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An Analysis of Truancy Causes and Prevention Programming in Clark County, Nevada

Jennifer Ashley Fletcher

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AN ANALYSIS OF TRUANCY CAUSES AND PREVENTION PROGRAMMING IN
CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

By

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Bachelor of Arts – Psychology
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2018

Master of Arts – Psychology
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of the requirements for the

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Abstract

In the United States truancy prevention is lacking two key elements to success; research that explains the causes of truancy and empirical evidence for best practices of truancy prevention. Truancy has been a problem in academics since the early 1900's, when truancy became illegal. Since then, truancy rates have continued to see a steady increase, and today approximately 10% of public school students in the United States are truant every day (Maynard et al., 2017). To combat this problem, research needs to be conducted to understand why truancy happens.

However, there is a severe lack of research on this topic; without understanding why truancy happens how can prevention programs effectively lower truancy? There is also a lack of studies that examine and build a list of best practices for truancy prevention programs to follow.

This study aims to fix both of these gaps in the literature surrounding truancy while also helping a community-based truancy prevention program. In Clark County, Nevada truancy among its student population is over 30%. The Truancy Prevention Outreach Program (TPOP) was created to combat the growing truancy rate by using a whole-family wrap-around approach and providing services to the whole family to help students stay in school. This study consists of quantitative and qualitative data provided by TPOP with the goal of understanding truancy causes and if the programs methods are effective. The quantitative data examined the effectiveness of the program as well as how the effectiveness effected academic achievement. These results showed that the program was effective in lowering truancy rates and as attendance increased so did the students' academic achievement markers. The qualitative data was examined for evidence behind the cause of truancy, and how families reacted to the program. The themes found in the qualitative data suggest that the family connection is the most important reason why the program was effective and that the reasons for truancy are vast. Finally, a mixed methods

analysis was conducted using both the quantitative and qualitative data, which examined the data for explanations as to why the program worked well for some students and not for others.

This study brings to light more questions regarding truancy research and paves the way for more research in this area to be conducted. The results of this study were also used by TPOP as evidence that the program does work and guided them to finding areas for improvement. The results of this study provided statistically significant findings that can help to build a set of best practices for truancy prevention program in the future.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all of the students and families out there who are struggling to get through one school day, let alone trying to get through all of them. I hope this paper will provide the evidence and guidance that education and legal systems need in order to provide you with support that you and your family may need to continue your academic journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States 33% of K-12 students have one common factor, which is that they are all chronically absent from school (Boaler & Bond, 2023; Eklund et al., 2020). Chronic absenteeism, better known as truancy, is a growing problem in the United States and there is a lack of research to support truancy prevention programs. Current research on truancy prevention focuses more on the ‘why’ truancy happens rather than creating a protocol for best prevention practices. While examining the causes of truancy is important to understand this phenomenon, so is understanding how to prevent truancy. This creates two broad research questions in truancy research: what causes truant behavior and what are the best practices to help in lowering truancy rates.

Early research during the 1900’s on truancy causes used theoretical frameworks that focused on psychological theories and the individual student. Using psychological theories worked to give an understanding of truancy through the eyes of the student and interpersonal reasons they may not attend school. As research on truancy evolved over the last 100 years more investigators turned to psychosocial based theories to help answer the questions, assuming that truancy is instead caused by social interactions and prevention should come from a psychosocial perspective. However, newest research suggests that the answer to why truancy happens and the best way to prevent truancy lies in combining a psychosocial theory with a psychological theory (Sanchez et al., 2022; Xia et al., 2015). Using two theories to examine the cause of a student's truancy will give a better understanding as to why they are absent, which will lead to providing evidence for best practices for truancy prevention.

This study used Erikson’s Theory of Developmental Age Groups, which is a psychological based theory and Family Systems Theory, which is a psychosocial based theory to

help understand the causes of truancy. These two theories were used together because while they examine the psyche in different ways, they do have some similarities that can help to identify possible causes of truancy. Both theories focus on the development of a child into an adult, which takes place over school age years, and how outside events can affect the actions and development of a child.

The hope of this study was to help future researchers turn away from traditional patterns of thought on the causes of truancy, which is usually that the child is singularly at fault and examine other possible reasons. Instead, this study hopes to help researchers ask questions such as ‘what events are causing a child to become chronically absent or truant’. A new theory about truancy prevention that is quickly gaining popularity is taking a wraparound approach with families of truant students and providing services that may be needed. This new theory suggests that events inside the family is affecting a student’s attendance which connects back to their overall academic success. This is why Erikson’s Theory and Family Systems Theory were chosen for this study, as they did help to provide a lens to help understand the true causes of truancy.

This study examined one truancy prevention program and their students’ attendance data, academic records and case notes to help find potential causes of truancy. The program uses the wraparound approach with families in hopes to provide necessary services to them and encourage school attendance. Examination of this prevention program did help to understand if it is successful in its efforts to lower truancy rates, using the attendance data and academic records. The case notes provided through the program did help to not only identify if the program is successful but also helped to identify the other possible causes of truancy.

Two Theoretical Frameworks

Erikson's Theory of Developmental Age Groups

Erikson developed his theory by shifting away from traditional developmental theorists such as Sigmund Freud and instead using the idea of psychosocial stages (Maree, 2021). While the psychosocial theory of Erikson does still build off of psychosexual development, it moves into the idea that the environment plays a part in one's development (Scheck, 2005). This shift away from the biological views of development has been criticized because some developmental theorists still argue that one's environment does not affect one's development (Maree, 2021). Erikson did believe that one's past and environment does affect one's development but that they could move past any limiting factors if they wished (Maree, 2021). This belief is the core of Erikson's theory of development and learning.

Infancy. Infancy takes place between birth and the age of two (Scheck, 2005). Basic trust vs. mistrust takes place during the first two years of life, which theorizes that if an infant's needs are not met, they develop mistrust (Maree, 2021). Another part of this task is an infant's willingness to allow its mother out of sight with panic (Willock, 2018). This stage still connects back to psychosexual theory of Freud's, that the infant needs the mother's milk in order to live (Scheck, 2005). The mother providing the milk helps the infant to understand trust; an uncaring caretaker would then cause mistrust (Ormrod et al., 2019).

Early Childhood. In ages two to four years, children develop autonomy vs. shame and doubt which focuses on developing a sense of self and control (Maree, 2021). This stage is completed when the child learns how to do tasks independently but with encouraging support from caregivers, such as brushing their teeth or making their bed (Ormrod et al., 2019). Shame is

built when the child is either handed too much to handle at this stage and fails or the caretaker does not allow the child to do age appropriate tasks (Ormrod et al., 2019).

Childhood. The third task happens between ages four to five and focuses on initiative vs guilt, or the ability to complete certain tasks without assistance and exploring the world (Maree, 2021). This is the first stage where children start to notice differences in others and their environment (Scheck, 2005). This stage is similar to the previous, where successful completion relies on caretakers and educators providing appropriate guidance and support (Ormrod et al., 2029). If children are able to explore their world and take initiative in their play and learning then the stage would be complete (Scheck, 2005). If the caretakers and educators discourage this behavior then the child will build guilt instead of initiative (Ormrod et al., 2019).

Early Adolescence. Industry vs inferiority, which takes place between ages five and 12, the task being that children increasingly learn new skills and competency (Maree, 2021). Children in this stage still rely on caretakers and educators to complete this task of industry but this reliance is based in praise and not in guidance or encouragement (Ormrod et al., 2019). If children receive praise for their tasks, they become industrious and learn how tasks are completed and start to understand how the world works (Scheck, 2005). If they are not praised for their actions but are instead punished or discouraged, they develop a sense of inferiority (Ormrod et al., 2019).

Adolescence. This stage is for adolescent identity development; a psychological stage between childhood and adulthood (Pond, 2018). This is a stage of exploration of not just one's identity but also their plans for who they want to become (Pond, 2018). Identity vs role confusion is the main task during adolescence; this task requires outside support to complete but focuses on developing a sense of personality and competency in completion of complex tasks

(Maree, 2021). Erikson (1950) theorized that a person's personality develops over the eight stages of life, but the largest portion of this is during adolescence (as cited in Maree, 2021). Erikson (1950) argues that the key developmental task of adolescence is identity formation (as cited in Pond, 2018).

Emerging Adulthood. The sixth task takes place during early and emerging adulthood (ages 20-40) and is about learning to build and maintain relationships (Maree, 2021). Intimacy vs isolation (dissociation from self-centeredness) focuses on the person leaving the self-centeredness of childhood and adolescence and learns to think of others and starts to build long lasting relationships (Ormrod et al., 2019; Scheck, 2005).

Adulthood. Between ages 40-65 adults face a task of generativity vs stagnation, or the need to care for others and create a legacy (Maree, 2021). While the ages of the adult stages may differ for every person, the stages still have to be completed successfully to the next. This stage builds off of the idea of building lasting relationships and using that to build a family to care for (Ormrod et al., 2019). If an adult does not find a way to complete this stage they will enter into a period of stagnation for their lives (Scheck, 2005).

Late Adulthood. The final task is in the maturity stage (65+) which is ego integrity vs despair; reflecting on their life and whether it was successful (Maree, 2021). If a person at this stage sees their life as successful then the stage is complete (Ormrod et al., 2019). If A person does not find that their life was successful, they may choose to find something to help complete this stage or they may choose to accept their life and feel despair (Ormrod et al., 2019).

Family Systems Theory (The Bowen Theory)

In 1966 Murray Bowen developed the first comprehensive model of how a family system affects childhood development, known as the family systems theory (Brown, 1999). Family

systems theory is grounded in Western ideologies of society and family that focus on individual development (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The basis of this theory is that family units develop patterns of behavior that diffuse anxiety in members of the unit and the goal is for the children to differentiate from the parents (Brown, 1999). Concern about family dynamics, structures, communication and power relations within the family unit is also a structure of the theory (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The quality of a marriage, or adult romantic relationship, is also considered in this theory. The theory suggests that an effective and communicative relationship between the couple is a key element to a successful family unit (Rothbaum et al., 2002). Unlike models such as attachment theory that focuses only on the dyad of interpersonal relationships however, family systems theory focuses on the triad and group (Rothbaum et al., 2002). There are eight concepts that make up the framework of the family systems theory (Brown, 1999).

Emotional Fusion and Differentiation of Self. This concept is similar to the idea of codependency. Rothbaum et al. (2002) explains this concept as the lack of one person inside a relationship; the need to be the same as the rest of the people in the relationship to keep harmony. As a child grows inside the family relationship, they develop their own sense of self and learn to separate themselves from their family members (The Bowman Center, 2023). If a development of self is not encouraged for the child, later effects can be a severe need for approval from others (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Triangles or the Triad. The triangle system refers to a three person relationship (i.e., two parents and a child). The three person relationship can withstand more tension than the two person relationship because there is a third person to hold some of the tension instead of only two (The Bowman Center, 2023). The triangle relationship can become problematic when a problem arises between two of the members and the third one becomes a reason to not resolve

the problem (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The triangle system does help with each individual differentiating from the others because they see that they can rely on more than one person and become their own through that.

Nuclear Family Emotional Systems. This concept of the family systems theory discusses problems that arise inside of the family unit. These problems can be between two members of the family or with a single member whose symptoms affect the whole family (The Bowman Center, 2023). These problems lead to dysfunction within each triangle in the family unit, which prevents differentiation (Rothbaum et al., 2002).

Marital Conflict. As a member of the couple gains anxiety the tension in the marriage increases, which leads to hostility (The Bowman Center, 2023). In order for this problem to resolve in the dyad, an agreement that disagreement can happen needs to take place (Rothbaum et al., 2002). Conflict is healthy in the relationship and can create an avenue for emotional connection and discussion (Rothbaum et al., 2002).

Dysfunction in a Spouse. This problem is seen in marriages where one member is always bending to the will of the other in hopes of avoiding conflict (The Bowman Center, 2023). The subordinate spouse may give so much control that increases their anxiety which may present in clinical concerns and symptoms (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Impairment of One or More Children. This problem arises when the dyad team focuses on one or more of their children either positively or negatively instead of focusing on the whole family (The Bowman Center, 2023). Children who experience this impairment are affected in their goals to differentiate from their family and their academics/career may suffer (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Emotional Distance. The other problems that are listed above lead emotional distancing, which further damages the triangle relationships which increases problematic symptoms (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Family Projection Process. This concept comes from the problem of one or more children being impaired from differentiation (The Bowman Center, 2023). The projection process is when the parents (or one parent) focus on a child and passes their anxiety onto that child (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The child most likely to be focused on, in this manner is the child who is aware of the anxiety between spouses and reacts to it (Rothbaum et al., 2002). This reaction usually creates the illusion that the child is suffering symptoms of impairment. The parents then hyper focus on caring for that child, which does create the symptoms that they assumed were there (Rothbaum et al., 2002). Then the parents feel guilt assuming that they did not give this child enough attention, which increases the hyper fixation which leads to problems with differentiation for the child (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Emotional Cutoff. Emotional cutoff happens when a child chooses to disengage emotional conversation (or physical contact) from their family (The Bowman Center, 2023). This can be an adult child not coming home, visiting family or avoiding conversations that bring up personal situations (The Bowman Center, 2023). This can also be seen in a family member maintaining silence when another member's anger or emotions have gotten out of control (Rothbaum et al., 2002). This emotional tension that is created by the emotional conflict can be described as walking on eggshells around family (Rothbaum et al., 2002).

Multigenerational Transmission Process. Each generation in a family passes not only learned traits of personality and self but genetically as well (The Bowman Center, 2023). When looking at a family unit, three generations need to be examined to understand the symptoms of

one individual (Rothbaum et al., 2002). Level of differentiation of self can also be transmitted this way, meaning that children may have a more developed sense of self earlier on than others (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Sibling Positions. Using the theory created by Walter Tomans research, Bowen used the theory to add the concept of sibling position into family systems (The Bowman Center, 2023; Rothbaum et al., 2002). Originally the theory proposed that oldest siblings took on a more leadership position in the family, the youngest child was more likely to be dependent and the middle child could shift between the roles (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The theory has continued to develop and make exceptions in regard to gender within the birth order, such as a middle child female with a male older brother will be more likely to take on a ‘functional eldest’ role (The Bowman Center, 2023). This is due to children learning gender roles, and the female wanting to take on the caretaker role.

Societal Emotional Process. The concept posits that all parts of society can act as parental units and create a triad for an individual (The Bowman Center, 2023). This can be within the school system, court system or with employment (The Bowman Center, 2023).

Intersections of Erikson’s Theory and Family Systems Theory

Erikson's Stages of Development and Family Systems Theory can be used together to help create a well-rounded theoretical framework. The two theories have clear differences in overall development, such as Erikson’s theory focuses on tasks that need to be completed during each stage of development while Family Systems Theory focuses on possible problems that can occur at any stage of development. While these two theories seem to be vastly different, they do have key concepts that when used in conjunction will fill the gaps that each theory does have. A critique of Erikson’s theory is that it does focus solely on the tasks of development and no other

issues that may occur during development (e.g., mental or physical health concerns) (Brown, 1999). Family Systems Theory has been critiqued for its focus on the problems that arise during development and not on how development happens (Rothbaum et al., 2002). Where one theory is lacking in concepts the other theory is built on that concept, making the two theories meld nicely together.

Both theories use the idea of caretakers and educators as a foundation for development. Problems that arise between a child and caretaker/educator does affect development. Over or under involved caretakers can affect the stages of development that rely on a caretaker to guide them through that developmental task according to Erikson (Rothbaum et al., 2002). The same can be seen in Family Systems, where a member of the triangle relationship focuses too heavily or not enough on the child and that leads to developmental issues (The Bowman Center, 2023). Both theories recognize that high levels of autonomy-granting experiences with closeness is necessary for adolescent identity development and adjustment (Lohman et al., 2007).

Family systems and theories that incorporate environmental factors (i.e., Erikson's theory) can be intertwined nicely as it encompasses the importance of how the environment does affect the family unit and the individual (Xia et al., 2015). The environment does not just mean location it encompasses peer interactions and societal rules. Both Erikson's and Family Systems theory highlight the importance of peer relationships on development. Peer interactions can affect choice behavior and patterns during development and well into adulthood.

School Attendance, Academic Achievement, and the Two Theories

There continues to be overwhelming evidence that school attendance and academic achievement are directly correlated (Fitzpatrick & Burns, 2015; Klien et al., 2022; Lohman et al., 2007). There are also multiple ways in which researchers have chosen to measure academic

achievement (see below) and examine what is academic achievement (Fitzpatrick & Burns, 2015; Lohman et al., 2007; Strand & Lovrich, 2014). Within the literature regarding academic achievement and school attendance the theories discussed above can be used as a lens to examine and hypothesize why the two variables are so intricately intertwined with each other.

Current Measurements of School Attendance

School attendance is normally measured through the number of days present during a school program or year (Bennett & Bergman, 2021). The United States Department of Education requires public and private schools to track and report attendance rates of their students every day (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). Attendance tracking is required to ensure students are receiving an education and for public schools this also provides evidence of needed government funding. The more students who are in class, the more funding schools will receive from the United States Government (Gottfried, 2017). There continues to be existing problems with measurements of school attendance even in districts where attendance is mandated to be recorded. Teachers may not have the time or ability to record attendance due to lack of technology and scheduling. Classrooms are also overpopulated due to high enrollment numbers. This not the fault of the teachers or schools, it just highlights that there is an overwhelming number of students and not enough resources. Districts also may measure attendance differently; some may recognize a ‘tardy’ or late to attend as a full absence and some may mark them as present. This can also come down to a teacher based decision or policy as well. Some teachers consider a student ‘tardy’ if they are walking through the door late while some consider a ‘tardy’ student to be anyone not in their assigned seat (even if the student is in the classroom). Through online schooling, attendance taking is also a challenge because some students could claim they were there but have their camera off so that teachers cannot confirm their attendance. Another online

problem with attendance is connectivity issues, students may struggle with internet access or login issues and are marked absent or late for that.

Measurements of Academic Achievement

Standardized Testing Scores. The growth in a student's standardized testing scores, or lack of growth can give an overall picture of how that student learns and succeeds throughout the school year (Fitzpatrick & Burns, 2015). Klein et al. (2022) also used English and Math standardized test scores to understand the connection between academic achievement and school attendance; finding them to be correlated. While standardizing testing scores may not be an accurate way to measure student achievement and learned knowledge (Klein et al., 2022) it can give a broad picture if they are learning anything. As standardized tests change and adapt to best practices the hope is that future scores will better interpret a student's academic achievement.

Passing or Failing Courses. As seen in Bennett and Bergman (2021) examining a student's number of passed to failed courses can predict academic success. If a student is passing courses, they are more likely to be academically successful and move towards graduation (Bennett & Bergman, 2021). If a student is failing courses, they are less likely to be successful. In order to pass a course, students usually need to regularly attend said course to learn its content. Using a measurement of passed or failed courses can help to understand a student's academic success.

Graduation Rates. Graduating high school is an easy form of measuring academic achievement, as it means that a student has completed the minimum requirements for academic success (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). Minimum requirements for graduation usually include standardized test scores and passing required courses. As stated above Bennett and Bergman (2021) found a direct correlation between passing courses and academic success; academic

success can be measured through graduation rates. If a student has passed their required courses, and any required standardized testing, they should be on track to graduate which is seen as being successful academically.

Behavior and Delinquency. In an academic context the word behavior takes on a different definition. Academically, behavior refers to the lack of control a student has over their emotional regulation which causes negative outcomes (i.e., outbursts in the classroom) (Casillas et al., 2012). Behavior concerns or issues are not linked with delinquency problems outside of school, but they can coincide depending on the case. Lohman et al. (2007) used the number of disciplinary actions for students as a marker of academic achievement as they hypothesized that students who were less delinquent were more adjusted to their school environment. Disciplinary actions can include behavioral problems or truancy. Lohman et al. (2007) did show findings that linked disciplinary actions for behavior concerns to connection to their school environment, suggesting that the less connected a student feels to their school the more likely they are to receive disciplinary actions. Behavioral problems may also be a sign that there is something going on at home or with the student that is deeper than how they feel about their school environment.

Erikson's Theory

Erikson's theory posits that students who are completing their developmental tasks and are receiving the age-appropriate amount of support will succeed in life endeavors, such as academic achievement (Lohman et al., 2007). In education this age-appropriate support translates to educators providing curriculum and guidance throughout coursework. However, if an educator provides too much guidance, proper development can be halted.

If a student is not in school however, then there is a severe lack of guidance and support in completing developmental tasks put forth in Erikson's theory. Erikson's theory assumes that a student is receiving additional support for development outside of the home, especially in a school setting (Scheck, 2005). If a student is not in school then they are missing out on that support and guidance by educators for task completion (Casillas et al., 2012). School environments provide a large opportunity for the completion of two of Erikson developmental tasks, industry vs inferiority and identity development (Ormrod et al., 2019).

For children ages five to twelve who need to complete the task of industry vs inferiority they need praise from educators in school (Ormrod et al., 2019). Praise for accomplishing educational goals helps to promote a feeling of industry for the student and moves them towards task completion. Praise should come to students practicing new skills and learning to make decisions based on outcomes. Youth who were given the opportunity to practice decision making skills in both family and school environments had higher academic achievement; the opposite was also found true (Epstein, 1983 as cited in Lohman et al., 2007). Industrious supportive environments are characterized by caretakers and educators' willingness and encouragement of a child's experiments and choices (Vasquez et al., 2016). This praise has been found to correlate with positive academic outcomes through a meta-analysis conducted by Vasquez et al. (2016) that examined literature on this possible correlation. If a student does not receive the praise, they need in school they may develop a sense of inferiority. Students who feel inferior may develop feelings of anger, aggression and find it difficult to engage socially (Schwartz et al., 2006). Schwartz et al. (2006) found that students who demonstrated high levels of aggression were less likely to be socially engaged and had higher rates of absenteeism. Students who were found to be socially engaged and accepted by peers were found to be academically engaged, have high

academic achievement and less likely to be absent from courses (Schwartz et al., 2006). Students between the ages of five to twelve need to complete the task of industry, which is easily accomplished in school where they can receive more praise for their actions. This praise will prevent feelings of inferiority; inferiority leads to negative social engagement which does lead to increases in truant behavior (Gottfried, 2017; Salazar & Heine, 2015).

Social and academic engagement also lead to identity development for adolescents. Identity development is the most important part of adolescence and is their only developmental goal (Ormrod et al., 2019). Identity formation and development come from supportive environments that create a cohesive experience. Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994) found that differing experiences of regularly attended environments can lead to negative outcomes with identity development (as cited in Lohman et al., 2007). Peer-peer social relationships help to develop identity (Scheck, 2005). The educational environment provides ample opportunities for peer-peer socialization. If a student is not in school, they miss out on these opportunities and that can damage their identity formation. Lack of identity can create barriers to academic success, as students may struggle to find a reason to attend school (Scheck, 2005).

Erikson's Theory and Truancy. As discussed above we see that there is a connection between attendance and academic achievement. There is also the argument that school attendance will help students to complete the development tasks set forth by Erikson. While students could complete the tasks without attending school, Bronfenbrenner & Ceci (1994) argue that environments that do not offer consistent experiences can cause issues with a negative identity development (as cited in Lohman et al., 2007). The educational environment provides a consistent and safe environment for students to start to build their identities, through classroom learning and peer social relationships (Scheck, 2005). If students are truant, they are missing out

on that consistent healthy environment. The school environment also provides opportunity for educators and mentors to provide support and guidance and foster the task of industry vs. inferiority (Vasquez et al., 2016). If students are not attending classes, they miss out on those opportunities and the task completion could be halted.

These three tasks put forth by Erikson are best completed through school attendance, which is why Erikson's theory is a strong psychological framework for truancy research and prevention efforts. A roadblock in the completion of these developmental tasks is an outcome of truancy; incompleteness of these tasks can lead to larger problems in the adulthood stages such as lack of identity and self-sufficiency.

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory is based on the idea of social triangles, in which the student is one point of the triangle, and two other people (usually caretakers or guardians) are the other two points. Students who have two parents that are actively involved in their school program are more likely to attend school and perform better academically (Gottfried, 2017; Seidu et al., 2022). One variable that may affect school attendance according to the Family Systems Theory is if one parent is absent from the triangle. Sanchez et al. (2022) conducted a study on over 700 students (ages 12-17) who lived in either one or two parent households and truancy rates. Results from this study show that families with only one active parent had students who were more likely to be truant throughout the school year (Sanchez et al., 2022). School attendance leads to academic success (Klien et al., 2022).

Active involvement between the parents and school environments should not only fall to the female caretaker but also the male. A meta-analysis by Lazovic et al. (2022) reviewed studies that examined how a father's involvement in a child's education affects academic achievement.

Fatherly involvement including school visits, helping with homework and psychosocial and environmental involvement (Lazovic et al., 2022). Results from this meta-analysis show that a father's involvement does significantly improve academic performance through the child's K-12 education (Lazovic et al., 2022). As seen in the Family Systems Theory, the triangle should remain equal in tension between the three points. Having both parents actively involved in the student's education will improve academic achievement (Lazovic et al., 2022). Collaborative learning and open communication between parents and educators have also been found to have significant impact on a student's school performance and in reducing drop-out rates (Alvarez-Blanco, 2016 as cited in Crisol-Moya, 2022). If a student knows that their parent is involved in their education, they are less likely to be truant (Seidu et al., 2022).

When a family is experiencing environmental stressors onto the triangle relationship this can also create problems with attendance and academic performance. Aikens and Barbarin (2008) highlight in their study that a child's environment, specifically at-risk environments (e.g., families who live at or below the poverty line) create struggles for students with basic academic skills such as reading comprehension and literacy. This is also part of the family projection process put forth by the theory, that when there is an issue between two members of the household unit it put stressors on the third member causing that member to act out (The Bowman Center, 2023). Xia et al. (2015) found that family climate (as measured in family systems theory) does affect academic self-regulation and achievement in their study of high school youth. Family socioeconomic status and the societal environment was found to be significantly negatively correlated to reading achievement in a cohort of kindergarten through fifth grade students (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). According to Casillas et al. (2012) students who have less stable school environments (e.g., multiple school changes), are more likely to have trouble with chronic

absenteeism due to family strain. Students who have instability at home will struggle with attendance and academic performance.

Family System's Theory and Truancy. The existing literature on the causes of truancy and possible successful prevention methods usually relate back to the household environment. Something happens at the home which effects the student and therefore effects the student's education (an example of a triad) (Gottfried, 2017). A program reaches out to the household to assess any resources they may need, and the student benefits and then attends class (another triad reaction). The household unit is an integral part of truancy causes and prevention, which is part of the argument for Family Systems Theory as the psychosocial framework for this paper.

Another connection found between truancy and Family Systems Theory is the outcome of an emotional cutoff between student and their education. The emotional cutoff happens when there is a lack of engagement between two parties and one member decides to disengage (The Bowman Center, 2023). This can relate to the educational environment, when a student does not feel a connection between what is being taught and themselves and decides to disengage. Disengagement in their learning is one of the reasons that students may decide to skip classes and become truant.

The Two Theories and Truancy

Both theoretical frameworks focus on social interaction between families, students, peers and educators in order to achieve academic success and encourage school attendance. There has been found to be a large connection between a family's opinion of and involvement in their student's education and truancy rates (Barthelemy et al., 2021). Attendance in school does connect with the family environment; families that do not support healthy child development may struggle with regular school attendance. As seen in Family Systems Theory, problems with

healthy child development may be a lack of or uneven triangle relationships such as one parent households or triangles with only one actively involved parent. Casillas et al. (2012) conducted a study on high school students that examined academic achievements (e.g., passing courses, GPA, behaviors) and psychosocial constructs that were based in both family systems theory and Erikson's theory. Of the variables that Casillas et al. (2012) studied, the most predictive of achievement was family attitude toward education. One-parent households or families with only one active parent can also create a strain on the praise and support level that students need in order to achieve the industry task set forth by Erikson's theory, which can translate into feelings of inferiority among peers.

The relationship triangle in Family Systems Theory also applies to peer to peer relationships. Students need to have peer to peer social relationships to help the differentiation between themselves and their parents (The Bowman Center, 2023). Erikson's theory highlights that adolescents need to develop their identity, which can also be accomplished through peer to peer socialization (Ormrod et al., 2019; Scheck, 2005). The educational environment helps to provide students a place for peer to peer socialization. Social relationships between peers do affect academic development and attendance rates (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). A student's social relationships are directly correlated with the likelihood that a student will attend school and succeed in their academics (Schwartz et al., 2006). School attendance is needed for development in both Family Systems Theory and in Erikson's theory; attendance is also directly correlated with academic achievement.

Structural Racism and Family System's Theory

Structural racism is, at its core, racism on macro levels that inhibit access to necessary resources and creates limitations of power (National Institute on Minority Health and Health

Disparities, 2023). Groups that suffer from structural racism include but are not limited too racial minorities, sexual orientation minorities, religious groups, and English limited speakers (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2023). Structural racism is not a theory, but in fact a reality and one that needs to be considered when working on research studies that encompass groups that experience different cultures. Long standing theoretical frameworks are being changed to fit this concept so that more accurate data that is culturally aware can be collected. One of those theories that is experiencing direct shifts is Family Systems Theory.

When discussing Family Systems Theory (FST), specifically the triad theory, it is important to remember that individualized culture plays a large role when examining a family unit. Not every family may work the same, and these differences can come from race, ethnicity or sexual identity. A problem arises when one does not consider these demographic differences when placing a theoretical lens over a study. As James et al. (2018) highlights, families who engage in their racial identity will aim to engage their children in parts of that racial identity. This helps to carry traditions down from one generation to the next, meaning that the traditional framework of FST may not apply to all families. Families have also been found to parent differently according to culture, African American families tend to have a heavier ‘no-nonsense’ parenting style to European Americans (Miller & Miller, 2009, as cited by James et al., 2018). Different parenting styles will also lead to drastic differences when looking through the FST lens at differing families, but cultural consideration may mean that the surface level differences are not as deep as they appear.

Another way that race will cause differences in the FST framework is when researchers consider the number of resources that families have access too; throughout history there is evidence that minority groups have less access to resources causing shifts throughout the

traditional FST layout (James et al., 2018). Families that have access to less resources will run their household differently; the family projection process may look differently. Lack of basic resources or financing could cause stressors that other families may not face.

When students are disengaging in classroom curriculum there could be a lack of interest in the subject, creating an emotional cutoff. Historically, the public education system has been found to engage in structural racism through the curriculum being taught (Dee & Penner, 2017). Students from racial minority families would naturally feel less connected to the curriculum than other students, which sets the stage for an emotional cutoff. When using FST for the psychosocial framework in educational research, remembering that things such as the type of curriculum being taught can have a large effect on a students want to be in class.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Truancy or Chronic Absenteeism

Truancy is a behavior that has many names and slang terms; academically the words truancy and chronic absenteeism can be used interchangeably. K-12 students may also use the terms ‘ditching’, ‘skipping’ or “cutting” to deceive their own truant behaviors (Maynard et al., 2017). Truancy also has a plethora of definitions nationwide, even internationally. States have their own thresholds for chronic absenteeism, while school districts may have even more strict ones. Each threshold also affects the definition of truancy, as one unexcused day could consider you a truant student in some states while ten unexcused absences is the threshold to be considered truant. Overall, truancy is known as a considerable number of unexcused absences with or without parental permission (Maynard et al., 2017).

Chronic absenteeism is a field that covers fields from criminal justice, education, and psychology; as does the research on truancy (Dahl, 2016). While there is an abundance of studies as to the effects of truancy, there is a lack of studies that focus on why students are truant and the programs that aim to prevent truancy. Dahl (2016) also highlights the studies that are present focus on quantitative methods, and not on qualitative or a mixed methods approach. While quantitative results give literature a firm number of truancy rates, it is one of the reasons there is a lack of understanding why truancy exists. If research expands into the why, accepting the fact that truancy does indeed happen, the why may help to create an outline of a best practices based study for prevention programs.

Between 2002 and 2014 truancy rates continued to remain constant at a rate of 10% across the United States (Barthelemy et al., 2021). These rates have continued to remain constant into 2023 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This translates into over 5 million

children missing an average of 30 days of school each year in the United States (Cosgrove et al., 2018). There are many reasons as to why a student may be chronically absent, but the possible negative repercussions of that chronic absenteeism are just as vast. Not being in school has been found to be a direct correlation to lack of academic success (Cosgrove et al., 2018). A lack of academic success leads to a lower chance of graduating and impacts them into adulthood. Outside of the negative effects of truancy on youth, the school systems also suffer a loss (Gottfried, 2017). Student attendance directly correlates to funding for the schools; lack of attendance means lack of funds which leads to lower academic success for all students (Gottfried, 2017). In the 2022-2023 school year public schools earned \$48.33 to \$1,368.33 per student per day depending on the state (Hanson, 2023). If one student is absent for 30 days throughout the school year, that means a possible loss of \$1,449.90 to \$5,049.90 for the school. Using the state with the minimum loss per student (\$1,449.90) and applying that number to the five million annual chronically absent students, each school is not receiving over \$7.2 billion every year in revenue. Just as truancy itself brings long term negative effects, so does some of the reasons that students may be truant.

Problems in Truancy Research

Truancy has been a researched field for many years, dating back to the early 1900's. The problems with studying truancy have not been solved, however. The first hurdle in truancy research is that it does involve minor participants. Minors are a protected age group within research studies and make it difficult to conduct thorough research on this topic. When starting a research study, the proposed study must pass an Internal Review Board (IRB) that ensures that the study is ethical and will not cause harm to its participants. When wanting to research minors, the ethical concerns and concerns of possible harm significantly increase which means passing

an IRB becomes more difficult. Another large roadblock in studying truancy is that school districts may not want to share their attendance data. This lack of openness from school districts could be from numerous reasons i.e. protected information concerns, fear of losing funding due to lack of attendance or lack of attendance data. Due to the lack of data sharing from school districts there is also a disconnect in available truancy data to use. Research universities and community partners who have the ability to conduct truancy research cannot easily access this data and therefore cannot complete studies on truancy.

The second struggle relates to obtaining the data itself. The difficulty in obtaining accurate attendance is one of the many challenges in creating an accurate truancy prevention program (Barthelemy et al., 2021). Statistically significant results are harder to obtain if attendance data cannot be accurately collected and analyzed. Without results a best practice cannot be designed for truancy prevention programs.

Reasons for Truancy

Individual Student. A truant student is typically seen as a student who chooses to miss school instead of their being a larger reason at play (Kurt, 2021 January 30). This has been the case for over a century and continues to be the generic thought pattern of many adults. However, students may have mental health problems, feel a lack of safety, have an undiagnosed learning disability or their immediate needs are not being met daily i.e. food, shelter (Kurt, 2021 January 30). Barthelemy et al., (2021) highlights previous studies that show the main source of internal causes of truancy is a lack of self-efficacy in themselves and of their academic performance. Lack of self-efficacy in a student's academic performance can be due to lack of support or disengagement with their education. School disengagement and alienation between the students has been linked to higher truancy rates (Gottfried, 2017). Motivation to attend courses that

interest students may also correlate to truancy rates. If a student is struggling with other issues outside of their control (mental health, food, shelter, etc.) they are going to lack the motivation and self-efficacy needed to attend and succeed in schools.

In Germany, a study on high school students by Salzar & Heine (2015) found that the type of course also relates to truancy rates; physical fitness was one of the most skipped courses by students over the course of one academic year. Many students found the physical fitness course to be embarrassing or not what they enjoyed about school (Salzar & Heine, 2015). If students are unmotivated to attend a course, they are more likely to not show interest in attending the course. Another reason that students may choose to miss a physical fitness course is lack of proper energy needed to complete the course which relates back to a need for a student to have their basic needs met.

The Family Unit or Household. Another reason students may be truant is because of their home life. A student's home life directly correlates to a student's basic needs being met (Kurt, 2021 January 30). This is not to say that their parent(s) or guardian(s) are causing the problems, but that the parent(s) or guardian(s) may need more support than they are receiving. Rising costs of childcare, groceries, rent and utilities are making it harder for parent(s) or guardian(s) to meet needs for their families. With the current economic environment more families are working longer hours, needing older children to pitch in more financially and there may be more stressors inside of the household.

Students with chronic absenteeism have also been linked to children who endured negative family experiences such as childhood abuse (Barthelemy et al., 2022). Children and youth may feel embarrassed of the abuse they suffer or threatened by the abuse if they choose to go to school. This cycle relates back towards the feeling of alienation that students may feel

about the social aspects of school (Barthelemy et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2017). The social alienation further disengages students from their academics which raises truancy rates. Family structure and engagement has also been linked to truancy rates; families that have single parents or are larger in size are more likely to engage in truant behavior (Ried, 1982 as cited in Gottfried, 2017). Families that are more engaged with the students' education are less likely to be found truant (Sampson & Laub, 1994 as cited in Gottfried, 2017).

In a 2017 study by Maynard et al. investigators found significant results showing that specific racial categories (i.e. black, Hispanic) were a predictor in truant behaviors. Race is a common confounding variable in many studies on truancy, but those studies do not use race as an independent variable to examine differences in racial groups and truancy rates. Findings did show that Black and Hispanic students were more likely to engage in truant behavior earlier and more regularly than non-Hispanic White students (Maynard et al., 2017). These results are consistent with findings from a study by Crisol-Moya, (2022) who found that Hispanic and Black students did have higher truancy rates than non-Hispanic White families. This is not to say that race is the cause of truancy, but that there are external factors pressing on these families that could cause the rise in truancy (i.e. racism in the community, lack of access to resources due to structural racism, etc.)

The Education System. A lack of support from educational instructors is another link between higher truancy rates. If students were to receive more support from their family and educators, then truancy rates may decrease. A possible cause of lower truancy rates has been found to be instructors who are perceived as caring towards their students (Barthelemy et al., 2021). This study suggests that if educators showed sincere care and support to their students, the students would be more engaged and less likely to miss classes (Barthelemy et al., 2021).

Throughout the past few years in education there have been many studies surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, including one that examined how the pandemic affected truancy rates. Boaler & Bond (2023) found that the pandemic increased a strain on attendance and families between fear of the disease and the rules around quarantining still in place for many school districts. Illness is a common reason students miss school, which has increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. While illness is a common reason students miss school, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the use 'illness' as an excuse for absenteeism whether for fear of Covid-19 or because the student is required to quarantine from the disease.

Evidence of Racism and Prejudice in the Education System. Students who identify or are perceived as identifying as a member of the LGBTQ minority have an increased odds of being bullied while at school (Poteat et al., 2017). In a study by Poteat et al. (2017) researchers found that not only were students who were in a sexual orientation minority more likely to be bullied, they were more likely to be truant out of fear of their safety. Findings in the Poteat et al. (2017) did show that heterosexual and sexual minority students who were being bullied were equally likely to be truant, suggesting that victimization was the main contributing factor. Research has also found that students in sexual orientation minority groups have a greater risk of suffering from mental health issues than their heterosexual peers (Developmental Services Group, 2014). LGBTQ students are also more likely to have suffered from sexual or physical abuse and not have access to resources necessary to heal from that trauma (Developmental Services Group, 2014). This creates a lack of safety in the school environment both physically and mentally.

There has also been an increased ask by educators for textbooks that do not teach race-based history or lessons and are politically correct in terminology and history (Dee & Penner,

2017). Due to budgetary issues and politics, these requests have been ignored and the same texts that were being used a decade or more ago are still in use. Evidence has suggested that when textbooks and curriculum are culturally relevant and accurate, students are more likely to engage in the curriculum (Dee & Penner, 2017). Continued use of outdated material will continue to increase the number of students who disengage in the classroom.

The lack of representation of minority groups as educators has been a continued problem in the public education system. Educators of color are needed to help create schools that represent diversity and encourage students of color to participate and engage with their education (Kohli, 2009). Kohli (2009) conducted an ethnographic study of female educators of color, to understand their experience in K-12 public teaching experience. A few common themes in this study were that educators felt like they were not only consistently discriminated against, but that they were underrepresented; and for the students this meant a disconnect with their learning (Kohli, 2009).

Many students suffer from learning disabilities, and while school systems do what they can to help these students the numbers continue to increase. Ethnic minority students are overrepresented in students who have learning disabilities and are usually found to be two to three years in mathematics knowledge compared to their White peers (Dee & Penner, 2017). These disparities have been known and common among the education system for many years, yet there is a lack of severe action to fix them.

Other Possible Causes. One study that examined causes of truancy examined gender differences based on student's sex assigned at birth. Barthelemy et al., 2021 found that there were no significant differences between males and females in truancy behaviors. On average males and females were equal in truancy rates (Barthelemy et al., 2021). Another study by

Cosgrove et al. (2018) found opposite results when looking at gender differences. This study focused on a connection between academic performance, physical fitness education and absences, and found statistically significant results showing that gender does correlate to the total number of absences of a student. While these two studies show differing results, it does suggest that further research on differences between sex in regard to truancy rates should be examined.

There are cases of students who miss school for responsibilities that should not fall on a youth's shoulders. Adult responsibilities and educational experiences are among the predictors of drop-out rates for high school students, along with attendance (Franklin & Trouard, 2016). Youth who are faced with the choice between paying the bills and going to school are given an inequitable challenge. This is the case for many youths whose families are impoverished and need extra financial support. Sometimes this comes in the form of providing childcare for their family or from having to work a job (Franklin & Trouard, 2016).

Truancy as a Risk Factor

Academic Success. A student's academic success and performance has been directly correlated with school attendance. Barthelemy et al. (2021) found results that nonattendance does lead to a higher risk of poor academic performance and adulthood occupational problems. Poor academic success does lead to a decreased chance of high school graduation. Students who are aware that they may not graduate on time may drop out of school (Van Den Burghe et al., 2022). School dropout is defined as an early exit from education and not completing K-12 education (Van Den Berghe et al., 2022). According to a study conducted by Franklin & Trouard (2016), attendance was one of five predictors of students dropping out of high school, along with age, poverty, gender and test scores. Dropout has been found to be directly correlated with occupational and relationship problems in adulthood (Van Den Burghe et al., 2022). Students

who do not complete their high school education have a more challenging time finding a career and succeeding in adulthood. Truancy leads to higher dropout rates which damages a student's success in other areas of their life.

Risk Taking Behaviors. Students who are truant tend to engage in behaviors that are higher risk, either in injury or delinquency. These behaviors or risks happen during the hour's students are truant from school and should be in class. Short term truancy is correlated with alcohol and drug abuse, medically treated injury and poor academic performance (Bailey et al., 2015). This suggests that students who engage in truancy are more likely to have increased risk of injury or death. Baily et al. (2015) examined mortality rates of youth (11-17) years of age and its connection to truant behaviors. Mortality included homicide, suicide and accidental (Bailey et al., 2015). The study found that of the 1,881 youth who were considered chronically absent, 15 were killed during their truancy from either homicide, suicide or accidental death (Bailey et al., 2015). In some states, such as Washington, laws regarding truancy prevention were put into place because of a negative consequence that happened to one person. This is known as the Becca law, for a young girl who was not accounted for in school and had been kidnapped. Barthelemy et al. (2022) also stated that there is a strong connection between truancy and juvenile delinquency; students who are truant are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors. Delinquent behaviors include vandalism, substance abuse and violent crimes. These behaviors alongside truancy lead to long term consequences for students. In the long term, truancy can create problems in adulthood with occupation and relationships (Bailey et al., 2015).

Truancy Diversion Programs

Truancy has been a problem in the United States since school attendance was made mandatory for elementary students in 1918. Truancy rates for different demographics have

fluctuated through time. Historically, elementary students have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism (Barthelemy et al., 2022). This may be due to the fact that primary education systems take better attendance than secondary school levels. Very few truancy diversion programs were implemented until recent decades. However, in the early 1900's a Colorado county truancy diversion program was created (run by Judge Ben B. Lindsey), their first version of a juvenile diversion program through truancy prevention and one of the first recorded in the United States (Morris, 2022). The program was for young males who were deemed as 'street kids' to come into the courtroom and read off their weekly report cards to the judge to show that they had been attending school (Morris, 2022). This program was to ensure that the youth were not truant and, therefore, would not be sent to juvenile detention (Morris, 2022). At this time, funding for truancy programs were slim and this was the best way that Judge Lindsey could help the street kids avoid incarceration for their truant behavior (Morris, 2022). This program was successful at not only ensuring students attending classes, but it reduced minor incarceration for the state of Colorado. Judge Lindsey helped to shape not only Colorado's juvenile court system, but helped other states shape their own such as California (Morris, 2022). Truancy was considered equal to juvenile delinquency for many years until court systems realized that sending students directly to incarceration for truancy was increasing truancy rates.

Truancy is still a leading problem in education and research on the topic is not enhancing at a pace that other research areas are. Existing research on truancy focuses on why students are absent from a psychological perspective but there is a small emerging research area of effective prevention programing. Until recently most truancy prevention programs and research continued to focus on the clinical reasons for why students were missing school (Boaler & Bond, 2023). The idea that a truancy prevention program should take place outside of therapy and counseling

sessions is still a new concept, with research on this area still minimal (Boaler & Bond, 2023). In a 2019 study, Heyne et al. argued that the field of truancy prevention needs to expand past the internal factors and focus on cultural and external reasons for truancy. This emerging area of research towards finding a best practices model for truancy prevention programs continues to expand. Programs in the United States, and internationally, are being examined for effectiveness and success in decreasing truancy rates.

Programs in the United States

The United States Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has provided an outline for truancy prevention programs (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). According to OJJDP there are five key components needed for a successful truancy prevention program. The first is active parental involvement with truant students (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). The second component is that sanctions are placed on schools that do not monitor truancy rates (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). Families should receive incentives for ensuring their students are attending school and no longer truant (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). The fourth component is that schools should be focused on fighting the root cause (i.e. what is going on outside of the classroom) of school truancy (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). The final component is that local law enforcement should be involved with truant students (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). This outline was created for programs that focus on students who are currently truant or chronically absent, and not for programs that aim to prevent truancy beforehand and/or prevent recidivism of truancy.

In Louisiana, the juvenile justice department created the Truancy Assessment and Service Centers (TASC) after the hurricanes of 2005 due to a severe rate of truancy and drop-outs (Barthelemy et al., 2022). TASC works with grades K-5 to assess students who are chronically absent for risk of continued truancy and behavioral or health problems (Barthelemy et al., 2022).

Families are also assessed for needs (i.e., student mental health, housing) related to truancy (Barthelemy et al., 2022). If the assessment results suggest a low rate for continued truancy, TASC sends a letter to the parents to alert them to the truancy (Barthelemy et al., 2022). For high risk students, a family conference is scheduled and TASC educates the parents on the importance of school attendance (Barthelemy et al., 2022). The parents are also alerted to the states' laws and regulations regarding truant behavior (Barthelemy et al., 2022). For students whose attendance does not improve, the family is sent to the next tier to appear in court.

A program in Washington State, known as Check and Connect has been in place for the past few decades (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). The program aims to monitor and connect with students who are found to be truant through a case-management system (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). Using the Check and Connect program helps to alleviate some of the pressure from the juvenile court system in Washington and prevent a school-to-prison pipeline for the students. The program integrates school members, the family and community programs to help connect with the truant students (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). The program was found to be successful in an evaluation of the program by Strand & Lovrich (2014) in improving graduation rates of high schoolers in the program. In a 2016 study the program was found to be one of the most successful in the United States but also the costliest at \$1,700 per child (Guryan et al. as cited in Bennett & Bergman, 2021). The success they found in the study focused on the students' willingness to participate in the program (Bennett & Bergman, 2021). The study did not examine if the program did create an overall decrease in truancy.

As food insecurity tends to be a common reason students may be truant, the state of Wisconsin implemented a school breakfast program to entice student attendance. Bartfield et al. (2019) conducted a study in Wisconsin that focused on providing school breakfasts and its

relation to lowered truancy rates. The study found that overall, there were no significant results for the study at large (Bartfield et al., 2019). When Bartfield et al. (2019) looked at individual confounding variables, however, they did discover that males had an average increase of .41% of school attendance throughout the school year when utilizing the breakfast program; females had no increase.

A program in Minnesota uses a court-diversion program so that there is a shift away from law and order in regard to truancy, and towards a public health format (Lee et al., 2020). Using 11 years' worth of school and truancy data, Lee et al. (2020) examined the effects of the court-diversion program. The Family Truancy Intervention Program went into effect in 1999 in Minnesota which is a referral based program for students ages 7-11 who have had more than five unexcused absences (Lee et al., 2020). This program works directly with the parents after the referral but does not provide extra services to support family needs. Lee et al., (2020) compared this program to another court system that does not alert parents at the five day marker and found that while attendance did increase it was not significant and that attendance would drop for the student after a period of time. Similar to the TASC program in Louisiana, if attendance does not improve in this program, families are required to appear in court.

In 2010 a program in the San Francisco Unified School District considered the lack of engagement and connection students felt with classroom material and used this as their basis for truancy prevention (Dee & Penner, 2017). Existing evidence highlighted the importance for students to feel a connection to the curriculum being taught (Dee & Penner, 2017). The school district then asked professors already involved in Ethnic Studies to create a curriculum that may engage students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Dee & Penner, 2017). This course was focused on teaching Ethnic Studies in a historical context and encouraged students to engage

with their own ethnic identity (Dee & Penner, 2017). This class was only taught to ninth graders, who did show marked improvement in their academics and attendance (Dee & Penner, 2017).

Nationwide the call to lower truancy rates has been increasing. The United States Department of Education implemented a campaign in 2015 known as “Every Student, Every Day”. This campaign is to bring awareness to truancy in the United States and aims to hold states accountable for student attendance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The program also provides educators and administrators with information as to why truancy happens and what the consequences of truancy are. While this program has helped states to take accountability for student attendance and offers some funding for state programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021), the initiative does not address truancy at its roots. The program is not empirically validated and has not been found to provide effective results in lowering truancy.

International Programs and Research

Investigators in Finland found that perceived educational support through grades six to nine directly correlated with truancy after the tenth grade (Virtanen et al., 2021). In fact, the perceived support students received not only translated into their risk of truancy but for overall secondary education completion (Virtanen et al., 2021). Perceived support included family, friends and teachers and what the students saw as supportive actions. Covariates included overall academic achievement and differences in student ages (Virtanen et al., 2021). This program was a short cohort pilot study in which educators were encouraged to give extra support to the participating students from grades six to ten.

Some international studies looked at the larger dropout rate to try and attempt to understand truancy rates. The hope was to find a way to apply dropout prevention programs to truancy prevention. In Belgium, Van Den Burghe et al. (2022) focused on secondary education

dropout but found that the same system they used for lowering dropout rates could be applied to truancy prevention. This involves a multi-tiered system that considers internal and external factors as well as support systems (Van Den Burghe et al., 2022).

In Seychelles, truancy is one of the largest problems the academic system faces with over a 25% truancy rate (Seidu et al., 2022). Seidu et al. (2022) found significant results showing that students who suffered from hunger, used substances or felt unsafe were more likely to be truant. Also found in this study was that parents who showed an interest in what their student did during the school day were less likely to be truant (Seidu et al., 2022). Although the country of Seychelles has no standing truancy prevention program as of 2022, Seidu et al. (2022) wanted to find possible causes of truancy and understand any factors that reduce chances of truancy. The goal of this study was to take what the investigators found and start to shape a truancy prevention program for the country.

Elements of Successful Programs

There is a lack of research on best practices for a successful truancy prevention model; the research that does exist however highlights specific programs and what they are finding to be successful. Two large meta-analyses of the existing literature on this topic have taken place in the last four years. Eklund et al. (2020) conducted a meta study of truancy prevention program studies, totaling a review of 22 studies taking place between the years 2000-2018. The meta-analysis focused on examining the program's effectiveness and the grade levels of students enrolled in the programs and the types of interventions (Eklund et al., 2020). The main intervention program categories found were behavioral, academic and parental involvement (some studies also overlapped with court intervention) (Eklund et al., 2020). Behavioral programs focused on counseling, attendance contracts and the individual overall (Eklund et al.,

2020). Academic interventions included tutoring and instructional support (Eklund et al., 2020). Behavioral and academic interventions produced similar results and effects, the parental involvement programs however, yielded slightly more significant results (Eklund et al., 2020). Using Eklund et al. (2020) as an outline for another meta-analysis, Boaler & Bond (2023) reviewed literature in regard to school-based truancy programs. Of the 2,548 cases found regarding truancy internationally, only 12 cases were studies that examined school-based truancy prevention systems (ten studies were from the United States, two were from United Kingdom) (Boaler & Bond, 2019). After the review of the 12 school-based truancy prevention systems, Boaler & Board (2023) concluded that school based programs did help to raise attendance rates, but not at significant levels due to factors that affect the youth outside of the school.

These meta-analyses showed common trends among programs with academic and school-based programs being the most successful at increasing attendance, although not at a significant level. Eklund et al. (2020) did find that programs that involved the parents were slightly more successful than other program types. This is similar to findings by Seidu et al. (2022) who found in their research that even one question from a parent about the student's school day did increase attendance rates. Parental involvement in their child's education may be a multi-faceted factor, but Stevens & Patel (2015) found that family engagement is a key to a successful truancy prevention program.

Academic engagement with the student is another key element to a successful program. As previous research has suggested, a lack of classroom engagement is directly linked to truancy for youth (Barthelemy et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2017). If students are not engaged, they may choose to not attend class instead of not participating. This can be seen in a study by Cosgrove et al. (2018) who found that a lack of interest in physical education reduced the attendance rates of

students. This study took place in Texas and aimed to examine the connection between physical fitness education, attendance rates and academic performance with high school students (Cosgrove et al., 2018). While Cosgrove et al. (2018) did find connections between academic performance and physical fitness, other findings included direct connections between school attendance and success in core academic courses, age, sex and Body Mass Index (BMI) scores. While academic performance and school attendance have been found to be directly correlated in many studies (Barthelemy et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2017), school attendance and BMI scores was an unexpected correlation (Cosgrove et al., 2018). Low socioeconomic status (SES) and food insecurity have also been linked to each other; both of which have also been connected to unhealthy BMI scores. Cosgrove et al. (2018) may have found a connection between BMI and school attendance that further suggests that nutritional food services are a necessary part of a successful truancy prevention program.

Food insecurity is a common problem across the United States. Studies that examined the connection between programs that offer food and a rise in attendance (Bartfield et al., 2019) have found that food is a service that does increase attendance. As seen in the Bartfield et al. (2019) study, that offering breakfast alone may increase male student attendance rates. Food insecurity is one of many services that should be provided to families who have truant students.

Barthelemy et al. (2021) calls for an increase in services for the TASC program in Louisiana; as the program is minimally successful in their goals, but their research suggests that more services offered would increase the success rate. Services that should be offered to families are job placement services, housing services, as well as childcare, mental and physical health care, and tutoring.

As research in the field of truancy continues to progress there has been a glaring research gap that still remains which is a lack of accurate data information. Franklin & Trouard (2016) found that programs that were successful in lowering drop-out rates implemented a data system that provided an early warning system using pre-existing predictors (attendance, family SES, academic performance, etc.). An early warning system uses statistical analysis to understand youth who may be at a higher risk of truancy by looking at SES, academic success, IEP status, etc. Using a similar system to predict truancy would be a primary level of intervention for truant students. Dymnicki et al. (2021) also found that research is pointing towards the direction of using school based data systems to predict delinquent behaviors with students. A data system that could predict delinquent behaviors among youth would not only alert educators to help certain students to make healthier decisions but would also alert to truancy risks.

A study in Belgium asked students who chose to drop out of school thought would be the best prevention against drop out and truancy. Van Den Burghe et al. (2022) found that a multi-tiered approach works to lower dropout rates and suggests that this could be used for truancy prevention as well. This system includes three key pieces: emotional engagement, behavioral engagement and cognitive engagement (Van Den Burghe et al., 2022). These pieces were designed using seven themes that focus on building connections and support systems, providing positive environments and supporting autonomy (Van Den Burghe et al., 2022). This multi-tiered approach would cover the aspects discussed in another research behavioral and cognitive but adds the emotional element. These three pieces would be well covered in a wrap-around approach to truancy prevention.

The Whole-Family Wrap-Around Strategy

In recent years studies on alternative forms of juvenile justice and recently incarcerated individuals have started to use a theory to help lower recidivism through a wrap-around approach. A wrap-around approach in this aspect refers to caring for the whole person rather than fixing one problem (i.e., a delinquent youth who has a mental health diagnosis would receive tutoring help if needed alongside mental health counseling). This wrap-around approach can also be applied to a family unit, to help provide any necessary services that the family needs to help the original individual to be successful. This wrap-around model is being put into practice in other fields and areas including truancy prevention programs. An example of this model is seen in the Check and Connect program in Washington state, where they are successfully lowering truancy rates by connecting students, families, schools and the community through resources to help the family (Bennett & Bergman, 2021). Wrap-around programs assess the student as a whole to understand why they are truant and what they can do to assist instead of assuming it is a matter of unwillingness to attend school. Since the reasons for truancy are multifaceted, a wrap-around method tends to show more significant results in lowering truancy (Gottfried, 2017; Lee et al., 2020). Some programs have also used research to understand best practices in lowering truancy rates and found that parental/family involvement is the most statistically significant element (Vasquez et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2015). In doing this, some programs have combined the two strategies and created the approach of a ‘whole-family’ wrap-around approach.

The whole-family approach is based on the research findings that students attend more school when their guardians are involved in their education; even just asking what they did at recess helps to lower truancy rates (Seidu et al., 2022). Van Den Burghe et al., (2022) found that

using a whole-family approach helped to build better support systems for the students, which encouraged a positive school and home environment.

Families may also have needs that are not being met, such as food, housing, childcare or financial problems (Van Den Burghe et al.,2022). These needs can inhibit a parent from giving more time to a student's education and being involved in it. The whole-family wrap-around approach aims to assess the needs of not only the student but the family. This method aims to answer the question of ‘what is happening at home that prevents the student from getting to school?’. As seen in Hilpert & Fletcher (2021), a large barrier to students getting to school was childcare and transportation. Parents were struggling to find childcare while they went to work and would require their older children to babysit (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). Transportation is another challenge for students as school bus schedules and stops can vary, and students may not even be on a route and rely on their parents to transport them. By assessing the family as a whole unit, truancy prevention programs will be able to see a larger problem that can be supported to encourage student attendance.

The whole-family wrap-around approach aims to support families in any way that they can, that will benefit the student and increase attendance in school. A community truancy prevention program wants to support the whole family and raise their social capital. Social capital refers to the social connection between individual and community (Stevens & Patel, 2015). Stevens & Patel (2015) suggest that social capital is a large part of an effective truancy prevention strategy. The study conducted by Stevens & Patel (2015) found that when a student's family has a large amount of social capital, they are less likely to be truant. Raising a family's social capital could reduce their students' truancy rates, making it an effective truancy prevention strategy (Stevens & Patel, 2015). To raise the social capital of a family, necessary needs must be

met such as housing, food, job placement and clothing. If family social capital is what it takes to lower truancy rates, it would then make sense to focus on meeting the needs of the family and not only the student.

Another part of the whole-family wrap-around' approach is to help remove cultural barriers to a student's education. By engaging the family, the program will have the opportunity to learn about and understand the culture the student comes from. The cultural aspect of why students miss school is a large factor (Maynard et al., 2017). In Maynard et al. (2017) the investigators found that the ethnic differences within truancy rates was statistically significant. In order to prevent truancy and not just intervene with truant students, family culture must be respected; families need to be involved in their students' education (Maynard et al., 2017). When a program respects a family's culture and practice, inherent trust is easily built.

Trust has been found to be a key barrier to family engagement in education and truancy prevention programs. Crisol-Moya (2022) found that families need to have inherent trust in the education system for them to have 'buy-in' into a program. Buy-in refers to the amount of belief someone has into a process; high buy-in usually means the person will benefit more from the program. In the case of truancy, a whole-family wrap-around approach needs buy-in from the families and programs to be successful. A family must believe that the program is there to help their student be successful and to help support any needs of the family (Crisol-Moya, 2022). Without the buy-in of the program, families are not going to trust that the program is doing what they can to support the family without judgment. This is why engaging and understanding the family dynamic and culture is important, as it builds trust (Maynard et al., 2014; Crisol-Moya, 2022). Buy-in needs trust, and trust is how you break down barriers to help support a family. To support the family a whole-family wrap-around method needs to be in place, so that all needs can

be met. Family support for the students' education is the key ingredient to a successful truancy prevention program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to understand the effectiveness of the Truancy Prevention Outreach Program (TPOP) and explore the reasons for the level of effectiveness in Clark County, Nevada. For this research study, truancy and chronic absenteeism is defined using Nevada's Department of Education threshold which is "students who are absent 10% or more of their enrolled school days" (Nevada Department of Education, 2023). Truancy is a growing concern, with over 5 million students considered chronically absent each year (Nevada Department of Education, 2023). This study focused on Clark County, Nevada and Clark County School District (CCSD). CCSD is the 5th largest school district in the United States with over 325,000 students enrolled in the 2019 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). As of 2023, 39% of CCSD students were considered chronically absent by Nevada's state standards (Banuelos, 2023).

The Truancy Prevention Outreach Program (TPOP) is Clark County's truancy program which was beta tested in the 2020-2021 school year and fully implemented in the 2021-2022 school year (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). TPOP is run by Clark County Juvenile Justice Services and their alternative to juvenile justice program, The Harbor. The Harbor aims to lower and prevent recidivism among youth who are at-risk for juvenile incarceration. Through alternative routes to the juvenile justice system, The Harbor provides services to at-risk youth and their families to help lower their chance on recidivism and incarceration. Some of these alternative routes and services consist of community service, community mentorship programs, wrap-around services, counseling, etc. The Harbor works directly with CCSD and receives referrals from the district for students who have behavioral or delinquency problems. In 2019 The Harbor

received 2,548 referrals from CCSD; of those referrals 1,741 identified as Black, 1,377 identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 495 identified as White, and 72 identified as Asian/Pacific Islander (Barton, 2020). These racial categories do show that there was a 20% or more decrease within their categories over a two year period as well as an overall decrease of referrals by at least 21% (Barton, 2020). The Harbor does have required training to combat structural racism and implicit bias for all employees (Barton, 2020).

TPOP was created inside of The Harbor as a way to help end the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is due to zero tolerance programs inside of schools for behavioral or delinquent behavior and truancy (Mallet & Tedor, 2019; Skiba et al., 2014). A large part of the pipeline, on a national scale, is the increasing disparity of students of colors receiving juvenile delinquency referrals compared to White students (Gregory et al., 2017). Students who identify in a sexual orientation minority group have also been found to have an increased rate of juvenile justice referrals compared to heterosexual students (Gregory et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline has been a constant issue inside the United States since the 1980's (Alexander, 2012); the term coincided with the start of the "War on Drugs" which happened to target racially minoritized groups and eventually this targeting also included youth (Alexander, 2012). Those who identify in a sexual orientation minority have also faced consistent prejudice within the criminal justice system and this prejudice also includes youth (Developmental Services Group, 2014). Racially minoritized groups and those of a sexual minoritized orientation have constantly faced an increased prejudice by the justice system, which has inadvertently created issues with access to resources (Alexander, 2012; Developmental Services Group, 2014).

Clark County Juvenile Justice Services theorized that if wrap-around services were offered to at-risk youth (including those in racially minorities and sexual orientation minorities), they would be less likely to be expelled from school or end up arrested. Using this theory of wrap-around services, The Harbor designed TPOP to help improve the attendance rates for students who have been marked as chronically absent in Clark County, Nevada. As truancy is considered to be a behavioral problem in many schools, truancy is then a part of the school-to-prison pipeline, thus TPOP was designed to help with the goal of ending the pipeline.

The goal of TPOP is to lower truancy rates in Clark County, Nevada by providing wrap-around services not only for the truant student but for their guardians and/or family members. Previous research studies have found that chronic absenteeism is not only the fault of the student but can be the outcome of household concerns or problems (Eklund et al., 2020; Evans & Mendoza Acosta, 2023; Maynard et al., 2017; Morris, 2022; Seidu et al., 2022). The assumption that TPOP makes is that truancy can be combated using wrap-around services for the family and the student; essentially creating a secondary form of intervention for the truant student. Some wrap-around services that TPOP offers to families is childcare, tutoring, special education assistance, mental and physical health assistance, and assistance with food and housing insecurities.

The protocol for TPOP is that once a referral has been made by a school, they are entered into TPOP's data system and assigned a Community Navigator (CN). The CN will then reach out to the students' parents and/or guardians to ask to set up a home visit and explain what TPOP is and does. Once a student has been referred and assigned a CN the family then has 90 days to work with the CN to improve the student's attendance and use whatever resources that TPOP has. At the 90 day mark, the case is closed but services may be continued to be accessed.

Families do not have to accept TPOP; but if their students' attendance does not improve further action will be taken by the county as truancy is illegal.

TPOP has been working with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Office of Learning Analytics (OLA) since 2020 to assess the effectiveness of the TPOP and their wrap-around services. A previous pilot study conducted by the OLA found that TPOP was overall effective in lowering truancy rates. This study aims to analyze the 2021-2022 school year data for TPOP's continued effectiveness as well examine interactions between attendance rates, academic performance, and the responses of guardians/families to TPOP.

Research Questions

Quantitative

1. Is the Truancy Prevention Outreach Program (TPOP) effective in improving attendance rates within Clark County School District?
 - a. Was the program more or less effective within specific age groups?
2. Did an increase with a student's school attendance correlate with an increase in the student's state standardized test scores?
3. Did an increase with a student's school attendance correlate with a decrease in the number of courses failed?

Qualitative

1. How did guardians and/or families respond to their students being referred to the Truancy Prevention Outreach Program (TPOP)?
 - a. How do guardians and/or families react to TPOP and its efforts?
 - b. Were services asked for by families once approached by TPOP?
2. What trends are seen in the case notes as to why a student has been absent from school?

Mixed Methods

1. Is there a correlation between family response to TPOP and the effectiveness of TPOP?
2. Is there a correlation between the family responses and academic achievement?

Hypotheses

Based on the TPOP pilot study in 2021, which showed that TPOP was significantly improving attendance rates, the hypothesis was that this trend will continue for this study and that TPOP would once again be found to have effectively increased attendance rates (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). The pilot study did show that younger developmental groups had a more significant result than the older groups, which again was the assumption for this study (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). For other demographic information the hypothesis was that there would be a significant difference between gender, age and possibly race.

Previous studies have found that school attendance does increase academic success (Duran-Narucki, 2008; Gottfried, 2009; Kim et al., 2014; Morris, 2022; Salzer & Heine, 2016). Using this information, the assumption was being made that as attendance rates increased, standardized test scores would also increase, and the number of courses failed would decrease.

The hypothesis for the qualitative data was that it would give a more thorough explanation as to why TPOP would work for some groups and not others. As found during the pilot study, only certain groups did benefit from TPOP; the qualitative data is to give a more in depth understanding as to why this might be. The qualitative data would hopefully highlight families that were less willing to participate in TPOP and families who were willing to participate. The other hypothesis for the qualitative data was that we would see a trend in families who explain that their student(s) are truant because they are struggling to provide basic needs to their family.

The goal of the mixed methods portion of this study was to use the qualitative data to explain the results of the quantitative data. The hypothesis was that by using the qualitative data the investigator would be able to discern the reason for the effectiveness of TPOP. If the qualitative data could help to further explain the quantitative data results, this would help TPOP to understand how they could continue improving the program, providing better resources and how to increase program acceptance. The other hope of the mixed methods portion of this study was to examine a connection between family responses and a change in academic performance.

Internal Review Board

As this study was a social/behavioral research study, there was need to receive permission through the UNLV Internal Review Board (IRB). The IRB is a committee that oversees any research study at UNLV that involves human subjects research including biomedical and social/behavioral studies. The main goal of the IRB is to protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects in research studies. The IRB falls under The UNLV Office of Research Integrity, which is in charge of ensuring all research studies at UNLV are conducted with integrity and accuracy.

In Fall of 2022 this study was submitted for IRB approval through their website Cayuse. The study was approved by the IRB on October 14th, 2022, as exempt. The reason this study was exempt is because the researcher did not have direct contact with the participants, and the data was provided directly from TPOP.

Method

Setting

Clark County, Nevada is an urban location located in Southern Nevada with a population of nearly 2.3 million people, which encompasses the popular tourist city of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Clark County is also home to four other cities: Boulder City, Henderson, Mesquite, and North Las Vegas. This study uses data from Clark County School District (CCSD) which encompasses the five cities of Clark County and the rural areas outside of city limits. As of 2019, Clark County School District has over 320,000 students enrolled across 384 schools (Nevada Report Card, 2021). The 2019 graduation was 85% and the average standardized test scores in Math and English Language Arts (ELA) were below 50% proficiency (Nevada Report Card, 2021).

Stakeholders

Clark County Juvenile Justice Services, The Harbor, and TPOP were the main stakeholders for this study. Clark County Juvenile Justice Services is a government department ran by the county that handles juvenile justice cases; this department also houses The Harbor which is their alternative routes to juvenile justice program. Alternative routes to juvenile justice programs are focused on helping the youth as a whole instead of sending them juvenile detention facilities. The Harbor is a safe place for at-risk youth to receive services to help them through their behavioral or legal problems. TPOP is a branch of The Harbor and functions under their supervision. The statistical analysis would help to further solidify the validity of TPOP, showing its effectiveness for improving attendance rates among truant students. This study also conducted in depth analysis of other variables that will help TPOP to continue to shape and grow for the demands of the families they work with. TPOP hoped to gain further insight into what parts of the program are successful, who the program helps the most, and receive an explanation as to the effectiveness of the program.

Clark County School District (CCSD) is one of the sources of data collected for this study and was the main referral source for truant students to TPOP. CCSD is working to lower their truancy rates by increasing attendance among students. As TPOP is the only truancy

prevention program in Clark County, Nevada and works with truant students, the success of CCSD's lowered truancy rates is dependent on the success of TPOP.

Participants

The participants of this study were students who are chronically absent and are considered to be truant according to CCSD. The threshold for chronic absenteeism in Nevada at the time of this study was missing more than 10% of enrolled school; once a student had met that threshold, the school in which the student is enrolled would send a referral to TPOP. Once the student is referred to TPOP they were considered eligible for this study. All students who were referred to TPOP in the 2021-2022 school year (n=3,222) were included in this study.

This study did not consist of any interaction between the investigator and the student participants. All data was provided by TPOP and CCSD. No consent form was needed for this study; IRB approval was secured in 2022. All data was de-identified upon retrieval by the investigator before using it for data analysis.

TPOP employs case workers, known as Community Navigators (CN's), to work with the students and families and manage their cases. CN's help to understand the needs of the families and provide resources to meet those needs. The CN's also kept case notes for each family which was used as the source for qualitative data in this study. The investigator and CN's had no direct contact and informed consent was not needed. There was no descriptive information provided by TPOP regarding the CN's.

De-identifying the Data. The data files for the students consisted of several forms of identification, including case file numbers, school ID numbers, names, birthdates and addresses. The first step once the data was collected was to remove the identifiable data and only use the necessary categories for this study. This meant that once the multiple files were merged, names,

and addresses were removed. The zip codes, which were a separate category was kept for geographical demographic data. The birth year of the students were also kept so that age would be an available demographic variable. The case file numbers, and school IDs were kept, and once the other identifying data was removed, the case file numbers, and school IDs were changed using a mathematic equation to de-identify the files. The investigator was the only person who had access to the mathematic equation used, and this equation was kept in a separate zipped file from the data. The original data files were then deleted from the investigator's computer hard drive, and the final remaining data file that was de-identified was placed into its own zipped file.

Quantitative

Data Collection. Quantitative data was provided by TPOP and CCSD. TPOP uses the Tyler data system to input and store their data. Tyler data system makes it easy for Community Navigators and Case Managers to access and manage case information, and to retrieve it for data analysis. Demographic information was also pulled from Tyler data systems for quantitative analysis.

CCSD uses Infinite Campus to help parents and teachers keep track of grades and attendance. For this study CCSD provided attendance rates and quarterly standardized testing scores for each case to TPOP. Attendance data was collected at the following intervals through Infinite Campus: 120 days pre-referral, 90 days pre-referral, 60 days pre-referral, 30 days pre-referral, 30 days post-referral, 60 days post-referral, 90 days post-referral and 120 days post-referral. These date markers for collection are dependent upon the date of the referral submission and change for each case (i.e. if the student was referred on November 1st, their 30 pre-referral would be October 2nd but a student referred on November 14th would have a 30 day pre-referral date of October 15th). The standardized testing scores was for Math and English Language Arts

(ELA) for each quarter the student was enrolled throughout the school year. The number of courses passed each quarter was also collected from Infinite Campus.

Problems with the Data Collection. The study consisted of data sets that were collected from multiple sources, Tyler Data Systems and CCSD's Infinite Campus as well as an excel file used by the TPOP case managers. Each of these data sets had to be collected, merged, cleaned, de-identified, and organized before analysis could begin. At the beginning of this study, Tyler Data Systems was a new program for TPOP, and they were unaware how to pull data sets from its systems to be used for analysis. This learning curve by TPOP did delay in retrieval of this data set. The other problem in collecting the data was receiving data sharing agreements with CCSD, as they were also working updating their data system Infinite Campus among other reasons. The issues with data sharing agreements and technology also created a delay in gaining the needed data sets for this study. Once all data sets were received, they then had to be merged and the cleaning and de-identifying process could begin. The cleaning of the data consisted of removing duplicate files and noting any missing data.

Procedure. A pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest design was used for this study. Due to the nature of the data provided and the field in which this study takes place, having more than one group for either a control or secondary experiment is not possible. Due to sharing agreements with CCSD we can gain information on attendance rates for students not referred to TPOP and therefore do not have data available for a control group or a secondary group. Having access to attendance data prior to the TPOP intervention did allow for a pretest-posttest analysis for the single group. This attendance data was not designed to have a time series or repeated measures study conducted on it, as the attendance data is cumulative and cannot be separated.

Once quantitative data was collected, the investigator de-identified the data for the security of the participants. Once the data was de-identified, it was imported into IBM SPSS for analysis of descriptive statistics and to answer the quantitative research questions.

Variables. The dependent variables for this study were the attendance rates (change of attendance rates calculated from subtracting the amount of days pre-referral from the same amount post-referral at 30 day intervals known as Delta Scores for this study), ELA and MAT standardized testing scores, Erikson's Developmental Age Groups and Number of Courses Failed. ELA and MAT standardized testing scores are Nevada's English and Mathematics standardized test for students, given every quarter to public school students. Developmental age groups are broken up by age a combination of age and grade ages three through five (prekindergarten and kindergarten), ages six through 11 (first through sixth grade), ages 12 through 17 (grades seventh through twelfth) and ages 18 and older (adult education). The Delta Scores for attendance rates, ELA and MAT scores and Number of Courses Failed was included in the data set. To separate the cases into age groups, Erikson's developmental age groups will be used. Ages listed in case files for each student was coded into the previously listed development age groups The independent variable for this study was the TPOP intervention.

Measurements of Student Academic Success. In a 2007 study by Lohman & Newman the investigators used grade point average (GPA), number of negative behavioral incidents, and number of absences. This study used the family systems theory to examine the differentiation of self in both school and family units (Lohman et al., 2007). The measurements of academic success were found to be accurate examples of academic achievement for the Lohman & Newman (2007) study. A meta-analysis in 2015 by Fitzpatrick and Burns used standardized testing scores to measure student success throughout an intervention. The intervention focused

on year round education and if its students' success was higher with year round school (Fitzpatrick & Burns, 2015). Fitzpatrick and Burns (2015) used the growth in scores to measure student success instead of single scores, which is what was used within this study. These studies give an example of how academic achievement and success can be measured using this data and was therefore deemed appropriate for this study. While there are critiques of using standardized tests to measure student achievement, they can provide a picture of an increase in academic success throughout a year. This study did not assess a student's success by their score, but instead in how the score changed in relation to their attendance.

Internal Validity. The quantitative piece of this study was a one-group pre-experimental design, which meant that the threats to internal validity were low. The study did not use an instrument or have a testing procedure, which means that there would be no changes in instrumentation and participants could not memorize answers. There was no compensation given to participants for this study further reducing threats to internal validity due to compensation. There was only one group for the intervention, which means that there was not a threat to diffusion of treatment. There were no mortality rates among the participants. There was minimal concern of maturation through this study as it takes place over one academic year and therefore did not provide a long enough time period for maturation. History of the students and families referred to TPOP could pose a threat to internal validity. A few students and families were referred multiple times to TPOP, whether they rejected the program the first time or completed the program successfully but then were referred again due to attendance issues. These families who were referred multiple times did not skew the data as they repeated what their original action was (whether to join TPOP or reject their services). If the case was a repeat referral, the same file was used.

Possible threats to internal validity were handled with careful consideration. Selection of participants were made based on attendance rates and truant behavior which does predispose them to further delinquency. Extreme delinquency does correlate with juvenile incarceration; there were two cases of this in the data set; these two cases showed a large jump in attendance while incarcerated (due to required detention schooling) and once released their numbers remained high due to probationary periods. The TPOP intervention takes place over 90 days, which is a not long period of time for the participants and history can cause a minimal effect; the case notes were used to identify situations that may have impacted the data. The study was not long enough that a large amount of maturation of the participants would be a threat to internal validity, but it was possible.

External Validity. External validity relates to concern outside of the experimental procedure. For this study the threats to external validity were that there could have been outside actions happening to households that affected the outcome of TPOP. These include actions such as loss of job, moving, family death, etc. These were threats to external validity that could not be controlled for by the researcher. To combat concerns of external validity of the quantitative data results, a qualitative and mixed methods analysis was conducted. These analyses were an explanatory process to help provide an understanding of the quantitative results. To have a better understanding of the participants the investigator used the case notes to understand how culture and family dynamics may have affected the results and to understand if there was a threat to external validity. Through the analyses of the case notes, signs for threats to external validity were searched for and if found, were recorded as subcodes (see Appendix A).

Qualitative

Data Collection and Variables. Qualitative data was collected from the case notes that Community Navigators write for each case. To standardize case files, Community Navigators are taught how to write the case notes, what is important to include in the case notes, and are provided with a brief rubric and outline for doing so. Case notes were collected from over 20 Community Navigators and there were over 33,000 case notes supplied. A code tree for the qualitative data was created and used for analysis (see Appendix A).

Procedure. The case notes were de-identified upon receiving the data and were then placed into MAXQDA for analysis. MAXQDA is a qualitative data system that allows for both singular analysis and large scale analysis of data sets. A sample of the case notes was analyzed for understanding and clarity of how case notes were written; once this was completed a lexical search for auto coding will was used. A lexical search in MAXQDA consists of using key terms and words found in the data in the search bar, and the system then finds each case note that consists of that term. Once each case note was found from the lexical search, it was read and coded appropriately.

Validity and Reliability. During the pilot study of TPOP in 2021 the qualitative data was coded separately by two individuals (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). The blind interrater reliability for the pilot study was 97% (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). Using the same coding technique for the pilot study, and similar codebook outline (see Appendix A), the qualitative data was coded for this study. The pilot study codes focused on family interaction and responses to TPOP, the type of connections made, and services used (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). The codes were chosen by looking at similar studies where qualitative data was collected using case notes for juvenile

justice files and coded to give explanation to quantitative findings (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021).

These studies were also used to help enhance the codes for this study.

Interning for TPOP. To further combat concerns of validity of this study, the investigator spent 20 days interning inside the TPOP facility learning how the data was collected and sorted, how and when Community Navigators (CN) took notes, and the fine details of how TPOP is run. The investigator had no direct contact with the CN's, but the investigator did sit in on trainings for the CN's and meetings with case managers.

This time volunteering inside of TPOP helped to give a better understanding of who TPOP serves the most and gave guidance on how to check investigator bias when starting this study. The largest bias that the investigator faced came from the idea that students who are chronically absent or truant were choosing to do so of their own accord. This bias was proven false while volunteering for TPOP after seeing that there are many factors that go into why a student is truant.

Mixed Methods

Variables. The variables used in the mixed methods part of this study were the same variables that was used in both the quantitative and qualitative pieces. The parent codes from the qualitative data. The dependent variables were the Delta Scores for change in attendance, ELA and MAT scores, Number of Courses Failed, and then Erikson's Age Groups.

Procedure and Data Collection. This was an explanatory sequential mixed methods design which involves a two phase data collection process. The first phase was to retrieve the quantitative data from Infinite Campus and Tyler data systems. The second phase was retrieving the case notes from Tyler data systems. This data collection was also used to answer the separate quantitative and qualitative research questions. The investigator did not have direct interaction

with the participants for the data collection; this study was an analysis of pre-existing data provided by TPOP.

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted and checked for validity and reliability purposes. The two data sets were then merged to create one large data set for statistical analysis. The subcodes were summed into the parent codes; the parent codes were then changed to binary variables, to assist in an independent samples t-test. The binary parent codes were tested against the Delta Scores for attendance rates and ELA, MAT and Courses Failed. If a parent code was found significant, the subcodes for that parent code were then changed to binary variables and tested in independent sample t-tests. This would then give an explanation as to why those cases may have been more successful.

Problems with Merging the Data. During the merging of the cleaned, de-identified quantitative data and qualitative case notes there was a significant problem. Of the 3,222 quantitative case files used in this study and the 5,384 qualitative case file only 759 cases had case notes that matched from the Tyler Data Systems. This was due to the fact that the quantitative data was retrieved first, and then the qualitative data was retrieved a few months later. This gap created an issue in connecting the IDs between the two data files.

Validity. The first check of validity for the mixed methods analysis was to ensure that the 759 cases was a representative sample of the 3,222 quantitative cases. The 759 cases were a fair representation of the quantitative data set as seen through the descriptive statistics (see Chapter 4: Results, for descriptive information). Having a representative sample helped to increase the validity of the mixed methods analysis as it was a fair representation of the quantitative demographic data. The validity of the quantitative analysis was considered to be high, even with the few threats that exist (external factors and possible history and maturation). The mixed

methods analysis contained the same parameters as the quantitative analysis which meant that validity was similar. The only remaining threat to validity for this mixed methods design was any possible assumptions of correlations found between the quantitative results and the qualitative analysis. To help lower this threat to validity, the qualitative data was the independent variable that was tested against the Delta Scores in the quantitative data. Using the qualitative results as the fixed factor and testing against the Delta Scores meant that no assumptions of causality could be made.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

To answer the first research question, if TPOP was overall successful the descriptive statistics were tested, disaggregated by Erikson's Developmental Age Groups, to identify differences in the age groups as done in the pilot study. Seeing that certain age groups did have better average increases than other groups, a series of ANOVA's were run to test for significant results and differences between groups. A p value of less than .05 was required for significance. This analysis did answer the question as to the effectiveness of TPOP and what groups were most effected.

To answer the second research question that was posed, does an increase in attendance correlate with an increase in academic achievement correlation coefficients were computed. Correlation coefficients were computed among the change in attendance rates, ELA scores, MAT scores, and Number of Courses Failed (all known as Delta scores). The change in attendance rates were be calculated by subtracting the attendance rates for pre-referral from post-referral. This change in attendance rates presented the increase or decrease in attendance for each student.

A p value of less than .05 was required for significance. These results did answer the quantitative research question regarding the effectiveness of TPOP at increasing academic achievement.

Qualitative

Qualitative data was analyzed using the MAXQDA 2020 system. There were 34,243 case notes to analyze for 5,384 cases. Once the case note data was inputted into MAXQDA, an outlined codebook was created using parent codes. The parent codes were the following: “Guardianship”, “Student Information”, “Family Positive”, “Family Negative”, “Internal Information”, and “School System”. “Guardianship” refers to who the legal guardian is for the case, and how many times they were mentioned and/or contacted in the case notes. Examples of subcodes for this parent code included, “Mother”, “Father”, “Foster Parent”, etc. “Student Information” was used to highlight any information that the Community Navigator (CN) learned about the student, the subcodes for this parent code included items such as “learning disability”, “mental health”, or “probation”. “Family Positive” was the parent code for any positive interaction between the family and Community Navigator; for example, if the Community Navigator was able to contact the family. Other “Family Positive” codes included “attendance improved at closure”, “seeking services” and “closure with services”. “Family Negative” was the parent code for negative interactions between Community Navigator and the family, the subcodes for this parent code included “missed household contact”, “declined to participate”, “student refusal”, etc. “Internal Information” was used to highlight case notes that did not have interaction between family and Community Navigator, but instead an interaction inside of TPOP and notes for their managers. The parent code of “School System” was used to refer to subcodes where either the Community Navigator or family mentions something inside the school system

was creating a challenge for the student to attend school (i.e., “unsafe”, “unenrolled”, “school discipline”). For the full codebook please see Appendix A.

Once the codebook was drafted, 300 case notes were randomly chosen to be coded by hand. These 300 case notes were used to identify key phrases, acronyms or abbreviations that Community Navigators used in their case notes for certain events (i.e., HV means home visit and VM means voicemail). Once this information was identified, a lexical search was conducted on the remaining case notes using the learned terminology. The lexical search would use the key phrases found in any case note, then the investigator read each case note from the search and coded appropriately. Frequency counts were then analyzed for each code. Frequency counts helped to identify the patterns within the case notes (i.e. which codes were found most frequently, and which were found the least).

Mixed Methods

Once the case notes had been analyzed and separated into separate case files, they were exported into an excel file. This file was then combined with the excel file for the quantitative data; this will then be imported into IBM SPSS for further analysis. To combine the two files, the use of the Tyler ID’s and School IDs were used as connecting categories. The parent codes were then changed to binary, with a “0” representing a lack of this parent code found in that case file and a “1” representing the parent code in that case file. The binary parent codes “Family Positive” and “Family Negative” were the first qualitative data to test against the Delta Scores for Attendance, to understand if familial response to the program is directionally correlated to an increase in student attendance. The statistical analysis conducted was an independent samples t-test. Other qualitative variables that were tested against the quantitative data include subcodes under “Student Information” and “School Information” to assess if factors such as “mental

health”, “learning disabilities” and “School Based Discipline” correlate with TPOP’s effectiveness. These tests were also conducted independent samples t-tests.

Limitations and Challenges

The first limitation to this study is the organization of the data presented. The data was not collected to be set up for advanced statistical analysis (such as a repeated measure analysis). The attendance rates were recorded on a cumulative basis, and not as individual counts per 30 day marker. While this is a limitation to the advanced statistics, statistical analysis was still able to be conducted. The analyses that were conducted were also more easily explained and shown to TPOP to help with their grant funding process.

After the qualitative data was analyzed, a large limitation to the study was discovered; the Community Navigators were not entering all of the detailed information necessary into the case notes. Although Community Navigators received training on how to correctly write the case notes and what information was to be included, they were not following the rubric they were provided. While this did limit the amount of information provided for analysis, enough information was available to still perform robust data analysis. Any information about lack of conformity found in the case notes was also given to the directors of TPOP, who will use it to enhance their Community Navigator training and highlight the importance of completed case notes.

Another limitation of this study was that not all cases were involved in the program; some families declined to participate, and some were unable to be located. Including these cases in the data was decided because the case notes for those families did provide important information, such as why they were not able to be located (e.g. they moved or have passed away). The families that declined to participate were not always negative towards TPOP and the

Community Navigator (such as one case where the student was 18 and he declined but was positive towards TPOP), but their decision to not participate was still be considered a negative encounter because it goes against the goal of TPOP.

The quantitative data was a challenge to retrieve because it was a joint effort between CCSD and TPOP. CCSD was hesitant to share attendance and standardized testing score data with TPOP and the OLA. TPOP also had to adjust to how they retrieved their data out of the Tyler data system. Once all of the data had been retrieved, it was be discovered that because the participants were truant, participants did not have regularly measured standardized testing scores. Our large sample size did help to prevent skewness inside of the statistical analysis, but more test scores in the future may help to create an even larger picture than the one the data did provide.

While this study has many benefits to TPOP and the community they serve, having TPOP directly involved with this study did prevent some challenges and limitations. TPOP asked the research questions, without knowing what data was available and without understanding what research questions should be asked. While there were some compromises made to better suit what this study focused on, the research questions did focus on what TPOP needed over what should be inherently researched overall. The other challenge of working directly with a community partner is that the researcher is on the partners timeline, which was this case for this project and meant that more in depth analyses were not possible on the partners timeline. This is not to say that TPOP wanted things that were out of reach for the researchers, but that there should be a longer timetable made available so that more in depth research could be conducted and provide a well-rounded analysis. TPOP wanted positive results, showing that TPOP was significant in improving attendance rates. This turned out to be the case, that they were significant in improving attendance rates in certain groups, this was all TPOP wanted to focus

on. TPOP was not aware that more information could be derived from the qualitative and mixed methods analysis immediately and this had to be shown through the analysis. Moving forward with TPOP and research for their program will be a continued compromise between what they want and what can be done with the data available.

Chapter 4: Results

Quantitative

Descriptive Statistics. For the quantitative data there was 3,222 participants. In the gender assigned at birth variable 56.1% (n=1,806) were males and 43.9% (n=1,416) were females. In the racial identity variable 30.1% (n=971) were Black, 53.1% (n=1710) were White, 4% (n=126) were Native American or Alaskan, 1.9% (n=58) were Asian American, 2.6% (n=79) were Pacific Islander, 0.1% (n=10) were Undefined and 8% (n=268) were Mixed Races. In the Hispanic ethnicity variable 53.1% (n=1,733) were Hispanic and 46.2% (n=1,489) were not Hispanic. In the Erikson's Age Groups variable 2.8% (n=93) were Early Childhood (ages 3-5), 32.2% (n=1,036) Childhood were (ages 6-11), 62.3% (n=2,008) Adolescence were (ages 12-17), 2.6% (n=85) were Adulthood (ages 18+).

The Findings. To have a more in depth view of the data, it was disaggregated by Erikson's Developmental Age Groups. Once this had been completed, the results showed that there were significant increases in attendance rates by age group. Table 1 shows the differences in mean for each age group at 30 days pre-referral, and then 30, 60, 90 and 120 days post referral. After the descriptive means were found, four ANOVAs were run to examine the 30, 60, 90, 120 day pre-referral attendance rates to the 30, 60, 90, 120 post-referral attendance rates to test for significant differences. The independent variable, Erikson's Age Groups, had four levels: 1 (PK, K), 2 (Grades 1-6), 3 (Grades 7-12), and 4 (Adult Education). The dependent variables were the Deltas calculated from post-referral attendance rates at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days from the corresponding pre-referral attendance rates. The first ANOVA, 30 day pre-referral to 30 day post-referral, was significant, $F(3, 3191) = 28.085, p < .001$. The second ANOVA, 60 day pre-referral to 60 day post-referral, was significant, $F(3, 3081) = 39.868, p < .001$. The third ANOVA,

90 day pre-referral to 90 day post-referral was significant, $F(3, 2877) = 38.450, p < .001$. The fourth ANOVA, 120 day pre-referral to 120 day post-referral was significant, $F(3, 2486) = 32.444, p < .001$.

Follow up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means. Equal variances were assumed, so LSD post hoc tests were conducted for each of the ANOVA's. For the 30 day pre-referral to 30 day post-referral, the researcher found significant differences between multiple groups (Table 2). Group 1 saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 2 also saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 4 also had significant increases in attendance to Group 3. These results suggest that the group that did not see any significant increase in attendance was Group 3 (grades 7-12). All findings were significant at the $p < .05$ level.

For the 60 day pre-referral to 60 day post-referral, the researcher found significant differences between multiple groups (Table 3). Group 1 saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 2 also saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 4 also had significant increases in attendance to Group 3. These results suggest that the group that did not see any significant increase in attendance was Group 3 (grades 7-12). All findings were significant at the $p < .05$ level.

For the 90 day pre-referral to 90 day post-referral, the researcher found significant differences between multiple groups (Table 4). Group 1 saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 2 also saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 4 also had significant increases in attendance to Group 3. These results suggest that the group that did not see any significant increase in attendance was Group 3 (grades 7-12). All findings were significant at the $p < .05$ level.

For the 120 day pre-referral to 120 day post-referral, the researcher found significant differences between multiple groups (Table 5). Group 1 saw significant increases in attendance to Group 4; Group 2 also saw significant increases in attendance to Group 3; Group 3 saw significant differences to both Groups 1 and 4. Group 4 also had significant increases in attendance to Groups 1, 2 and 3. These results suggest that after 120 days the Groups that had the most significant increase in attendance when compared to other groups were Groups 1 and 2. Group 3 never had a more significant increase over the other three groups; and Group 4 seems to drop off in significant attendance increases after 120 days. All findings were significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Table 1*Average Attendance Rates Before Intervention Compared to Average Attendance Rates After Intervention*

Erikson's						
Age	Time Block	Valid	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std.
Groups						Deviation
1	30 Days Before Referral	91	.13	30.00	17.2723	6.84342
	30 Days After Referral	91	.00	30.00	20.7087	7.40988
	60 Days After Referral	89	.00	59.03	42.2348	12.72725
	90 Days After Referral	81	2.50	87.99	60.4393	17.00980
	120 Days After Referral	52	24.26	117.99	83.5867	22.04928
2	30 Days Before Referral	1032	.00	30.00	16.8678	7.12025
	30 Days After Referral	1032	.00	30.00	20.5082	7.21507
	60 Days After Referral	1011	.00	60.00	42.1786	12.31763
	90 Days After Referral	978	.00	90.00	63.8483	16.29421
	120 Days After Referral	866	.00	120.00	86.4518	20.02793
2	30 Days Before Referral	1987	.00	58.23	16.4441	6.89212
	30 Days After Referral	1987	.00	61.00	17.8488	7.81691
	60 Days After Referral	1923	.99	139.00	37.0039	14.10835
	90 Days After Referral	1819	6.89	192.67	56.4303	19.81113
	120 Days After Referral	1634	12.89	120.00	76.7038	24.03865
4	30 Days Before Referral	85	2.80	30.00	13.8511	7.56783
	30 Days After Referral	85	.98	30.76	17.4587	8.63874
	60 Days After Referral	82	6.03	63.78	38.8194	14.43135
	90 Days After Referral	79	20.48	93.78	61.1478	19.78641
	120 Days After Referral	71	33.01	120.00	84.1620	24.96261

Table 2

LSD Post Hoc for ANOVA for 30 Day Pre-referral to 30 Day Post-referral by Erikson's Developmental Groups

Erikson's Age Group n= 3191	Erikson's Age Groups n= 3191	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1: PK and K	Grades 1-6	-.11980	.74106	.872	-1.5728	1.3332
	Grades 7-12	2.16004*	.72648	.003*	.7356	3.5845
	Adult	-.09556	1.02223	.926	-2.0999	1.9087
2: Grades 1-6	PK, K	.11980	.74106	.872	-1.3332	1.5728
	Grades 7-12	2.27984*	.26003	<.001*	1.7700	2.7897
	Adult	.02424	.76472	.975	-1.4751	1.5236
3: Grades 7-12	PK, K	-2.16004*	.72648	.003*	-3.5845	-.7356
	Grades 1-6	-2.27984*	.26003	<.001*	-2.7897	-1.7700
	Adult	-2.25560*	.75060	.003*	-3.7273	-.7839
4: Adult Education	PK, K	.09556	1.02223	.926	-1.9087	2.0999
	Grades 1-6	-.02424	.76472	.975	-1.5236	1.4751
	Grades 7-12	2.25560*	.75060	.003*	.7839	3.7273

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3

LSD Post Hoc for ANOVA for 60 Day Pre-referral to 60 Day Post-referral by Erikson's Developmental Groups

Erikson's Age Groups n=3081	Erikson's Age Groups n=3081	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1: PK and K	Grades 1-6	.16279	1.47369	.912	-2.7267	3.0523
	Grades 7-12	5.26421	1.44695	<.001*	2.4271	8.1013
	Adult	-1.00634	2.00388	.616	-4.9354	2.9227
2: Grades 1-6	PK, K	-.16279	1.47369	.912	-3.0523	2.7267
	Grades 7-12	5.10142	.49986	<.001*	4.1213	6.0815
	Adult	-1.16913	1.47369	.428	-4.0586	1.7204
3: Grades 7-12	PK, K	-5.26421	1.44695	<.001*	-8.1013	-2.4271
	Grades 1-6	-5.10142	.49986	<.001*	-6.0815	-4.1213
	Adult	-6.27055	1.44695	<.001*	-9.1076	-3.4335
4: Adult Education	PK, K	1.00634	2.00388	.616	-2.9227	4.9354
	Grades 1-6	1.16913	1.47369	.428	-1.7204	4.0586
	Grades 7-12	6.27055	1.44695	<.001	3.4335	9.1076

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4

LSD Post Hoc for ANOVA for 90 Day Pre-referral to 90 Day Post-referral by Erikson's Developmental Groups

Erikson's Age Groups n=2877	Erikson's Age Groups n=2877	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	Grades 1-6	-1.68883	2.69282	.531	-6.9689	3.5912
	Grades 7-12	5.94558	2.65918	.025*	.7315	11.1597
	Adult	-5.50693	3.39938	.105	-12.1724	1.1585
2	PK, K	1.68883	2.69282	.531	-3.5912	6.9689
	Grades 7-12	7.63441	.77111	<.001*	6.1224	9.1464
	Adult	-3.81810	2.25369	.090	-8.2371	.6009
3	PK, K	-5.94558	2.65918	.025*	-11.1597	-.7315
	Grades 1-6	-7.63441	.77111	<.001*	-9.1464	-6.1224
	Adult	-11.45251	2.21340	<.001*	-15.7925	-7.1125
4	PK, K	5.50693	3.39938	.105	-1.1585	12.1724
	Grades 1-6	3.81810	2.25369	.090	-.6009	8.2371
	Grades 7-12	11.45251	2.21340	<.001*	7.1125	15.7925

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5

LSD Post Hoc for ANOVA for 120 Day Pre-referral to 120 Day Post-referral by Erikson's Developmental Groups

Erikson's Age Groups n=2486	Erikson's Age Groups n=2486	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	Grades 1-6	-3.79371	5.29302	.474	-14.1729	6.5855
	Grades 7-12	4.86814	5.26044	.355	-5.4472	15.1834
	Adult	-13.13881	5.95851	.028*	-24.8230	-1.4547
2	PK, K	3.79371	5.29302	.474	-6.5855	14.1729
	Grades 7-12	8.66185	1.03298	<.001*	6.6362	10.6874
	Adult	-9.34510	2.98306	.002	-15.1946	-3.4956
3	PK, K	-4.86814	5.26044	.355	-15.1834	5.4472
	Grades 1-6	-8.66185	1.03298	<.001*	-10.6874	-6.6362
	Adult	-18.00695	2.92486	<.001*	-23.7424	-12.2715
4	PK, K	13.13881	5.95851	.028*	1.4547	24.8230
	Grades 1-6	9.34510	2.98306	.002*	3.4956	15.1946
	Grades 7-12	18.00695	2.92486	<.001*	12.2715	23.7424

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The quantitative results suggest that the Developmental Age Groups did alter the effectiveness of TPOP. The researcher found that students in grades 7-12 were less likely to be successful in TPOP at increasing their attendance rates; the younger grades PK-6 and the Adult Education group were more likely to be successful in TPOP. This trend can be seen at every 30 day post-referral marker for change in attendance rates until the 120 day marker. At 120 days post referral, we see two differences, the first being that the PK and K group is no longer significantly different than Grades 7-12 groups but they are to the Adult Education group. The second difference is that the Adult Education group are significantly increased in attendance from all of the other groups.

Correlation coefficients were computed among the change in attendance rates (Delta Scores), ELA scores, MAT scores, Erikson's Developmental Age Groupings, and Number of Courses Failed. This quantitative analysis was to understand any correlation between the Deltas and the other variables listed above. For this piece of analysis, Deltas were computed using the same number of post-referral days as pre-referral days (i.e. 60 days post-referral to 60 days pre-referral). These Deltas were used because the ELA, MAT and Courses Failed were also calculated Delta Scores, to assess changes in scores or numbers. As ELA, MAT and Courses Failed were recorded on an even quarterly basis, the Delta Scores for change in attendance should also be calculated similarly. The number of cases did change per variable, as not every student had data for each one (see Table 6). A *p* value of less than .01 was required for significance. The results of the correlational analysis shown in Table 6 show that 16 out of the 22 correlations were statistically significant. Due to gender, race and ethnicity being string variables, correlation coefficients could not be computed for these variables.

As the effectiveness of TPOP increased the ELA and MAT scores did increase, and the number of failed courses declined. Also noted as significant, as courses failed decreased, the ELA & MAT scores increased. ELA and MAT scores were also positively significantly correlated; as a student scored better on an MAT test there ELA test also scored better. These results overall suggest that TPOP is most effective with younger aged students and does help students perform better on standardized tests and improve their chances of passing courses.

Table 6*Correlations Among Change in Attendance Rates (Deltas) and Corresponding Variables*

	Post30- Pre30 (n=3195)	Post60- Pre60 (n=3085)	Post90- Pre90 (n=2878)	Post120- Pre120 (n=2490)	Age Group (n=3222)	Failed Courses (n=1025)	ELA (n=1794)
Age Group	-.124**	-.143**	-.129**	-.102**			
Failed Courses	-.021	-.160**	-.283**	-.331**	.025		
ELA	.033	.127**	.222**	.252**	-.028	-.463**	
MAT (n=1650)	.010	.117**	.208**	.261**	-.019	-.488**	.418**

** $p < .01$ **Qualitative**

Descriptive Statistics. When the qualitative data was received, the only variable attached to the case notes was their Tyler ID case numbers. There was no other demographic or identifying information with the case notes, which helped to prevent any biases while coding the qualitative data. However, since no other demographic data was available there are no defining descriptive statistics for the qualitative results. There was a total of 34,242 case notes that span 5,384 cases, which resulted in 76,444 total codes. Some of the case notes did encompass notes for files that involved siblings (either two or more siblings) and instead of the CN writing notes for all siblings, one main file was used for notes for the whole family. Case notes that mentioned

this information was coded for, with a total frequency of 164 case notes. There were also 287 case notes that clearly stated that a contact attempt between CN and a family was made in Spanish.

One of the parent codes used in the coding process was “Guardianship”, which housed the subcodes that encompass who the CN was in contact with during the case note. The most common connection between CN and a household member was the “Mother” (n= 32,289). The “Father” (n= 6,087) was the second most common and “Grandparents” (n= 1,850). There were two other forms of guardianship found, “Aunt” (n=383) and “Foster” (n=115) which meant any foster parent mentioned. There are case notes where more than one guardian was present during the contact, both subcodes were used in these cases.

Describing the Data. The case notes were organized by Tyler ID case numbers, and then placed into MAXQDA for analysis. The parent codes of “Positive Reactions”, “Negative Reactions”, “Internal Information”, “Guardianship”, “School Information” and “Student Information” were used to house the subcodes for each category that were used to code the case notes. The first 300 case notes coded were randomly selected, and used to identify key phrases inside the case notes that would be used for the lexical search through the rest of the case notes. When coding of the case notes was finished, every case note had at least one code attached to it. Some of the codes were simple ones such as “MA Notes” which case notes made by case managers regarding assigning or closing a case and some were more detailed codes such as “Depression” or “ROI”. The parent codes themselves were not coded, as TPOP was more interested in the subcodes found in the case notes. Some of the sections below include quotes from the parents (dictated by the CN’s) or quotes from the CN’s on what they saw or witnessed. Some of the subcodes use these quotes as explanations and examples as to what the code was

focusing. There were some subcodes that did not need further example or explanation as to what the subcode was for.

Positive Reactions. This parent code was the first one created, as the research questions focused on understanding how different reactions to TPOP would affect the effectiveness of the program. For a case not to receive one of the following subcodes, the case note had to show that the family was willing to participate in TPOP. “Attendance Improved at Closure” (n= 209) was created because when a case is closed, the CN is supposed to highlight if the case was closed with improved attendance or not. According to case note protocol for the CN, the only time this phrase can be used is if the family participated in TPOP and attendance was improved early enough while in the program that the case could be closed early. The CN were required to document every contact or contact attempt made between them and a member of the students’ household. “Household Contact” (n= 4,335) serves to show how many case notes contain a comment regarding a successful household contact. This is considered a positive reaction because it means that the CN was able to successfully communicate with a member of the household and provide information regarding TPOP. An example of a case note for this subcode would include a CN mentioning that they had a home visit with the family or if a mother responded to text sent to the CN. When a case was closed at its regularly scheduled time (90 days post referral) for a household that did participate in TPOP, the phrases written by CN were similar to closure with services. “Closure with Services” (n= 689) is considered a positive reaction because it meant that the household participated in TPOP and received services. This code also refers to the fact that the family participated in TPOP the entire 90 day period and was closed for timing out of the program. “Seek or Using Services” (n= 122) encompassed two situations, either a guardian referred their child to TPOP to gain services or that once approached

by TPOP the guardian or student actively asked for specific services before being offered them. For example, in one case, a mother sent a referral into TPOP asking for help for her teenage daughter who was struggling with attending school due to her daughter's fear of Covid-19. This case note was then coded as "Seek or Using Services" since the mother reached out and requested services. Another example of this code is a mother whose oldest son was referred from his high school, and when the CN attended the first home visit, the mother asked for tutoring services for her younger son.

Negative Reactions. Negative reactions from households included situations where household refused services or declined to participate, missing a communication with the CN, or situations where there could have been an excused absence to the school, but the family did not follow through with the excuse and explained as much to the CN. When a CN reaches out to a household to make contact, they provide the household multiple dates in which to communicate. The subcode "Reschedule" (722) was coded for case notes where there was a scheduled connection between CN and the household but then the household had to reschedule last minute and usually without reason. This is considered a negative reaction to TPOP because continued communication is needed for TPOP to be successful. When a CN would contact a household and the guardians tended to blame something going on with the student outside of school for the student's truancy, the subcode used "Outside School Trouble" (n=385) was used. A few examples of this subcode included excuses such as "his gang friends don't go to school, so he doesn't either" or "well his grandmother died two months ago and he just doesn't want to go anymore". This subcode covered a vast number of excuses provided by guardians as to why they have stopped going to school, all revolving around things outside of academia. This code did not

cover Covid-19 or other illness's that were in the family, as those were mentioned specifically unlike vague excuses coded in "Outside School Trouble".

Due to the timing of this data, a subcode for "Covid Related Issues" (n= 184) was created to help identify how many of the families working with TPOP claimed the pandemic as a reason for their student's truancy. Most of the cases that had this as a subcode would meet with the CN and explain the situation, the CN would then inform the family that they needed to provide a doctor's note to the school to have the absences excused. These cases were usually closed swiftly afterwards as attendance improved once the note was provided. Covid-19 did fall into the parent code of Negative Reactions because most of the time the CN's would mention that the guardians were annoyed when the CN would contact them because the parents were already being contacted by the school. CCSD also provided clear instructions to parents on how to excuse your child from school if they contracted Covid-19, families who did not follow those instructions were considered truant.

Separate from the Covid-19 code was the subcode "Family Illness" (n= 1,206). This subcode was used for cases where someone else in the family had an illness (either mental health or physical) and informed the CN that this was why the student was missing school. There were two reasons as to why this subcode was considered negative, the first was that many of the CN's expressed in their case notes that when meeting with a family in which someone had an illness, they were faced with some hostility for contacting them. The other reason is that many households also used this as an excuse as to why their child should not go to school. An example for a case note like this was "the mother claimed to have undiagnosed depression which meant that she sleeps in and does not think the kids should get up since they would wake her up".

There were subcodes that were easily interpreted as a Negative Reaction. “Missed Household Contact” (n= 7,683) meant that the CN attempted to reach out to the household and never received a response (this included home visits in which no one answered, and they received no call back as requested). “Declined to Participate” (n= 150) was the subcode for households that told CN’s that they were choosing not to participate in TPOP. “Declined Services” (n= 150) was a subcode similar to declining to participate, but in some instances the family agreed to participate in TPOP but did not want any services. In some instances, upon contacting the household, the CN would meet with them and find out that the parents want to participate but the student refused to participate (“Student Refusal” n= 64). The last code that was considered negative was “Unable to Locate/Missing” (n= 610) which meant that the CN had attempted to contact the household multiple times, reached out to the school, and anything else they could think of, but the student was unable to be contacted.

Internal Information. Part of the information that TPOP was curious to understand was what services were being used/requested the most and how often the different departments (or managers) were discussing each case together and with the CN’s. This is why the parent code “Internal Information” was created, to house this information for the directors of TPOP.

Knowledge of the most frequently used services was being tracked by the amount that each service billed to TPOP, however TPOP directors were curious as to how often this was being documented through the case notes. The services found in the case notes were “Food Box” (n=377), “Jewish Family Services” (n=2), “Boys Town” (n=302), “Shining Star” (n=683), “Club Z” (n=272), “Parent Support Specialist” (n= 16), and “Earn and Learn” (n= 152). Further discussion of the outcome of these frequencies will be discussed below in the interpretation of these findings.

The other part of this parent code focuses on communication within TPOP and The Harbor. Any time a CN wanted an attendance updated on one of their cases, they had to note this in the case notes as a message for their case manager this was noted as the subcode “Attendance Pull” (n= 577). When a case was assigned to a CN from a case manager, this was marked as “Case Assignment” (n= 1,053). This was followed by other notes that case managers would make for the CN to see, or in response to case notes that the CN would write; this subcode was marked as “MA Notes” (n= 4,561) because MA is how the case manager would sign before their name. As part of the case note protocol, CN’s are also required to note when they attempt their first contact with a household, or their “First Outreach” (n=517). Some of the referrals that TPOP receives are also involved with The Harbor or the juvenile justice system and that can interfere with the services that TPOP can provide. Three different subcodes were used for cases in which the student had interactions with either of these departments: “Arrest Record” (n=40), “Juvenile Detention” (n=32) and “Harbor Referral/Appt” (n=228). The “Harbor Referral/Appt” subcode included cases referred by The Harbor to TPOP and when TPOP would refer the case to The Harbor (usually for additional services TPOP does not provide).

School Information. This parent code housed subcodes in which the CN received information from the school system outside of the student’s referral or the student explained a situation in which the school had done something to prevent the student from attending. Many CN’s would attempt to reach out to the school counselor to gain information about the student, the subcode “Contact with School Counselor” (n=1,668) was used for this. When it came to reasons that the student was not attending school due to the school’s decision, these subcodes were “Unenrolled” (n=135), “Expelled” (n=76), and “Suspension” (n=450).

Students would also give explanations as to why they were not attending school, due to something going on at school. Students would say that they felt “Unsafe/Safety” (n= 127) for either health reasons or some had a fear of active shooters. There were also many students who said that there was a “Bully” (n= 217) at school that made them choose to not attend. Due to the time of this data, there were also many students who explained that they had issues attending class due to “Distance Learning/Online” (n= 493) situations such as lack of internet access or more specifically “Chromebook Related Comments” (n= 197). In situations where internet was the cause, CN’s and TPOP contacted CCSD to provide wifi hotspots for household.

Another common issue from parents regarding the school system was challenges in withdrawing (“Withdrew”, n=129) their students from school due to relocating and with “Registration Issues” (n= 259). Many of the case notes in which these subcodes were used were cases in which the families first language was not English. There was one case in which the single mother expressed her frustration with ‘the lack of understanding the directions for schooling due to her only speaking Spanish’ (this quote was interpreted by the CN who spoke Spanish and wrote the note in English).

Student Information. When CN’s write case notes, their rubric states that they must write any and all information they find out about the student during contacts with the household or with the school. TPOP directors wanted to know if this protocol was being followed. The subcodes in “Student Information” highlight what information CN’s inputted into their case notes about the student.

Specific diagnosis, disabilities or substance issues were mentioned by guardians, students and school counselors to the CN’s. Specific ones found in the case notes were “ADHD” (n= 115), “Dyslexia” (n= 3), “Depression” (n= 107), “Behavioral/Anger Problems” (n= 19),

“Bipolar” (n= 15), “Anxiety” (n= 233), and “Student Substance Use” (n= 346). Generic concerns were also mentioned to CN’s such as “Mental Health” (n= 261) or “Learning Disability” (n= 29) and “504 Plan” (n= 190). There were 34 cases that mentioned “Suicide”, which encompasses suicidal thoughts, tendencies, attempts and sadly completion of the act. Reports of “Racism” from the household to the CN’s were recorded (n= 8); student reports of being a member of a sexual minority group were also recorded (“LGBT”, n= 10).

CN’s also gathered information about the student’s overall behavior or opinion towards school. “Transcript and Credit Conversations” (n= 567) were a common note made by CN’s, as was if the student was enrolled in a “Behavioral School” (n= 124). CN’s would also highlight if the student was a “Foster Kid” (n= 115), had received a “Citation” (n= 10) or was working with a “Probation Officer” (n= 39).

Interpretation of Findings. The most common code was “Mother” under “Guardianship”, which suggests that mothers were the most commonly contacted guardian by the CN and/or the most involved in their student’s attendance concerns. Throughout the case notes, the evidence that the mother or mother figure was the most common point of contact was seen not just in the codes but in the discussions between mother and CN’s. Many of the case notes highlight that case involved a single mother raising her kids as best as she could on her own but was struggling to do so. An example of this is a case where the single mother worked the graveyard shift and was unaware that her teenage son was missing school due to her work schedule. Another example was a single mother who worked during the day, was raising a toddler but could not afford childcare, so her middle school daughter stayed home to babysit. This particular example was a common theme among many cases, and assisting with childcare became a resource that TPOP regularly helps with now. Many of the cases that were coded for

reaching out for services was usually also coded with mother. Other common codes found alongside mother was “Household Contact” and “Closed with Services”. Due to “Mother” having such a high prevalence rate in the codes, it was common for them to be found with many other codes as well but not common enough to report one. There were two cases where the student did report being a member of the LGBTQ community (and this was coded as such) and this code was tied with the “Mother” code. Both students reported feeling unwanted by their mother once coming out to her, and this effected their school attendance.

One of the main proponents of not just a wrap-around truancy prevention program but all prevention programs is parental involvement, as they are in charge of their minor children and could be the ones facing criminal charges if their student does not attend school. This was why “Guardianship” was a necessary parent code; understanding the parent/guardian connections between students and their guardians helped to not only examine triad relationships but also who was involved in their life. Laxovic et al. (2002) found in their research the importance of having a father figure for students, and its direct correlation to academic achievement. The significant difference in the number of “Mother” to “Father” codes (and the number of cases where the mother explained that she was on her own) suggests that there is a lack of a father figure in many of these cases. In a handful of the cases that had “Father” codes, the father was attempted to be contacted by the CN but received negative responses including this one “they live with their mom, stop bugging me, I don’t care about whether or not they go to school”. While the appearance of a father figure may help improve academic achievement, it cannot be helped when there is a lack of one for a student.

Existing studies have found that programs where the parent(s) are involved are successful in lowering truancy rates (Bennett & Bergman, 2021). Whether this is one, two or multiple

parents, engagement with the family unit is necessary. Family Systems Theory also posits that there needs to be an even triad for a child to be successful, if the relationship between parents is non-existent or strained this can create challenges for the child. For single mothers, this need for a triad creates a large barrier as it may just be the parent and the children. The third point is sometimes filled by an older child, another family member or even an educator. “Grandparents” were a common non-parent guardian that CN’s would have contact with, followed by “Aunt” and “Foster”. The cases involving grandparents were a mix of guardians and situations where the family lived with their grandparents. This was also the cases for the code “Aunt”. “Foster” referred to cases where the student lived with their foster parent of which there were 115 cases. Whoever fills those points though must continue to provide a healthy triad relationship. With TPOP coming into the picture, the CN can also help to support the triad relationship for single mothers or by supporting the parents’ relationship through provided resources. The presence of the CN as an acting force on the triad should help the family unit and improve the student’s success.

TPOP’s main route of helping families is through contact between CN and the household, which is why it is important for CN’s to document when an attempt at contact is made. This is also why it was important to examine the notes for contacts between the two parties, which resulted in 12,018 codes involving contacts. However over 7,000 of those codes were missed contacts, whether from in person visits, email or over the phone. While TPOP is successful in lowering truancy rates, as seen in the quantitative data, it is not as successful as it could be. This could be in part from lack of successful contacts. There are more missed contacts than successful ones, and that means communication is not happening between CN’s and households. No communication means that households are not getting the information or services that they need

to help their student attend school. There were also many more “Negative Reactions” to TPOP than there were “Positive Reactions”, mostly in part from the high number of missed contacts but there are still other codes that need to be considered.

Households that declined to participate in TPOP or declined their services were higher than anticipated, since TPOP is a free service that helps households avoid truancy court. This brings to question if CN’s are approaching households in a manner that portrays the true goals of TPOP or are things like language and age barriers causing these codes to have a high frequency.

The other subcode that should be considered is “Unable to Locate/Missing”. In cases like these were the CN’s following the proper channels to track down the students/households or are households truly not communicating with school districts about their relocations. Once again, we have to consider possible language barriers between households and the school system, as CN’s receive contact information through the school system, and if that information is inaccurate then locating the student becomes a challenge.

Analyzing the case notes for reports of services being used was directly requested from TPOP to assess the documentation that CN’s are using, and to find out if any services are being requested. While we do see that there are households who request services (“Seeking or Using Services”), only a few case notes also mentioned which specific services were requested (usually tutoring or childcare). After sharing this information with TPOP directors, they discovered that CN’s were not recording all of the services they provide to families according to the services being billed to TPOP. This was the case for the other codes regarding departmental communication as well.

The services that CN’s did report the most usage of was “Shining Star” (a program to help families with psychological and physical needs for children who have mental health needs

or learning disabilities), “Boys Town” (in-patient treatment center for males) and “Club Z” (online tutoring service). These services all focus on providing needs for youth who are struggling from different areas. Shining Star works with all ages of youth (and developmentally challenged adults) to help them become independent adults with a strong support system. Boys Town works with young men who are struggling with substance abuse problems, behavioral concerns and delinquency acts; its goal is to help these young men stay out of the criminal justice system. Club Z is an online tutoring service that focuses on helping youth who are behind academically to catch up to their peers. All of three of these programs are designed to provide the support and guidance that Erikson’s theory highlights as necessary for proper development.

When looking at the subcodes under “School Information” the most common one was “Contact with School Counselor” which means that the CN either reached out to or was contacted by the school counselor. Most of the referrals to TPOP come from school counselors and therefore contact between the CN and school counselor should be noted and documented, as well as continued through the time the household is working with TPOP. As the case notes tagged with this code were examined, there was a common pattern where the school counselor was not willing too or preferred to not be included in the student’s case. We know that school engagement is an element of a successful program (Virtanen et al, 2021) but what happens when the school counselor wants nothing to do with the student, they refer to a program? Does that provide an overview of how that school feels toward that student and could that be a reason that a student has disengaged? When we look at other subcodes under “School Information” we see that some students are suspended or have been expelled from their schools. When reading into these cases, they were tied to other subcodes such as “Behavioral/Anger Problems” and “504 Plan”. When students are not getting the support they need in the classroom, they act out which

means that they risk punishment by the school (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). When a student feels as if the school is against them, they will disengage which leads to truant behaviors (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). This disengagement will also lead to an emotional cutoff between the student and their education/educators. The emotional cutoff creates problems with development for students; when students are suffering from developmental issues they will usually act out (Ormrod et al., 2019). This then becomes a vicious cycle for the student, that will lead to truancy.

The other problem that students brought up in the case notes was that if they missed a certain number of days, the school would either auto-disenroll them or the student would receive a suspension. One mother recalled “she was just getting over Covid-19 and went back to school and her teacher her sent her to the office. The office said she had to leave because she was no longer a student there because she missed a week of school”. While this case was due to a lack of understanding from a language barrier on Covid-19 protocols, it did highlight a large issue with the school system. Since schools do not want to admit that they have attendance problems, they will auto-disenroll students without any warning to avoid having a higher truancy rate. A teenage boy who had been referred to TPOP explained to his CN how he ended up suspended after entering TPOP, “you dropped me off at school since I missed my bus, and then the security officer saw me first thing and sent me to the office. Office said I was suspended for being truant and couldn’t go to class”. This student then walked home and called his CN to explain that he would be absent that day. While cases such as these were few in number, they were present in the data and fell under “Suspension” and “Unenrolled”. Schools do not want to have high truancy rates, so they will attempt to cover their tracks or punish the students themselves. This creates problems in truancy research due to lack of accurate attendance data.

Lack of basic and safety needs will also lead to disengagement in school (Kurt, 2021, January 21). The subcodes “Food Box”, “Bully”, “Unsafe/Safety”, “Earn and Learn” and “Mental Health” all highlight that there is a trend with students who are truant, which is that they lack their basic needs and the right to feel safe at school. To clarify what these subcodes mean, “Food Box” meant that the CN delivered a “3 Square a Day” box to the family as they needed food services. “Bully” meant that the student told the CN that they were being bullied at school, which is different from the code “Unsafe/Safety” which referred to physical safety fears from illness or active shooters. Some of the cases with this code also consisted of the codes “Racism” and “LGBTQ”.

The “Earn and Learn” service is a program that pays students to attend school and earn better grades, which is usually suggested by CN’s for cases where the students are working instead of attending school. An example of this was one teenage boy who said, “my moms the only paying the bills for the three of us, she needs help and I would rather help her feed my little brother than go to school”. Another example was of a 17 year old male whose family were immigrants from South America, “in my family when a guy is 17 they’re a man and need to provide for the family”. The CN offered the male Earn & Learn, but the student refused as their dad said “that wasn’t good enough” (this case also received the codes “Student Refusal” and “Declined to Participate”). This is just a couple of examples of many situations where the student needed the money, so Earn and Learn provided an option so that the student can go to school and earn money (even though some refused the service). The cases where families needed extra financial support are also examples of how the family projection process happens, while parents were not forcing their children to work, it may have been expected or needed. In the case with the boy and his single mother, he was willing to help out because the mother projected the

financial stress onto him. In the case with the 17 year old and his father, his father was projecting his expectations onto the son. Financial situations were a common reason that students were truant, and in many of these cases the family projection process could be seen (whether on purpose or not).

“Mental Health” and all of the codes that relate to it is a basic need that many do not realize teenagers struggle with. 34 cases involved suicide in some form, even if it was only ideation of it mentioned by the student. One teenage girl said, “some days are so hard to get up that it would be easier to just let the depression keep me in bed than go to school and be bullied and have teachers yell at me for not doing the homework”, this girl ended up attempting suicide while in TPOP and was hospitalized. Another 107 case notes involved the discussion of depression and how that effected their school attendance.

751 case notes consisted of the code “IEP”, which is a program for students to provide extra resources to students so that they succeed. Many of these case notes were not about how their student has one, but that their student needs one and/or the school was refusing to help the parents request one. 29 students had pre-diagnosed learning disabilities outside of ADHD (n= 115 case notes). This lack of help in regard to their education will feed into an overall emotional cutoff between the student and their learning. If students are struggling mentally or emotionally, they will struggle to be successful in their academics. Youth can only handle so much in their cognitive load until they start to cut things out, and school tends to be the first one.

A number of the cases had subcodes that consisted of “Outside School Trouble”, “Student Substance Use” and “Arrest Record”. Cases that were tagged with “Outside School Trouble” usually referred to the student having behavioral issues outside of their education, such as gang activity, or their parents referring to ‘friends who are bad influences’. When students were asked

if they had substance issues by the CN, many self-reported (those who didn't and were using were reported by the guardian). Having an existing arrest record also related directly to cases that had the other two subcodes. Many of the students who had these subcodes in their file also mentioned feeling unsure, unliked and looking for people who like them. The sad truth is that many found 'friends' who liked them because they would all commit delinquent acts together, even if it was just skipping school. Adolescence are swayed by their peer influences (according to Erikson's theory), and therefore they want to act like them and fit in. If they find groups that are accepting of them, they will do what that group does to continue to fit the mold of the group.

There was a common theme among many of the cases, and that was alternative forms of schooling such as "Summer School" and "Distance/Online Learning". Summer school for CCSD is mostly mandatory, but there are options for students to take classes if they want that are not mandatory. However, if a student is enrolled in Summer school, then their attendance is mandatory as it would be in another school semester. This code was hard to break down between students who were referred to TPOP for missing Summer school and cases where the CN would suggest attending Summer to catch up on credits. A separate code was then created ("Transcript and Credit Conversation") that helped to break down the two types of Summer school cases. CN's worked to have conversations with high schoolers who were not on track to graduate from missing credits and tried to encourage Summer school to make them up. During the time of this study, online schooling was still a prevalent option due to Covid-19. Students who did attend online learning and were truant, were included in this study. These students were found to have internet and connectivity issues, or "Chromebook Related Comments" that ended up being the main cause of their truant behavior.

Evidence of Mistrust Caused by Prejudice. Within the case notes there was a theme in regard to mistrust of the CN's, TPOP and CCSD by the families and students. In a 2018 study, James et al. found that there was a severe amount of mistrust that parents would pass down to their children, out of concern for their well-being. This was due to the parents having experienced a negative interaction with someone of another race, and out of fear of their own children having that experience, decided to encourage their child's fear of that group. One Black mother's words to a CN (who was the replacement of a White CN), "the other one didn't listen, she was White so she wouldn't understand that my husband died and I didn't want that around the kids. But you get it, cause you're brown and we need more time to be with us". The previous CN had one interaction with the mother, to let the mother know that her children were considered truant and to explain TPOP. This is an example of the fear that parents may have for their children's wellbeing and the mistrust that someone of another race will not understand. The mistrust is not always between the CN and the family but instead what the CN may represent to the family. One mother explained "y'all just keep calling about [name of son] and him not going to school! Y'all the same, school and government trying to screw us". The mother declined to participate in TPOP, after a continued explanation that she did not trust the government in her family business. This mistrust is due to years of structural racism and has created permanent distrust between families and government programs.

Another case that discussed prejudice was of a student describing their homeroom teacher as a "racist jerk" and explained how no matter what she did, she was the problem and made comments about how it was because of her skin color. In this case the CN was able to contact the school counselor and change the student's homeroom, and the student's attendance increased. The CN also reported that the school counselor said that there was nothing else they could do

regarding the teacher. When CN's are able to help the student combat serious issues such as racism, it helps to build overall trust in TPOP. However, when other people, such as the counselor, cannot offer more support it can deter some of that trust building.

Mixed Methods

Descriptive statistics. For the mixed methods analysis there were 759 cases. In the gender assigned at birth variable 55.1% (n= 418) were males and 44.9% (n= 341) were females. In the racial identity variable 29.1% (n= 221) were Black, 51.9% (n= 394) were White, 5.1% (n= 39) were Native American or Alaskan, 1.7% (n= 13) were Asian American, 4% (n= 17) were Pacific Islander, 0.4% (n= 3) were Undefined and 9.5% (n= 72) were Mixed Races. In the Hispanic ethnicity variable 55.9% (n= 424) were Hispanic and 44.1% (n= 335) were not Hispanic. In the Erikson's Age Groups variable 4.6% (n= 35) were Early Childhood (ages 3-5), 26.1% (n= 198) Childhood were (ages 6-11), 66.3% (n= 503) Adolescents were (ages 12-17), 3.1% (n= 23) were Adulthood (ages 18+). These descriptive statistics are very similar to the descriptive data for the quantitative analysis, suggesting that the 759 cases that were able to combine from the quantitative data and the qualitative is a proportionate sample. Three subcodes did not transfer over, as the cases they were found in did not merge ("Seeking or Using Services", "LGBT", and "Racism").

Results. The results of the independent sample t-tests, that assessed connections between attendance Delta Scores and binary parent codes, and then Delta Scores for ELA, MAT, Courses Failed and Behavioral Infractions and binary parent codes produced a few significant findings (Table 7). A series of independent t-tests were conducted to test the hypotheses that the qualitative data could provide further insight to the quantitative results, specifically that family interaction does affect the effectiveness of TPOP. Two tests were found as significant. The first

was “Guardianship”, $t(163.54) = -2.151, p = .033$ but the results were counter to the hypothesis, suggesting that “Guardianship” had a negative effect on attendance rates at the Delta Score for 120 day post-referral to 120 day pre-referral. The second test found as significant was the parent code of “Negative Reactions”, $t(703) = 2.102, p < .05$, these results were counter to the hypothesis, suggesting that “Negative Reactions” to TPOP have a positive effect on attendance rates at the Delta Score of 30 day post-referral to 30 day pre-referral. Independent sample t-tests were run for the Delta Scores of 30, 60, 90 and 120 days with the binary parent codes and Deltas for ELA, MAT, Courses Failed and Behavioral Infractions, no other significant results were found.

Table 7

Results for the Independent Samples T-Test for Delta Change Rates and Significant Codes

	F	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Guardianship and Post120-Pre120	6.277	-2.151	163.54	.033*	-6.303	2.929	-12.087	-.5181
Mother and Post12-Pre120	8.020	-2.123	222.06	.035*	-5.756	2.711	-11.097	-.4139
Negative Reactions and Post30-Pre30	.661	2.102	703	.039*	3.339	1.613	.2199	6.459
Reschedule and Post30-Pre30	5.325	2.789	104.07	.006*	5.449	1.954	1.574	9.324
Outside School Trouble and Post30-Pre30	.023	2.519	73.879	.014*	6.306	2.503	1.318	11.294

* $p < .05$. Notes: Equal variances not assumed

Chapter 5: Discussion

Quantitative

Interpretation of the Findings

The quantitative results suggest that the hypotheses were accurate regarding the increases in attendance as it related to age groups and staying in line with the results from the pilot study (Hilpert & Fletcher, 2021). TPOP is effective at increasing attendance for students, most specifically for groups in the younger age ranges and adult learners. Grades 7-12 did not have significant increases in attendance, unlike the other three age groups. These results will help to continue to support TPOP in its search for funding. TPOP is a grant funded program, that relies on empirical evidence to provide to the county to receive funding. Without empirical evidence the program could not receive the funding that they need to continue forward.

The hypothesis regarding school attendance effecting academic performance was also proven to be correct; the results show that as attendance increases so does ELA and MAT scores increase, and the number of courses failed decreases. These results are in line with current studies on academic achievement and school attendance (Casillas et al., 2012; Duran-Naruick et al., 2008; Klien et al., 2022) and continues to show that attendance in school is necessary to be successful academically. These results will also support TPOP's collection of evidence, as it highlights the importance of lowering truancy rates. As TPOP does lower truancy rates, it means that the program is directly helping students be academically successful. When students are academically successful, it benefits not only the students but the school system as a whole.

Through the Framework Lenses

When looking at these results through the lens of the two frameworks, some explanation as to why grades 7-12 did not have significant increases in attendance can be theorized. If one

considers what the main task is for youth in this age group, according to Erikson, it is identity development. Throughout a youths overall development, they are building their identity through specific tasks that lean on tension with another person; the adolescence stage however is completely focused with identity development within themselves. At this point many youth are known to rebel against their parents and societal rules in order to create an identity (Rothbaum et al., 2002). An easy way to rebel is to skip school; this can also be a way of finding different peer relationships and changing a social circle for a student. The youth in this category are past the tasks where they need immediate adult support to continue forward and are working on creating their own identity. This could be a reason why these students did not have significant increases in their education. Once the students reach adulthood, and in this case adult education, there identity is mostly developed, and they are working towards improving their outcomes which could explain why the adult learners also had an increase. In the early adulthood stage, the task then refocuses on a tension with another party and finding intimacy to avoid isolation. In todays society, one of the easiest ways to build connections is through education and the classroom. This could also be a reason to help explain why the adult learners were found to have increases in their attendance rates after their needs were met by TPOP.

If one were to look at family systems theory, and what the quantitative results are showing, there are many arguments that could be made about what could be the reason behind the results. The first is the triad relationships, and how they shift over a student's growth (The Bowman Center, 2023). When students are younger, they rely more on the other two points of their triangle. As they get older that reliance dissipates and in some cases the student is the one being relied on (help with finances, childcare, healthcare, etc.). Another part of Family Systems Theory that could help to explain these results is the emotional cutoff, and how that happens

quite often in adolescent years (Brown, 1999). The emotional cutoff could be between a student and their parents or the student and their education. This cutoff could be the reason that grades 7-11 were not significant in raising attendance rates, as the students felt no connection or reason to go to school. As the qualitative data will show, there are many more possible reasons as to why students were truant and how this can relate to Family Systems Theory.

Qualitative

Impressions of the Data

There was one large thing noticed in every case, the family needed help in some way. Whether they needed help with childcare, food insecurity, financial hardships or mental/behavioral problems. The case notes showed that truancy was caused not by the student, but by the things happening around the student and their family. Many of the families were excited to have the extra support that TPOP could offer. While there were some that were hesitant to accept help at first (or in some cases completely refused) the hesitant families did learn to trust the services that TPOP offered and what TPOP could do to help them and their children.

There were many cases where common codes overlapped each other, which hinted at a larger story to be heard by the families. For instance, the cases where the students identified as LGBTQ also were linked to codes about bullying or fearing for their safety. When students do not feel safe the likelihood that they will not attend school increases, as seen in the literature and this study. Alongside this, many students shared that they did not feel heard at home or at school which made them feel unsafe or unwanted in either location. This lack of belonging came from a mix of lack of connection to their education or lack of connection to their parents. The students were unaware of how to communicate this feeling to the adults around them; the CN's who

witnessed these cases according to their case notes worked to help build better communication for the students.

Another common overlapping of codes was when families were seeking services from TPOP and the need for childcare help. In these cases, many of the parents admitted that their student was truant because they needed a babysitter; so when asked what services TPOP could provide to the family, childcare was requested. These requests usually came before the CN's would list off available services; the families knew what they needed to be successful and were able to ask for help. Following these cases to the end of their notes, there is another overlapping theme showing that the cases were closed early, "Attendance Approved at Closure", meaning the case was closed early due to a dramatic increase in attendance by the student. This shows that one provided service could have a dramatic effect on a family. Stepping back from these specific cases however, this trend that one asked for service can lead to dramatic increases in attendance is seen in many cases. Families that needed help with enrollment services for their student; students needing help getting enrolled in IEP program; an online learner not having access to reliable internet. Cases that had the corresponding codes all showed improved attendance once one simple 'issue' was solved, and the cases were closed early. This suggests that simply asking what the family needs for the student to be successful, instead of assuming and trying to fix it (which will be discussed below), will have large effects.

Assuming things is never a wise idea, especially when working with such a diverse population like Clark County, NV. Culture and race play a large part in how a family unit will function. There were some instances throughout the case notes where the CN may have assumed something (i.e. language spoken, basic needs insecurity, transportation issues) based off of the families name and address. Anytime the CN assumed one of these things about the family, the

guardians did not react in a positive light. If a CN brought a food box without asking if the family would like it, this tended to offend some families (i.e. “we can feed ourselves” or “we don’t need no pity food”). If a CN saw that family spoke Spanish (according to their school profiles) the CN would attempt first contact with the family in Spanish. This led to many responses by parents explaining that they spoke English. The opposite would also happen, with the parents explaining that they spoke Spanish and the CN should know that. The CN’s never meant to offend, and in many instances of these situations, were following protocol or what was suggested by the school.

There was a lack of communication between many of the guardians of the students. This was a problem with families with split parents, where the students lived most of the time with one parent and the other parent would have the students for shorter periods. CN’s would reach out to the main parent listed on file from the school, and that parent would not have the kid or blame the absences on the other parent. One parent would move and not inform the other parent of where they were, making it hard for CN’s to track the students’ movements. This lack of communication ends up breaking down the triangular relationship that is described in Family Systems Theory; where two adults help a child develop into an adult themselves. When there is a breakdown in the relationship, it puts uneven amount of strain between two points which leads to behavioral problems. This is seen throughout the case notes where youth may feel the strain set by one parent and act out (skip classes) in rebellion.

Families that only have one regularly present guardian was a prevalent theme throughout the case notes and with many of these cases there were struggles for the families. Financial, childcare and control of the children to name a few. When a CN would enter into the family unit, they sometimes would take up the third point of that triangular relationship and do what they

could to relieve some of the strain between the parent and the student. This was especially common with younger students who were still in Erikson's praise needing stage and responded quickly to the CN's extra praise. For older students, if they were skipping classes for less obvious reasons, having another adult to talk to seemed help them open up and share their reasoning. Many times, it was the student felt lost, mentally unhealthy or unsure of themselves (which all relate to Erikson's identity development task). The strain between the student and parent created a communication breakdown and the student felt as if they didn't have someone to talk with.

There was one trend that was found but could not be outright coded, as it is something that has to be seen underneath the data. Every family who participated in TPOP struggled with communication in some. This may have been a language barrier breakdown, where the parents did not speak English and did not understand how the school system worked. A communication breakdown between the school counselor and the family. The communication breakdown could have been internal to the family (i.e. between parents, or between parent and child). Or a communication breakdown between the family and TPOP itself. Communication is necessary not just according to Family System's Theory (especially in the triangular relationship) but also in Erikson's Theory of Development. The earlier stage tasks rely on communication between a parent and the child to feel industrious and receive praise; later on communication between parent and child can help the child to build their identity. Many of the CN's noted that parents were struggling to connect with their children of all ages, which meant that the children's needs were not always met (ultimately hindering development). Communication helps to build connection between people, and so many of these families had other stressors in their lives that broke down communication. As families were accepting the services that TPOP offered, stressors

on the families were lessened. CN's would note how as families could focus more on the student and getting on the student to school, communication started to rebuild as well.

This study took place right after the Covid-19 pandemic when school systems were still learning how to manage the epidemic and coming back to in person learning. The case notes had a multitude of examples where families were either in fear for their students health, or had no idea about the Covid-19 policies and how to navigate them. Once again, there is evidence of communication issues. This time it was usually between parents and the school, and how the schools were lacking in clarity of policies and procedures with parents.

To sum the qualitative data into one statement would be a large challenge, due to the overwhelming amount of case notes. However, the case notes do show that communication is a key element in the success of TPOP and the school system, as well as within the family unit. Connection between the CN's and family unit was necessary in order to communicate the needs that the families may have and what TPOP does and offer to the families. The school system was lacking in their communication with the families and with TPOP itself. This lack of connection and communication hindered TPOP's goals and prevented students from attending school in some scenarios. Moving forward, TPOP should focus on improving all areas of communication with the family and school system. Open communication will not only help to improve attendance but will help to make the students feel heard and more safe in their education.

Mixed Methods

Interpretation of findings

There were some significant findings in the analysis that suggest there may be more to understand between the connection between attendance rates and the qualitative data. When the binary variables were created for the parent codes, a 0 represented a lack of code for that case

while a 1 represented a presence of that code for that case. “Positive Reactions” (n= 759) had 446 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 313). “Negative Reactions” (n= 759) had 569 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 190). “School Information” (n= 759) had 423 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 336). “Student Information” (n= 759) had 197 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 562). “Guardianship” (n= 759) had 585 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 174). “Internal Information” (n= 759) had 638 cases that received a code in this parent code (0= 121). Further examination of the data does show that there is missing Delta Scores in the 30, 60, 90 and 120 sets; with the 120 day set missing the most at 305 cases. This amount of missing data could skew the results of the analysis. Courses Failed (n= 86), MAT (n= 83), ELA (n= 104), and Behavioral Infractions (n= 100) all had a low number of participants within this data set, meaning that statistical significance would be hard to capture and the results showed no significance.

Results show that “Guardianship” did have a negative effect on attendance rates. Most of the cases for the 120 day data set that were present did not have the “Guardianship” parent code, which could explain the negative correlation found in the analysis. To examine further into any correlations between the parent code and attendance rates, the binary subcodes for “Guardianship” were then tested using independent samples t-tests. “Mother” (n=315) was found to be significant, which may suggest that when interacting with the mother of the household, there is less of an effect than when dealing with other guardians. This could relate back to the qualitative data and results, that suggest ‘mothers’ are struggling more to help their children attend school than other guardians. As discussed above, these reasons could relate to a single mother who needs more services and support, a higher number of rebellious teenagers or that the lack of a well-balanced triad relationship could be affecting attendance rates. The qualitative data

does show that the “Mother” code did not only encompass single mothers, but it was on who the main point of contact was during each interaction between Community Navigator and the household. This negative correlation between “Mother” in this instance and attendance rates does lean to suggest that there not having two adults regularly involved with TPOP than the program is not as effective. No other subcodes under “Guardianship” were found to be significant. While the lack of significant results for other subcodes would suggest that having more adults involved in the TPOP interactions meant that it does not affect attendance, that may not be the case. The other subcodes were smaller in number than “Mother”, which provided a small sample size to test. The interactions of the other guardian codes also shows that when present, there is no decrease in attendance as there is with the “Mother” code. Once again this suggests that when there is more than one adult present in the triad relationship, attendance does not decrease.

Results also show that “Negative Reactions” had a positive effect on attendance rates. The positive correlation between “Negative Reactions” and the 30 day marker does make some sense, when one considers the qualitative data and subcodes present. The subcodes under “Negative Reactions” presented two significant findings, “Reschedule” and “Outside School Trouble”. These two codes were created as to represent interactions where the Community Navigator felt as if the parent were making an excuse to not meet with them or for why the student was truant. For “Reschedule” this code meant that the family had rescheduled multiple times, and seemed to be delaying meeting with TPOP; during the first 30 days of this attendance for the student increased. The need to reschedule multiple times could be due to last minute schedule issues with the family, or it could represent a lack of trust in TPOP and a need to ‘fix it themselves’ (as seen in some comments from parents in the qualitative data). Families may not trust an outside, or government, program to help them or be involved in their family so they

agree to meet but keep rescheduling while attempting to improve attendance. However, results suggest that this does not work long term as the main cause of the truancy may not be taken care of. “Outside School Trouble” represented anything the Community Navigator deemed as an excuse for why the student was not attending school (i.e. ‘mother said it was his friends’ or ‘grandma died two months ago and he’s not over it’). Cases with these codes also saw a significant increase in attendance over the first 30 day period. As mentioned when discussing “Reschedule”, families may feel an immediate mistrust in TPOP and/or may feel embarrassed that their student is being marked as truant (as seen with a handful cases in the qualitative data). Parents may feel the need to provide some excuse to the Community Navigator instead of sharing the real reason that the student is truant. Once again, the parents then work to get the student back in school but then attendance drops off later on; this once again could be from the lack of healing the main cause of the truancy. The increased attendance during those first 30 days does suggest that just because TPOP receives a negative reaction, that does not mean that households are not working to improve attendance rates after being notified of the truancy with their student.

Through the Framework Lenses

Between parents and children, the triangular or triad relationship begins to build. However, when one parent is left alone or is handling the relationship on their own (i.e. the other parent works long periods of time, is not present physically or emotionally, etc.) then the strain between the present parent and the child grows. Sometimes an older child or another adult might notice this strain and attempt to step in, but this does not always fix the problem and may create even more issues. The results from the “Guardianship” and “Mother” codes suggest that many families are struggling to maintain balanced triangular relationships within the household. Maybe

a single mother needs an older sibling to step up, but in doing so places that older child in an adult position that affects their identity, ability to attend school or places more adult responsibilities on them (which puts strain on the relationship between the mother and older child). Maybe a mother is the only one home during the day, and is struggling to handle multiple children while the father works and that's why a child acts out and puts strain on the relationship. The lack of a balanced triangle can create long term affects, that could lead to chronic truant behavior.

Family Systems Theory posits that the family projection process can play a large role into a student's academic choices and future (Brown, 1999). An example is a family where both parents are doctors, it could be assumed that the student will be guided into the medical field. This process can be seen when looking at the results of the "Negative Reactions" t-test, and how that when a family member reacts negatively to TPOP (i.e. declining to participate because "they will handle it themselves"), they could be projecting their reaction to TPOP onto their child, which encourages their child to attend school. However, the lack of correlation between "Negative Reactions" and any other Delta Attendance does suggest that even though the projection process may work in the first 30 days, it does not work in the long term. Which is exactly what happens within the family projection process, it eventually stops working. One of the reasons that the family projection process stops working can once again be tied back to identity development, Erikson's adolescence stage, and how as a student develops their identity, they may choose to not allow the projection that their parents place on them define their actions.

As seen in the descriptive statistics, we see that 503 out of 759 cases were adolescents, which does mean that the need to create their identity and step away from their parents may have been prevalent among the students. This can also relate into why interacting with the guardians

created a decrease in attendance instead of an increase, as students are wanting to be seen as an adult and therefore may want to be worked with directly instead of through a guardian.

Significance

This study used a mixed methods approach to help provide an in-depth understanding of a severe problem in the Clark County, NV community. Truancy and chronic absenteeism rates are at an extreme high and TPOP's aim is to lower those rates and improve attendance. The topic this study was focused on is relevant and important to not only the state of Nevada but the United States as a whole because truancy rates are increasing in many states. Truancy is not just a national problem, but an international problem as well. Not only are states and counties working to implement truancy prevention efforts, but other countries are as well. This study will support those efforts and hopefully start to create a set of best practices for truancy prevention. Truancy research is more relevant today than it ever has been and its expansion into the causes, outcomes and prevention methods is necessary. This study's relevancy is a strength because more information on what prevention and intervention strategies work is necessary; the result from this study provides this vital information to the community so that further research can be conducted.

Within Clark County, NV truancy rates are at an all-time high, and while other counties and some school districts attempt to implement prevention efforts, those efforts are not all successful. There also is a lack of empirical evidence to suggest that programs such Every Student, Every Day (implemented by CCSD in Fall 2023) is working for the community. There are larger causes and consequences of truancy that these other programs do not address. TPOP does recognize that there are outside forces when it comes to truancy, not just what happens at

school level. Internal and macro level issues are also causing truancy rates to increase, and TPOP wants to help solve those issues so that students can focus on their education.

This study's main strength is that it is community focused, which means that it had a goal of providing immediate results to a community partner. The immediate results did help TPOP to understand their strengths and recognized areas of needed improvement. When an in-depth study such as this has a focused goal, it helps to strengthen the purpose and reason for the study. Using not only both quantitative and qualitative methods but including the explanatory mixed method helped to give a wider view of the results for this study while also highlighting important details. It is both the large and detail oriented views that helped to provide better answers for the research questions asked in this study. The community partnership also helped to propel the study forward by asking specific research questions and providing the expansive data sets. The results of this study also helped TPOP to provide detailed information back to the county about how the programing is performing.

This study produced significant results showing that not only is TPOP effect in lowering truancy rates, but that the program ultimately helps with academic achievement. The study also found through qualitative analysis that TPOP is very aware structural issues such as racism, prejudice, language barriers and the need for better communication between families and the education system. TPOP was created to serve the community, and without being aware of these existing problems TPOP would not be successful. CN's are trained in breaking down structural racism, how to work with sexual orientation minorities, how to approach language barriers and how to work with educational partners. These trainings help CN's to serve the families involved with TPOP to the best of their abilities. Even when CN's do not receive positive reactions TPOP does see a spike in attendance for just brining awareness of a student's truancy to parents as seen

in our mixed methods analysis. Overall, this study is significant and relevant not only for TPOP but for every school district, county, state and country doing what they can to prevent truancy.

Implications for Practice

Within the Legal System

Historically the legal system has thought of truancy as a crime committed by the students and their families (Morris, 2022). In many states and school districts this is still the case, that truancy is a crime and therefore should be punished with fines and incarceration. In Nevada it is still a crime, and families can be forced to pay fines or receive time incarcerated. However, new evidence is showing that truancy is not always meant as a criminal act by students and parents, and thankfully the legal system is slowly catching up (Boaler & Bond, 2023). The United States federal government has already placed mandates (Strand & Lovrich, 2014) helping to lower truancy rates and increase student attendance. But that does not implicitly mean fines or incarceration of students or parents/guardians is decreasing. The federal mandate only informs states that they should consider truancy in a different light, and that attendance must be taken in school. Another part of the mandate is continued involvement of a police presence in truancy issues on and off school campus's (Strand & Lovrich, 2014); this does not implicitly mean that the student/parent will be arrested but that it is a crime to be truant and will work with the student to help them increase attendance. This police presence may also limit some of the cooperation that is needed between some families and the school, as a police presence is intimidating. This intimidation may be from a multitude of items, previous experience with the criminal justice system, fear of being profiled based on race or sexual orientation, etc. Involving the police in truancy could just create larger problems instead of working to fix it.

The implications of this study, and future work with TPOP, further show that there are factors outside the walls of a school that are causing truancy and/or chronic absenteeism. This study found evidence supporting this hypothesis which implies that school-based truancy prevention programs are not enough to lower truancy rates and that a need for family/community based truancy prevention programs such as TPOP are necessary. Evidence from this study suggests that there should be large changes needed at the federal, state and county levels to successfully lower truancy rates. The truancy prevention mandate (Strand & Lovrich, 2014) needs to be amended to include family/community-based prevention programs not just the school-based programs as the mandate currently stands. At the state level, funding should be arranged to support programs that are already working to do this, such as the Check and Connect in Washington state (Strand & Lovrich, 2014), culturally relevant curriculum programs (Dee & Penner, 2017) and TPOP in Clark County, Nevada. These programs are empirically studied and show significant results in lowering truancy rates. At the county level, family/community-based prevention programs should be implemented either by their juvenile justice system or by school districts to reach out to the families of truant students and assess possible needs. These needs and services should also include contact and access to lawyers trained in juvenile law and understand that the causes of truancy are more than face value. These lawyers can help to bring peace of mind when having work with police or receiving truancy warnings from schools and juvenile justice centers. County governments should also take accountability for the school districts in their boundaries and ensure that attendance is being properly recorded, and that any prevention programs for truancy that exist are continually updated to meet best practices such as the wrap-around approach.

Within Education

School districts have been stunted in their ability to implement many different types of programs because of funding issues for decades if not longer. School systems are underfunded, understaffed, over student capacity and most are struggling to get by as is. Asking districts, schools and educators to do more is never an easy task even if it is just taking attendance. Taking attendance however is a federally mandated requirement of schools and has been for a very long time (Strand & Lovrich, 2014). If schools are found to not be recording attendance, they can have federal sanctions placed on them which does affect funding for their district and the individual school (Gottfried, 2017; Gottfried, 2009). Taking classroom attendance is one of the most important things that can be done to help further truancy research and guide creation of best practices. Accurate attendance records will lead to accurate truancy data and research. The review of literature for this study has shown that inaccurate attendance numbers create issues with truancy research (Gottfried, 2009) and with truancy prevention programs. This is why taking attendance is an important factor in improving truancy research, and this study shows the importance of truancy research.

Most educators go into teaching because they care about sharing knowledge with the students, and care about the students in general. Educators become challenged when they have students who have behavioral problems, are not passing tests and may not even be attending class. This study shows that these students may not be in complete control of these actions, there may be things going on at home, they may be hungry or have to stay home to babysit a sibling. Schools should remind teachers to give a little more grace, reach out to the student and ask if there is something going on. If there is, ensure that the teacher reports any needs or concerns to the school.

Many schools have a truancy prevention protocol already in place that usually consists of an early warning system to the parent and then later a report to the county (Banuelos, 2023). This study shows that students are not singularly to blame for their absenteeism and that a wrap-around approach is successful, then schools need to aim to change their protocols. Instead of a simple warning, asking for a meeting with the parents to assess needs of the family and student would be more beneficial. Then providing weekly updates on student attendance and an assessment of needs would also be an easy way to implement a wrap-around prevention program. If the family and/or student does not respond to the program, then the school should consider more drastic measures such as involving the legal system.

Throughout the qualitative part of this study there is continued evidence from families in regard to the structural racism found in the Clark County School District (CCSD). Previous studies have found that structural racism inside of schools is not a new issue, and that combatting it can be a challenge (Kohli, 2009). CCSD has made statements about their goal to end racism in their education programs, but that involves a lot more than hiring teachers that are not racist or are racially diverse. Structural racism goes to the core of the organization, limiting power of the minority groups. In order for CCSD to succeed at their promise to end racism in their schools, they need to start with rules, dress and hygiene codes, and curriculum. Studies have shown that providing curriculum that the students can connect with does help to lower truancy rates (Dee & Penner, 2017). Updating the curriculum to remove terms that are harmful and incorrect history lessons can help students from racially minoritized backgrounds feel as if they connect to the curriculum more and raise student engagement.

Within the Community

Community Partners. This study will help to show community programs that TPOP partners with that the services they provide are helping to lower truancy rates. Many of the programs (Jewish Family Services, Club Z, etc.) offer discounted or contracted rates for The Harbor and TPOP. Providing these programs with empirical evidence that TPOP is successful, and that their programs are being asked for is necessary. This study will also be helpful in recruiting other programs to work with TPOP, since it is successful in its goals. Community partners usually want to partner with programs that can accomplish their goals and help the community as a whole. Lower truancy rates do suggest a lower risk of juvenile delinquency and injury, which benefits the community.

Another community partner group are the families that TPOP works with. TPOP provides services to these families, but the families represent the community. Families who may be hesitant to work with or share private information with TPOP may be more inclined if they know the program does work. Families also help to provide feedback to TPOP on the program and services provided, and this study does help to supplement that feedback.

Juvenile Justice and The Harbor. The Harbor is department that houses TPOP, and it falls under the Department of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) for Clark County, NV. The department and program are both state funded and rely on empirical evidence to retain grants and funding for the programs and services that they offer. Truancy has fallen under DJJS for decades, as it does involve juvenile delinquency. This has created a strain on the department for many years until truancy was handed to The Harbor. The Harbor aims to keep students off of the school-to-prison pipeline, and on alternative routes to justice. For truancy this meant creating the sub program TPOP, to avoid youth facing incarceration for their truancy. This study helps to show both DJJS and The Harbor that TPOP is effect and worth the continued funding.

Within TPOP

The research questions posed by TPOP for this study focused on if the program was successful and where there were areas of needed improvement. The study found that TPOP was successful in raising attendance rates for grades PK-6 and Adult Education programs. This result provided a jumping off point of other research questions, how effective was it, what can be improved, what services are used the most, etc. Once the qualitative data was provided, many of these questions were quickly answered. Areas of needed improvement are in CN training, specifically in the importance of standardized case notes and how to connect with families better. These areas are already being worked on by TPOP for the next program evaluation.

Seeing the results that TPOP was effective also helped to identify where the program was succeeding the most, grades PK-6. This has helped to show that what TPOP is currently doing with the families whose students fall in these ranges is working. It has also created more questions as to how they can better help students in grades 7-12. Instead of simply following the same protocol for younger students, changing protocol or aiming to create a better connection between student and CN should be the goal for this age group. Grades 7-12 are working to build their identity and are pulling away from their parents according to Erikson. This theory is consistent with both the quantitative and qualitative data results; so instead of treating them like the younger students, the main suggestion for TPOP in this regard is to treat the students at their age and cognitive development level.

Implications for Future Research

As discussed throughout this paper, there is a significant lack of research on truancy causes and prevention. While there is an existence of literature on truancy it is an area of research that is lacking in abundance. As mentioned above Boaler & Bond (2023) found only

2,548 in their meta-analysis of all research including international studies. This number is small when one considers how long truancy has been a problem, the early 1900's, and the vast number of students who are chronically absent every year just in the United States (over five million) (Eklund et al., 2020). Truancy is a problem that seems to have been mostly ignored for decades, this cannot be the case anymore because it has many risks to the students.

This study shows that the wrap-around approach is successful in lowering truancy rates, but there needs to be continued research examining why it is successful. Why are some programs more successful than others and what can be learned and shared from these programs. Are there school-based programs that are wholly successful? Once enough research has been conducted on successful programs a best practices model can be made and shared with other counties and school districts.

The cause of truancy is an emerging research field, from what little research is being conducted in truancy. The change from the 'student as the problem' to an overall question of what the problem is, is a large step in the right direction. This does not mean we should ignore the student altogether as there could be internal psychological concerns going on that need to be addressed with truant students. However more focused research on other possible causes of truancy is needed, which this study does examine. Results of this study should provide a direction in which this research area could be expanded, specifically using a combined psychological and psychosocial framework. Results show that a lack of childcare is a leading reason why high schoolers are missing classes, then there should be a study into how childcare effects a student's education overall. Results also show that a lack of finances is a contributing factor to truancy rates, a study could be conducted examining how the two interact and at what levels. Further mixed methods studies should also examine other connections between family

responses to prevention methods and the student's attendance rates. This examination of TPOP and its data is a stepping off point for many other possible studies in truancy that need to be conducted.

Implications for Future Prevention Efforts

Truancy Research

Psychological vs. Psychosocial. At the beginning of this paper, the argument for frameworks in which to research truancy was discussed. Original studies discussed the use of psychological frameworks; more recent studies suggest the use of psychosocial frameworks. Very few existing studies proposed and used the idea of combining both framework styles to examine truancy causes and prevention programs. This study chose to use both styles, Erikson's Theory of Development as the psychological framework and Family Systems Theory by Bowen as the psychosocial framework. This study benefited from the combination of the methods, as it helped to provide both internal and external reasonings for possible truancy causes. The results sections of each research piece of this study have a section dedicated to interpreting the results specifically through a combined lens. This meant that words and actions found in results sections could be explored at both an internal and external level.

Future research on truancy should continue to use a combined framework and lens as it helps to provide well-rounded reasonings for truancy causes. Truancy, as found in this study, is caused by both internal and external factors. This means research that only examines one of those factor levels are missing a piece of the puzzle. Without a full view of the problem how can accurate research be conducted?

Empirical Evidence for Programs. More programs for truancy prevention are being created and implemented every year. The problem is that these programs are not using empirical

evidence or even assessing the needs of their truant students before implementation. Gregory et al., (2017) suggested that to increase school equity among minoritized students, data-based inquiry studies should be conducted with students. This means that programs should ask the students what they need, not just truant students but all of them. Research studies need to be conducted inside the school systems to assess the needs at empirical levels. Accurate information as to what is needed will help to inform truancy prevention efforts as to how they should move forward. Conducting data-based inquiries before programs start will help to save money in the long term, as unnecessary resources will not be wasted.

Best Practices

Involving the Household or Family Unit. Throughout previous studies (INSERT HERE), and this one, there is sufficient evidence to say that involving a student's household or family unit is necessary in preventing truancy. This is due to a few reasons; families may need resources to help the student in their education and/or parents are unaware that their student is missing school and will aim to fix the problem. As seen in the qualitative data from this study we know that most parents want their child to attend school, but other issues can occur that prevent that. Involving the parents is a successful way in understanding what is preventing the student from attending school, and assessing what needs are not being met. Involving the family is how the whole-family wrap-around approach begins, to see the whole situation for the family and bring in services that encompass everyone in the household.

Engaging Programs. The emotional cutoff between student and education is a cause for truancy; they disengage and lose interest with what is being taught to them. This can be from a lack of other needs being met, lack of connection to the curriculum or a disconnect between student and educator. Creating curriculum that students find engaging is a primary prevention

step in truancy prevention, if students are interested in what they are learning or doing in class they will be more likely to attend (Cosgrove et al., 2018; Dee & Penner, 2017). If students feel like they are welcome and wanted in the classroom then there will be less disconnect between student and educator. Creating an engaging atmosphere for students as two main components: encourage teachers to create supportive relationships with students; allow educators to teach culturally relevant material (Gregory et al., 2017). While this can be a challenge for school systems and educators, proper training and guidance with the educator can make it happen.

Providing Necessary Services. Many families and students need resources and services that go unnoticed by the schools. When basic needs are not met, families and students struggle in other areas such as education. By providing necessary services or resources students may be able to focus more on their education and less on things like when they will receive their next meal. Some needed services may include housing, financial, food, educational, mental or physical health among many more. An inclusion of services (through the school districts and prevention programming) that are dedicated and focused on youth who identify as LGBTQ (Gregory et al., 2017; Developmental Services Group, 2014) are also necessary and may be hard for many families and students to gain access too. Providing these services, as seen in this study with TPOP, does help improve attendance rates.

Benefits of this Study

For Truancy Prevention Efforts

Truancy has been found to be directly correlated to an increased risk of juvenile delinquency and youth injury (Bailey et al., 2015). As truancy rates continue to rise across the country so does the consequences of truant youth. These consequences can hurt a community through loss of life, taxpayer dollars or the long term outcomes for the youth in missing school or

being arrested. In Clark County, Nevada approximately 39% of students are truant which means that 120,000 youth are at danger or causing possible issues to the community every day that they are absent (Lane, 2022 June 21). This program and study aimed to lower truancy rates across Clark County. Lowering truancy rates will decrease the number of truant students, therefore decreasing their risks.

This study also helped to start a map for best practices in truancy research and prevention. At this moment there is no clear route on how to research truancy; the ongoing argument between frameworks and obtaining data permissions has slowed this down. This study has shown that a combination of frameworks and working directly with truancy prevention programming is an easy way to start truancy research. Once there is more truancy research available, more information regarding best practices will be apparent. Research will help to identify which programs work, what pieces fit together best and how to approach truancy as a whole. This study provides only three ideas for best practices, but there is so much more to understand about preventing truancy. The evidence in this study helps to set future researchers with a basis for where to start.

For TPOP

Students and families in the Clark County School District (CCSD) come from varying economic backgrounds, and some families need more support than others. This study helps to identify those families in CCSD through truancy rates and provide necessary support and services to the students. While most students who enter TPOP are referred by the schools, families are able to refer their own children if they need support or services to help keep their child in class. This ability to refer their own family means that students may not even be

recognized by the school as truant yet, but the parent knows that their family needs help to prevent that from happening.

The results from this study are being used by TPOP to help continue to receive funding for the program. Providing empirical evidence that the program is successful is a key factor in earning grant money and federal funding to keep the program going. Other results from this study, such as which services are used most often, will help guide TPOP to understand what is being used the most compared to other services. Variables such as which interactions go well, which form of communication is most successful and how to approach families will also be used to help shape their protocol moving forward. Providing this study for TPOP will help them to create and follow best practices for their program and to help lower truancy in Clark County, Nevada.

For UNLV

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) has an R1 research designation, and all research conducted at the university is a part of that. Studies that work with community partners is a necessary part of the designation, as research should ultimately benefit communities. UNLV is also working on its goal as a Top Tier 2.0 minority serving institution. Which means that UNLV is working to become a haven for minority student seeking a higher education. This study benefits UNLV on both of these goals; as it is a community partner driven research study that has a number of racially minoritized participants.

Working on this study with TPOP has helped to build lasting professional connections between UNLV and The Harbor. Every research question asked by TPOP was answered, with supplemental evidence and explanation into the answers that were given. This continued

partnership with TPOP and The Harbor opens the doors for new community programs and research studies with UNLV.

Being a minority serving institution means that many of the students UNLV have, may have different needs than other students. While this study focuses on families and their needs, knowing what needs are not being met as a community can help UNLV to better predict the needs that their own students may need. Another reason this study helps with the Top Tier 2.0 goal is that students in minority groups want to see that their university is culturally aware and cares about the minority populations in their community, not just among their students. This study shows both of those things, awareness of culture differences and that UNLV cares.

Conclusion

This study shows that truancy is a problem, but there are ways to improve and prevent truancy. This study found significant results in both the quantitative and mixed methods section and provides an in depth analysis of the qualitative data. The research questions posed by both the researcher and by TPOP were answered, and many of the hypotheses were proven true. These results show that not only does TPOP significantly lower truancy rates, but they also provide necessary services that are used by families, improve academic achievement and are working to improve the connections between students and the education system. The hypotheses that were not found true were discussed and theorized as to what may have caused that outcome.

Moving forward in both practice and research is necessary for this area of research. In practice, changes need to be made in the legal system, the education system and even some in TPOP itself. For research, future studies should focus on a combination of psychological and psychosocial frameworks so that a more in depth understanding of the causes of truancy can be found. Diving into best practices research and finding parts of programs that are more successful

is needed to help prevent truancy. Evidence has shown that at least three things are needed in a successful program, household involvement, engagement between the student and their education and lastly a way to provide necessary resources to the students and families. Building off of these three practices will help to give shape to a full map for best practices that programs like TPOP can use to help prevent truancy.

Appendix A

Data Codebook

Code Name	Frequency	Code Name	Frequency
Positive Reactions		Internal Information	
Attendance Improved at Closure	209	Contact Attempt in Spanish	287
Household Contact	4335	Attendance Pull	589
Closure with Services	689	Food Box	377
Seeking or Using Services	122	Jewish Family Services	2
School Information		Boys Town	302
Withdrew	129	Shining Star	683
Contact with School Counselor	1668	Club Z	272
ROI	1145	Parent Support Specialist	16
Unenrolled	135	Earn and Learn	152
Chromebook Related Comments	197	MA Notes	4561
Expelled	76	Confirming	695
Suspension	450	First Outreach	517
Summer School	654	Case Assignment	1053
Distance Learning/Online	493	Main Sibling File/Multiple Siblings	164
Unsafe/Safety	127	Arrest Record	40
Registration Issues	259	Juvenile Detention	32
Bully	217	Harbor Referral/Appt	228
School System	20	Guardianship	
Negative Reactions		Foster	115
Reschedule	772	Aunt	383
Outside School Trouble	385	Grandparents	1850
Covid Related Issues	184	Father	6087
Family Illness	1206	Mother	32289
Missed Household Contact	7683		
Declined to Participate	776		
Declined Services	150		
Student Refusal	64		
Unable to Locate/Missing	610		

Code Name	Frequency
Student Information	
Behavioral School	124
Transcript and Credit Conversations	567
Foster Kid	115
IEP	751
ADHD	115
Dyslexia	3
Depression	107
Behavioral/Anger Problems	19
Bipolar	15
Suicide	34
Anxiety	233
Learning Disability	29
Has a Probation Officer	39
Citation	10
Student Substance Use	346
Mental Health	261
504 Plan	190
LGBT	10
Racism	8

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Curriculum Vitae

Jennifer Fletcher- jenniferafletcher95@gmail.com

EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Learning Sciences, Ph.D.

2020-Current

Active Research: Truancy prevention and Juvenile Justice

Committee: Dr. Jonathan Hilpert, Dr. Vanessa Vongkulluksn,

Dr. Rebecca Nathanson (Chair)

Concordia University- Portland

Master of Arts in Psychology

2018-2019

Emphasis: Community Psychology

Thesis: "The Relationship Between Geek Fandoms, Sense of
Community and Awareness of Social Justice Issues"

Committee: Dr. Reed Mueller, Bryan Evans, Dr. Bryant Carlson
(Chair)

Concordia University- Portland

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

2017-2018

Internship Capstone: Clark County Juvenile Justice Center

Clark Community College

Associates of Arts

2012-2016

Running Start student, continued and finished after military service.

Professional Experience

Kids Court School, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Kids Court School Coordinator

2023- Current

Performed court competency assessments on juveniles; assisted with fundraising; research assistant.

Supervisor: Dr. Rebecca Nathanson; okay to contact.

Kids Court School, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Juvenile Competency Coordinator

2021- Current

Performed court competency assessments on juveniles; assisted with fundraising; research assistant.

Supervisor: Dr. Rebecca Nathanson; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate Assistant- Research Analyst

2020-Current

Research analyst in the Office of Learning Analytics.

Conducted quantitative and qualitative research on community analytics project.

Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Hilpert; okay to contact.

After School All Stars, Las Vegas

Classroom Program Assessor

2022

Performed YPQA assessments on classrooms over a period of time to assist in program assessments.

Supervisor: Andrew Loshbaugh; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate Assistant- Assistant in Academic Programs Office 2021

Assisted in annual review process for university academic programs. Assisted in accreditation assistance to programs.

Supervisor: Gail Griffin; okay to contact.

Concordia University- Portland

Safety Evaluation Intern 2019

Worked on the Emergency Management plan and evaluated building safety protocols. Assisted in development of emergency protocol handout for buildings.

Supervisor: Laurie Holien; okay to contact. John Hrmoco; okay to contact.

Concordia University- Portland

Research Assistant 2018-2019

Assisted in Participatory Action Research qualitative data coding for a community analytics project.

Supervisor: Bryan Evans; okay to contact.

Camp Tapawingo

Outdoor School Instructor and Camp Counselor. Summers of 2017 & 2018

Taught elementary outdoor school science classes. Summer camp counselor, assisted in group learning and project instruction.

Supervisor: Jane Schmidt; okay to contact.

Clark County Juvenile Justice Center

Detention Classroom Intern and Mentor 2017-2018

Taught life skill and psychology lessons to incarcerated youth.

Weekend mentor to youth on probation during community service projects. Built portfolio of classroom lessons.

Supervisor: Jeff Olsen & Nick Potter; okay to contact.

Hot Topic, Inc.

Key Holder 2017-2020

Started as a sales associate, worked up to management level.

Specialized in stock and store design.

Supervisor: Kym Zimmerman; okay to contact.

United States Coast Guard

Enlisted Member 2014-2015

Enlisted member; worked as office manager for the Morale, Well-Being and Recreation department.

Honorable Medical Discharge.

Supervisor: Senior Chief Ashley; Retired.

Professional Service

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate and Professional Student Association 2021- Current

Department Representative for Educational Psychology,
Leadership and Higher Education.

Supervisor: Virginia Smercina; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate Programs Committee 2022- Current

Student Representative on Graduate College Programs; voted on changes and approvals for
programs.

Supervisor: Gregory Moody; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

College of Education's Committee for DEIJ 2021- 2023

Student representative for the College of Educations committee
for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice for the Department
of Educational Psychology, Leadership and Higher Education.

Supervisor: Dr. Alice Corkill; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Grad Rebel Advantage Mentor 2021-2022

Mentor to undergraduate students as they are applying to graduate school.

Supervisor: UNLV Graduate College; okay to contact.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The Harbor; TPOP

2022

Conducted data analytics; helped to build data collection system.

Supervisor: Cheryl Wright; okay to contact.

Lines for Life- YouthLine

Volunteer Research Analyst

2019

Assisted in coding qualitative data for staff survey responses.

Assisted in grant writing. Program evaluation conducted for the training program for volunteers.

Supervisor: Emily Moser; okay to contact.

Conference PResentations

Fletcher, J. (2024, March). An Analysis of Truancy Prevention Programming in Clark

County, Nevada. [Conference Presentation]. 2024 American Psychology-Law Society Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Nathanson, R. & Fletcher, J. (2024, March). Preparing children for court: An overview of court preparation programs and essential components of programs for children. Paper submitted to be presented at the 2024 American Psychology-Law Society Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Nathanson, R., Larson, K, Fletcher, J. & Fass, T. (2024, March). The Kids' Court School Competency Remediation Program: Overview and update on analyses of efficacy. Paper

submitted to be presented at the 2024 American Psychology-Law Society Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Nathanson, R. & Fletcher, J. (2024, March). Kids' Court School. Poster presented at the UNLV College of Education Ed Expo.

Nathanson, R. & Fletcher, J. (2023, October). Kids' Court School. Poster presented at the UNLV Inaugural Community Engagement Expo, Las Vegas, NV.

Fletcher, J. & Hilpert, J. (2023, April 15). *A Mixed Methods Analysis of a Truancy Prevention Program: An ongoing study of its Effectiveness on Academic Performance and Familial Response to the Program* [Conference Presentation]. UNLV GPSA 25th Annual Research Forum- 2nd Place Poster. Las Vegas, NV, United States.

Fletcher, J., Newport, T., Wakayu, E. & Hilpert, J. (2022, April 28- May 1). *A Mixed Methods Analysis of Truancy Prevention: A Pilot Study for Community Analytics Support* [Conference Presentation]. Western Psychological Association 2022. Portland, OR, United States.

Fletcher, J., Newport, T., Wakayu, E. & Hilpert, J. (2021, October 12-15). *A Mixed Methods Analysis of Truancy Prevention: A Pilot Study for Community Analytics Support* [Conference Presentation]. SCIPIE 2021. Virtual Conference, United States.

<http://scipie.org/2021-conference>

Fletcher, J. (2019, June 26-29). *The Relationship Between Geek Fandoms, Sense of Community and Awareness of Social Justice Issues*. [Conference Presentation]. SCRA 2019. Chicago, Illinois, United States.

https://www.scra27.org/files/6915/6857/5653/2019_Biennail_Conference_Program.pdf

Fletcher, J. (2019, April 25-28). *The Relationship Between Geek Fandoms, Sense of Community*

and Awareness of Social Justice Issues. [Conference Presentation]. WPA 2019. Pasadena, California, United States.

<https://westernpsych.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/WPA-Program-2019-Final-2.pdf>