

SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM IN FIRST GRADE CHILDREN
FROM HOMES OF WORKING AND
NON-WORKING MOTHERS

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of modern technology has set women free from time consuming household chores and allowed them to choose to work outside the home. The movement of women out of the house and into the labor market is expected to continue to grow. The United States may soon realize a larger population of women in the labor force than of men (Technical Education Research Center, 1974). We are informed by Krupsak (1977) that many women would continue working even if they did not need the income.

Authorities acknowledge that some women work outside the home for personal fulfillment, but the majority of women seek employment for economic reasons (United States Department of Labor, 1975). A report concerning working mothers and their children revealed that in April of 1978 there were 12.5 million married women in the labor force (United States Department of Labor, 1977). Of the 61.7 million children under 18 years of age, 28.2 million (46 percent of all children under 18 years) had mothers in the labor force. Many have been encouraged by the "Women's Movement" and the changing attitudes toward women and work. These working mothers are frequently faced with decision-making, which impacts on the child and the child's school attendance (e.g., when to keep a sick child home from school and who will care for the sick child while the mother is at work). Van Fleet (1977) has reported that an

older brother or sister may stay at home to care for a younger child who needs attention.

The effect of the mother's perceptions on her child's school attendance is of vital concern to educators and of society as a whole. As more mothers enter the labor force, the United States may see a change in women's attitudes toward school attendance. Slome, Ledner, Roberts, and Basco (1977) reported:

. . . forty-eight percent of white mothers in the United States keep their children home from school if the child has a headache. Black mothers respond by keeping children home more if they have stomach aches, are overtired or are constipated. With fever and diarrhea a higher percent of both black and white mothers keep children at home. (p. 107)

Low attendance disrupts and has a detrimental effect on the learning process (Wheatley, 1975). The National Association of Secondary School Principals rates poor attendance as the most perplexing student problem (Thomson and Stanard, 1975). Slome et al. (1977) have noted that:

. . . causes of absence from school often include health conditions such as upper respiratory infections, asthma, hay fever and social conditions such as baby sitting needs, work in the home needs, etc. An additional major factor in the determination of school absences relates to the decision making process which the family uses in order to decide if a child with one or more symptoms will be or will not be allowed to attend school. (p. 106)

There are only a few studies that have been done on the causes of absenteeism in the secondary schools (Thomson and Stanard, 1975) and the effects of low attendance in secondary schools (Karweit, 1973). Basco, Glasser, and Roberts (1972, p. 492) have found that "low attendance children tend to remain in the low attendance group from year to year and the same is true of the high attendance children." Rogers, Reese, and Pittsburgh (1965) reported that some children sent to school must be returned home as the student is considered not well and in danger of

adversely affecting his or her own and other students' health. Unfortunately, little information is available on the causes of absenteeism in elementary schools. Additional understanding of the factors related to absenteeism among elementary children may help school personnel work effectively with parents and provide a better learning environment for children.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of factors associated with a mother's working and certain factors related to her child's education. The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and the employment status of their mothers.
2. To determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and occupational classification of their mothers.
3. To determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and their mother's marital status.
4. To determine if there is a relationship between first grade children's absenteeism and the absenteeism rate of their older siblings.
5. To determine if there is a difference between the academic achievement of first grade students from homes of working mothers and non-working mothers.
6. To make recommendations for further research into some of the factors that influence attendance rates of first grade students.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are postulated for this research:

H₁: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of children of working mothers and non-working mothers.

H₂: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of first grade children with regard to the occupational classification of their mothers.

H₃: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of first grade children with single-parent households and dual-parent households.

H₄: There will be no significant difference between absences of siblings from families of:

- a. working mothers
- b. non-working mothers

H₅: There will be no significant difference in the academic achievement of first grade students from homes of working mothers and non-working mothers.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions are being made for the research study:

1. The school attendance records are correct and accurate.
2. The mothers are conscientious and candid in completing the personal data form.
3. The study is limited to these first grade children and their mothers in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are being utilized in the development of the study:

1. Absentee: For purposes of this study, first grade students who were absent for half a day of school were considered as being absent for the whole day. Absences were considered as a percentage of total possible school days.

2. Working Mother: Mothers who indicated on their first grade child's enrollment card that they were employed outside the home.

3. Occupational Classification: Determined by the Two Factor Index of Social Position (Hollingshead, 1957).

- a. Higher Executives, Proprietors of Large Concerns, and Major Professionals;
- b. Business Managers, Proprietors of Medium Sized Businesses, and Lesser Professionals;
- c. Administrative Personnel, Small Independent Business, and Minor Professionals;
- d. Clerical Sales Workers, Technicians, and Owners of Little Businesses (value under \$6,000);
- e. Skilled Manual Employees;
- f. Machine Operators and Semi-Skilled Employees;
- g. Unskilled Employees.

For purposes of this study, two additional categories were added. They were Housewives and Students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter gives background material helpful in understanding the research study. This review of literature is divided into four sections: mothers in the work force, importance of school attendance, mother's employment/children's school achievement, and single-parent households/children's school achievement.

Mothers in the Work Force

Women today lead busy, many-faceted lives. Women have expanded their horizons and are reaching out of the home and moving into the labor force. Modern technology has made life easier for the homemaker, with new appliances and products helping to free her from household chores.

The traditional definition of the place of women as being in the home, caring for it and for the small children and engaged in home production and processing, evolved from a milieu characterized by a relatively undifferentiated economy. The mother typically produced food (gardening) and clothing (weaving, sewing, and repair) and performed basic processing such as canning food, baking and preparing food for cooking. (Burr, Hill, Nye, and Reiss, 1979, p. 205)

The United States Department of Labor (1975) stated that:

Homemaking in itself is no longer a full-time job for most people. Goods and services formerly produced in the home are now commercially available; labor saving devices have lightened or eliminated much work around the home. (p. 10)

Research by Mostow and Newberry (1975) show many more women have entered the work force. The Technical Education Research Center (1974) stated

that Americans can expect women to outnumber men in the United States' labor force by 1990. The United States Department of Labor (1975) stated:

. . . working mothers with children under 18 years of age numbered 12.6 million in March, 1974. They represented 46 percent of all such mothers in the population and 38 percent of all women workers. This was a significant increase since 1967, when there were only 10.6 million mothers with children under 18 in the labor force, accounting for 38 percent of all such mothers in the population. (p. 25)

The United States Department of Labor (1978, p. 30) reported that mothers of children age 6 to 17 have been joining the labor force at a quickening pace recently and that "among families with school-age children (6 to 17 years), the increase in the number of children with working mothers was greater in female-headed families, where the number rose by 1.3 million."

The United States Department of Labor (1973) reported that most women work for economic reasons:

. . . decisions of the individual women to seek employment outside the house are usually based on economic reasons. Most women in the labor force work because they or their family need the money they can earn. Some work to raise family living standards above the low income or poverty level; others, to help meet rising costs of food, education for their children, medical care and the like. The majority of women do not have the option of working solely for personal fulfillment (p. 1)

Yet, Krupsak (1977, p. 5) says "a recent survey showed that over 60 percent of working women between the ages of 30 and 40 would continue to work even if they could live comfortably without their earnings." At the turn of the century, Abbot (1916) recognized that with the fact of more women working outside the home comes the fear of the failure to understand the problems which may arise. Child care is an obvious problem working mothers face. The International Planned Parenthood

Federation (1974) and the United States Department of Labor (1973) informed us that today's young women expect to bear fewer children than in the past. The researcher's concern is with the mothers who have moved into the work force and their care for a sick child. The problem may affect the child's school attendance and school achievement, and this is of vital concern to parents and educators.

Importance of School Attendance

Many educators are looking at school attendance and its affect on school achievement. Slome et al, (1977) believed that increased numbers of women entering the labor force could have an impact on the health behavior of women and their families. Some children are sent to school when they should be home in bed (Rogers et al., 1965). Van Fleet (1977) reports that some older children may stay at home to care for a brother or sister who needs attention and the parents do not have the time or are working. Slome et al. (1977) did a longitudinal study of first and third graders of a representative school in Delaware looking for causes of absenteeism in school. They were also concerned with the decision-making process which the families use to decide when to keep a sick child at home and who will care for the sick child while the mother is at work. Slome et al. reported finding that "black mothers keep their children at home more than do white mothers" (p. 109) and interpreted that this indicated greater availability of the extended family. They also found that "black grandparents aid in the decision to keep the children at home more than do white grandparents" (p. 109). Berganza and Anders (1977) fear that excessive school absence may be a sign of psychopathology or school maladjustment in childhood and adolescence.

Looking as far back as Zeigler's (1928, p. 4) study, it has been acknowledged that "high attendance and good grades are highly correlated." There have been many studies concerning high absenteeism negatively affecting scholastic achievement. Thomson and Stanard (1973) found a high correlation between absenteeism and low grades. Nelson (1972) found a strong correlation between high rates of absenteeism and failing grades. Wheatley (1975, p. 4) commented that "frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences, disrupts the continuity of the instructional process."

An important finding by Basco et al. (1972) is the tendency for high-absent children to remain in the high absence group from year to year. These authors also reported that absenteeism is more "prevalent in the first grade, in urban schools and among the lower social classes" (p. 494). Most importantly, as Karweit (1973, p. 3) points out, "there is a lack of current research devoted specifically to understanding factors related to student absenteeism."

Mother's Employment and Children's School Achievement

There have been many tests of the idea that maternal employment is associated with problems in the personality and school achievement of children. For example, Nye (1959) found no differences in psychosomatic scores among controlled samples of children whose mothers were and were not employed. Burchinal and Rossman (1961) reported non-significant differences between anxiety scores of children whose mothers were employed and of children whose mothers were not employed. Nolan and Tuttle (1959)

reported non-significant differences in school grades and rated adjustment characteristics of children of employed and non-employed mothers. Hand (1957) also failed to observe any significant differences in personality adjustments between children whose mothers were employed and those whose mothers were full-time homemakers. However, Hoffman (1963) found that children of employed mothers showed lower intellectual performances than the children of non-working mothers. Nye and Hoffman (1963) found that children of employed mothers received lower grades than children of non-employed mothers; and Roy (1961) concluded that educational aspiration and achievement were greater for children of working mothers than of non-working mothers in rural areas, but lower in urban areas.

Findings of Woods (1972) conflict with Hoffman and Nye's findings.

She found that:

. . . mothers who were employed full-time and away from home the larger portions of the day had children who achieved the best social and intellectual scores of the group. Children whose mothers worked at home did not do as well. (p. 24)

Myrdal and Klien (1956) reported in their investigation:

. . . made among 1,345 elementary school children in Gothenberg, Sweden, by their medical officer, Dr. Blume-Westerberg, showed no difference in the rates of absenteeism between the children of employed and non-employed mothers. When regard to school results, the investigator found that in the first form, children of mothers who get to work had lower marks than children of mothers at home; in the fourth form the two groups were level; and in the seventh form, the children of working mothers came out on top. (p. 133)

Burr (1973) felt that existing data indicates that the amount of time a mother works is not related to the personality maladjustment of her children. Much is known concerning the effect of maternal employment on children, but much more needs to be researched and documented.

Single Parent Households and Children's

School Achievement

Single parent households could be the results of many factors-- death of a mate, divorce, or simply people opting to remain unmarried. Whatever the reasons, there are many children being reared in single parent households. Bentley (1975, p. 3) states "it is not unusual to find substantial numbers of children in a first grade classroom who live in broken homes."

Deutsch (1960) found lower achievement for black children from father-absent homes, but did not relate this to the broken home factor, rather to the single parent household. Sciara (1977) supports Deutsch's theory:

. . . the over representation of black children from father-absent homes in Title I remedial programs would tend to support the notion that father-absence does have a definite effect upon some children's academic achievement. (p. 4)

Sciara also reported that both black and white children's reading scores when compared for children of father-present and father-absent homes had a significant difference that was found favoring the children from father-present homes.

The researcher was aided by the ERIC SYSTEM at Oklahoma State University. It was found that there was a dearth of research on single-parent households and its effect on children. This gives credence to the lack of current research on this subject.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects in this study included 224 first grade students who attended Westwood and Will Rogers Elementary Schools in Stillwater, Oklahoma, during the spring of 1979. Both male and female first grade children were included in the sample.

Recording of Data

The researcher visited with the Superintendent of Schools in Stillwater, Oklahoma, to explain the research project and request permission to record the first grade students' attendance records and achievement scores. The attendance records of older brothers and sisters were also examined. In order to obtain information concerning the employment and marital status of the students' parents, the researcher requested access to Elementary Enrollment Cards that parents fill out when they enroll their children in school.

The principals of Westwood and Will Rogers Elementary Schools granted permission to record data from the cards concerning the following:

1. Names of First Grade Students.
2. Date of Birth of First Grade Student.

3. Sex of First Grade Students.
4. Occupation of Mother.
5. Marital Status of Parents.
6. Number of Other Children in the Family.
7. Grade Level of Other Children in the Family.
8. School of Other Children in the Family.

The researcher also collected data from the elementary school records showing the reading and math achievement scores of first grade students.

At the office of the Superintendent of Stillwater schools, the researcher collected more data pertaining to first grade students and their older brothers and sisters concerning the following:

1. Name of the First Grade Student.
2. Total Number of School Days in the Year.
3. Number of Days Absent of the First Grade Student.
4. Days Attended by the First Grade Student.
5. Days Attended by Each of the Siblings of the First Grade Student.

First grade children who did not complete the entire year in the Stillwater schools were analyzed on a percentage of time present.

Analysis of Data

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used for statistical analysis. The researcher prepared a codebook with a variable number and format to match the corresponding variable name and description. That variable was then assigned a card number and a column number. Once the codebook was properly organized the information was taken to the

Oklahoma State University Computer Center and the cards were carefully "punched out" according to the information on the codebook. The t-test, F-test, and Chi-square tests were utilized to analyze the five hypotheses presented by the researcher. The computer organized the information and put it on sheets of paper for the researcher to examine. The information was carefully recorded on the tables presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of Subjects

A detailed description of the 224 subjects who were involved in this study is presented in Table I. All of the students were first grade children who attended Will Rogers and Westwood Elementary Schools in Stillwater, Oklahoma, during 1978-79. Seventy-two percent of the students were six years of age and there was an equal balance of male and female students. The mothers in this study were 57 percent workers and 43 percent housewives. Twelve percent of the mothers were divorced, widowed, separated, or lived without a partner while 86 percent lived with a partner.

The older brothers and sisters of these first grade children were in grades two through grade ten. There were 114 older siblings of the first grade children in this study. Forty-nine percent of the first grade children had no older sibling.

Examination of Hypotheses and Discussion of Results

Hypothesis I: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of children of working mothers and non-working mothers.

Table II indicates that no significant difference was found to exist between the number of days first grade children were absent according to

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	n	%
Grade	All First Grade Students	224	100.0
Age	Six	162	72.3
	Seven	45	20.1
	Eight	7	3.1
	Missing	10	4.5
Sex	Male	113	50.4
	Female	111	49.6
Occupational Classification	Higher Executive	11	4.9
	Business Managers	17	7.6
	Administrative Personnel	8	3.6
	Clerical Workers	27	12.1
	Skilled Manual Employees	6	2.7
	Machine Operators	17	7.6
	Unskilled Employees	9	4.0
	Workers: Jobs Not Specified	18	8.0
	Housewives	95	42.4
Students	16	7.1	
Marital Status of First Grade Child's Parent	Mother and Father	170	75.9
	Mother (alone)	27	12.1
	Father (alone)	0	0.0
	Stepmother and Father	3	1.3
	Mother and Stepfather	13	5.8
	Other than above	6	2.7
	Missing	5	2.2
Household Status	Dual	192	85.7
	Single	27	12.1
	Missing	5	2.2
Older Siblings of First Grade Children	Second Grade	11	4.9
	Third Grade	21	9.4
	Fourth Grade	22	9.8
	Fifth Grade	18	8.0
	Sixth Grade	11	4.9
	Seventh Grade	10	4.5
	Eighth Grade	10	4.5
	Ninth Grade	9	4.0
	Tenth Grade	2	0.9
No Older Siblings	110	49.1	

the mother's work role. It appears that if mothers are home there is a tendency for higher absences but it is not significant at the .05 level. A Chi-square value of 9.75 indicated no significant difference between the absentee rates of children of working mothers and non-working mothers. In this study the researcher considered mothers who were college students as working mothers.

TABLE II

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ABSENTEE RATES OF CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS AND NON-WORKING MOTHERS

Percentage of Total Days Student was Absent*	Mother's Work Status				Level of Significance
	Mothers Work Outside-the-Home		Mothers are Housewives		
	n	%	n	%	
0-1 Percent	25	22.5	12	12.6	
2 Percent	15	13.5	13	13.7	
3 Percent	24	21.6	11	11.6	
4-5 Percent	16	14.4	20	21.1	$\chi^2 = 9.75$
6-9 Percent	15	13.5	18	18.9	$p < .08$
10 or More Percent	16	14.4	21	22.1	n.s.
Totals	111**		95**		

*Total possible days in year was 173.

**Eighteen cases had incomplete information on mother's occupation.

Hypothesis II: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of first grade children with regard to the occupational classification of their mothers.

Table III illustrates that using analysis of variance F-ratios on nine levels of employment that there is a significant difference ($p < .04$) between the absentee rates of first grade children with regard to the occupational classification of their mothers. Children whose mothers are students have the lowest absentee rates (an average absenteeism rate of 2.8 percent of all school days) and children whose mothers are employed as machine operators have the highest degree of absenteeism (absent 7.9 percent of all school days).

Table IV groups the occupational classification of first grade children's mothers into five categories. The Chi-square value indicates a significant difference ($p < .04$) between the absentee rates of first grade children with regard to the occupational classification of their mothers. First grade children whose mothers are students have the lowest degree of absenteeism (6.3 percent) and children whose mothers are employed as machine operators and unskilled employees have the highest degree of absenteeism (30.8 percent). Children whose mothers are housewives also had a high degree of absenteeism (22.1 percent). The low number of cases in some groups must be considered when making interpretations about these results.

Table V groups children into high and low absenteeism and tabulates the number of times that each occupational classification has a child in the high or low category of absenteeism. Only 31 percent of the children whose mothers are students were in the high absenteeism while 62 percent of the children whose mothers are housewives were in the high category.

TABLE III

ANALYSIS REFLECTING DIFFERENCE IN ABSENTEEISM RATES OF FIRST
GRADE CHILDREN BY OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION
OF THEIR MOTHERS

Occupational Classification	Absenteeism of First Grade Children	
	Mean Days Absent (Percentage of Total School Days)	n
Higher Executives, Business	3.27	11
Business Managers	5.00	17
Administrative Personnel	3.13	8
Clerical and Sales Workers	4.50	26
Skilled Manual Employees	6.33	6
Machine Operators	7.88	17
Unskilled Employees	3.67	9
Students	2.80	15
Housewives	5.44	89
Mean Days Absent (Percentage of Total School Days)	5.02	198

Missing cases = 26, F-ratio = 2.08, $p < .04$.

TABLE IV

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FIRST GRADE CHILDREN'S ABSENTEEISM RATE AND THE
OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF THEIR MOTHERS

Number of Days Absent as a Percentage of Total School Days	Occupational Classification of Mothers									
	Higher Executives, Business Managers, and Administrative Personnel		Clerical Sales Workers and Skilled Manual Employees		Machine Operators and Unskilled Employees		Students		Housewives	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
0-1 Percent	27.8	10	9.1	3	34.6	9	18.8	3	12.8	12
2 Percent	11.1	4	15.2	5	3.8	1	31.3	5	13.7	13
3 Percent	25.0	9	27.3	9	11.5	3	18.8	3	11.6	11
4-5 Percent	11.1	4	18.2	6	11.5	3	18.8	3	21.1	20
6-9 Percent	13.9	5	21.2	7	7.7	2	6.3	1	18.9	18
10 or More Percent	11.1	4	9.1	3	30.8	8	6.3	1	22.1	21

$$\chi^2 = 32.4, p < .04.$$

TABLE V
 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH-LOW ABSENTEEISM OF FIRST GRADE
 CHILDREN AND THE OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION
 OF THEIR MOTHERS

Occupational Classification of the Mothers Grouped into Five Levels	Absenteeism of First Grade Children			
	0-3 Percent		4-24 Percent	
	Low Absenteeism		High Absenteeism	
	%	n	%	n
Higher Executives, Business Managers, and Administrative Personnel	63.9	23	36.1	13
Clerical Sales Workers and Skilled Manual Employees	51.5	17	48.5	16
Machine Operators and Unskilled Employees	50.0	13	50.0	13
Students	68.8	11	31.3	5
Housewives	37.9	36	62.1	59

$\chi^2 = 10.46, p < .03.$

This table appears to indicate that mothers who are students and mothers who hold higher levels of occupational status have first grade children with higher school attendance than do mothers who are housewives and mothers with lower levels of occupational status. It must be noted that the number of cases may have an affect on the analysis of the data.

Table VI more closely compares the first grade children's absenteeism with the level of occupational classification of their mothers by comparing various levels of employment. A t-test indicated a significant difference ($p < .001$) between the school attendance rates of children whose mothers are housewives (a mean of 5.4 percent of total days absent) and children whose mothers are students (a mean of 2.8 percent of total days absent). This indicates that women who remain in the home tend to keep their children home from school more often than do women who are out of the home either working or attending school.

Hypothesis III: There will be no significant difference between the absentee rates of first grade children with single-parent households and dual-parent households.

Table VII indicates that a significant difference ($p < .02$) did exist. Children from single-parent households have a higher mean number of days absent (7.70) than do children from dual-parent households (4.68). However, the number of cases shows only 27 single-parent families while there were 184 dual-parent families represented in this study.

Hypothesis IV: There will be no significant difference between absences of siblings from families of (a) working mothers or (b) non-working mothers.

TABLE VI
ANALYSIS REFLECTING THE DIFFERENCE IN MEAN DAYS ABSENT OF FIRST
GRADE CHILDREN ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL
CLASSIFICATION OF THE MOTHER

Work Status of Mother	First Grade Children's Absenteeism		Level of Significance	
	% of Total School Days	n	t	Degree of Freedom
Higher Executives	3.27	11	.42	13.89
Students	2.80	15	p < .68	n.s.
Higher Executives	3.27	11	.11	16.99
Machine Operators and Unskilled Workers	3.12	8	p < .91	n.s.
Machine Operators and Unskilled Workers	3.12	8	-2.34	11.35
Housewives	5.44	89	p < .04	n.s.
Higher Executives	3.27	11	-1.94	14.44
Housewives	5.44	89	p < .07	n.s.
Students	2.80	15	-4.10	50.13
Housewives	5.44	89	p < .001	

TABLE VII

ANALYSIS REFLECTING DIFFERENCE IN THE ABSENTEE RATES OF
FIRST GRADE CHILDREN IN SINGLE- AND
DUAL-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS

Family Status	Days Absent as Percentage of School Days		t-Value and Level of Significance
	Mean	n	
Single-Parent Households	7.70	27	t = -2.51 df = 29.58
Dual-Parent Households	4.68	184	p < .02*

*Probability of t takes into consideration unequal cases but interpretation should allow for the large difference in number of cases.

No significant difference was found to exist between absences of siblings from families of working mothers and non-working mothers. As the siblings get older the number of cases are smaller and this negatively affects statistical analysis. There were very few families in the two elementary schools from which the data were collected with more than three children in the family.

Hypothesis V: There will be no significant difference in the academic achievement of first grade students from homes of working mothers and non-working mothers.

There was no significant difference between first grade students' achievement scores and their mothers' work roles. The work status of mothers and their first grade students' school achievement is illustrated in Table IX. It is interesting to note that children of higher executives tend to score highest and those of skilled manual employment and

unskilled employment tend to score lowest. However, these findings are not significant at the .05 level.

TABLE VIII

ANALYSIS REFLECTING THE DIFFERENCE IN FIRST GRADE
STUDENT'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND THEIR
MOTHER'S WORK STATUS

Mother's Work Status	School Achievement			
	Reading		Math	
	n	Mean	n	Mean
Mother Works Out of the Home	98	22.98	98	22.87
Mother is Housewife	72	25.03	72	24.10
	t = -1.19 p < .23 n.s.		t = -.91 p < .37 n.s.	

TABLE IX
 ANALYSIS REFLECTING DIFFERENCE IN FIRST GRADE STUDENTS'
 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND THEIR MOTHERS'
 OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Occupational Classification	Achievement Scores (Mean)			
	Reading	n	Math	n
Higher Executives	29.82	11	26.00	11
Business Managers	24.60	15	24.33	15
Administrative Personnel	23.75	8	26.38	8
Clerical and Sales Workers	24.36	22	22.00	22
Skilled Manual Employees	14.00	6	20.33	6
Machine Operators	19.36	14	20.86	14
Unskilled Employees	20.78	9	18.78	9
Students	22.08	13	24.00	13
Housewives	25.03	72	24.10	72
Totals		170		170
F-Values	F = 1.58		F = 0.99	
	p < .13		p < .45	
	n.s.		n.s.	

Missing cases = 54.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purposes of this study were to: (1) determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and the employment status of their mothers, (2) determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and the occupational classification of their mothers, (3) determine the relationship of absentee rates of first grade children and their mother's marital status, (4) determine if there is a relationship between first grade children's absenteeism and the absenteeism rate of their older siblings, and (5) determine if there is a difference between the academic achievement of first grade students from homes of working mothers and non-working mothers.

The sample was composed of 224 first grade children at Will Rogers and Westwood Elementary Schools, Stillwater, Oklahoma, their mothers, and their older siblings. Of the mothers in the study, 45 percent were housewives and 57 percent were employed outside-of-the-home. The first grade children consisted of 111 females and 113 males. The data were collected in June, 1979.

Analysis of the data revealed no significant difference between the (a) absentee rates, (b) academic achievement, or (c) sibling's absentee rates, when comparing children of working and non-working mothers.

It appeared that if mothers are home there is a tendency for higher absences but it was not significant at the .05 level. A Chi-square value

of 9.75 indicated no significant difference between the absentee rates of children of working mothers and non-working mothers.

It was found that there was a significant difference ($p < .04$) between the absentee rates of first grade children with regard to the occupational classification of their mothers. Children whose mothers are students had the lowest absentee rates (an average absenteeism rate of 2.8 percent of all school days) and children whose mothers are employed as machine operators had the highest degree of absenteeism (absent 7.9 percent of all school days). First grade children whose mothers are students have the lowest degree of absenteeism (6.3 percent) and children whose mothers are employed as machine operators and unskilled employees have the highest degree of absenteeism (30.8 percent). Children whose mothers are housewives also had a high degree of absenteeism (22.1 percent). The low number of cases in some groups must be considered when making interpretations about these results.

It was found that only 31 percent of children whose mothers are students were in the high absenteeism category while 62 percent of children whose mothers are housewives were in the high category.

There was a significant difference ($p < .001$) between the school attendance rates of children whose mothers are housewives (a mean of 5.4 percent of total days absent) and children whose mothers are students (a mean of 2.28 percent of total days absent).

This study found that a significant difference ($p < .02$) did exist between the absentee rates of first grade children with single-parent households and dual-parent households. Children from single-parent households were found to have a higher mean number of days absent (7.70) than do children from dual-parent households (4.68). However, the number

of cases show only 27 single-parent families while there were 184 dual-parent families represented in this study.

No significant difference was found to exist between absences of siblings from families of working mothers and non-working mothers.

There was no significant difference between first grade students' achievement scores and their mothers' work roles. It was interesting to note that children of higher executives tend to score highest and those of skilled manual employment and unskilled employment tend to score lower. However, these findings were not significant at the .05 level.

Areas of Possible Future Study

Since the data were collected from school records only, there was no information explaining the reason for a particular student's absence. More detailed attendance figures might result in developing a new and useful variable to explain reasons for absenteeism in first grade children. It would be interesting to know what the actual causes of absenteeism were. For example, some of the reasons we assume children miss school are chronic illness, physical handicaps, allergies, family-stress, and school phobia as discussed by Berganza and Anders (1977).

This study could be improved by expanding the sample to include a national cluster of first grade children. It would be interesting to see if there were geographical differences in absentee rates also.

The significantly higher absentee rate of first grade students from single-parent households strengthens the concern that Van Fleet (1977) expressed about the care of youngsters who must remain at home while the parent works. It would be of considerable interest to know more about

the care children from single-parent households receive when they are absent from school and their parent is at work.

Mothers who are college students were of particular interest in this study. The significantly low absentee rates of first grade children whose mothers were college students as compared to first grade children whose mothers were housewives indicates a need for future exploration. One wonders if having mother in the home is more conducive to making the decision to let the child miss school since it is more convenient in this situation.

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VITA ↵

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