

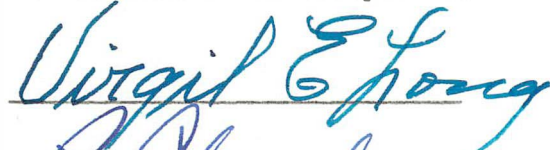
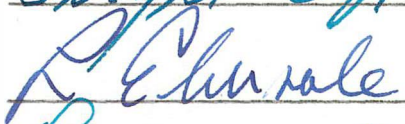
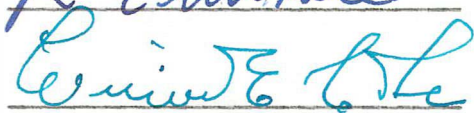
May 23, 1962

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by John Martin Bogert entitled "School Attendance, Absenteeism and Withdrawal: A Sociological Analysis." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Sociology.


Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council


Dean of the Graduate School

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, ABSENTEEISM AND WITHDRAWAL:

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

John Martin Bogert

June 1962

20
33

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The City	1
The School	2
Theoretical Model: Developed Through Industrial Research . .	3
Theoretical Model: Applied to the Educational Situation . .	4
II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	5
Theory Developed Through Industrial Research	5
Theory Developed Through Educational Research	7
III. ANALYSIS OF DATA	11
Field Definitions	11
Analysis	13
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	29
V. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	37
APPENDIX	39

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Attendance as Related to Distance to School	15
II. Attendance as Related to Education of Mother or Female Guardian	18
III. Attendance as Related to Education of Father or Male Guardian	19
IV. Attendance as Related to Social Status	22
V. Attendance as Related to Occupation of Principal Breadwinner	24
VI. Attendance as Related to Mental Ability of Student	27

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, considerable interest in the phenomenon of absenteeism has been expressed by sociologists. Most of the work in this area has been confined to the industrial situation. In our present model-testing experiment, we wish to compare high school attendance with an industrial model.

The high school chosen to represent our model was the Mountain Grove Senior High School, Mountain Grove, Missouri. This particular school was chosen because of the availability of excellent records. The school records were of extreme significance as they represent the primary source of data used to construct our high school model. The only other source of data was lengthy, unstructured interviews with Ronald Compton, principal of the institution. It is quite unfortunate that time and budget did not permit interview and testing of the subjects in social and psychological phases not covered by school records.

I. THE CITY

Mountain Grove is a small city, with a population of 3,176, located in the Ozark Mountains of southwest Missouri. The major occupation of the area is farming. The two most important crops grown in this area are wheat and corn. Livestock is found on most farms as a complement to the main crops. Also a few stock farms are found in the area.

Small business is the second major factor in the economy of the area. The small businesses are retail service centers for the immediate area. Several years ago, lead and zinc mining was also an important part of the economy; however, the veins have almost been depleted and mining is of tertiary importance. Mountain Grove is situated sixty miles west of Springfield, Missouri; ninety miles east of Poplar Bluff, Missouri; seventy miles north of Mountain Home, Arkansas; and 150 miles south of Jefferson City, Missouri. Since Mountain Grove is not a satellite city, there is little commuting to work and metropolitan influences are secondary to the local situation. No sharp change in the number of inhabitants is noted and the city is characterized by slight growth. Although there is little immigration to Mountain Grove, there is a sharp emigration each summer after high school graduation as recent graduates enter military service or leave to seek employment in other areas.

II. THE SCHOOL

Mountain Grove Senior High School has approximately 650 students and twenty-seven teachers. The school is a member of the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. Although Mountain Grove Senior High School includes grades seven through twelve, this paper is concerned only with those students in grades nine through twelve. Figure 1, Appendix, page 39, shows the layout and physical structure of the plant. Although the major portion of the school was constructed during the 1930's, laboratory facilities and teaching aids are of the most modern type. As new supplies and aids are needed, they are

readily accessible. Last year, some of the high school seniors were awarded college scholarships in varying amounts and totaling over fifty thousand dollars. Also, the elementary school is presently enjoying a national reputation for its pioneering in experimental teaching methods of mathematics.

III. THEORETICAL MODEL: DEVELOPED THROUGH INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

John B. Knox, after studying absenteeism and labor turnover in Argentina, hypothesized that these phenomena were related to the adjustment of the employee to the work situation. Building upon absenteeism theory developed by Hill and Trist,¹ Knox hypothesizes ". . . if absenteeism is intermediate between regular attendance and separation, the absentees will appear as intermediate between regular attenders and leavers on incentives or barriers or both."² (This last statement refers to incentives or barriers to attendance and barriers to adjustment.) Knox has suggested three factors affecting attendance:

- (1) Incentives to attendance which would involve such items as "wages, physical and social conditions of the work, and managerial practices";
- (2) Barriers to attendance which would involve such items as "health,

¹J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "A Consideration of Industrial Accidents as a Means of Withdrawal from the Work Situation," Human Relations, 6 (November, 1953), 357-380; also J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "Changes in Accidents and Other Absences With Length of Service," Human Relations, 8 (May, 1955), 121-152.

²John B. Knox, "Absenteeism and Turnover in an Argentine Factory," American Sociological Review, Vol. 26, No. 3 (June, 1961), 426.

family conditions, or distance of residence from the plant"; and
(3) Barriers to adjustment which would involve items such as "age, unfamiliarity with the plant, the area, or the culture."

IV. THEORETICAL MODEL: APPLIED TO THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

Utilizing a portion of Knox's hypothesis which states, "that if absenteeism is intermediate between regular attendance and separation, the absentees will appear as intermediate between regular attenders and leavers on barriers to attendance," we will apply this hypothesis to an educational situation. It should be noted that barriers to adjustment are not considered because the small numbers of students to which this concept is applicable do not lend themselves to normal statistical treatment. However, an attempt was made to eliminate this factor by excluding both extreme deviations in age-grade distributions and transfer students. Incentives to attendance were excluded, as physical and social conditions of the school work are relatively homogeneous and assumed to be randomly distributed. Administrative policies are also assumed to affect all groups equally. As grades were not thought to be analogous to wages, they were excluded from the analysis. The following four variables were categorized as barriers to attendance: (1) long period of travel time to school; (2) lack of higher education of parents or guardians; (3) low social status position of the family; and (4) low mental ability of respondent.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study of attendance and absenteeism has progressed rapidly in recent years. Sociologists have focused particular attention upon the study of industrial plants. Most of these studies have established an association between various items and absenteeism, but failed to pursue development of a general theory of absenteeism.

I. THEORY DEVELOPED THROUGH INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

Fox and Scott have noted some distinct differences between a group of employees having few absences and a group of their co-workers whose absences exceed ten.¹

In 1953, Hill and Trist published the results of their studies of iron and steel works employees. In that paper, employees were conceptualized as potential "stayers" or "leavers." This conceptualization is a highly significant development toward a theory of absenteeism. It allowed Hill and Trist to study the relationship between accidents and "stayers" absences, independent of the effects of labor turnover.²

¹J. B. Fox and J. F. Scott, Absenteeism: Management's Problem (Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1942), p. 26.

²J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "A Consideration of Industrial Accidents as a Means of Withdrawal from the Work Situation," Human Relations, 6 (November, 1953), 362.

To this conceptualization of "stayers" and "leavers," Hill and Trist indicate a third category of employees who attempt to temporarily withdraw from the plant. This third category is referred to as "absentees."³

Hill and Trist discovered an attendance pattern which is presented in the following quotation.

The study of survival distributions has suggested the process of labor turnover has three broadly distinct phases: an induction crisis when a large proportion of entrants become casualties as a result of their initial encounter with the firm; a period of differential transit when those who survive learn the ways of the firm and discover how far they have a place in it; and a period of settled connection characterized by a remainder of quasi-permanent employees.⁴

In 1955, Hill and Trist published another segment of their research findings on absenteeism. This second report attempted to measure change in the quality of employee-employer relations over a four-year period. The measure used to indicate the quality of this relationship was the employee's absence record. They found that absences in the stayer group were a method by which the employee dealt with the stress of the relationship without terminating his contract. Also it was noted that as the length of service of an employee grew, his absences were changed from unsanctioned to more sanctioned types such as sickness or accidents. A statistically significant portion of voluntary absentees were changed later to accident-sustainers, after

³Ibid., p. 362.

⁴Ibid.

six months of employment.⁵

Knox contributes to this frame of reference as he conceptualizes some incentives to attendance and barriers to attendance and adjustment, which we have previously mentioned.⁶

II. THEORY DEVELOPED THROUGH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Having presented a discussion of attendance patterns and factors affecting attendance in an industrial situation, we will now direct our attention toward the work of sociologists and educators in the school situation. Our search of this type literature had the objective of locating studies which had tested the relationship between attendance and one of the items which we regarded as a barrier to attendance.

Our first barrier to attendance is period of travel time to school. Distance to school was used as an indicator of travel time.

Bonney discovered that transported students were not accepted on terms of equality by the town students, due in part at least to socio-economic and cultural differences.⁷

Lee has submitted evidence indicating that transported pupils

⁵J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "Changes in Accidents and Other Absences With Length of Service," Human Relations, 8 (May, 1955), 149-150.

⁶John B. Knox, "Absenteeism and Turnover in an Argentine Factory," American Sociological Review, Vol. 26, No. 3 (June, 1961), 426.

⁷M. E. Bonney, "A Sociometric Study of Peer Acceptance of Rural Students in Three Consolidated High Schools," Educational Administration

show a greater degree of maladjustment than do their peers who do not require transportation.⁸

Finally, Dunlop, Harper, and Hunka found that ". . . differences in attendance between transported and untransported pupils are not in evidence in grades two and four, but become significant to the disadvantage of the transported group at the grade six level." He explains this by saying that this difference ". . . must be attributed to the practice of keeping older children at home to aid in seasonal farm operations."⁹

Low formal education of parents or guardians is our second barrier to attendance. The rationale for this statement is based upon the assumption that persons possessing superior education will place more value upon it and will instill this value in their children through the socialization process.

Herbert Hyman found that higher groups, as measured by education, recommend college education as essential to upward mobility more often than the lower groups.¹⁰

and Supervision, 33 (April, 1951), 234-40.

⁸T. Lee, "On the Relation Between the School Journey and Social and Emotional Adjustment in Rural Infant Children," British Journal of Educational Psychology (June, 1957), 101-114.

⁹G. M. Dunlop, R. J. C. Harper, and S. Hunka, "The Influence of Transporting Children to Centralized Schools Upon Achievement and Attendance," Educational Administration and Supervision, 44 (July, 1958), 191-198.

¹⁰Herbert Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in Class, Status and Power, Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, editors (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), p. 430.

Archibald, in a study of shipyard workers, found that most workers did not perceive clear paths of upward mobility. They had low levels of aspiration and felt that chance, rather than factors within their control, was responsible for success. Archibald points out that this may be a reality assessment. However, the workers were disparaging toward administrators possessing high formal education. The workers did not view education as a key to mobility and did not value education for themselves or their children.¹¹

Our third barrier to attendance was social status. We used two indicators of social status. First was an objective rating of social status based upon a survey conducted by Mountain Grove Senior High School. Second, the author placed the students in status positions based upon the occupation of the principal breadwinner of the respondent's family. Herbert Hyman found that higher groups, as measured by occupation, recommend college education as essential to upward mobility more often than the lower groups.¹²

Mullin found socio-economic status to be a factor associated with superior attendance. She reports, ". . . the higher socio-economic status of superior attenders gives this group an advantage over poor or average attenders in the matter of current expenses and expectation of further schooling, decreases the possibility of those emergencies which interfere

¹¹Katherine Archibald, "Status Orientations Among Shipyard Workers," in Class, Status and Power, op. cit., pp. 395-403.

¹²Hyman, op. cit., p. 430.

with and curtail school attendance."¹³

Our final barrier to attendance is that of low mental ability. We used the intelligence quotient as an indicator of mental ability. We regard mental ability as a variate which must be present in sufficient degree to permit maintenance of the position of student. Also Mullin discovered that low intelligence was a factor associated with poor attendance.¹⁴

¹³Margaret M. Mullin, "Personal and Situational Factors Associated With Perfect Attendance," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 33 (April, 1955), 440.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 442.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data were collected for this study during the spring of 1961. The data were coded and placed on punch cards and processed through the use of a counter-sorter. The data were used to test the difference between our three categories of attendance with regard to each of our four barriers to attendance, through the use of the chi square test. A confidence limit of the probability of chance occurrence at or below the .05 level was considered significant.

The study population consisted of ninety-six students followed over a four-year period from 1954-1955 academic year to the 1958-1959 academic year.

I. FIELD DEFINITIONS

The students were placed into three broad categories according to their varying rates of absenteeism. Dropouts were classified as the students whose education was terminated prior to the completion of the academic year, regardless of their absenteeism. There were thirty-two persons classified as dropouts in this study. Of the remaining sixty-four students, the thirty-two with the lowest number of absences were classified as Attenders, while those thirty-two with the highest number of absences were classified as Absentees. Those students forced to withdraw because their parents moved from the community were excluded

from the study. A student was counted as absent if he missed both the morning and the afternoon sessions. One-half absence was calculated if the students were not present for at least two hours in any given session. Absence which the school defined as "excused absences," e.g., field trips, athletic trips, or other school sponsored activities, were excluded from the tabulation.

Long period of travel time to school was regarded as a barrier to attendance. Travel time was measured by distance from home to school. Distance from home to school was divided into two categories: (1) zero to five miles; and (2) five miles or more.

Lack of higher education of parents or guardians was regarded as a barrier to attendance. The formal education of both mother or female guardian and father or male guardian was used to measure this relationship. Lack of higher education was defined as less than twelve years of formal education, while higher education was defined as twelve or more years of formal education.

Low social status was regarded as a barrier to attendance. The survey conducted by Mountain Grove Senior High School (see Appendix) required the student to provide information concerning conditions in his home. It should be noted that occupation was included. The students completed this questionnaire at home. Ronald Compton, principal of Mountain Grove Senior High School, considered all the information provided by each student and placed the students into three categories: (1) high; (2) medium; and (3) low. The second measure of social status was the author's objective rating of occupation. Occupations were divided into

three groups: (1) high; (2) medium; and (3) low. High occupational categories included professional persons and business owners. Medium occupational categories included clerks, salesmen, skilled laborers, farmers, and farm managers. The low occupational categories included semi-skilled laborers, service workers, unskilled laborers, and persons unemployed or receiving welfare assistance.

Finally, low mental ability was regarded as a barrier to attendance. Students were divided into the two categories of high and low mental ability. Students were placed in the low mental ability category if their intelligence quotient score was less than one hundred, and placed in the high mental ability category if their intelligence quotient score was one hundred or above.

II. ANALYSIS

Knox discovered an inverse relationship between the distance of respondent's home from the plant and his regularity of attendance.¹ This finding receives the support of other studies and suggests a fairly common pattern in industrial absenteeism. Dunlop, Harper, and Hunka noted an inverse relationship between transported pupils and regularity of attendance.²

¹John B. Knox, "Absenteeism and Turnover in an Argentine Factory," American Sociological Review, Vol. 26, No. 3 (June, 1961), 427.

²G. M. Dunlop, R. J. C. Harper, and S. Hunka, "The Influence of Transporting Children to Centralized Schools Upon Achievement and Attendance," Educational Administration and Supervision, 44 (July, 1958), 194.

We would expect a high proportion of attenders to fall in the one to five mile category, and the dropouts to be concentrated in the five or more miles category. The absentees would be expected to appear as intermediate to attenders and dropouts.

The data from our high school model (Table I) does not lend support to our expectations and we find no relationship between the distance of respondent's home from school and his regularity of attendance.

To explain this finding, we must consider the differences between the typical industrial and high school transportation systems. Industry in general does not provide for the employee's transportation to or from the plant. The employee is left to his own devices whether it be public or private transportation. Most high schools make elaborate provisions to transport students to and from school. Mountain Grove Senior High School runs thirty buses for this purpose. This fact greatly reduces two significant factors which would make distance from home to school appear as a barrier to attendance. The first factor is obviously that of reduced travel time to and from school. With efficient routing of buses, many rural students arrive at home prior to some students who reside within the small legal boundaries of the city. To many students living several miles from the school plant, "school" may appear to be as near as the bus in front of their homes. Another factor to consider is the relative proximity of the industrial worker to the plant as compared with the student to the school. Residential areas are usually thought of as separate and distinct from those of employment, while the presence of a school in a residential community is commonplace and

TABLE I
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO DISTANCE TO SCHOOL

	0-5 Miles	5 Miles or More
Attenders	15	17
Absentees	17	15
Dropouts	18	14

$$\chi^2 = .588, P > .05$$

possibly favored. City governments encourage or demand this separation of residence and industry by zoning ordinances. However, few cities would consider similar practices in the location of an educational plant. Also, even in areas with few legal requirements on location, many persons find it inconvenient, unaesthetic, or impossible to reside near industry. These factors would lead us to expect a smaller range of distance from home to the school than from home to the plant. This difference in range might make distance a less meaningful factor in the school situation than in the industrial situation. In recent years there has been some trend toward the decentralization and suburbanization of the school. The school, as we have mentioned, is usually located in residential areas. Also, schools are relatively similar in structure and function throughout the nation and require similar skills of their students, as compared with the varied types of industry with their complex division of labor. This allows a student to attend the school nearest his residential location. Also, schools are largely decentralized. However, there are some recent trends toward convergence of the differences between industry and school in relation to residence. As industry appears to become decentralized and located nearer to residential areas where legally permissible, the schools appear to become more consolidated and less concerned with the residential area. However, as schools consolidate they continue their policy of transporting students.

Schools are placing more emphasis upon attendance. As state aid has increased over the years, schools have had an increasing economic

interest in attendance of students since they are paid in relation to the number attending.

Dunlop, Harper, and Hunka explained the difference between transported and non-transported students as being due to the practice of keeping older children at home to aid in seasonal farm operations.³ Mechanization of agriculture may have changed this practice significantly.

Low formal education of parents or guardians was regarded as a barrier to attendance. From our theoretical background we would assume that the parents or guardians who lack formal education do not perceive it as valuable to instill its value in the socialization of their children.

Low formal education was defined as zero to eleven years of formal training, while formal education was defined as twelve or more years of formal training.

We would expect the attenders to concentrate in the category of high formal education. The absentees should appear as intermediate between attenders and dropouts. The dropouts would be expected to concentrate in the category of low formal education.

It was found that attendance varied significantly with both the formal education of the mother or female guardian (Table II) and the formal education of the father or male guardian (Table III). The relationship between attendance and education of both the mother or female guardian and the father or male guardian appeared significant at the .05

³Ibid., pp. 194-195.

TABLE II
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO EDUCATION OF MOTHER
OR FEMALE GUARDIAN

	0-11 Years	11 Years or More
Attenders	20	12
Absentees	22	10
Dropouts	30	2

$$\chi^2 = 9.332, P < .05$$

TABLE III
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO EDUCATION OF FATHER
OR MALE GUARDIAN

	0-11 Years	11 Years or More
Attenders	19	13
Absentees	24	8
Dropouts	31	1

$$\chi^2 = 12.864, P < .05$$

level of confidence. Our prediction as to the direction of these relationships was shown to be correct in both cases. In the table regarding the relationship between attendance and the education of the father or male guardian a large number of attenders' parents, although not a majority of that group, did appear in the high formal education category. The parents of dropouts were concentrated in the low formal education category, with only one dropout having a parent in the high formal education category. Also the parents of absentees appeared as intermediate between the parents of attenders and dropouts in this relationship. In the table regarding the relationship between attendance and the education of the mother or female guardian a large number of attenders' parents, although not a majority of that group, did appear in the high formal education category. The parents of dropouts concentrated in the low formal education category, with only two dropouts having a parent in the high formal education category. Also, the absentees' parents appeared as intermediate between the parents of attenders and dropouts in this relationship. A possible explanation for the lack of a majority of attenders' parents in both tables appearing in the high formal education category is that our measure of high and low formal education was somewhat imprecise. We defined low formal education as less than twelve years of formal training. It should be noted that seventy-four fathers or male guardians and seventy-two mothers or female guardians were placed in the low formal education category, while twenty-two fathers or male guardians and twenty-four mothers or female guardians were placed in the high formal education category.

On the basis of our findings we will assume that low formal education of parents or guardians is a barrier to attendance in the school situation. We will rely upon Archibald's interpretation that parents who lack formal education do not perceive it as valuable or instill its value in the socialization of their children.⁴

The third major barrier to attendance is that of social status. Since social class boundaries are difficult to differentiate in the United States, two indices of social status were used. First, social status was measured by a survey (Appendix, Figure 2, page 40), conducted by the Mountain Grove Senior High School and the respondents placed into high, medium, or low social status positions.

We would expect the attenders to concentrate in the category of high social status. The absentees would be expected to appear as intermediate between attenders and dropouts, and to concentrate in the medium category of social status. The dropouts would be expected to concentrate in the category of low social class.

It was found (Table IV) that attendance varied significantly with social status. The relationship between attendance and social status appeared significant at the .05 level of confidence. Our prediction as to the direction of this relationship was found to be correct. The table indicated that a large number of attenders, although not a majority of

⁴Katherine Archibald, "Status Orientation Among Shipyard Workers," in Class, Status and Power, Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, editors (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), p. 399.

TABLE IV
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO SOCIAL STATUS

	High	Medium	Low
Attenders	14	15	3
Absentees	9	14	9
Dropouts	5	12	15

$$\chi^2 = 12.771, P < .05$$

that group, did appear in the high social status category. The absentees concentrated in the medium social status category. The dropouts concentrated in the low social status category. It is interesting to note that almost all of the attenders were concentrated in the high and medium social status categories while the dropouts concentrated in the low and medium social status categories. The absentees concentrated in the medium social status category.

Our second measure of social status of the respondent's family was the occupation of the principal breadwinner in the family. This was not an independent measure of occupation, as it was taken from the Mountain Grove Senior High School survey. However, occupation was separated as Hyman indicated it might prove to be a single indice of social status.⁵ Occupations were divided into three categories of high, medium, and low.

We would expect the attenders to be concentrated in the high occupational category. The absentees would be expected to concentrate in the medium occupational category. The dropouts would be expected to concentrate in the low occupational category.

It was found (Table V) that the direction of the predicted relationships was not affirmed. It was found that there was not a significant relationship between the occupational status of the principal breadwinner of the respondent's family and the respondent's rate of

⁵ Herbert Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in Class, Status and Power, Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, editors (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), p. 430.

TABLE V
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO OCCUPATION OF
PRINCIPAL BREADWINNER

	High	Medium	Low
Attenders	5	20	7
Absentees	8	22	2
Dropouts	2	25	5

$$\chi^2 = 7.711, P > .05$$

attendance, at the .05 level of confidence. However, the relationship was significant at the .10 level of confidence, indicating a need for further research and/or a larger sample population. It should be noted that attenders, absentees, and dropouts concentrated in the medium occupational category. This concentration of all groups into medium occupational category may be explained in terms of our imprecise measure of occupation. We found that the farm group made up a large number and percentage of our respondents, and our occupational measure did not distinguish between the wealthy, large, land-holding farmers from the marginal subsistence type of farmer. The Mountain Grove Senior High School survey was able to differentiate between types of farmers as they considered other criteria such as home ownership, conveniences in the home, number of persons residing in the household, and number of rooms in the house.

On the basis of our findings, we will assume that low social status is a barrier to attendance. The economic aspect of social status would explain a large part of this relationship. The child would certainly benefit from the freedom from economic responsibility, adequate study aids and reference materials, and study privacy which might accompany high or medium social status. However, other indices of social status should be considered such as education of the parents and their attitude toward the children's education. Also reading habits and child-rearing practices may influence the child and have been shown to vary with social status.

Finally, low mental ability was regarded as a barrier to attendance. Students were divided into two categories of high or low mental ability.

We would expect the attenders to concentrate in the high mental ability category. The dropouts would be expected to concentrate in the low mental ability category. The absentees would appear as intermediate between attenders and dropouts in relation to mental ability.

It was discovered (Table VI) that our predictions concerning the direction of the relationship were correct. The attenders did concentrate in the high mental ability category. The absentees were found to be intermediate between attenders and dropouts in regard to mental ability. However, it was found that there was not a significant relationship between mental ability and attendance at the .05 level of confidence. The relationship was significant at the .10 level, however, indicating a need for further research and/or a larger sample population. There was little difference noted between the attenders and absentees with regard to mental ability; however, the dropouts concentrated in the low mental ability category.

On the basis of our findings, we will consider low mental ability as a barrier to attendance. Or more specifically, the heavy concentration of dropouts in the low mental ability category, while little difference is noted between the attenders and absentees, would indicate that low mental ability is a barrier to staying in school. We would explain this finding on the basis that a student with low mental ability may experience

TABLE VI
ATTENDANCE AS RELATED TO MENTAL ABILITY OF STUDENT

	0-99	100 or Above
Attenders	15	17
Absentees	17	15
Dropouts	24	8

$$\chi^2 = 5.741, P > .05$$

extreme difficulty competing for and securing adequate academic rewards. The slight difference between the attenders and absentees may be explained in terms of those students receiving adequate, but not excellent, academic rewards may compensate for this in several other ways. Achievement in extra-curricular activities may be a compensative factor.

It should be noted that a change in one of our variables is not regarded as a change from a barrier to attendance to an incentive to attendance. After the barrier has been surpassed, further change in one of our variables would not significantly affect attendance. Thus we would assume that there would not be a significant change in attendance if the high formal education of parents or guardians' group possessed an even greater amount of education. A positive rather than a negative attitude toward education would seem more important than the degree of positiveness in attitude. Also, we would assume that attendance would not vary significantly with a change in one of our variables if the barrier to attendance had not been surpassed. Thus we would assume that there would not be a significant change in attendance if the low formal education of parents group possessed an even lesser amount of education.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although a general theory of absenteeism and withdrawal has yet to be developed, considerable progress has been made in this direction. Hill and Trist¹ found that absences in the stayer group were a method by which the employee dealt with the stress of the relationship without terminating his contract.

Knox has built upon the work of Hill and Trist and has discovered some incentives and barriers to attendance and barriers to adjustment. Knox states ". . . future research should test further the validity of this conceptualization and seek other incentives and barriers to integration." Also ". . . if further research indicates that the hypothesis can be generally accepted, we shall be much nearer a social theory of absenteeism and labor turnover."²

In an effort to extend this conceptualization to other areas, we devised the present model-testing experiment to compare high school attendance with an industrial model.

We have attempted to discover some barriers to attendance in the

¹J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "A Consideration of Industrial Accidents as a Means of Withdrawal from the Work Situation," Human Relations, 6 (November, 1953), 362.

²John B. Knox, "Absenteeism and Turnover in an Argentine Factory," American Sociological Review, Vol. 26, No. 3 (June, 1961), 428.

high school situation while eliminating some of the barriers to adjustment. Incentives to attendance were assumed to be randomly distributed in our sample.

Four variables were regarded as barriers to attendance: (1) long period of travel time to school; (2) lack of higher education of parents or guardians; (3) low social status position of the family; and (4) low mental ability of the respondent. A search of the literature revealed that the relationship between attendance and each of these variables had been discovered according to our predictions.

The data were used to test the difference between our three categories of attendance with regard to each of our four barriers to attendance, through the use of the chi square test. A confidence limit of the probability of chance occurrence at or below the .05 level was considered significant.

The study population consisted of ninety-six students followed over a four year period from 1954-1955 academic year to the 1958-1959 academic year. The students were placed into three broad categories of thirty-two each.

This small sample prohibited the use of higher order partialing techniques. The use of a small sample confined us to the use of a limited number of broad categories. This limitation was necessary to circumvent the development of cells expecting less than five cases. Of course, reliability is always increased by the use of larger samples.

Analysis of data yielded no relationship between attendance and travel time to school as measured by distance from respondent's home to

school. This finding is quite different than the evidence found in an industrial situation. Distance from respondent's home to school is an imprecise measure of travel time as the school provides fast, efficient transportation to students residing some distance from the school. We would expect a smaller range of distance from home to school than from home to plant. Even a precise measure of travel time may fail to yield any relationship between attendance and travel time, because "school" may be considered as near as the school bus.

This finding may have some practical application for the industrial situation. It appears that providing transportation may help the employee overcome travel time as a barrier to attendance. An interesting aspect of this question would be to discover differences, if any, between the attendance rate of those employees participating in a "car pool" as opposed to those employees traveling alone to work.

Our analysis yielded a significant relationship between attendance and formal education of the respondents' parents or guardians. The parents of attenders concentrated in the category of high formal education while the dropouts' parents concentrated in the category of low formal education and the absentees' parents appeared as intermediate between attenders' parents and dropouts' parents.

This variation of attendance and formal education of the respondents' parents or guardians may be explained in terms of parents or guardians who lack formal education do not instill its merit in the socialization of their children.³

³Katherine Archibald, "Status Orientations Among Shipyard Workers,"

This interpretation may prove useful to many institutions. It may be possible to educate and indoctrinate the individual to view the institution as a positive force both for himself and the larger society.

Analysis of data revealed a significant relationship between attendance and social status. As predicted, the attenders concentrated in the category of high social status while the dropouts concentrated in the category of low social status and the absentees appeared as intermediate between attenders and dropouts with reference to social status.

Each index of social status should be considered in an explanation of this relationship. However, as the survey had strong economic overtones, we explained much of this relationship in terms of the economic advantages or disadvantages of social status.

We attempted to use occupation of the principal breadwinner of the respondents' family as a single indicator of social status. However, the imprecision of our measure does not allow detailed elaboration. The relationship between attendance and occupation was found to be significant at the .10 level of confidence. However, it was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Analysis of our final barrier to attendance shows the relationship between attendance and mental ability was significant at the .10 level of confidence. The relationship was not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence. The direction of the relationship was as predicted. Attenders concentrated in the high mental ability category

in Class, Status and Power, Reinhard Bendix and S. M. Lipset, editors (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), p. 399.

while dropouts concentrated in the low mental ability category and absentees appeared as intermediate between attenders and dropouts in relation to attendance.

By viewing mental ability as a tool of which a certain amount is a pre-condition to success, we will explain this relationship in terms of adequate and inadequate mental ability. Our data reveal little difference between high and medium mental ability in relation to attendance, but a significant difference between medium and low mental ability. While adequate mental ability may be a pre-condition to remaining in school, more than adequate mental ability does not appear to change the respondent's attendance.

Perhaps this type of explanation may be carried over into other institutions where other types of skills are a pre-condition to success. Digital dexterity in the college of surgeons may be somewhat analogous.

Our purpose has been to compare high school attendance with an industrial model. This study has added support to Knox's⁴ conceptualization of barriers to attendance. We discovered three barriers to attendance in the high school situation. Although one variate did not appear as a barrier to attendance, it did not appear to seriously detract from the conceptualization.

⁴Knox, op. cit., p. 425.

CHAPTER V

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research should test the validity of the barriers to attendance developed in this paper and discover correlates to attendance. Also, further research should be directed toward the phenomenon of attendance patterns, particularly with a cross-institutional approach.

As our study was concerned only with barriers to attendance, the study of incentives to attendance and barriers to adjustment would aid validation of this conceptualization. Also, the possibility of incentives to adjustment might be considered.

Certainly the relationship between attendance and accidents as they are related to the integration of the individual with the institution needs further refinement. Although Hill and Trist¹ have made a significant contribution in this area, development of more reliable indices is needed to make this relationship meaningful for practical application.

Perhaps the most severe limitation of this study and the most productive future contribution would lie in the realm of psychology. A thorough study of the identification of the individual to the

¹J. M. M. Hill and E. L. Trist, "Changes in Accidents and Other Absences With Length of Service," Human Relations, 8 (May, 1955), 149-50.

institution could certainly develop meaningful incentives and barriers to attendance and/or adjustment.

As Knox² has suggested that barriers and incentives may be additive, a composite index of both social and psychological characteristics affecting integration may prove invaluable toward the development of a general theory of absenteeism and withdrawal.

²John B. Knox, "Integration of Work Force in an Argentine Factory" (paper read at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 3, 1959), p. 3.

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APPENDIX

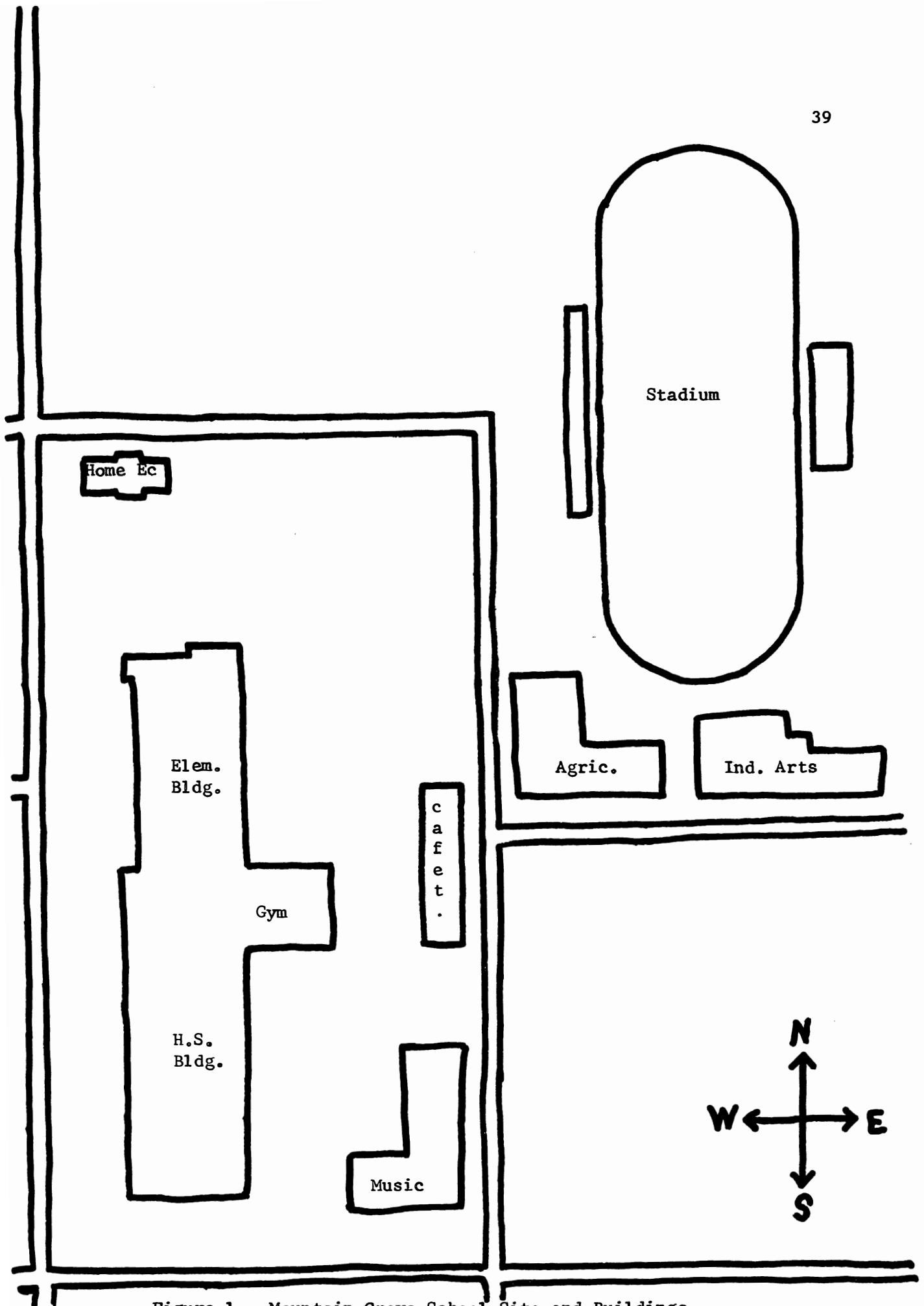


Figure 1. Mountain Grove School Site and Buildings

COUNSELING INFORMATION SHEET

Name _____

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Younger () Older ()

Do you own or rent your home?

Do you have running water?

With whom do you live?

What relation to you are they?

How many people other than your mother, father, sisters, and brothers live with you?

What relation to you are they?

What is your mother's occupation?

Father's?

What was the language spoken before 10 in your home?

After 10?

How many rooms are in your house?

The economic status of your family is:

Good () Fair ()
Poor () Destitute ()

What is your telephone number?

What nationality are your parents?

Birthplace of your parents?

Are they citizens?

What is the last grade completed by your mother?

Father?

The marital status of your parents is:

Living together ()
Separated ()
Divorced ()
Remarried ()

Explain what particular talents or accomplishments members of your family have made.

Your mother's and father's health is: Good () Fair () Poor ()

Briefly explain where you do your home studying.

What reference materials do you have?