with the institution. Brief interpersonal relationships characterize the institution. What matters to the school is the future. Conversely, what matters to the *gemeinschaften* parent is the present. For this parent, family and community personal relationships, not individual attainment, are the source of success and joy. The fact that these value-pattern differences were discovered within a sample that varied little in terms of family income is significant. The findings indicate that there is not a "culture of poverty," but that there are differences in value patterns among the poor. Rokeach (1973) made the same argument, and the current findings are consistent with his.

In addition to examining parental value patterns, this researcher investigated children's school attendance. Their days in school varied, and among students who were not in school often, no verifiable excuses were offered. In fact, these highly absent, poor-excuse students had their parents' permission not to attend school. The inevitable interpretation here was that parents did not really care about schooling for their children.

It was discovered that the parents whose value patterns were most like the institutional pattern sent their children to school regularly, given the logic of the 12-value model and the results of the study. Those parents who had increasingly divergent (from the mainstream or institutional pattern) outlooks regarding certain values sent their children to school less and less. Thus, the

interpretation is that, as the parent has a greater *gesellschaften* orientation, the more likely the child is to interact with the larger society, in this case as a result of school attendance. The more *gemeinschaften* the parent's orientation, the less likely the student is to participate in the larger society. These children are not interacting regularly with the mainstream society. The possibility of social alienation later in life is more likely under the latter circumstances. The major finding, however, is that the parental value pattern is, in fact, associated with the school attendance pattern of the child, in a manner consistent with the Tönnies model.

Another finding from the study is significant. As shown in Table 3.5 (page 87), there were wide differences among respondents in the number of family residence changes and telephone "problems." These differences were strongly associated with absence rates. Family life, under essentially equal financial support, varied widely within the sample. For children who missed a lot of school, neither a telephone nor a stable place to stay was certain. High-absence children were nearly twice as likely as low-absence children to have moved during the school year. High-absence children were nearly twice as likely to have had their phones disconnected or get a new phone number during the school year. And they were more than nine times as likely never to have had a telephone during the school year.

Children who are absent from school often with no good reason live with parents who see the world differently. This parental view of the world is different

from that held by parents who send their children to school often, or so it was hypothesized in this study. The difference in world-view can be expressed in many ways. One measure is a survey of parental opinions, and in this study the opinions of parents regarding their rankings of values were solicited. Another measure of world view, however, is direct observation of how a family lives. The participant-observer method allows for behavioral observation and subsequent analysis.

The count of residence changes and telephone "problems" for the sample in this study provided a behavioral glimpse at family life in the style of a field study. The count confirmed that differences did exist among families, and it further confirmed that the differences were aligned with student absence patterns. These qualitative differences in family behavior strongly suggest that parents differ in the strength of their commitment to regular school attendance for their children. Moving often and changing the child's school is, unfortunately, too often a necessity for many poor people. Yet some move, whereas others decide to stay to keep the children in the same school. Those who move often do not place a high priority on school continuity because not only do their children change schools often, they also miss school often for no "good" reason. The evidence cited here lends additional support to the other findings that confirmed the hypotheses of this study.

Implications of the Findings

The major implication of these findings is that changing the attendance patterns of high-absence students in their earliest school years requires significant attention to parental value systems. Parents whose children are often absent from school with no good reason see the world quite differently than does the school or its agents. The anger encountered by truant officers and others who encourage these parents to send their children to school more regularly is deeply rooted in cultural differences. Those differences are directly attributable to differences in value systems between the culture of the parent and the prevailing culture as represented by the school. Bringing about any significant change in attendance rates will require significant change in this lack of value consensus between the home and the school.

From a theoretical perspective, the first observation of note regarding these findings is that values and behavior appear to be linked. Differences in parents' belief or value systems are, in fact, related to their children's school absences. The lack of a value consensus between some parents and the school is associated with higher levels of school absence, whereas a common or shared value system between other parents and the school results in higher levels of school attendance.

Parsons (1955) wrote, "The conditions under which effective socialization can take place then will include being placed in a social situation *where the more powerful and responsible persons are themselves integrated in the cultural value*

system in question" (p. 17, emphasis added). Children whose parents' value systems are not consistent with or integrated with the prevailing social value system will not be effectively socialized. This lack of socialization is exacerbated when the value systems are significantly different, and is even worse when the systems are in conflict.

The problem presented by the poor socialization of some members of society into the mainstream culture (or into a main variant thereof) is serious from a pattern-maintenance standpoint. A society that is unable to replicate its patterns of interaction will not survive long without significant change. The findings from this study suggest that some poorly socialized members of society, represented by parents who have value systems that are different from the mainstream, are essentially preventing their children from attending school. In this study, it was found that, the more parents differ from the mainstream culture, as represented by their ranking of values on the survey, the lower their children's school attendance. The potential for the production of nonsocialized children is therefore high, assuming that school is important to the formation of values.

What effect does school attendance have on acquisition of mainstream cultural values? Parsons (1955) argued that nonfamily institutions have high levels of influence in highly differentiated societies like that of the United States. Thus, what level of socialization into the mainstream is evident for children who are not in school often? Speculation on this question leads to examination of the problem of school effects.

Jencks (1972, 1991), Johnson (1985), and many others have argued that schools have an influence on students. Sometimes that effect is positive; other times it is not. Often the effects are described in academic terms, less frequently in social-integration terms. But always, the assumption is that schools make a difference.

If schools make a positive difference, then the hope of society's wishing for some stability and replication is that children are in school, where they will be socialized. If the school influence is in a negative direction, the hope of society for replication lies in the parents' having an integrative effect on the child. But the implication of this study is that, among the poor, children who miss the most school live in families that are least like the mainstream society. The socialization of these highly absent children is in the hands of families that see the world differently from the prevailing norms. The chances that such families will support their children's positive integration into mainstream society are indeed slim.

A possible solution to this problem is to secure a greater value consensus between the family and the school. Herein lie the practical implications of this study. There are a number of current and past practices, and some suggested future actions, that aim directly at the value consensus problem. The primary solution is first to establish face-to-face, personal relations with parents of high-absence students. Then, educators can concentrate on working with such parents to change their value patterns.

High, unexcused student absenteeism is not a problem in all schools for a large proportion of the student body. It is a problem, however, for any individual child for whom the pattern is a reality. Thus, for at least the one case that may exist in a school, or for the many, educators can and should adopt practices that initiate and support fundamental home-school cooperation. The vaunted mission of teaching and learning is meaningless for absent children, and educators need not apologize for substituting some alternate goals. Finding ways to bring children to school on a daily basis is a prerequisite to instilling a love of learning, an ability to read, or any of a number of other worthy aims. A simple reorientation of philosophy, with a minor redirection of existing resources, is highly appropriate.

In the one-room school of old, a teacher taught an individual student for many consecutive years. The relationship among the student, the student's family, and the teacher was generally long term, severed only when the teacher or the family moved away. There was not a lot of moving away then; it was a time when children were often born in the same house in which their parents were born. This pattern of multiple interactions over time between the family and the school supported a higher level of value consensus, due in part to the on-going nature of the social relationships. Current "restructuring" proposals in elementary schools (and middle and high schools as well) include teachers having the same group of students for two or more years. Although other pedagogical benefits are generally advanced in support of these proposals, the

opportunity to bring into alignment the school and home value patterns is obvious and is strongly supported by the current research.

Another recent suggestion is called "invitational education," but it again reflects behavior long used by excellent teachers. Advocates of this practice suggest altering educational operations to make them more interesting, less harsh, more open, and therefore more "inviting." Negative comments in red pen on the front of a student's paper ("NOT his best effort!") carry a strong message in word and in medium. A positive message, in blue ink, on the bottom or back of the paper is more invitational ("I'd love to see Johnny able to put on paper what I'm sure is in his head."). The parent who already has a negative orientation toward institutional life will find a decreasing use for schooling when the experience appears to berate his or her child. The parent in this instance is much less likely to interact with the school. The opportunity is thus greatly diminished to reach the parent in order to secure a change in his or her values.

A similar case can be made for the difference between sending home a typed note on letterhead as opposed to a handwritten note from either the principal or the teacher. There are many other examples. The challenge here is to think in terms of what might "soften" the harshness of the admittedly necessary rules and regulations inherent in a larger bureaucracy in order to have a better chance of welcoming certain families into the larger community. It is not required to abandon or break rules, but merely to administer them in a less

aggressive or assertive manner, or in a manner that appears more humane and understanding.

Another arena of action is that of interagency cooperation. Certain demographic changes over time have presented schools with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Writing a nice note home seems to be a very weak practical suggestion when the parent who receives it has characteristics such as these: didn't finish high school, functionally illiterate, 19 years old, four children (the oldest of whom is in kindergarten), no husband, abusive boyfriend, no job, and no other family support or prospects. This scenario is altogether too common. Schools have sought to connect with other community agencies (both governmental and private) to help provide food, shelter, clothing, and other support to such families. It is known that schools alone do not have the resources to solve such difficult problems.

Yet in pursuing cooperative ventures, educators could insist on developing common goals that the current research suggests as critical. For example, keeping families in the same house for several years' time would certainly increase the chances that teachers could establish longer-term relationships with parents. Such a goal is compatible with the missions of other agencies. The fact that it also affords an opportunity to the school to secure a higher values consensus with the family is an additional benefit.

This focus on changing the marginal parents' values system is critical to the delivery of educational services to their children. Many people understand

and accept that entering kindergartners have a lot to learn about getting along with others, particularly in a large group setting. This is an appropriate model for practical application of the findings of the current study to adults. We should be careful to preserve and, in fact, to celebrate those individual and cultural differences that provide a richness of diversity within society. We have an obligation as public educators to accept children of all backgrounds. But we also have a mission to provide for them a foundation of opportunity, so that as they progress through our institution they increase in their ability to function in our complex society. One method strongly suggested by this study is to identify the children who are very often absent and to target their parents, to bring both the child and the parent into the larger society, and to introduce both to the notions of getting along in the larger world.

From using the island tradition of oral storytelling to help teach reading in Hawaii, to providing a hot lunch in Maine, public schools must continue to reach out to the immediate community, become a part of it, and use that relationship to build bridges for families in desperate need.

The efforts of educators to understand and accept varying value patterns and alternative family life circumstances will serve to shrink the cultural gap separating some children from access to the larger world. Because of the highly complex nature of both the systems of social interaction and the personal value patterns held by members of society, no single program or emphasis is a panacea. Rather, skilled educators will solve the problem of some poor

children's missing a lot of school for no good reason one family at a time, using a variety of techniques.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study provide a background for further research in four major areas. The nature of value patterns among parents, patterns of school absence among their young children, the relationship between the two, and the possible existence of a set of "educational values" all merit further investigation. It is suggested that this study be replicated with larger samples, nonurban samples, and more affluent samples.

How consistent are differences in parents' value rankings? In this study, certain trends were found, particularly with regard to six values. Do these same patterns exist in other samples? For example, are there affluent parents who favor immediate gratification over saving for the future? Conventional wisdom would answer in the affirmative, but updating of Rokeach's national sample would be of benefit.

Regarding the nature of school absence, school administrators and board of education members commonly accept the notion that an attendance rate of 90% or better is tolerable, and perhaps it is. But this study and other inquiries into school absence have suggested that the nonattending population includes a significant number of children who frequently miss a lot of school. The common perception is that the 10% of students who are absent on a given day

evidence random absence patterns: a few sick, a few doctor's appointments, and so on. In fact, the absentee population has a significant membership whose absence pattern is very regular and whose excuses are weak, at best. More information, and particularly updated information, would be very helpful as American educators are being asked to consider lengthening the school day and year.

In this study, a relationship was found between parents' rankings of certain values on the Rokeach Value Survey and their children's school-absence patterns. Does the same relationship exist in samples that are not poor? Is there a difference between urban and rural, rural and suburban, or other stratified samples? Answers to these questions would provide a better perspective on the importance of the role played by value-pattern variance in explaining school-absence patterns.

Another important area of inquiry concerns the question of whether a set of educational values exists. A logical proxy for educational values was tested in this study, and the results were mixed. Six values related fairly strongly to school attendance, but no simple explanation for all of the results of this study was supported. Testing the 12-value model posited herein on other samples is suggested. This investigation was limited to families in which the mother reported having no high school diploma. Would the results be similar in samples of parents having a range of educational attainment? Can the value mix be linked to other school-supporting behaviors, such as voting on school millages

and board elections, volunteering in school, donating money, and the like? Also, pattern analysis of larger data sets might be helpful in determining whether an educational-values prototype exists.

Finally, if other research supports the idea introduced in the current study --that the values of the parent are controlling in the life of the child--it is sensible to design and test some intervention programs. Schools will continue to exist, and parents will continue to keep their children at home against strong social, legal, economic, and perhaps moral sanctions. Less than 6% of the population in this study exhibited the high-absence, poor-excuse behavior, so the number of cases was not large. But the possible effect on the larger society is large, so it may be worthwhile to study effective responses to this on-going problem.

Conclusion

The fact that a few children account for a large percentage of school absence is bad news. The fact that many of these students have poor excuses (if any) for missing school ought to alarm more educators than it does. The knowledge gained in this study--that a relationship exists between school-absence patterns and parent value patterns--is not surprising, nor is it particularly newsworthy. However, the implications of the logic of this study are significant.

The postindustrial society the United States now embraces has resulted in a marked decrease in manual-labor opportunities, coupled with a dramatic rise in a service-oriented economy. The need to read, write, and get along with

others is significantly greater now than in even the recent past. True, many places of business use technology to compensate for deficiencies in their employees, as pictures of products on the cash register keypad instead of numbers for prices would indicate. But the level of skill necessary to function in this complex society continues to rise. Regardless of variations in definitions of success, the hermit and the street dweller who happily anticipate a today just like yesterday are rare.

The one common opportunity in support of having a reasonable set of options for life as an adult is schooling. The knowledge and skills, and particularly the social integration, available through universal public education are crucial to the development of the individual. They are also paramount to cohesiveness and order in a highly differentiated society. Consider just one facet of many, that of society's general acceptance of a wide variety of cultural and linguistic differences. This is possible only through the transmission of the valuing of that diversity to a critical mass of the society. Should American society be prevented from modeling and nurturing these notions with the young, the potential for cultural, ethnic, and racial conflict will escalate. Children who miss school are likely never to encounter, much less accept, people who are not like themselves. Social disintegration, in the true sense of lack of integration, is inevitable.

The problem is not so much the question of how large a nonsocialized segment of society can be accepted before the nation gets in serious trouble.

Rather, the problem is how many cases **should** be accepted. As a concomitant to any public or personal oath of educational purpose, members of society ought to commit themselves to bringing all children to the common experience of the society--school. In this regard, through the support of public education, people are in a true sense promoting the common good.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ROKEACH'S TERMINAL AND INSTRUMENTAL VALUE MEDIANS

TABLE A1. INSTRUMENTAL VALUE MEDIANS AND COMPOSITE RANK ORDERS FOR GROUPS VARYING IN EDUCATION (N = 1,404)

Value	*N* =	*0–4 Yr.*	*5–8 Yr.*	*Some High Sch.*	*Comp. High Sch.*	*Some Coll.*	*Comp. Coll.*	*Grad. Sch.*	*p*
		64	*263*	*320*	*426*	*180*	*90*	*61*	
Ambitious		5.5 (3)	6.1 (3)	6.1 (2)	6.6 (3)	7.7 (5)	7.7 (4)	8.0 (5)	—
Broadminded		9.2 (10)	8.0 (7)	8.1 (8)	6.9 (4)	7.4 (4)	6.2 (3)	5.9 (3)	—
Capable		9.5 (11)	10.3 (13)	10.0 (11)	9.0 (9)	9.1 (7)	9.7 (10)	8.7 (9)	—
Cheerful		7.7 (5)	8.1 (8)	9.4 (9)	10.3 (13)	11.3 (14)	11.8 (14)	11.8 (15)	.001
Clean		5.1 (2)	6.6 (4)	7.8 (7)	8.6 (6)	10.6 (13)	13.2 (17)	14.4 (16)	.001
Courageous		10.8 (13)	7.8 (6)	7.2 (6)	8.6 (7)	6.7 (3)	7.9 (5)	8.0 (4)	.01
Forgiving		6.8 (4)	5.8 (2)	7.0 (4)	7.3 (5)	8.8 (6)	10.7 (12)	8.3 (6)	.001
Helpful		8.5 (7)	7.7 (5)	7.2 (5)	9.0 (8)	9.5 (9)	8.8 (7)	8.6 (8)	.001
Honest		3.3 (1)	3.6 (1)	3.3 (1)	3.1 (1)	3.4 (1)	2.4 (1)	3.8 (1)	—
Imaginative		15.5 (18)	15.9 (18)	15.8 (18)	15.7 (18)	14.0 (17)	11.8 (15)	9.0 (10)	.001
Independent		11.5 (15)	10.7 (14)	10.8 (14)	10.2 (12)	10.2 (11)	9.5 (9)	8.4 (7)	—
Intellectual		15.0 (16)	14.3 (16)	13.7 (16)	13.1 (15)	10.3 (12)	9.4 (8)	9.4 (11)	.001
Logical		15.2 (17)	15.7 (17)	15.5 (17)	13.8 (17)	12.1 (16)	10.6 (11)	11.3 (14)	.001
Loving		8.0 (6)	10.1 (10)	10.0 (10)	9.3 (11)	9.6 (10)	10.8 (13)	9.7 (12)	—
Obedient		11.1 (14)	11.7 (15)	12.8 (15)	13.4 (16)	14.7 (18)	15.5 (18)	16.6 (18)	.001
Polite		10.2 (12)	10.1 (11)	10.4 (13)	10.5 (14)	11.6 (15)	12.4 (16)	14.7 (17)	.001
Responsible		8.8 (9)	8.6 (9)	6.9 (3)	6.1 (2)	5.9 (2)	5.4 (2)	5.7 (2)	.001
Self-controlled		8.8 (8)	10.2 (12)	10.1 (12)	9.2 (10)	9.2 (8)	7.9 (6)	10.4 (13)	—

Figures shown are median rankings and, in parentheses, composite rank orders.

TABLE A2. TERMINAL VALUE MEDIANS AND COMPOSITE RANK ORDERS FOR GROUPS VARYING IN EDUCATION (N = 1,404)

Value	*N* =	*0–4 Yr.* 64	*5–8 Yr.* 263	*Some High Sch.* 320	*Comp. High Sch.* 426	*Some Coll.* 180	*Comp Coll.* 90	*Grad. Sch.* 61	*p*
A comfortable life		5.5 (3)	7.3 (6)	8.0 (7)	9.5 (12)	11.2 (13)	12.3 (13)	13.8 (15)	.001
An exciting life		14.6 (18)	15.6 (18)	15.5 (18)	15.5 (18)	15.3 (18)	14.5 (16)	13.4 (14)	—
A sense of accomplishment		12.5 (13)	11.1 (12)	9.1 (11)	9.1 (9)	7.6 (6)	6.3 (5)	5.4 (4)	.001
A world at peace		3.1 (1)	2.8 (1)	2.9 (1)	3.7 (2)	4.2 (2)	4.4 (2)	3.5 (1)	.001
A world of beauty		13.6 (16)	13.2 (14)	13.5 (15)	14.0 (15)	13.6 (15)	13.3 (15)	11.3 (12)	—
Equality		10.8 (12)	8.6 (9)	8.5 (9)	8.3 (7)	8.4 (8)	9.2 (8)	8.0 (7)	—
Family security		4.5 (2)	4.6 (2)	3.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	3.5 (1)	3.6 (1)	6.6 (5)	.001
Freedom		6.0 (4)	6.1 (3)	5.7 (3)	5.2 (3)	5.4 (3)	4.7 (3)	5.1 (3)	—
Happiness		7.0 (5)	7.2 (5)	7.4 (4)	7.2 (4)	7.8 (7)	10.3 (10)	9.7 (10)	.001
Inner harmony		10.2 (9)	11.2 (13)	11.2 (13)	10.3 (13)	9.4 (9)	9.3 (9)	9.3 (9)	.001
Mature love		13.9 (17)	13.4 (15)	13.1 (14)	12.1 (14)	12.2 (14)	10.5 (11)	10.1 (11)	.001
National security		10.5 (10)	9.0 (10)	8.9 (10)	9.3 (10)	10.1 (10)	11.0 (12)	13.0 (13)	.01
Pleasure		12.8 (14)	13.7 (16)	14.6 (17)	14.8 (17)	14.8 (16)	15.4 (18)	16.0 (18)	.001
Salvation		9.5 (8)	6.7 (4)	7.9 (6)	8.6 (8)	10.3 (11)	12.5 (14)	15.1 (17)	.001
Self-respect		8.9 (7)	8.3 (8)	7.7 (5)	7.8 (5)	6.9 (5)	6.8 (6)	6.8 (6)	.01
Social recognition		13.5 (15)	13.8 (17)	14.1 (16)	14.8 (16)	15.1 (17)	15.2 (17)	14.3 (16)	.05
True friendship		7.6 (6)	8.2 (7)	9.7 (12)	9.4 (11)	10.4 (12)	8.7 (7)	8.6 (8)	.01
Wisdom		10.8 (11)	9.6 (11)	8.4 (8)	8.1 (6)	6.1 (4)	5.5 (4)	4.6 (2)	.001

Figures shown are median rankings and, in parentheses, composite rank orders.

APPENDIX B

THE ROKEACH VALUE SURVEY

ROKEACH VALUE SURVEY

Milton Rokeach

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

City & State of Birth: _____

Sex: _____

Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.
3803 E. Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303
0725

Instructions

The following page lists 18 values arranged in alphabetical order. Each value is accompanied by a short description and is printed on a gummed label that can be peeled off easily and placed in the boxes in the left-hand column of the page.

Your goal will be to rank each value in its order of importance to you. Study the list and think of how much each value may act as a guiding principle in your life.

To begin, select the value that is of most importance to you. Peel off the corresponding label and place it in Box 1. Next, choose the value that is second in importance to you and place its label in Box 2. Work your way through the list until you have ranked all 18 values on this page. The value that is of least importance to you should appear in Box 18.

When you have finished ranking all 18 values, turn the page and rank the next 18 values in the same way.

When ranking, take your time and think carefully. The labels can be moved from place to place so you can change their order should you have second thoughts about any of your answers. When you have completed the ranking of both sets of values, the result should represent an accurate picture of how you really feel about what's important in your life.

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1	1	**A COMFORTABLE LIFE** a prosperous life
2	2	**EQUALITY** brotherhood and equal opportunity for all
3	3	**AN EXCITING LIFE** a stimulating, active life
4	4	**FAMILY SECURITY** taking care of loved ones
5	5	**FREEDOM** independence and free choice
6	6	**HEALTH** physical and mental well-being
7	7	**INNER HARMONY** freedom from inner conflict
8	8	**MATURE LOVE** sexual and spiritual intimacy
9	9	**NATIONAL SECURITY** protection from attack
10	10	**PLEASURE** an enjoyable, leisurely life
11	11	**SALVATION** saved; eternal life
12	12	**SELF-RESPECT** self-esteem
13	13	**A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT** a lasting contribution
14	14	**SOCIAL RECOGNITION** respect and admiration
15	15	**TRUE FRIENDSHIP** close companionship
16	16	**WISDOM** a mature understanding of life
17	17	**A WORLD AT PEACE** a world free of war and conflict
18	18	**A WORLD OF BEAUTY** beauty of nature and the arts

When you have finished, please proceed to the next page.

Please rank these values in the same manner as you did on the preceding page.

1	1	**AMBITIOUS** hardworking and aspiring
2	2	**BROAD-MINDED** open-minded
3	3	**CAPABLE** competent; effective
4	4	**CLEAN** neat and tidy
5	5	**COURAGEOUS** standing up for your beliefs
6	6	**FORGIVING** willing to pardon others
7	7	**HELPFUL** working for the welfare of others
8	8	**HONEST** sincere and truthful
9	9	**IMAGINATIVE** daring and creative
10	10	**INDEPENDENT** self-reliant; self-sufficient
11	11	**INTELLECTUAL** intelligent and reflective
12	12	**LOGICAL** consistent; rational
13	13	**LOVING** affectionate and tender
14	14	**LOYAL** faithful to friends or the group
15	15	**OBEDIENT** dutiful; respectful
16	16	**POLITE** courteous and well-mannered
17	17	**RESPONSIBLE** dependable and reliable
18	18	**SELF-CONTROLLED** restrained; self-disciplined

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER

Dear Parents,

I'm an elementary principal in Lansing and a graduate student at Michigan State University. As part of my studies I'd like your help through filling out the attached questionnaire.

I have a very high interest in knowing more about family values. About twenty years ago there was a lot of research about values, but it is now out of date. My study is intended in part to bring up to date our knowledge about this important area.

What I hope to learn through your help is how schools and families can work together more closely to ensure that students have solid academic progress. Knowing more about family values will help schools do a better job with students.

I think you will enjoy working through the Values Survey. It will take about a half an hour. Notice that you will be able to change your answers by rearranging the stickers, and of course there are no right or wrong answers or hidden meanings. I chose this survey because it is straightforward and actually fun to do.

I would like to have the parent who has the most "day to day" contact with your child or children to complete the survey. This way, the connection between the values of the parent and the child is most strongly represented. You were selected on a random basis from among all the parents in the Lansing School District.

Your name and responses will be kept strictly confidential. The number I have put on your form is only there to help me keep track of the forms as they come in. Once I record your responses this number will be cut off from the survey, so you cannot be identified. I have also crossed off the name portion on the survey.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and there are no consequences should you choose not to complete the survey. You might fill out the survey, mail it, and later decide you don't want to participate. Simply give me a call and you will be excluded, no questions asked.

By completing this form you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study. If you would rather not, just write "no thanks" on the instruction page and mail the survey back in the envelope provided.

If you have any questions, or would like to know about my study when it is finished, feel free to call me at Lewton Elementary School, 374-4393, during school hours.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Hecker

Stephen R. Hecker

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