THE UNTOLD STORIES OF TRUANT STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY
ANALYSIS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AT THE ATTENDANCE RESOURCE CENTER

Tera Lynn Diggs-Reynolds
B.S., California State University, Sacramento, 2001
M.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2004

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2011
THE UNTOLD STORIES OF TRUANT STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AT THE ATTENDANCE RESOURCE CENTER

A Dissertation

by

Tera Lynn Diggs-Reynolds

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

__________________________
Frank Lilly, Ph.D., Committee Chair

__________________________
Daniel Orey, Ph.D.

__________________________
David Nylund, Ph.D.

SPRING 2011
Student: Tera Lynn Diggs-Reynolds

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for shelving in the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

Carlos Nevarez, Ph.D.  Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to family especially….
To my “Nana” Nafeesha Obi for her love and continued support, I hope I made you
proud;
To my mom for teaching me to dream big and that my possibilities were endless;
To my son Terrin for changing my life and motivating me to overcome stereotypes;
And to Dr. Lila Jacobs for helping me to “own my voice” Rest In Peace.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MY FAMILY & FRIENDS

To my family and friends for all their time patience, love, support and sacrifice I could not have done this without you all.

MOM AND DAD

Thank you for providing me with life and opening my eyes to world. Thank you for words of encouragement and continued prayers.

MY CHILDREN

Larrisha and Terrin you guys are reason why I continue to grow and strive to accomplish my dreams and I hope this motivates you to accomplish yours. I love you guys

MY HUSBAND

To my husband for taking on the challenge to walk side by side with me through this process and being patient with me as I completed this journey.

THE INDEPENDENT DOCTORAL PROGRAM, COHORT TWO

Thank you so much for your support through this process. Thank you for continuing to encourage me and empower me to not give up. A special thanks to Jennifer and Katherine for taking additional time to proofread and edit my writing. Love you fort that…..

MY COMMITTEE

Words cannot explain the gratitude and appreciation I have for guiding me through this process. I truly owe this accomplishment to you and a special thanks to Dr. Frank Lilly for coming through in the end and stepping up to the plate and chairing my dissertation.
CURRICULUM VITAE
TERA L. DIGGS-REYNOLDS

EDUCATION

Ed.D., California State University, Sacramento, 2011 (Ed. Policy & Leadership, Public Policy Admin.)

Faculty Intern: Los Rios Community College District, Faculty Diversity Internship Program (2009)


M.S., California State University Sacramento, 2004 (Master’s of Social Work)

B.S., California State University Sacramento, 2001 (Criminal Justice)

A.A., American River College, 1999 (Liberal Arts)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2007-2010  Supervisor, Prevention and Intervention Services, Natomas Unified School District

2004-2007  Human Services Social Worker, MSW Special Skills, County of Sacramento Children’s Protective Services

2002-2003  Social Work Intern, Lilliput Children’s Services

2001-2004  Probation Assistant, County of Sacramento Probation Department

Assistant Program Director of the Leadership Development Academy

Contact Information,
teradiggs@yahoo.com
terabella7@hotmail.com
Abstract

of

THE UNTOLD STORIES OF TRUANT STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AT THE ATTENDANCE RESOURCE CENTER

by

Tera Lynn Diggs-Reynolds

Truancy is a nationwide epidemic and is the first sign that a student is in crisis. This research study looked into the perspectives of habitually truant students an underrepresented population in this research. This study captures the voices of truant students about paths that led them to truancy and the Attendance Resource Center. The Attendance Resource Center is a collaborative approach model truancy reduction program in Sacramento County. The researcher used constructivism and systems theory as the theoretical foundation for this study. The purpose of this study is to expand the research literature on truancy and provide practitioners and schools with a different perspective to truancy and information to reduce high school dropout rates. The study used grounded theory research methods to analyze the data, and recommendations for the education system.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Foundation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions/Limitations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory Education</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of Truancy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions from the Findings .................................................................107
Limitations .................................................................................................112
Justifications ..............................................................................................113
Recommendations ......................................................................................113
Recommendations for Future Research ....................................................118
Researcher Reflections .............................................................................119
Conclusion ..................................................................................................121

6. APPENDICES .............................................................................................127
Appendix. A: Attendance Resource Center Staff Approval .......................124
Appendix. B: District Approval ....................................................................126
Appendix. C: Consent Forms .....................................................................128
Appendix. D: Interview Questions ..............................................................132

REFERENCES .............................................................................................133
LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1 Criteria for Participants ................................................................. 10
2. Table 2 Qualitative vs. Quantitative ............................................................ 43
3. Table 3 Grounded Theory Major Components ........................................... 47
4. Table 4 Criteria for participants ................................................................. 53
5. Table 5 Research Checklist ........................................................................ 59
6. Table 6 Steps Taken by Researcher ............................................................ 63
7. Table 7 Demographics .............................................................................. 64
8. Table 8 Living Arrangements ..................................................................... 65
9. Table 9 Sample of Student Chart ............................................................... 68
10. Table 10 Sample Log Entries from District X School Database .................... 69
11. Table 11 Concepts from Students’ Document Review ................................. 70
12. Table 12 Codes and Concepts Developed into Resilience ............................ 75
13. Table 13 Codes/Concepts Developed into Substance Abuse Category .......... 78
14. Table 14 Codes/Concepts that Developed into the Teacher Category ........... 81
15. Table 15 Member Check Question One ..................................................... 92
16. Table 16 Member Check Question Two ..................................................... 93
17. Table 17 Member Check Question Three .................................................. 94
18. Table 18 Member Check Question Four .................................................... 95
19. Table 19 Member Check Question Five .................................................... 96
20. Table 20 Frequency of Final Themes................................................................. 97
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Figure 1 Systems Theory: Micro, Meso, and Macro</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Figure 2 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Figure 3 District X Student Population</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Figure 4 Categories</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Figure 5 Resilience</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Figure 6 Substance Abuse</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Figure 7 Teachers</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Figure 8 Reflection</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Figure 9 Suggestions</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Figure 10 Systems Theory (as it relates to themes)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Figure 11 Hierarchy of Needs for Student Success</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

David, a 16-year-old student, was recently picked up by law enforcement and brought to the Attendance Resource Center (ARC) in North Sacramento after being cited for shoplifting at a local store. The 11th grade student was supposed to be at school but was caught stealing underwear, toothpaste, and batteries. The ARC is one of three truancy programs in Sacramento County that provides immediate interventions, counseling services, and resources to truant students. During the course of the day, local law enforcement officers patrol communities and if they see a minor under the age of 18 during school hours, they will detain the student and transport him/her to the nearest ARC. Once the student arrives, he/she goes through an intake process in which information is gathered about the student. For example, what school they attend, grades, behavior logs, attendance, gang involvement, juvenile delinquency, and student demographics. Once the student completes the intake process, a counselor meets with the student to complete an assessment and develop an action plan to improve the student’s attendance.

In the above case, it was revealed his family was homeless and staying in an abandoned warehouse. David stole batteries for the flashlights because the warehouse had no electricity. He was limited in clothing and only had one pair of underwear. David was the oldest of six children, all residing with their mother who had been laid off eight
months before. Since that time, the family lost their home, personal belongings, and was barely surviving off the mother’s unemployment checks. They had been staying in different places around the community, and, as a result, the children’s attendance and grades had plummeted. The counselor worked closely with this student and family and, after several months, was able to link the family to community resources. The student’s attendance improved drastically as the family became more stable. The situation faced by David and his family is not unique. In these cases, some students improve their attendance while others continue to be truant. Stories like David’s drive this research to look at the perceptions of truant students, their experiences at the ARC, and what services the students felt would help reduce truancy.

Statement of Problem

Truancy is an issue in schools and districts nationwide. It is a pre-indicator for juvenile delinquency and high school dropout. There has been a variety of studies and research done on the causes of truancy, how to reduce truancy, and programs that address truancy. The vast majority of the research focuses on initiatives and programs that have had success in reducing truancy. They are often categorized into three different areas: school-based programs, legal or court programs, and collaborative/community programs. However, missing from the literature are the voices of the habitually truant students, their perception of truancy, their experience at the ARC, and what services are needed to reduce truancy.
Nature of the Study

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. *Research Question:* What have been the experiences of students receiving services at the Attendance Resource Center?

2. *Research Question:* Did the services offered at the Attendance Resource Center help improve student attendance? If yes, how? If not, why?

3. *Research Question:* What do the students believe put them on the path to truancy?

4. *Research Question:* What would help motivate students to go to school, stay there, and graduate?

The purpose of this study was to gain deeper insight into the constructed reality and perception of habitually truant students who received services at the ARC. The researcher completed a qualitative case study analysis of six participants who received services at the ARC between the 2007-2010 school years. The researcher completed a document review of each student’s academic cumulative file, and electronic school database to gain additional information about the students’ attendance and background history. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to hear directly from the students in their own words about factors that led them to be truant and their experience at the ARC. The researcher also completed a member check with each participant after analyzing the data for validity.
It is often difficult to evaluate and measure the success of habitually truant students because they face multiple challenges that keep them from attending school regularly. Naturally, many truancy programs are evaluated based on improvements in the student’s attendance or academic grades. However, this becomes a challenge to measure a student’s success based solely on student’s attendance or grades due to the fact that many variables can impact grades and attendance. Some variables include the classroom structure, grading policies, lack of school engagement and poor student/teacher relationships. David (mentioned previously) is one such example. His attendance did not improve until his immediate needs were met and the family’s housing became stable. It presents a challenge for a program evaluated on a yearly basis to see immediate results in such a short time frame. Therefore, this research not only hears from the truant students about services that were effective but also looks at attendance patterns in the student’s academic history.

When launching the ARC, participants of the spearheading committee only consisted of adults from various agencies around the county such as law enforcement, school districts, community-based organizations, social services, and government agencies. Over the past three years, representation from habitually truant students has been absent from the table. In those three years, the ARC provided services to over 1200 students and not once had the committee brought habitually truant students into the ongoing planning process (District X, 2010). This was one of the first qualitative studies
completed on the ARC and the first to evaluate the program from the perspective of truant students.

Summary of Research

Absenteeism is a result of compulsory education laws mandating that children attend school. In California, minors between the ages of 6 and 18 are required to attend school on a regular basis. California education code 48260 explains that a student becomes truant when he/she has three or more unexcused absences, tardiness of more than 30 minutes resulting in missed school or class instruction, and attendance is not rectified during the academic year (California Department of Education [CDE], 2009b). By the California state definition, it does not take much for a student to become truant. Accordingly, this review, in keeping up with the majority of the literature, focuses on habitually truant students who have excessive (10 or more) unexcused absences in a school term. Given the staggering social costs as well as the ramifications for the individual students, programs to prevent and reduce truancy must be carefully investigated to ensure their efficacy.

There is no doubting the value of research that focuses on school and district initiatives and interventions, as this is where truancy is first identified. Each state addresses truancy issues in different ways. The most common methods to reduce truancy are through school-based, legal, and collaborative approaches. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, these approaches have shown success in helping reduce truancy and
improve student attendance, as well as academic achievement. Due to the success of these programs, research in this area has been extensive, yet truancy remains a grave issue. Therefore, this research endeavored to expand the scope of the existing body of research on truancy by approaching the problem through a constructivism perspective and systems theory framework. This research looked carefully at an area that is under-represented in the literature. The researcher applied the systems theory as the theoretical foundation for this study by focusing on student voices; the researcher examined truancy from the lens of habitually truant students.

Theoretical Foundation

Constructivism

Constructivism provided the researcher with a lens to help better understand the reality of habitually truant students and what they have experienced at the ARC. Constructivist perspective recognizes that each person has his or her own frame of reference that comes from his or her own values, concepts, and ideas. Constructivists realize there are “multiple interpretations of reality” (Bess & Dee, 2008). Constructivist paradigm is commonly used in professions such as social work because it aligns with the important values of the social work profession. For example, social workers believe in starting counseling or interventions by understanding the client’s experiences and focusing on the individual client perception (Rodwell, 1998). There are multiple
interpretations of reality and each interpretation of reality is influenced by the various systems in one’s life.

*Systems Theory*

Systems theory has evolved over the years and covers theoretical meanings across many different disciplines: science, organizational studies, biology, and psychology just to name a few. General systems theory was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1928 and was used to describe all systems in science as interactions between various components; however, each component is interdependent on one another (Walonick, 1993). As systems theory continued to evolve, ecological systems theory was developed and it breaks down the larger systems theory into five systems areas in human development: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, marco-system, and chrono-system (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The ecological systems theory had a huge impact on the social work profession and developed into what some refer to as the social systems theory by Goldstien in 1973. Systems theory is frequently used as a framework to help social workers treat clients as a system and as part of a larger system (Walonick, 1993). In the social work profession system theory focuses on micro, meso, and macro levels of each system or individual. This study used the social system theory (micro, meso, and macro) as a theoretical foundation to understanding how each participant’s truancy may have been influenced from each level. The researcher completed a qualitative case study analysis using grounded theory as the methodology to study habitually truant students and the ARC.
Chapter 3 explains the grounded theory methodology the researcher used to complete the case study analysis of habitually truant students and the ARC. A case study design is one of the many types of qualitative research best suited for this researcher to capture the voice of habitually truant students. According to Creswell (2007), case studies are a qualitative design where the researcher explores a case through detailed, in-depth data collection such as interviews, observations, and field notes. In this case study the researcher gathered in-depth data through the review of student documents and the individual semi-structured interviews. The researcher used grounded theory methodology to analyze the data. Strauss and Corbin 1990 described grounded theory as a tool giving detailed techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis to
discover the phenomenon being study, in this case, the perspective of habitually truant students on truancy and the ARC. The researcher completed the following steps to gather and analyze the data: 1) documented review of student’s academic cumulative file and logged entries, 2) created a chart recording data gathered from cumulative file and logged entries, 3) transcribed interviews, 4) all data sets were coded into concepts and then into categories, 5) a member check was completed to verify categories, and 6) categories were linked into themes.

Setting for Study

The study was completed at the ARC located in District X in the Northern Sacramento area. The ARC is a partnership between the school district, Sacramento Police Department, City of Sacramento, and community-based organization Panacea Services to help reduce truancy and provide services to students and their families. The ARC has been in existence since 2007, and the researcher purposely selected habitually truant students to study.

Participants

All participants met the criteria listed in Table 1 and more is explained in-depth in Chapter 3.
Table 1
Criteria for Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Habitually truant students who received services from the ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students were currently enrolled in the school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students were 12\textsuperscript{th}-grade students during the 2010-2011 school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who were habitually truant or repeat offenders during the years of 2007-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who received at least one formal district truancy letter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definition of Terms

**Attendance Resource Center (ARC)**
Collaborative truancy program in District X in Northern Sacramento County.

**Grounded Theory**
A phenomenon discovered and developed through a specific data collection process

**Habitually Truant Student**
A minor between the ages of 6 and 17 years old who has more than 10 unexcused/unverified absences in an academic school year.

**Student Perception/Perspective**
The opinion and/or feedback from the student themselves
Truant Student

A minor between the ages of 6 and 17 years old who has more than three unexcused/unverified absences in an academic school year.

Assumptions/Limitations

Limitations in this study were that the researcher only focused on a small sample from only one truancy program in Sacramento. Getting a larger sample would have given more information about habitually truant students across Sacramento County. Also, the study only focuses on the perspective of the habitually truant students and does not cover the perspective of the parents/guardians or service providers who could also disclose valuable information about the ARC. Some assumptions are that habitually truant students’ perspectives of truancy differ from the literature. Another assumption is that studying the perspective of habitually truant students gives creditable feedback and information about the ARC and truancy. Finally, it is assumed that society cares about what the habitually truant students’ perspectives are on truancy and reduction programs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that high school dropout rates are increasing and graduation rates are declining, in addition to the increase of youth violence and over populated juvenile detention centers across the state and nation (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009). As previously mentioned, truancy is a precursor to
juvenile delinquency and the above mentioned issues; therefore, education leaders can no longer ignore students who have poor attendance or truancy issues, and they should be made a priority to positively impact our future generations. Lack of attendance or poor attendance is the first sign that something is wrong and that a student is in need of intervention services. Educational leaders can no longer assume the responsibility is only on the parents; it must be a collaborative community and school effort to see change and progress. In addition, it also negatively affects schools’ and districts’ fiscal budgets because schools receive funding based on students’ average daily attendance.

This study provided a platform for truant students who were resilient and self-determined to change their lives and pursue a high school diploma. This study will provide practitioners and internal/external stakeholders with additional truancy information and a qualitative study analysis on a truancy reduction program as well as the needs of truant students from their perspective. This study will hopefully inspire policymakers to at least start to address and consider reforming attendance laws and allocate funding for programs and services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed valuable information from truant students whose voices are often ignored or unheard. This research walks the reader through real testimonies from truant students and captures their perspective of what is going on and why and how students became truant from school. This study used a constructivist and
systems theory approach to study the constructed reality of habitual truancy of students, their truancy, and experiences at the ARC. The reader can expect to get current background information on the previous research around truancy programs and initiatives in the literature review section located in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explains the grounded theory methods taken to complete a qualitative case study analysis on habitually truant students at the ARC. Chapter 4 explains how the data collected from the students’ cumulative files and interviews was analyzed, coded, and categorized. The study concludes with Chapter 5, which reveals the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research and recommendations for local and state policymakers to continue the fight to reduce truancy.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction
This chapter is a review of the current and relevant literature in relation to truancy, habitually truant students, and truancy reduction approaches. First, the researcher reviewed the history of compulsory education, examined nationwide and statewide (California) approaches to reducing truancy, and reviewed more truancy efforts in Sacramento County. Next the researcher reviewed the theoretical foundation that guides this research, constructivism and systems theory. The chapter concludes with a summary of literature and an argument for the necessity of studying students’ perceptions about truancy to inform local and state policy.

Compulsory Education

*History of Attendance Regulations*

The concept of “truancy” stems from laws related to compulsory education that require minors to attend school and receive an education. Such regulations began in the mid 1600s as Massachusetts colonists sought to develop more educated, honorable church membership. In doing so, they developed education laws requiring the children of colonists to attend school. In 1642, Massachusetts required all parents and school officials to teach children how to read, to help children understand principles of religion,
and to inform them about the capitol laws of the colony. A select group of individuals with authority, such as school officials and leaders of the colony, enforced this law. In 1647, “The Old Deluder Satan Act” also known as the “The General School Law” was the first step toward compulsory education law directed by the state or government. The concern was that Satan used illiteracy to keep people from reading scriptures and living a righteous lifestyle. As a result, teachers were appointed by the legislature, and schools were created to educate the children. At that time, there were no attendance requirements but it was expected the children would attend school and receive an education (Kotin & Aikman, 1980).

Considering this history, it is to no surprise that Massachusetts was the first state to require mandatory school attendance in 1852. The Massachusetts School Attendance Act required parents to send their children to public school for at least 12 weeks during the year. Shortly after the Massachusetts School Attendance Act, other states started requiring mandatory school attendance: Virginia in 1867, Michigan in 1871, and California in 1871 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007). Each state had different age requirements and children were required to attend school for different time frames. These requirements formed the basis for legislation many states have today. Because each state’s compulsory attendance laws reflect its own culture and autonomy, there is no national standardized definition for truancy.
What is Truancy?

California education code 48260-48263.6 explains three different levels of truancy: truant, chronic truant, and habitually truant. They are described in the following ways:

1) Truant – a student becomes truant when he/she has three or more unexcused absences, tardies of more than 30 minutes resulting in missed school or class instruction, and attendance was not rectified during the academic year;

2) Chronic truant – a student that has missed over 10% of school without a valid excuse and has been identified by the appropriate school official during the academic year;

3) Habitually truant – a student who has been reported as truant three or more times and offered services from the appropriate school official (CDE, 2009b). The Truancy Toolkit (National Center for School Engagement, 2006) provides a generic definition of truancy similar to California and many other state policies:

If a student is absent without an excuse by the parent/guardian or if the student leaves school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge, it will be considered to be an unexcused absence and the student shall be considered truant. (National Center for School Engagement, 2007, p. 50)

By the California state definition and the Truancy Toolkit sample definition, it does not take much for a student to become truant (National Center for School Engagement, 2007). To stay consistent with the majority of the literature, this review focuses on habitually truant students who have excessive (10 or more) unexcused absences in a school term.
Causes of Truancy

The causes for truancy typically fall under three categories: family/community issues, school issues, and personal issues (Bell, Rosen, & Dyblacht, 1994). Family/community issues include child abuse/neglect in the home or community, financial problems, lack of childcare, parental involvement in alcohol or drug abuse, lack of positive role models, and lack of value for education and attendance. School issues include lack of school engagement, an unsafe environment, bullying, lack of trust or poor relationships with teachers and staff, inconsistent attendance reporting, students struggling academically, and undiagnosed special education needs. Personal issues include substance abuse; mental health issues, such as depression; poor academics; low self-esteem; and lack of value in education (National Center for School Engagement, 2007). The causes of truancy vary from student to student and are not limited to only one of the above mentioned factors; many students and their families often have multiple factors that contribute to the student’s absenteeism.

Social Costs of Truancy

Truancy is a nationwide issue that affects all schools, districts, parents, community members, and taxpayers, and as such it should be considered a national priority (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2005). Truancy is a precursor to juvenile delinquency, dropping out of high school, and gang involvement.
Research shows that students who are truant are more likely to engage in criminal activity including burglaries, auto theft, vandalism, and substance abuse (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2005). Once they enter adulthood, they are less likely to attend college or be employed, and are more likely to receive public assistance or be incarcerated, which, in turn, affects taxpayers and communities (Dryfoos, 1990; Garry, 1996).

Given the staggering social costs as well as the ramifications for the individual students, programs to prevent and reduce truancy must be carefully investigated to ensure their efficacy. There is no doubt about the value of research that focuses on school and district initiatives and interventions, as this is where truancy is first identified. In 2005-2006, the U.S Department of Education initiated its first federal requirement under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Title IV, Part A, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities; SEC. 4112. Reservation of State Funds for Safe and Drug-free Schools states that all schools must report annual attendance and truancy rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The requirement will hopefully open doors for new truancy data to be explored and for policies to eventually be changed. This data could better equip policymakers, districts, and schools to better monitor and improve truancy.

As mentioned previously, there is no national or federal truancy definition or standard method to reduce truancy; in addition, there is no particular federal department that governs truancy laws and procedures. The United States Department of Education actually refers to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in
regard to addressing truancy (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In 2007, the National Center of School Engagement (NCSE) (2007) developed a *Truancy Toolkit* entitled *Creating Your Own Truancy Program* published by the OJJDP. Truancy is viewed as a juvenile justice issue because it is identified as the most prevalent indicator of juvenile delinquency; therefore, OJJDP has become the primary resource for prevention and intervention programs and approaches.

NCSE, located in Denver, Colorado, has become the research institute for truancy. It created not only the Truancy Toolkit but also a truancy database called Truancy Reduction Application Interface (TRAIN) (National Center for School Engagement, 2007). The database is a resource that any truancy program, school, or district can purchase to help record and document truancy data, physical and mental health information, demographics, academic achievement, and services provided. The database will aggregate individual or program data inputted into the system and produce reports that can measure, compare, and evaluate student and program progress. The *Truancy Toolkit* serves as a bible for schools, districts, law enforcement, families, community organizations, and all other stakeholders invested in truancy reduction. The *Truancy Toolkit* gives an overview of truancy; provides a review of literature and legal and economic implications of truancy; explains how to evaluate your truancy reduction programs; shows best practices and model truancy programs around the United States; and provides several lists of how to improve attendance and parent/community involvement (National Center for School Engagement, 2007). The *Truancy Toolkit* is
widely used and referenced in most truancy research and reports. The literature and research around truancy reduction nationwide are most commonly separated into three major areas: school-based, legal, and collaborative approaches. Each approach has been deemed an effective approach to reduce truancy.

Nationwide Approaches to Truancy Prevention

Around the nation, each state is taking individual yet similar approaches to dealing with truancy. In 1996, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) produced a *Manual to Combat Truancy* to help schools fight off the truancy symptom before it turned into a juvenile delinquency disease. The *Manual to Combat Truancy* was one of the only remedies prescribed by the DOE to reduce truancy. It gives five steps to reducing truancy and a list of model truancy reduction programs taking place across the nation. Each of the programs also falls under one of the three most effective approaches to reduce truancy: school-based approaches, legal approaches, or collaborative approaches.

The three different approaches all have the same goal to reduce truancy and are contingent upon one another. For example, the school is where the student is first identified as being truant; therefore, all the programs are connected to the school or district in some way. Differences in these approaches are legal policies and procedures and services offered. For example, in many legal approaches, the courts are governed under state penal codes, or state child welfare and institution codes. As mentioned earlier attendance laws vary from state to state but many states can criminally charge parents
and/or minors for being truant. Both the *Truancy Toolkit* and the *Manual to Combat Truancy* make reference to model truancy prevention and truancy reduction programs as well as truancy initiatives that have been studied, researched, and have received national recognition. The programs mentioned below represent some of these different approaches taking place nationwide to reduce truancy.

*School-based Programs*

The research defines school-based approaches as academic enrichment or outreach programs offered through a district or a school site, which focus on providing academic support and alternatives to youth who maintain passing grades but have poor attendance (Testerman, 1996). Schools and districts have become creative with implementing different services that include school counselors, tutoring, and smaller learning communities. A study by Mueller, Giacomazzi, and Stoddard (2006) reported that some schools are providing greater one-on-one instruction time, as well as intense support from career counselors, teachers, and tutors, to help enhance students’ academic performance through positive relationships with students, staff, parents, and the community. School-based programs primarily focus on rebuilding student/school relationships.

The Twilight Academy, a school-based program that has been shown to help reduce truancy, was recently studied by D’Angelo and Zemanick (2009). The Twilight Academy is a high school program (grades 9-12) that serves students referred by a teacher or school staff for being truant, suspended consistently, or failing academically.
The Twilight Academy is a small learning community with only 15 students in each classroom, allowing for more one-on-one attention. One of the components that make this program unique is that the students are required to work a minimum of 20 hours per week. The students attend school from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm, allowing them to work in the mornings or afternoons. Students are given elective credits for completing work hours. The students who are too young to work or who cannot find a job take vocational education courses. The counselors link students to businesses and community leaders for employment and internship programs. In addition, the teachers conduct home visits when necessary to connect with parents, and they visit the students’ work or internship sites weekly. Results showed that after only one year of existence, the Twilight Academy graduated 11 of their 12 eligible students (D’Angelo & Zemanick, 2009). One of the key points the study mentioned about the student population of the Twilight Academy is that almost all the students who were truant were also on probation or had previous contact with the juvenile justice system; thus, the study reinforces the previously mentioned argument that truancy is a precursor for juvenile delinquency, and the programs that reduce truancy reduce the probability of incarceration.

Another school-based program is Operation SAVE KIDS, one of the model programs listed in the Manual to Combat Truancy (DOE, 1996). The school-based approach to reduce truancy holds truant students and their parents accountable. The program serves students 6-18 years of age in 15 different school districts located in Peoria, Arizona. The program requires school officials to carefully and accurately
monitor student attendance, and when students have three or more unexcused absences his or her parents are notified. The program also requires the parents to respond to school officials with a plan that outlines how they will improve their student’s attendance. If the student’s attendance does not improve, the school officials notify law enforcement or prosecutors. The prosecutors could file criminal charges against the parents for their negligence or offer them a diversion program to improve parenting skills, strengthen family ties, and encourage the student to attend school.

A study was completed on 292 truant students and their families to measure program outcomes. A pre-test and a post-test were conducted at the end of the 1995-1996 academic school year in 12 elementary schools and two high schools. The results showed that, in the first few years of the program, property crimes committed by juveniles declined 65% and truancy rates around the city declined. It also reported that attendance rates increased when parents were notified by mail of their student’s absences. Overall, attendance increased by 72% and less than 30% of parents were referred for prosecution (National Center for School Engagement, 2007). Once families are referred for prosecution, the cases are usually handled by legal court programs.

**Legal Approaches**

In states including Idaho, California, and Kentucky, parents can be civilly and criminally sanctioned for contributing to the delinquency of a minor (Stover, 2004). It is a legal mandate that minors between the ages of 6 and 18 years of age who have not completed the 12th grade must attend school full-time during the entire school term.
In addition, parents and students can face legal ramifications for non-compliance with school attendance regulations. Many districts and counties have brought both parents and students to court to account for a student’s truancy. Many districts and counties have established truancy or attendance court processes in which first-time attendance offenders receive minor sanctions like warnings or detention; repeat offenders receive stricter formal sanctions that may include probation, expulsion, fines, or incarceration for students and/or parents (Mueller et al., 2006).

One program in particular that both qualitative and quantitative data show improved attendance is the Ada County Attendance Court program located in Idaho. Ada County provides interventions to elementary students who have chronic school attendance problems. The Attendance Court works closely with the Boise and Meridian school districts that refer habitually truant students to the court process for intervention. For these families, the court appoints attorneys to defend the children’s legal interests, and parents are then given several months to improve the students’ attendance. The court schedules a review hearing approximately four to six months later to see if attendance has improved. If the attendance has improved, then the case is closed. If attendance has not improved, the parents can be fined, and students can receive delinquency charges (Mueller et al., 2006). In reviewing the impacts of the Ada County program, Mueller et al. (2006) incorporated direct observations and interviews of participants, students’ attendance records and school data, and surveys of school administrators in the court process.
The findings reported inconsistencies with the school records and the referrals were missing data, therefore, compromising the validity of the school data. In addition, it was hard for schools to keep accurate records of attendance because the families were mobile and would move or place their students in home school where they could not be monitored (Mueller et al., 2006). One of the most significant findings of this study was the importance of the multi-agency collaborative efforts. Though the Ada County Attendance Court Program focuses on bringing the parents and students through the legal process and has the power to hold them accountable, they also realized that family dynamics dramatically influence student attendance; therefore, additional resources and support from multi-agency collaborative efforts were needed to combat truancy.

Collaborations with the Sheriff’s department, Boys and Girls Club, Department of Health and Welfare, and community programs such as Warm Springs Counseling services had positive effects (Mueller et al., 2006). Offering multi-agency services provides the families with the additional resources they might need to stabilize their student’s attendance.

Collaborative Approaches

Collaborative programs, multifaceted interventions, multidisciplinary programs, or multi-agency programs are a few of the terms used to describe the collaboration of many different organizations. The Truancy Toolkit, Manuel to Combat Truancy and other literature strongly recommend collaborative approaches to reducing truancy (NCSE, 2007).
Rodriguez and Conchas (2009) reported that in urban areas, many schools almost “function as drop-out producing factories, poorly able to engage the most vulnerable youth and provide an adequate opportunity to learn” (p. 218). They focus on the internal processes of schools and the outside forces such as socio-economic, family dynamics, and the context of the urban environment that contributes to truancy and dropping out. Rodriguez and Conchas’s (2009) analysis focused on the Boston Urban Youth Foundation (BUYF), a collaborative program that links community organizations and school-based programs together to combat truancy. BUYF is a community-based program geared toward helping young people develop spiritually and emotionally while engaging them in and empowering them toward positive educational practices. BUYF offers three programs: a school success program, an academic enrichment center, and a college vision program. In addition, it offers a variety of services that include one-on-one counseling, motivational activities, and student engagement and progress monitoring.

Rodriguez and Conchas (2009) focused on the importance of bridging institutions and building close networks of support between schools, community, students, and teachers. Their research project goes beyond assessing the success of a program based on improved attendance rates and the graduation rates, or by interviewing practitioners who work in the field. Their study captured the students’ perceptions of the program and their experiences within the program. Using interviews, observations, and document analysis, the researchers found that the majority of the youth enjoyed going to BUYF and felt it provided them with a safe, local place for learning with staff with whom they could talk
and who they could trust. Several youth reported they were reconnected with school and now had dreams that they could actually go to college (Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009). In addition, several students also emphasized that the most positive aspects of the program were the case management services. The caseworkers follow up with students at least twice a week by making school visits, encouraging them to go to tutoring, and communicating with teachers and administrators. This study concluded by recommending what Rodriguez and Conchas (2009) call a “Multi-institutional Approach to Truancy/Dropout Prevention/Intervention that offers the safe space, incentive structures, institutional advocacy, and social networks that contribute to the transformation that youth begin to experience” (p. 243).

Another creative collaborative approach to improving attendance and student behavior is the Student Transition and Recovery (STAR) Program located at several sites in the state of Georgia. An evaluation report completed by Dopkins (2000) of the Children and Youth Coordinating Council United States reviewed data collected from 10 different STAR programs during the 1998-1999 school year. The program served middle school students ages 12-14 years with a primary goal of reducing bullying, expulsions, and other pre-delinquent behaviors. The program uses a combination of military-style drill training and academic tutoring (Dopkins, 2000).

STAR is a three-tiered program with tier one being the less severe and tier three being most severe. Tier one is a one-day intervention where the students attend a one-day program that includes boot-camp military training and exercise. Tier two is a 30-day
program that the students attend for five hours a day that includes boot-camp training in the morning wearing military style uniforms and participating in counseling and decision making groups in the afternoon (NCSE, 2007). Tier three is for students referred from juvenile detention centers or from the court system. It is a 24-week program that not only includes tier two requirements, but also requires the parents to participate in weekly support classes. The report surveyed the students and parents in the program and revealed that almost 80% of both parents and students felt STAR helped improve grades and almost 70% reported it improved family relationships (Burg, 2005). All 10 STAR sites reported a substantial decline in absenteeism and an increase in academic grades (Burg, 2005).

The aforementioned approaches are common across the nation and are similar to how California addresses truancy. The next section looks more closely at what California and Sacramento County are doing to address truancy.

California Approaches

California’s School Attendance Review Board (SARB) program is the recommended process for all districts and counties in California and describes Sacramento County’s intervention program that specifically addresses truancy. Because funding is based on student daily attendance, truancy not only negatively affects the individual student and family but also has enormous negative financial effects on the school district itself. In fact, 70% of a district’s general revenue funding is based on the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rate of students. ADA is determined based on how
many students are enrolled in the district, multiplied by a pre-calculated rate that is a complex formula with several variables such as state taxes and local property taxes (EdSource, 2010). Therefore, when students are chronically truant, schools lose money daily, which eventually has a large impact on the district’s general fund (EdSource, 2010). The potential financial cost truancy places on districts motivated the state to establish programs and laws such as SARB and California education code 48320 to help reduce truancy.

In 2004, the Legislative Analyst’s Office produced a report on California’s compulsory attendance laws and reviewed interventions offered across the state to reduce truancy (Gutierrez, 2004). The interventions in California are similar to nationwide school-based approaches, legal approaches, and collaborative approaches.

*Student attendance review board.* SARB was created for schools to use to help improve student attendance and behavior, to hold students and parents accountable, and to provide families with resources. The state SARB board meets a once a month throughout the year and recently reissued the 2009 state SARB handbook designed as a roadmap for improving school attendance and behavior. The SARB process is widely recognized and supported throughout the state by the legislature, and many other constituents such as district superintendents and district attorney’s offices (CDE, 2009a). Previous state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’ Connell encouraged school districts and county offices to use and develop model SARB programs because these
programs aligned with his mission to improve graduation rates, reduce dropout rates, and close the achievement gap (CDE, 2009a).

Although supported by the state superintendent among others, the SARB process is facilitated differently from district to district and county to county. Ideally, SARB is designed to have SARB panel members representing a diversity of organizations such as probation officers, welfare workers, children’s services social workers, community members, and district nurses. The panel is usually facilitated by the district’s child welfare and attendance worker. The panel meets with the student, parents/guardian, and the school site administrator to discuss the reasons why the student is truant. Prior to the SARB hearing, the school site administrator should have met with the student, family, teacher, and counselor in an attempt to rectify the student’s attendance and make appropriate interventions. If the interventions are unsuccessful and the student’s attendance does not improve, the administrator refers the student to the district level for a SARB hearing. As is mandated, a SARB panel develops a contractual agreement with resources and interventions for the student and family. The contract is good for a year from the date it is created and placed inside the student’s academic cumulative file. If the contract is broken, the SARB panel will meet again and implement consequences, as also outlined in the contract.

In 1974, the California legislature enacted education code 48320 attendance laws that allowed the SARB panel to implement consequences and use the juvenile court justice system if school and community interventions were unable to rectify the student’s
attendance (CDE, 2010). The consequences could include the student transferring to another school site, the parents being referred to the District Attorney’s (DA) office for prosecution, the parent’s welfare being sanctioned if the parent is receiving government assistance, or the student being referred to the juvenile justice court system (Justia US Law, 2010).

Sacramento County Approaches

In Sacramento County, truancy is identified and addressed by each school district’s SARB process. Districts have the freedom of implementing the SARB process as it suits the needs of their students; however, they all can refer students and families to the juvenile justice system or Sacramento DA’s office. Sacramento is aggressive in its commitment to reduce truancy; therefore, the county has established a countywide truancy court process, countywide truancy sweeps, and attendance centers.

Truancy court. The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) is the governing agency that oversees the 13 school districts located in Sacramento. Under SCOE’s Student Services Department, a County SARB Representative oversees truancy and the SARB program for the whole county and reports to the CDE SARB representative (Superior Court of California, 2004). While all California counties have a SARB representative, what is unique about Sacramento is that each school district’s SARB facilitator meets with representatives of the District Attorney’s office, Probation Department, Children’s Protective Services, Department of Human Assistance, and County Mental Health on a monthly basis to discuss SARB cases, the SARB process,
forms, procedures, interventions, and resources (Superior Court of California, 2004). Not all counties have strong ties to their DA’s office and juvenile court system like Sacramento. In fact, previous Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Peterson started a truancy court program piloted in 2008 that still exists today. There have been truancy mediation court programs run by the Juvenile Probation Officers in the past, but Judge Peterson’s process allowed all schools to bring students and their parents before the judge and present his or her case. The family is appointed with a public defender if they cannot afford legal representation. The judge has the right to order the student to attend school, complete community service, and have the case monitored for 90 days. If attendance is not improved, the judge can order the student be placed in juvenile hall as a ward of the court under California Welfare and Institution Code 601 (CDE, 2010).

In addition to holding the student accountable for not attending school, there is a separate court process to hold accountable the parents of children who are too young to make their own decisions on whether or not to attend school. In Sacramento, the school districts can refer the parents to the DA’s office through the SARB process. The DA will review the case and determine if there is enough evidence to bring charges against the parents under California Penal Code 272: Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor (CDE, 2010). If the DA does bring charges against the parents, they are served with a warrant for their arrest. In most cases the parents will contact the DA’s office to address the charges and the DA will offer them a six-month diversion program, which monitors the student’s attendance and requires the parents to attend a parenting class (Superior
Court of California, 2004). If the parents do not make contact with the DA’s office to clear their warrant, they will be placed on a truancy sweep list.

*Truancy sweeps.* For the past 14 years, Sacramento County has held annual truancy sweeps in which local law enforcement agencies, school districts, and social services departments rally together to arrest parents/guardians who do not clear warrants issued by the DA’s office. Parents/guardians are booked into the Sacramento county jail as a result of their children’s truancy. When needed, social workers make arrangements for the children if there is not an adult to care for them while their parent is detained. The local news sends reporters to tag along with the officers and show live footage of the parents being arrested (Office of the District Attorney Sacramento County, 2009). It is assumed that having the local news report on the truancy sweep will help encourage parents to send their kids to school and demonstrate that truancy will not be tolerated in Sacramento County (Superior Court of California, 2004).

*Attendance resource centers.* Another resource proven to be successful in reducing truancy in Sacramento County are the Attendance Resource Centers (ARC). The City of Sacramento’s Office of Youth Development receives federal grant money from Congresswoman Doris Matsui’s office to fund the centers in Sacramento. The centers are located at: High School A located in District X and High School B and High School C located in District Y (pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants). The centers are staffed with an attendance technician, a Community Based Organization (CBO) Counselor, and social work interns. The centers are a collaborative
with the Sacramento Police Department, CBOs, District Y and District X, Sacramento County, and the City of Sacramento.

Students seen in the community during school hours are detained by Sacramento Police officers and brought to the nearest center for services. The attendance technician is the first point of contact. He/she gathers information about the student and pulls school records. The student then sees the CBO counselor who completes an assessment and notifies the parent/guardian. Depending on the nature of the truancy and the student’s school record, a case plan will be developed to address the student’s needs. As mentioned, collaborative programs like the ARC have proven to be one of the most effective methods to reduce truancy. In February 2010, at a Senate Public Safety Hearing, Sacramento City’s Police Chief Rick Braziel testified that the centers succeeded in reducing high school truancy rates by more than 15% in the past year (Fight Crime, 2010).

School-based, legal, and collaborative approaches have been determined to be effective strategies for reducing truancy and the data show students’ attendance improves in the short-term, but none of the programs described in the literature provide ongoing follow-up services or support. Nor do they ask the student or family whether or not the programs are effective. The students are absent from the table of discussion around program planning and truancy reduction approaches.

While the research reports collaborative approaches like the ARC are the most effective model for reducing truancy and providing the student and family with support,
this may not be the reality for the students. The students’ realities, perspectives, paradigms, and voices are critical and should be included in the development and evaluation of the program and truancy efforts to best inform local and state policy.

Theoretical Foundation

Many great truancy programs and resources exist across the nation and across the state of California. Programs in Sacramento are helping to reduce truancy; however, the voices of truant students are missing from the literature. In the recent study by Barbara Cooper (2009), *The Unheard Voices of Truants: Aurora Public Schools Early Intervention Program*, she notes there is a gap in the literature in that it does not consider the habitually truant’s perspective. In the literature previously mentioned, many of the programs have completed student surveys and interviewed students, but none have taken a more in-depth look into trying to understand what the students are experiencing when they are truant. Constructivism and systems theory laid the theoretical foundation for this study helping the researcher recognize the constructed realities of habitually truant students.

Constructivism

The constructivist perspective recognizes multiple realities, and knowledge and realities are created by social relationships and interactions (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). According to Rodwell (1998), constructivists focus on the cognitive maps individuals construe for themselves that give meaning to their individual
experiences. In this case, the researcher allowed the students to speak freely and openly about their truancy experiences and discover what their realities were about causes of truancy and the effectiveness of services offered at the ARC.

This study did not take the typical positivist approach and only review quantitative data to measure the success of the intervention programs; instead, it took a constructivist approach to look deeper into the lives of habitually truant students. Positivism is based on the scientific method of understanding why physical and human events occur (Creswell, 2007). The positivist framework focuses on logic and reason, believes only one reality exists, and typically uses random, large sample sizes, to measure cause and effect. Instead, this study explored the history and background of habitually truant students and captured their voices and their perspectives. The researcher sought to reveal how students viewed truancy and resources needed to reduce truancy.

Constructivist theorists recognize that each person has his or her own frame of reference that comes from his or her own values, concepts, and ideas. Constructivists realize there are “multiple interpretations of reality” (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Constructivist theory is commonly used in professions such as social work because it aligns with the important values of the social work profession. For example, social workers believe in starting counseling or interventions by understanding the client’s experiences and focusing on the individual client’s perception (Rodwell, 1998). As a social worker by profession, the researcher determined the constructivist approach best suited this study. The researcher used grounded theory as the methodology for this
study. It provided the researcher with the steps to gather and analyze the data appropriately to allow the multiple social realities of the truant students to emerge. In doing so, the researcher first had to consider the different systems or structures that influence a student’s reality and perceptions on life.

**Systems Theory**

Systems theory was created by Von Bertalanffy in 1937 who was most recognized for his book *General Systems Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* in 1968 (as cited in Payne, 2002). As mentioned in Chapter 1, systems theory describes several interactive components dependent on one another. The general systems theory developed into the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and, from there, had a large impact on the social work profession.

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory in 1979 that looks at human development as a complex system of relationships that influence an individual’s developmental process (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, or more recently referred to bio-ecological system theory, explains there are five environmental systems influencing the development of an individual: *Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem*. The five systems represent different layers that are inter-related; a conflict in one layer can affect the other layers.

- **Microsystem** is the most internal layer that includes the individual’s own biology, the environment in which the individual lives, and structure with which the individual has direct contact. This includes the relationships and
interactions with parents, teachers, school, church, or anything in their immediate surroundings (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

- **Mesosystem** is the next layer, and it includes the experiences that one has at the microsystem level and how they influence each other. For example, how one’s experience at home or church affect how they experience school (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

- **Exosystem** layer is the larger social system with which an individual does not have direct contact but negatively or positively impacts his or her life, for example, a parent’s place of work, training, volunteerism, or counseling services. A child does not have direct contact with the parents’ work but if they are away from home for a long period of time and the child is left unsupervised or with a sitter, their development will be influenced (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

- **Macrosystem** is the outermost layer that includes the culture or *state* in which the individual lives. This includes values, customs, traditions, and socioeconomic status. For example, whether he/she lives in poverty, developing countries, or if the family has strict cultural practices influences development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

- **Chronosystem** is the timing of events or physiological stages one develops or incidents that occur during the course of an individual’s life. For example,
when someone goes through puberty and his or her body changes or a parent
dying influences his or her development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory (Paquette & Ryan, 2001)

Figure 2 illustrates Bronfenbrenner’s five different systems and exemplifies the
structures and people who are a part of that system. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems
theory had a major impact on social work in the 1970s and was used to help social
workers understand and see individuals as a system themselves and as part of a larger
system (Payne, 2002). It also helped social workers enhance problem-solving techniques and coping skills by understanding and recognizing the systems and subsystems involved (Payne, 2002).

The systems theory provided the researcher with additional information to consider as well as data to gather about the students’ backgrounds. Each student had a different story to tell with different influential structures, people, and events that may have caused them to be truant. For example, David, the student mentioned in Chapter 1, became truant due to a major change in his living situation (micro-system) resulting in the family becoming homeless. Each student has their own frame of reference that was developed based on his or her childhood experiences, the school, and community in which they lived, and cultural/religious influences. The researcher took into account what systems impacted the students’ lives to understand how they became truant, as well as what their experience was being detained by law enforcement and brought to the ARC for services.

Summary

After reviewing the literature, the researcher realized this study was greatly needed to provide practical implications not only for practitioners working in the field, but also for local and state policymakers tasked with combating the negative societal effects of truancy. Therefore, the researcher completed a qualitative case study using grounded theory as the methodology to answer the research questions, further described
Chapter 3. Using this method allowed the researcher to explore truancy from the students’ perspectives and identify additional interventions on how the ARC could be improved.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A thorough review of the literature revealed a lack of research on truancy from the perspectives of habitually truant students. This gap in the literature encouraged the researcher to take a deeper look into what habitually truant students experienced when they were absent from school. This chapter explains the methodology the researcher used to address the absence of truant student voice in the research. To give truant students an opportunity to express themselves, explain their experiences, and offer program recommendations, the researcher completed a case study at the ARC. A qualitative case study design and grounded theory methodology was chosen because it aligns with the constructivist framework and was best suited to capture the student’s voice while answering the research questions. This chapter gives a clear description of the setting, criteria for selecting the participants, procedures, role of the researcher, and measures taken to protect the participants’ rights.

Qualitative Research

A qualitative research design was chosen to discover and better understand the students’ points of view in regard to truancy. Qualitative research was defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 46) as “the use of a set procedures that are simultaneously open-
ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study.” Maxwell (2005) described qualitative research as an ongoing process of going back and forth reviewing different components and assessing for goals, theories, questions, and methods. On the other hand, quantitative research is usually based on measurable quantities of how much or how many. It stems from logical empiricism, usually from a positivism philosophy, using large random representative samples, and statistical methods (Cowan, 2007; Merriam, 1998). In contrast, qualitative research helps to understand and explain the meaning of a social reality in its natural setting (Merriam, 1998).

Table 2 shows the different characteristics between qualitative and quantitative research.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of Comparison</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of research</td>
<td>Quality (nature, essence)</td>
<td>Quantity (how much, how many)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical roots</td>
<td>Phenomenology, symbolic, interaction</td>
<td>Positivism, logical empiricism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated phrases</td>
<td>Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, constructivist</td>
<td>Experimental, empirical, statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal of investigation</td>
<td>Understanding, description, discovery meaning, hypothesis generating</td>
<td>Prediction, control, description, confirmation, hypothesis testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Characteristics</td>
<td>Flexible, evolving, emergent Small, nonrandom, purposeful, theoretical</td>
<td>Predetermined, structured Large, random, representative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample
Another characteristic of qualitative research is an inductive research strategy that builds concepts and theories rather than testing existing theories or hypotheses. Qualitative research is known for its deeply rich description using images and words to express what the researcher is saying (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research also takes into account the researcher’s personal biases and own experiences, which may affect how the data was collected and how it is translated (Cowan, 2007).

This qualitative case study did not test a theory or conduct an experiment, but instead gained understanding of the participants’ experiences from their perspectives. Merriam (1998) described this as an emic approach, in other words, understanding reality from the participant’s own perspective as a key characteristic distinctive in qualitative research. In case studies, the researcher is the instrument used to collect and analyze the data. The data is often gathered through fieldwork that requires the researcher to physically go into the setting to collect data.
Case Studies

Case studies have been defined several different ways by different authors. Stake (1994, 1995) described it as a “unit of study,” Wolcott (1992) described it as “end product,” and Merriam (1998 p. 27) explained, “a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit.” A qualitative case study allows the researcher to study or focus on a person, a class, a school, or a community directly. Case studies are used in many fields for specific reasons, for instance, in the medical field, psychology, social work, and political science, just to name a few. Case studies used in education are often ethnographic, historical, psychological, sociological, and are commonly geared towards teaching, learning, or curriculum (Merriam, 1998). Ethnographic studies in education usually focus on the climate of a school, group of students, or classroom behavior. Historical case studies are often about how institutions, such as a district or a school, have evolved over time; or historical case studies are used when there is no living person to interview or report. These studies rely heavily on artifacts and historical evidence.

Psychological case studies focus on individuals, like the student or stages of learning. Sociological case studies focus on educational phenomena, social life, and how the community and social institutions impact people’s lives. For example, the interaction between social problems such as divorce affect student learning or student-peer interaction (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, this case study could be categorized as having sociological influence because it studied habitually truant students and examined what
social impacts may have influenced their truancy and what services they need to be successful. According to Creswell (2007), case studies are a methodical design in which the researcher explores a case through detailed, in-depth data collection of several sources, such as observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports, and finalizing with a theory, themes that emerged, and a case description. The researcher then used grounded theory methods to analyze the research data.

Methodology

*Grounded Theory*

Taking a constructivist approach and looking at the different systems that influenced each individual student, the researcher used grounded theory as the methodology for this case study. Grounded theory is a systematic research approach that provides the researcher with specific techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis to discover the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory was created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss as a qualitative research method that builds theory useful to the discipline being studied. Grounded theory is a valid scientific method because its procedures meet the criteria of doing “good science” and research that includes significance theory-observation, generalizability, reproducibility, and rigor (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory gives specific, detailed steps on how to develop a research question, gathering data, coding procedures,
and the process to analyze data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) list four major components to ground theory listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Grounded Theory Major Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Builds rather than only tests theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The process is rigorous enough that the theory is considered a scientific method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assists the researcher in breaking through personal bias and assumptions that develop during or before the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “It provides the grounding, builds the density, and develops the sensitivity and integration needed to generate rich tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents” (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990, p. 57).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher used grounded theory and followed the procedures to gather and analyze the data collected from the truant students in this case study. The researcher studied the phenomenon that students experienced when they were truant from school as well as what events led them to their behavior. Grounded theory appropriately aligns with qualitative research because the data is collected through field work and typically looks at pieces of social life instead of the whole community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The benefits of using grounded theory in qualitative research are

(a) strategies that guide the researcher step by step through an analytic process, (b) the self-correcting nature of the data collection process, (c) the methods’ inherent bent toward theory and the simultaneous turning away from a contextual description, and (d) the emphasis on comparative methods. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 270)
Grounded theory is an emerging process instead of a simple product of a research question. Through grounded theory, a researcher can gain a deeper understanding by studying and analyzing personal data.

*Constructivist Grounded Theory*

Constructivist grounded theory is a middle approach between postmodernism and positivism and recognizes that social realities are created by participants and researcher and is geared toward trying to interpret the participants’ meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Based on the qualitative research literature written by various authors (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998), a qualitative case study using grounded theory is the best method to answer the proposed research questions and capture the voice of the truant students. Constructivist grounded theory helps the researcher discover the reality that arises from the interactive data collection process and helps the researcher understand, define, measure, and analyze that reality. Constructivist grounded theory examines variables that exist and seeks to interpret the statements the subjects construct as their realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

A constructivist ultimately seeks meaning for both the researcher and the participants. To seek that meaning in constructivist grounded theory, the researcher must review the values, beliefs, ideologies, structures, facts, and actions of the participants. Therefore, in this case study, the researcher used a constructivist grounded theory approach with consideration of the systems theory. In addition, constructivist grounded theory encouraged the researcher to dig deeper when gathering data and during the
Constructivist grounded theory aimed to gather and understand the meaning as the participants described it rather than just through a standard answer. For example, the researcher asked a student, what makes a truant? The “standard truth,” or answer, was defined earlier in Chapter 2 as “when a student misses three or more days of school.” However, the researcher using constructivist grounded theory asked the student what do you think makes a student really truant? Or in your own words, what do you think makes a student truant? Asking the questions differently or probing the participant to elaborate or clarify gave the researcher more understanding regarding what the participant meant or felt about something. Using the constructivist grounded theory in qualitative research, the researcher had to make several analytical decisions and decide how much data was necessary to convey the participants’ stories and understand their reality to answer the research questions.

1. *Research Question*: What have been the experiences of students receiving services at the Attendance Resource Center?

2. *Research Question*: Did the services offered at the Attendance Resource Center help improve student attendance? If yes, how? If not, why?

3. *Research Question*: What do the students believe put them on the path to truancy?
4. **Research Question:** What would help motivate students to go to school, stay there, and graduate?

5.

**Research Design**

As previously stated, when conducting a case study, the researcher should explore the case through detailed, in-depth data collection using several sources. The researcher explored each student’s academic cumulative file to gather historical information about the student’s academically, primarily focusing on when the student started to develop attendance issues, what the causes were, and whether services were offered. Then, the researcher interviewed each student to gain additional understanding of the student’s perceptions and the construction of his or her reality.

**Setting**

This case study was completed at the (ARC) located at a High school A in District X. District X is a K-12 unified school district in the Northern Area of Sacramento County. District X has approximately 12,000 students being served by 12 schools and three charter schools. There are seven elementary schools serving grades K-6, one K-8 school, one middle school serving grades seven and eight, two comprehensive high schools serving grades 9-12 and one continuation high school. District X (S. Nichols, personal communication, September 2, 2008) reported its student population ethnicity as 27% African American, 29% Hispanic, 19% White (Not Hispanic), and 25% other (Asian, Pacific Islander, etc.) (see Figure 3).
District X is one of two districts participating in the collaborative truancy reduction program in Sacramento. Through this truancy reduction program, the City of Sacramento, community-based organization Panacea Services, Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, Sacramento City Police Department, District X, and District Y partner together to provide interventions for truant students. District X ARC has provided truancy services to over 1,200 students since it opened in 2007. The
majority of students who received services through the ARC attended schools in District X; however, several students have received services from the ARC but did not attend District X schools.

Participants

The researcher gained written permission from District X’s Assistant Superintendent and the Executive Director of Panacea Services (who directly oversees the staff at the ARC) to access student information through the school database and student academic cumulative files (see appendices A and B). The researcher also gained written consent from both the parents/guardians and each student to participate in this study (see Appendix C).

Participant Selection

The participants in this study were habitually truant 12th grade students (students who had more than 10 days of unexcused/unverified absences during the school term) from District X who received services at the ARC between school years 2007-2010. Over 1,200 students received services at the ARC; however, this study only focused on those who were 12th graders during the 2010-2011 academic school years and received attendance interventions anytime during their freshman, sophomore, and/or junior years. The researchers chose 12th-grade students because those students had over 12 years of data in their academic cumulative files and were able to reflect on and articulate their experiences. When conducting a qualitative case study, large sample sizes are not warranted to gather rich descriptive data. Therefore, the researcher purposefully selected
no more than 10 12th-grade students between the ages of 17 and 18 years; however only six participated. The researcher was only able to get six participants. The habitually truant students for this case study met the criteria listed in Table 4. The criteria allowed the researcher to study a specific population of habitually truant students who provided prudent information and insight about the ARC.

Table 4

Criteria for Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Habitually truant students who received services from the ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students were currently enrolled in the school district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students were 12th grade students during the 2010-2011 school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who were habitually truant or repeat offenders during the years of 2007-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students who received at least one formal district truancy letter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Procedures

The ARC staff reviewed the data of 1,200 truant students who received services during the 2007-2010 academic school years. They, then, provided the researcher with a list of students who meet the criteria and helped the researcher make initial contact with the students to inquire about participating in the study. The researcher ranked the students from the list based on who had the most visits to the center or who received the
most formal truancy letters or had on-going chronic truancy throughout the 2007-2010 school years. The researcher then contacted each student and parent/guardian on the list to seek participation in the study. If the parent/guardian and/or student did not consent to the study, the researcher moved to the next student on the list.

Once students were identified, the researcher met or spoke with the parent/guardian and student to review the consent form and answer any questions they had regarding the study. After receiving written consent from both parent/guardian and student, the researcher reviewed the student’s academic cumulative file and documents pertaining to the student’s attendance history. After the document review was complete further interview questions emerged based on the information gathered. The researcher contacted each student to schedule an interview at a neutral location in which the student felt comfortable. The researcher asked a set of predetermined questions (see appendix D) and additional questions that emerged from the document review of his or her cumulative file such as, “I noticed in your cumulative file that your attendance started to decline in seventh grade, can you tell me what happened around that time?”

The interviews were one hour semi-structured and during the first 30 minutes, the researcher asked the pre-developed written questions. The remaining 30 minutes were left for additional questions and any probing questions based on the participants’ responses. All the questions surrounded the participants’ experiences at the ARC or their personal experiences that may have contributed to their truancy. The participants had the right to decline to answer any questions without penalty of being removed from the study.
at any point in time as noted and explained in the letter of consent and before the interview began. The instruments used in this study included a computer, pens, paper, and audio recorder. The instruments of data collection did not cause any harm, except being audio recorded may have caused some discomfort to participants. The tapes were only heard by the researcher and dissertation committee members as needed. The recordings were stored until transcribed, and were stored for no longer than two years when they were destroyed to safeguard the integrity of the participants. After the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the data to look for patterns and themes. The researcher noted whether any gaps appeared in the data, and the researcher would re-contact participants if needed via phone, email, or in person.

Ethical Protection

It is important that the researcher honored the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* and do no harm to the participants or the institution (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 1999). The researcher first received permission from California State University, Sacramento Research Evaluation Human Subjects Committee to go forth with this study. The researcher also gained informed consent from both the students and their parents, District X, and ARC staff Panacea Services. Informed consent is an agreement from the participants to take part in the case study and an acknowledgement that they were aware of what they agreed to. The researcher met with or spoke to each student and parent to explain the purpose of the
research, to clarify how the data was collected and used, and to gain their written consent (Cowan, 2007). The researcher conducted the case study in an ethical manner by ensuring the validity and reliability of the case.

The internal and external validity and reliability are important factors to consider in research and in planning how the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Merriam, 1998). Internal validity focuses on how the findings align with reality and whether the researcher measured what he/she intends. Here, reality refers to the conceptualizations people construct in their minds (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1998) described internal validity as a strong point in qualitative research of this nature, as the purpose of the interviews is to uncover students’ perceptions.

Merriam suggested six strategies a researcher could use in qualitative research that enhance internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory or collaborative modes of research, and researcher’s biases. Creswell (2007) has eight strategies to ensure validity in qualitative research. Several were similar to Merriam’s previously mentioned six, and the additional two are refining the hypotheses and external audits allowing external consultants to audit the process. In either case, Creswell suggested that qualitative researchers use at least two to ensure validity in the study. Therefore, this researcher ensured internal validity by clarifying the researcher’s role and biases, by completing a member check-in (taking the data and conclusions back to the participants to verify accuracy), and through inclusion of a rich,
thick, description of the data gathered via audio recorded informal interviews transcribed, coded, and recoded.

External validity focused on whether the findings in one study could be applied to other situations. Often in qualitative research, the ability to generalize is limited. This is sometimes viewed as a limitation of the method (Merriam, 1998). However, in multi-case or cross-case analyses, if the data is gathered and coded in the same specific process, the ability to generalize findings is enhanced. This case study has external validity because the researcher used the same procedures and questions to gather and code the data. However, some different questions were asked due to the data that emerged from the individualized background information gathered from each student’s academic cumulative file.

Reliability focuses on to what extent can the findings be duplicated or if the study were repeated, would it produce the same results (Merriam, 1998). This is based on the positivist assumption that there is a single reality and studying it repeatedly will give the same results. Under constructivism, this repetition of outcomes is not to be expected. Therefore, in the context of qualitative research, reliability focuses on whether informed people agree that the given data and the results are feasible (Merriam 1998).

In qualitative research, the researcher must disclose his or her own biases and assumptions, which can greatly affect the study’s findings. In this study, the researcher made the assumption that many of the habitually truant students have a different
experience with truancy and the ARC than those commonly described in the literature and in the previously conducted quantitative ARC program evaluations.

Rights to Privacy

The participants’ rights to privacy and psychological safety were protected in three ways. First, the researcher used pseudonyms for the school sites, district, and all participants in any documents made public, for example, transcripts, research papers, or research presentations. In addition, all interviews were confidential. Second, participants signed a copy of the consent form, which explained the purpose of this study and how their contributing information would be used. Third, as part of the consent form, participants could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt any discomfort. If the student experienced any psychological distress and needed help, the researcher provided them with contact information to Sacramento County Mental Health Treatment Center for adults (916) 875-1000 or the Minor Emergency Response Team for minors (916) 875-1113. As with any interview, if the student disclosed any abuse or neglect, the researcher, as a mandated reporter, would refer the family to the necessary authorities, including Children’s Protective Services or the local law enforcement agency. The information gathered was completely confidential and was stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s residence for two years after the study was complete.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to serve as a non-biased volunteer at the ARC to study the program. To alleviate conflict of interest, the researcher clearly
explained to the participants that their honest responses would not only aid in the research, but were appreciated by the researcher. There were no incentives nor was a positive outcome of any response expected, and no response was considered “correct.” This information was provided in the interview consent form and was addressed in person before each interview. The researcher formerly served as the Supervisor of Prevention and Intervention Programs and supervised the ARC in District X. The researcher was no longer employed with the district at the time of the study; therefore, there was no conflict of interest. Additionally, the participants selected were not students the researcher had a prior relationship with while employed with the district.

Table 5 contains a checklist of the steps the researcher took to gather the data.

Table 5

Research Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ developed research questions based on gaps in the literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ determined criteria of participants that could aid in answering the research questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ gained written consent from District X to use students in their district as participants for this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ gained written consent from the Office of Research Administration at California State University, Sacramento to complete this case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ gained written consent from Panacea Services to assist the researcher with identifying participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ gained written consent from students and their parents/guardians to participate in this case study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
researched each student’s academic cumulative file to gather historical data and develop additional interview questions

Table 5 continued

Checklist

- conducted individual interviews with each student to gain the student’s perspective
- transcribed the interviews and used grounded theory methodology to discover concepts and themes that emerged from the data
- analyzed all the data gathered and reported findings in Chapter 4

Summary

This chapter explained the steps taken by the researcher to complete a qualitative case study on the ARC by capturing the constructed reality and voice of habitually truant students. The researcher used a case study approach, with purposeful sampling of five habitually truant students and complete in-depth research to understand their experiences at the ARC. Chapter 4 provides the reader with an analysis of the findings and Chapter 5 discusses the implications for educational leaders, social work practitioners, and the formulation of public policy on truancy interventions.
Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter explains steps taken to examine and assemble the qualitative data gathered for this case study. Grounded theory was chosen by the researcher to best understand the perspectives’ of truant students and their experiences at the Attendance Resource Center (ARC). Grounded theory is a rigorous and detailed manner of data assembling that identifies concepts, categories, and themes that emerge through open and in vivo coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The significance of this study is that it gives voice to truant students who are often under-represented in truancy literature. This chapter provides a description of the participant population as well as an analysis of documents reviewed, individual student interviews, and the member check process. This chapter concludes with a summary of final themes emerging from the data analyzed.

The qualitative tools used to address the study research questions are document review process and individual interviews. The document review was completed on log entries from District X’s electronic student database, which contains notes and comments recorded by school officials throughout the duration of the students’ enrollment in the district. Document review was also completed on the information gathered from each student’s academic cumulative file. Individual interviews were conducted with six
participating habitually truant students. The interviews were audio recorded and immediately transcribed. The researcher also took written notes during each interview.

All the data were analyzed using grounded theory methodology. The researcher later synthesized the concepts and categories into themes. To gain a better understanding of each student’s educational history, the researcher completed the document review of each student’s academic cumulative file and log entries prior to the interview. This allowed additional interview questions to develop based on any information discovered during that process. The researcher then interviewed each student individually using open-ended questions and probing as necessary. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher immediately began the data reduction process by open/in vivo coding, developing concepts, which developed into categories and finalized into themes. Once the categories were developed, the researcher also completed a member check for validity with each student to verify the categories that emerged from the data. Table 6 demonstrates the steps completed in the data synthesizing process.
Table 6

Steps Taken by Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) The researcher completed a document review of each student’s academic cumulative file and district log entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The researcher created a chart recording data gathered from cumulative file and log entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) The researcher transcribed each student interview verbatim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) All data sets were coded into concepts and categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) The researcher completed a member check with each participant to verify categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) The categories were synthesized into themes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of Population

A list of 17 students who met the criteria listed in Chapter 3 were given to the researcher by an ARC staff member. Six students were available and willing to participate in the study with signed consent from their parents/guardians. The six participants were assigned letters A-F as pseudonyms to protect their identities for this study. All the students were in the 12th grade, three participants attended High School A and three attended Continuation High School; both schools are in District X. All the students were considered habitually truant at some point in time and all went through the ARC on different occasions between 2007 and 2010. Of the six students; two were
female, four were male, and two were Latino, two were African Americans, one was Caucasian, and one was bi-racial African American/Italian as shown in Table 7. This information was either self-reported by the student or recorded by the parents in the District X electronic student database.

Table 7

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Continuation High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>High School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American/Italian</td>
<td>High School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Continuation High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>High School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Continuation High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 shows the living situations of the six participants.

Table 8

Living Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Both parents</th>
<th>One parent</th>
<th>Between two homes</th>
<th>Extended Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Background Information

Student A resided with both her parents in her grandparent’s home to save money and allow her mother to stay home and not work two jobs. Student A was 18 years of age, worked part-time, and finished high school in March 2011. Student A was gang affiliated and after being attacked twice by gang members, she decided to change her life and make better decisions. She planned to attend community college in the fall.

Student B lived part-time at his mother’s house and part-time at his father’s house. Student B stated that neither of his parents had graduated from college and he
wanted to be the first. Student B planned to graduate in May 2011 and wanted to become a police officer after he finished community college.

Student C lived with his mother, and his father was incarcerated. Student C planned to graduate in May 2011 and planned to go to community college. Student C stated that he looked forward to moving out and pursuing a vocational career.

Student D lived with his father part-time and his grandparents part-time. Student D’s mother abandoned his brother and him when he was a baby. After living in foster care, he was given to his grandparents who raised him until the age of 12 when his father was released from prison. Last year, he met his mother and brother for the first time, and they are starting to rebuild their relationship. Student D may not graduate by May of 2011 and would have to attend Adult Education to get his General Education Development (GED).

Student E lived with her mother part-time at her grandmother’s house and lived with her father part-time. Student E had attendance issues since she was in elementary school but had good grades and high test scores. Student E planned to graduate in May 2011 and wanted to attend community college for a few years and then transfer to a four-year university.

Student F lived with his father who resided with the student’s grandmother and aunt. Student F was primarily raised by his mother but was recently kicked out for smoking marijuana. Student F attended school on a daily basis but he did not graduate in
May 2011 and had to attend Adult Education to get his GED. He was expecting a daughter in April 2011.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section gives detailed results from the document review data and interview transcription data analyzed by the researcher. The document review section is broken down into two areas with examples and direct quotes from the data gathered from the academic cumulative files, and log entries from the District X electronic database. The interview transcription section reviews the findings from the student interviews and categories that emerged with specific examples and quotations directly from each participant.

Document Review

Academic cumulative files. The researcher created a chart for each student containing information gathered from the students’ cumulative files and log entries. The charts contain information the researcher deemed important to record. The chart lists each academic school year ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade. There are nine different columns titled school/district attended, absences/tardies, academic progress/grades, test scores, truancy letters, special education, mental health, miscellaneous, and comments. Out of the six student participants, two did not have original student cumulative files. Both Student C and Student D cumulative files were never located and received in District X. A generic student file was created at the time of
the students’ enrollment in District X and used in place of the students’ cumulative files. This limited gathering any information about the student prior to their enrollment in District X. The other four students A, B, E, and F had cumulative files; however, each file contained different information or was missing information from some academic years, thus, resulting in areas left blank on the chart. See Table 9 for samples of student charts.

Table 9

Sample of Student Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School attended</th>
<th>Absence/tardies</th>
<th>Academic Progress/Grades</th>
<th>Test scores CST</th>
<th>Truancy letters/docs</th>
<th>Special Ed/IEP</th>
<th>Mental health/ Misc</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson School Natomas District 98/99</td>
<td>25/10</td>
<td>ELL K Promoted</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2 truancy letters 2/3/99</td>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Teacher noted needs to improve attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Natomas 99/00</td>
<td>13/0</td>
<td>C’s average</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1 letter 2/9/00</td>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauch NSSD/ Twin Rivers District 00/01</td>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>2’s satisfactory</td>
<td>ELA-Basic</td>
<td>1 letter 10/31/00</td>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauch NSSD/ Twin 01/02</td>
<td>2/0</td>
<td>Satisfactory needs improve in reading</td>
<td>ELA-Basic Basic</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log entries. Log entries were gathered from the District X electronic school database. Log entries are notes, comments, and information recorded on each student by
various school staff. It could include teachers, secretary, school registrar, principal, school nurse, and school counselor. Log entries are not public information. They are the school districts’ private notes and comments recorded about each student during their enrollment in the District X. Information recorded in the log entries are school enrollment, residency, behavior, illness, and attendance information, in addition to any meetings held and any contact made with the student or parent.

Table 10

Sample Log Entries from District X School Database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/3/2010</td>
<td>ARC staff- <strong>District XAC</strong> – Student was brought to the Attendance Center by Officer, SPD for truancy 950a-1050a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29/2010</td>
<td>Office Staff- <strong>No Go List</strong> - Failed to serve detention 1/28/09. Now on No Go List until rescheduled and served.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/2010</td>
<td>Office Staff - <strong>12 tardies; detention</strong> - 3rd qtr: Now has 12 tardies/cuts, assigned 1 1/2 hr detention 2/10. Sent notice to student 1/28.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26/2010</td>
<td>Office staff - <strong>9 tardies; detention</strong> - 3rd qtr: Now has 9 tardies, assigned 1 hr detention 2/3. Sent notice to student 1/26.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher completed a document review on each student’s cumulative file, drafted the chart, and then reviewed each student’s log entries for additional information. Once all the data was gathered and charts were completed, the researcher analyzed the information and began coding. During the data reduction process of each student’s documents, the following concepts emerged: mobility, residency, poor attendance, behavior, low test scores, class disruption, suspension, English language learner
(ELL)/Special education, truancy letters, and, consequences. Table 11 explains which concepts were observed from each student’s document review.

Table 11

Concepts from Students’ Document Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>A, C, D, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior issues</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attendance</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency issues</td>
<td>A, C, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low test scores</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class disruptions</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL/Special Education</td>
<td>A, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy Letters</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using grounded theory, the researcher again coded the data into concepts and then categories were developed into themes. Mobility was coded if a student changed schools or districts more than three times for other reasons than promoting to another grade during their academic history. Students A, C, D, and E changed schools several times during their academic history. Students A, C, D, and F all had various behavior comments or notes recorded in their student cumulative files and/or teachers comments.
For example, one teacher reported on Student F’s fourth grade report card, “student needs to improve behavior.” In addition, there were several entries recorded in the student’s District X electronic file about Student F’s behavior. Below is the first entry ever recorded in Student F’s log entries from District X’s electronic student database.

8/21/03 recorded by school staff - Fight with another student during PE. According to PE teacher, the other student was mainly defending himself and Student F took a swing. Student F said he went to get a ball from the other student and hit him. Both boys pushed each other and Student F admits to punching the other student. Student F also said he did not stop when told to by the teacher. Spoke with mother.

Poor attendance was obviously a concept in all the students’ academic files since they were all truant at some point; however, three of the students, A, E, and F, had poor attendance not only in their secondary schools but also in elementary. Poor attendance was coded if they had more than 10 absences during a school year. Poor attendance observed in elementary school led the researcher to ask students A, E, and F additional interview questions regarding this issue.

Residency became a concept because many documents or log entries recorded mentioned the students changed residency or had a new addresses. Students A, C, and D all had documents or log entries noting the student moved or residency needed to be verified. The data reported that students A, C, and D all had moved frequently throughout their academic experience. Documents observed were change of address forms, District X residency verification forms, and log entries noted by various school personnel that the student’s residency had changed. Residency issues also led the researcher to ask students A, C, and D additional interview questions about how this may
or may not have impacted their truancy. An example of the data gathered from an entry in Student A’s District X electronic database noting that the student’s residency letter had been approved by District X is, “8/24/06 recorded by school staff- RL (residency letter) 06-07- RL approved on 8/16/06 per district office staff.”

Low test scores was a concept based on information from the student’s California Standardized Test Scores. Students A, C, D, and F all scored below basic or far below basic numerous times throughout their educational history.

Classroom disruption/suspension became a concept because it showed up repeatedly in the documents of students C, D, and F. The three students had several log entries recorded every time the student was disruptive in class or was suspended from class or school.

Two student participants, A and F, were listed as needing additional resources and services. Student A was identified as an English Language Learner and was provided services to help the student improve her English. Student F was identified as a special education student and had an individualized education plan noted in his academic cumulative file. The researcher was unable to discover with what learning disability the student was diagnosed. The data gathered led the researcher to ask additional interview questions with students A and F about how this may have impacted their truancy.

Truancy letters were considered a concept because each student received at least one formal district truancy notice that was observed by a hard copy in the student’s academic file or noted in the student’s District X electronic file.
Consequences became a concept because almost every student’s document with the exception of Student A received detention or some type of consequence for poor attendance. Five of the six students were required to serve detention at some point in time during their educational history.

*Interview Transcripts*

The researcher conducted six one-hour individual interviews with students A-F at their current school of attendance. During each interview, the researcher asked each student semi-structured questions, additional questions that developed from data gathered during a review of the student’s documents, and any probing questions based on the participants’ responses. The researcher also recoded notes of any thoughts or questions that arose during the interview. All the questions surrounded the students’ backgrounds, personal experiences with being truant, and their experience at the ARC. The semi-structured interview questions asked of each student are listed in Appendix D. The researcher then transcribed all six interviews verbatim. After the transcriptions were completed, the researcher analyzed the interview transcripts and researcher notes taken during the interview. Again, the researcher completed open and *in vivo* coding and developed concepts and categories. Once the researcher completed the data reduction process, these categories emerged: resilience, substance abuse, teachers and student reflections on relationships, school environment, and their background/upbringing, shown in Figure 4.
Resilience. The resilience category was created based on what the students reported about overcoming different obstacles in their lives. Students reported overcoming circumstances of problems at home, having an absent parent, peer pressure, violence, and learning disabilities. Figure 5 shows the different areas in which students demonstrated resilience. For example, Student D’s mother abandoned him as a baby and his father was incarcerated for the first 12 years of his life. Disconnected from his parents and moving from home to home, he was resilient and did not give up and attended school regularly.
**Table 12**

**Codes and Concepts Developed into Resilience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent parent</td>
<td>C, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education/ELL</td>
<td>A, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor attendance</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy Letters</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial hardships</td>
<td>A, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Pregnancy</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student A reported that her parents have both had to work at least two jobs to support the family and recently had to move in with her grandparents to save money. She also showed resilience of overcoming the pressures of gang violence and being an English language learner. She reported that her father had given up on her and she wanted to prove him wrong despite the fact that she was severely credit deficient and had to leave the regular high school and attend a continuation school. From her words exactly:

Like when my dad told me that he got tired of me doing all this stuff and I was never going to be anything. It hurt me, and I want to prove him wrong so when I came here my grades improve my attendance improve the teachers talk great about me. I proved him wrong and I told him I proved you wrong in his face and he said I’m sorry and that felt good.

Student C reported having a poor relationship with his mother, they argued and fought all the time and he had no relationship with his father who was incarcerated. He stated that his mother stopped caring about school but something changed and despite his
circumstances, he started to care and attend school. He reported he was counting down the days to graduation so he could move out of his mother’s house. He stated, “I wish I never would have stopped caring…figured that if I want to graduate I better come to school…you just have to come to make the decision on your own.”

Substance abuse. Substance abuse was mentioned by every student during the interviews. They all reported that it was the number one reason students skipped school and became truant. Figure 6 shows the different codes and concepts that led to this category.

Figure 6    Substance Abuse
Table 13

Codes/Concepts Developed into Substance Abuse Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>A, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard drugs</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge drinking</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partying</td>
<td>C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends use</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents use</td>
<td>D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are aware of students’ use</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle stress</td>
<td>A, B, D, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get through the day</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students reported they or their peers used drugs on a daily basis at school or during the school day. Only two of the students reported never using drugs. Student A and Student B both stated that they did not smoke or use drugs, but their friends and peers did. They stated students left school or class to get high on almost a daily basis. One student even stated, “If students could smoke at school they wouldn’t leave.” In response
to the interview question: what are some reasons kids skip school, all six participants mentioned drugs as a leading factor. When asked why students were using, they reported because they liked it, because of family issues at home, to escape the reality, or to get through the school day. Drugs that appeared frequently in the data were marijuana, alcohol, and cigarettes. Some students did report that kids used “hard drugs” like ecstasy, heroin, or they popped pills (prescription medication). Student A reported during the interview:

Marijuana and like other stuff. Like some people that come here they do crystal and like all that stuff and its bad. And they’re like, “it’s not bad; it just makes you like something in your brain stops clicking and makes you happy and something that you want to be for like a little while. And I’m like why would you want to do that. They're like, cause things that are going on at home and things that are happening here. And then most of my friends they do things that I’ve never done before. And that I don’t plan to do neither. Not now. Not never.

Student A went on to say that “yeah I’ve had friends like ask me for money. Like they beg for money and like, I don’t give it to them because I would lend them the money but I know what they need it for.” Student B stated he never tried drugs but he was around it every day before and after school. Drugs were mentioned in every interview. In fact, both Student C and Student D revealed they smoked marijuana almost on a daily basis but felt they could stop if they wanted. Student C went on to state how many kids were skipping because of drugs or alcohol:

At this school about 90 percent to 95 percent. You got your 5 people that don’t smoke and there is 180 here. This is the school that got me started to be honest. I mean smoking everyday but this is also the school that got me done and on task but the people at the school.
Student F explained that if students could smoke at school, they would come every day.

Then he went on to say:

They really would. If they could smoke on campus and still pass they would come every day. There is a lot of muthafuckas that be smoking hella weed in the morning. I be like damn I don’t even wanna smoke this early in the morning. Just give me a cigarette. I don’t feel like smoking no weed in the morning. I be telling them that all the time. They be like I need this man to get through school. I’m like damn!

Student F also expressed that not only were students smoking marijuana and cigarettes but they were using hard drugs.

well this one guy he uses heroin….I asked him one day….I’m like man what the hell is heroin is that ice or powder. Naw man its like oxy cotton. I’m like man I’ve never tried oxycotin. He showed me it. It was like doo doo brown and shit. It was like a brown ball. Look like residue from weed. But it wasn’t it was something bigger. He showed me a little bag. And asked me if I did it or knew anyone cause his dude ran out. I was like I don’t even fuck with that shit. I told him man you know what you should just drink at least. He was like naw man. I was like alright bro. I can’t tell you nothing but that shit is hella addictive. He can’t stop. He does it every day. ….kids be snorting lines….it’s already bad enough that niggas smoke cigarettes, smoke weed, and drink. But doing hard ice, powder and stuff. I can’t see that. My moms told me don’t ever do that stuff. I knew not to ever do that shit. It’s going to put fat ass holes in your brain. Warp your shit.

Teachers. All six participants mentioned teachers on several different occasions.

According to the data teachers have an important role and a major impact on truancy.

Figure 7 shows the codes, and concepts gathered to create the teacher category.
Table 14

Codes/Concepts that Developed into the Teacher Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>A, B, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching styles</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning styles</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication</td>
<td>A, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not supportive</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t believe in student</td>
<td>A, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Concept Assignment</th>
<th>Participant Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t care about student</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relationship</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, E, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnoticed</td>
<td>A, B, D, F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All six participants mentioned teachers as one of the reasons that students did not come to school or skipped class. The participants stated that teachers impact truancy for various reasons as mentioned in Figure 7; they have poor communication with students, they are not supportive, and they do not believe in the students. Again this is from the students’ perspectives. In addition, several students mentioned teachers do not take time to get to know their students or are using teaching techniques that are boring and hard to follow. Student A mentioned it was pointless for her to come to class if she was unnoticed by some of her teachers. In her exact words:

well I would go to school and they wouldn’t even know I was there. And everybody would be doing their work and I would like try to catch up and they would like ignore me and they would be like you should just come after school or you could come in the morning because you’re interrupting our lesson and it’s not their fault I haven’t been to school.

Student B also described being unnoticed by teachers:

uh pretty much throughout all high school teachers don’t really notice me, I don’t stick out in the classroom, so teachers don’t really notice me. I don’t act out in the classroom so they don’t really notice me as much. I slide under the radar in my classes. They don’t pay attention to the kids who aren’t causing any trouble or anything like that.
Student D talked about one of the reasons he hated going to school. Because of some of his teachers, he stated:

I just didn’t like some of the teachers and their program. How they did their stuff. I love the principal he was cool and some of the teachers were cool….but some teachers can be dicks. They’re people just like we are and they have their moods too but we just have to handle it. I hate when teachers do that and come at you all wrong cause they know damn well that I wouldn’t come at them like that. Give me respect back. That’s all I ask for.”

Student E mentioned similar behaviors some teachers demonstrated in class. She stated:

They have attitudes and stuff like that….I know my math teacher would always have an attitude and take it out on class. Like if somebody would ask her a simple question she would like be snappy with them but like you’re the teacher that’s what you are here to do. You’re not supposed to take things out on the students.

Students also reflected on how teachers managed their classrooms and their teaching styles. Student F suggested that teachers should offer different types of assignments and that learning should be fun. Class should not be boring regardless of the subject; teachers should make it fun to learn. He stated:

if they different assignments….like doing projects. Maybe easier ones and if you couldn’t do the class work today than you can do something else to make up for that. Just make it a little bit easier cause its hella overwhelming. What’s the first thing people thinking about when they come to school in the morning…damn I got to go deal with these teachers. I don’t even feel like going. I just want to go to sleep. You know.

Another student told a story about a teacher’s poor class management skills. She stated:

Yeah cause people would being sitting in class with juice but it wasn’t just juice in there. And you can straight smell it that it wasn’t juice….the teachers wouldn’t notice they would just sit there like when the teacher would turn around they
would spray something and drink and just sitting and some would be drunk….but some people that could really play it off too. And like the teachers wouldn’t notice. Like they should be paying more attention to what kids are doing and bringing to school.

Another student mentioned that in junior high, his class went through several teachers because none of them were prepared or capable of handling the class. He stated:

we were in a class that was so bad that the regular teacher quit and we made three subs cry. We had a long-term sub who only lasted a week then he quit. Then finally there was some guy who came and we liked him but he got fired. That class was so bad.

Though all six participants mentioned negative things teachers did or do, they all were able to articulate and list qualities that good teachers had or should have. All the students reported that a teacher who communicates with students and builds a relationship with their students is very important. Teachers who are approachable, easy to talk to, and who actually cared about them were all qualities the participants said teachers should have. Simple things were mentioned that one would assume teachers are already doing, for example, answering questions and showing students respect. Below are several statements from the students during the interviews.

Student A stated:

yeah if they would have talked to me more or called my parents and tell them I wasn’t going to school…teachers have to able to communicate with me seeing if anything was wrong like why wasn’t I going school and I would tell my teachers and they would understand and then they would give me missed and they would give me my work and they would communicate with me.

She also stated, “not only listen but understand what you are going through and it really makes you feel comfortable to know they know what you’re going through so you
can tell them.” Student B stated, “like ones that actually try to talk to you and figure out what’s wrong and didn’t try to just teach one way for each.”

Student C stated:

helps individually a lot and not just sitting at their desk chilling all day. Actually teach something. Cause I have teachers that just give five tests no homework or quizzes just tests. So every time a test comes around I just fail it.

Student D stated:

somebody that’s strong minded and steady and not such as discipline their class but handle their class and just respect them and the kids will treat you with respect back, and have a humorous side… to know what they are teaching makes sure they have one-on-ones with kids so they come and talk to you. Always willing to help and make sure the student is doing their job right. Make it easier in like teaching us. That’s one of the reasons we’re here (Continuation High School) because we never wanted to ask questions but the teachers here make it so you want to and everybody works.

Student E stated, “take advice from the students…is reasonable. Offers help and be available for like tutoring and stuff.”

Student F stated:

laughing all the time, busted jokes, make that class laugh all the time but still get the work done. Told them something like turn this in after class and its all good we still going to be having fun learning after your done with all that.

Reflection. During the interviews all the students reflected on personal experiences at the ARC, school, and home. Figure 8 demonstrates areas of personal experiences on which the students reflected.
The participants were asked to reflect on their experiences at home and school and on the relationships with parents, teachers, and friends. All the participants openly discussed childhood experiences growing up and influential relationships that have impacted their truancy. They also described in detail their experiences of being picked up by law enforcement and taken to the ARC. The participants concluded each interview by offering suggestions and recommendations for the ARC and local schools. The data analysis revealed that all students reflected on the items shown in Figure 8.

*Childhood.* The participants were asked to describe how things were at home and reflect on their childhood experiences at school. All the students reported that as a child they remembering enjoying school and looking forward to attending. Almost half the
students had poor attendance in elementary school and several recalled their first incidents of ditching school started in middle school. Some participants like students A and E had poor attendance all through elementary when the responsibility fell on their parents. Student A recalls missing a lot of school because her family moved frequently causing her to change schools in the middle of the semester. She also stated she was the oldest child and she often had to miss school to take care of her younger siblings when they were sick while her parents worked.

My mom started working then and I had to stay home most of the time…yeah when my sister was sick and my mom was working I had to stay home take care of her. And when I was sick I had to stay home and take care of myself.

Student E also mentioned she moved often as well but again her parents did not see it as a concern because her grades were good. Student E mentioned that it affected her lifestyle and she continued to be late and miss school until this day.

Student D reflected on his childhood experiences and being abandoned by his mother and being raised by his grandmother because his father was incarcerated. He stated he did not really start to have attendance issues until he went to live with his father after he was released from prison. He stated they lived with his father’s girlfriends, several, so they had to move often which affected his grades, behavior, and attendance. He stated, “Sixth grade I went to live with my dad and stepmom and that’s when all the moving came in…I’ve had about five or six stepmoms literally. It gets so irritating.”

*Relationships.* The participants all reflected on the different relationships that impacted their lives and academics. They all mentioned relationships with their friends
that negatively impacted their attendance and behavior. Student F wished, “that I would have never started messing with the wrong crowd that got me doing this.” Friends showed up in the data analysis quite often and were another leading factor in causes for truancy. Student D mentioned, “I would go chill with friends and that’s basically it…friends friends friends. It’s always friends that bring you down.” Student A reflected on how she would miss school to go kick it and hang out with friends and in fact every participant was with friends when they were brought to the ARC.

*Attendance Resource Center.* Each student had different experiences at the ARC but most reported that they were scared, and embarrassed by being picked up the police officers and taken to the ARC. Some stated they did not feel they committed a crime so being picked up by police officers was unnecessary. Others stated that it was so humiliating that it got their attention and made them not want to miss school again.

Student A reflected on her experience of riding in the back of the cop car:

It was the stupidest reason… my friend was like let’s go to the donut shop. It’s across the street, and I was like I don’t know. We were going to just walk and get it and come back. When we got outside the police officer was waiting outside for us. He searched our backpacks and asked us a lot of questions. I didn’t know my friend had stuff on him and the cop found a bag of weed and photos of him throwing up gang signs in his cell phone. The officer took us to the ARC. I felt so guilty like if I did something bad. You know when you’re in the back and I would like see people stopped and there was this old lady and she was huh…(shaking her head) and I was like I didn’t do anything bad. And my friend had his hoodie on over his head. I was worried I would see someone I know….it was very embarrassing.

Student F stated,
I didn’t feel like being in class or I would just leave before English…but we ditched and left and were smoking in front of American River College and the cops pulled up on us and took us to the ARC.

Student F stated he was not fazed by being stopped by the cops because he was often stopped by the cops when they were looking for someone or a suspect on the streets. Student D also stated he was frequently stopped by officers and had been to juvenile hall twice so when he was picked up and taken to the ARC it was not a big deal. The other students reported they did not like being picked up by the cops and thought it scared students initially. Each student had different experiences while at ARC and received different services. Some students reported they spoke to a counselor and the counselor followed up on them to make sure their attendance improved. Other students stated they talked to the counselor but did not receive any services. Student C reflected on participating in a group with the counselor to discuss issues and improving his attendance. All of the students stated the program only helped improve their attendance temporarily and all the participants continued to be truant after they went to the ARC.

All the participants stated that if someone followed up with them over the years it probably would have helped them improve their attendance.

Student suggestions. All the students gave suggestions on how to reduce truancy and what changes needed to take place to get kids to attend school. Figure 9 displays the data areas in which the participants suggested needed changes. All students stated the school structure and climate on campus needed to be changed. Students stated that possibly starting later in the day and having smaller class sizes so students could get more
one-on-one attention would help improve student attendance. Student E reported the school was dirty and all the students stated that if the school offered better lunch, it would reduce truancy. Many students suggested the curriculum needed to be updated and more relevant.

Figure 9 Suggestions

Some students stated that if there were more resources and supports on campus, then students would attend school. One student stated that school was his safe haven and if there were additional services such as counselors, groups, and mentors, more students would attend. Others mentioned additional extracurricular activities, more electives, and vocational programs would be good. The participants stated that students should have options and school should give them the basics and then allow them to take classes that
directly related to what they wanted to do when they graduated. Another possibility was allowing students to participate in sports with poor grades but give them tutoring and additional support to improve grades. All the students stated that if the school staff, teachers, administrators were supportive and welcoming and believed in the students, they would want to attend school and class. Student D mentioned having guest speakers. He reflected on an assembly in which he participated that motivated him to want to come to school.

If most schools had speakers come in to tell the students how important school is. You gotta keep telling them till it gets students in their head. You gotta be real. If you're real they will want to listen. You gotta have someone who has been through it all that knows what they talking about and the kids will listen majority of the time. There was a speaker that came to the school and it was called Breaking Down the Walls and the only reason I listened to him was because he started talking telling us what we did from elementary on up.....once you speak something real somebody wants to listen to you cause they know you know what you're talking about.”

Student F reflected on the lack of counseling or support services he states, “I had a stressful time...my senior year was the most stressful one and I had no one to go talk to.” Student C even stated, “The kids could use counseling but they probably wouldn’t go unless it was at school.” Student E also alluded that the school should have more than just school counselors. She stated, “I know we have school counselors but maybe more deeper type of counseling cause I do know kids who are dealing with stuff like that...like serious issues or problems.” The participants also mentioned having stricter consequences and staying on the students would help reduce truancy.
Member Check

After the initial data reduction process was completed, the researcher met again with each student to complete a member check questionnaire to verify the categories and information revealed from the data. The member check questionnaire consisted of five Likert questions that allowed the participants to select from one of the following: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The students’ identity was not disclosed on the member check.

Table 15

Member Check Question One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students reported that their experience at the ARC was scary, humiliating, embarrassing, stupid, and a joke. Students reflected on their experience being picked up by the police and why they were truant.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One student stated that he/she strongly agreed, four students stated they agreed with the statement, and one student stated he was in the middle and agreed but also disagreed.
Table 16

Member Check Question Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students reported that it only temporarily improved attendance and students continued to miss class after being brought to the Attendance Resource Center. Students reported that if there were continuous follow-up services and more severe consequences then it may have helped improve their attendance over a longer period of time.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two students stated they strongly agreed and four stated they agreed with the statement.
Table 17

Member Check Question Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students reported that students are truant for any of these various reasons:
- Friends
- Drugs
- Family Obligations
- Issues at home
- School is not a priority
- Teachers
- School is boring
- Food is nasty on campus
- Student gave up and didn’t care about school anymore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four students stated they strongly agreed and two students stated they agreed with the statement.
Table 18

Member Check Question Four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students reported that if the following things were in place, students would be more motivated to come to school.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good relationship with teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers cared about students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different teaching styles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School offered different programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School started later</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If they change schools and move so much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counseling resources at school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self determined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student made better decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five students reported they strongly agreed with statement and one agreed but also disagreed.
Question 5: After reviewing all documents and interview transcripts based on the students' perspective these were the categories that emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience/Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background/Upbringing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three students reported they strongly agreed and three reported they agreed with the categories that emerged.

Once the member check was completed, the researcher again analyzed all the data and the following themes were developed from the categories: self-identity, family influence, peer/outside influence, teacher influence, and school experience. Table 20 illustrates the frequencies of the themes as they appeared in the data. The researcher decided on naming the following themes based on the grouping of the concepts and categories that emerged from the data. In addition, the themes also correlate with
theoretical foundation systems theory found in Chapter 2 and speak directly to the research questions in this study.

Table 20

Frequency of Final Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-identity</th>
<th>Family Influence</th>
<th>Peer/Outside Influence</th>
<th>Teacher Influences</th>
<th>School Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final themes listed in Table 20 emerged from the codes, concepts, and categories discovered while analyzing the data. The themes that emerged were all based on the perceptions of habitually truant students about truancy and their experiences at the ARC. Each theme plays an integral role in truancy from the perceptions of the participants. As shown in Table 20, self-identity was the most frequently found theme in the data with school experiences being the next most frequently found theme.
Summary

This chapter presented qualitative data gathered and analyzed using grounded theory methods. The qualitative data used was a document review of participants’ academic cumulative files, log entries from the electronic school database, and transcripts from participant interviews. The data was collected and interpreted thoroughly and with the purpose of addressing the research questions. The final themes that emerged revealed five elements that influence truant students: self-identity, family influence, peer/outside influences, teacher influence, and school experiences. The themes also serve as elements that need to be addressed by truancy reduction programs, such as the ARC, which is further discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to give voice to truant students about their experiences at the Attendance Resource Center (ARC) and the factors that led to their truancy. The perspectives of truant students is underrepresented in the research literature, resulting in an incomplete understanding that weakens our ability to plan programs and develop public policy initiatives. To address this lack, this study gathered input from habitually truant students served by a Northern California truancy program.

The findings from this study support the literature in terms of the causes of truancy and effective methods of reducing truancy. Consistent with the literature, students participating in this study stated that common factors causing truancy were disengagement from school, drugs, family obligations, issues at home, and peer pressure. Both the literature and students reported that an effective truancy reduction approach is a collaborative model similar to the ARC. Despite this agreement with the literature, this examination of student perspectives also revealed extensive room for improvement in the design and implementation of truancy programs.

This chapter reviews the findings from data gathered and analyzed in this study. This chapter also discusses the theoretical insights in relation to the constructed realities of truants and the research questions. The chapter concludes with recommendations and the researcher’s reflection.
Theoretical Insights

This study revealed that the constructed realities of habitually truant students are heavily influenced by the various themes in the students’ lives. The five themes (i.e., self identity, family influence, peer/outside influence, teacher influence, and school experiences) also coincide with systems theory by directly relating to the micro, meso, and macro levels. Figure 10 displays the relation between the systems theory and themes that emerged from the data. The five key themes affect the participants on different levels but all influenced the students’ truancy.

Figure 10      Systems Theory (as it relates to themes)
The researcher found that each participant identified with actions and poor choices he/she made that hindered academic growth and attendance at school. For example, many students reflected on making poor choices of friends and how that affected their school attendance. Each participant stated that he/she was with friends when detained by law enforcement and brought to the ARC. The data showed that the interaction between the systems contributed to the participants’ constructed realities.

Constructivism as explained in Chapter 2 states there is no one truth of reality but there are multiple realities constructed by each individual. The researcher discovered that the constructed realities of the truant students are somewhat chaotic and convoluted. Each participant had layers of experiences growing up and going through school that severely affected their academic and personal growth. The participants in this study discussed their personal backgrounds and events leading up to truancy and involvement at the ARC. The study revealed that habitually truant students carry many emotional, psychological, unresolved issues that contain broken parental relationships, low self-esteem, drug use, violence, and a lack of trust for the school system. However, many of the participants were resilient and able to overcome many obstacles personally and academically.

Findings

This study addressed four research questions. The first two were: (1) What have been the experiences of students receiving services at the Attendance Resource Center?
and (2) Did the services offered at the Attendance Resource Center help improve student attendance? If yes, how? If not, why? The research questions were investigated through a document review of the students’ academic history and individual student interviews consisting of semi-structured open-ended questions. The researcher allowed the students to speak freely and openly about the experiences that led them to the ARC and their perspectives of the ARC and the services offered.

Reflections

Each participant reflected on his or her experiences at the ARC and the events that led to being there. During their reflection, all the students recalled different factors or incidents that played critical parts in their truancy. They all reflected on their poor decision making which led them to be picked up by law enforcement and taken to the ARC. They stated they made poor choices in friends and the people they were hanging around were not positive influences. Many stated they ditched school usually with friends. They reflected on how poor decision making led them to delinquent behaviors and severe consequences. One student reflected on being physically assaulted twice because her poor choice of friends was gang affiliated and it could have cost her life. The participant reflected on that experience and wished she would have made better decisions.

Apathy

Many of the participants recalled that at one point or another they stopped caring about school and fell behind in class by not attending, not completing homework, and not
valuing their education. Many participants had low self-esteem and did not think school was for them because they learned differently or could not keep up with class assignments. Many stated they did not like the food on campus or did not like a particular teacher so they would not go to that class. They also reflected on their experiences while at the center. They reported that the ARC staff were nice and they met with the ARC counselor who discussed their attendance, grades, and academic plans. Some stated that after the initial contact, the counselor checked on their attendance to see if it improved. Some stated they actually participated in groups with the counselor and other truant students. However, most of the participants reflected on their experiences with the law enforcement.

Participants’ Emotions

The participants reported that at least one of the five themes was a factor in their truancy. The participants all reflected on the emotions and feelings they experienced when being detained by police officers and taken to the ARC. It was discovered that having police contact was helpful as it demonstrated to the participants the severity of their truancy. Many of the participants stated they did not feel that missing school warranted being detained by law enforcement and was not a crime. The participants all reflected on how they emotionally felt when they were stopped, searched, and put in the backseat of the police car then transported to the ARC. They reported they felt embarrassed, scared, and humiliated by being picked up by law enforcement and taken to
the center. Many stated they felt like criminals. Many stated they did not know where they were going which made it really uncomfortable and a somewhat scary feeling.

**Effectiveness of the Program**

The participants also reported that ARC would have been more effective if it provided extensive follow-up services for each student and targeted truant students at an earlier age. It was discovered that all the students started to develop attendance issues long before high school. The most prevalent grade was middle school, and the data revealed that middle school age was when the participants started to disconnect from school and have poor attendance. A few of the participants had attendance issues dating as far back as elementary.

The students reported that if there was a program or someone who followed up on them regularly, their attendance would have improved. Some participants reported that ARC counselors did follow up with them from time to time and randomly checked on their attendance. Again some participated in groups and some stated they received no services at all. All the participants reported they felt ARC was a good start to help reduce truancy, but was only a temporary solution to the problem because truancy is a complex issue and cannot be rectified in only one academic school year. They felt truancy was too convoluted and required continual support and services. Having truancy counselors available to work with students and being detained by law enforcement did make an impact on the participants, but it did not provide a long-term solution to the truancy
problem. The data revealed that more extensive follow-up services were imperative to the program’s success.

Research questions three and four asked: (3) What do students believe put them on the path to truancy? and (4) What would help reduce truancy and motivate students to go to school, stay there, and graduate?

*Causes of Truancy*

All the participants were able to clearly articulate why and when they started to become truant. Some reasons were mentioned previously, but the researcher discovered the students’ perspectives on factors that cause truancy mirrored factors reported in the literature. The participants’ primary reasons were issues in the home, disengagement from school, teachers, peers, family obligations, and the use of drugs. Several of the participants had truancy issues as children in elementary school and the cycle carried on throughout the duration of their academic experience. The data revealed that issues in the home or with their parents had a direct impact on their school attendance. Many of the participants changed schools or districts throughout their elementary experience, which had a huge impact on their grades and attendance. Their families moved often for financial reasons which caused the students to have to reestablish themselves academically and socially at each school. In some cases the students were not able to catch up and often fell behind in class and at school which led to behavior problems and disconnect from school.
The data showed substance abuse was a major factor with each participant. Many of the participants reported they used drugs regularly and/or their family and friends used drugs on a regular basis. All the students reported drug use going on in or near school campus, and the study showed that many students needed drugs to cope and manage with the pressures of school and home life.

The data also revealed that from the students’ perspective, teachers had a major impact on student attendance and in some cases it was detrimental to the students’ progress. The data showed teachers played a big role in student attendance not only because they recorded daily attendance but because their relationship can have such a negative or positive impact on the student. The participants in this study all reflected on the role teachers have on a student’s academic performance. From the students’ perspectives, teachers were not always supportive, and they felt that many did not care about them. Teachers were initially seen as role models and surrogate parents for some students and when that relationship was broken or never established it often caused students to not care about school which resulted in them becoming truant.

In response to the fourth research question, many of the participants reported that self-efficacy and changes to the school system could help motivate students to go to school and graduate. The data revealed the truancy reduction programs and services offered are ineffective if the student does not become self-determined and motivated to graduate. The participants in this study all decided to take school seriously and started to value the importance of a high school diploma. Once they developed self-efficacy, their
attendance started to improve and they started to make better decisions like not hanging around certain friends.

The participants reported that schools need to offer multiple academic programs where students can choose from arts, sciences, or vocational training that would lead to specific skills or certificates students could directly use in the workforce if college is not their choice. From the perspective of truant students, offering culturally relevant curriculum, more electives, counseling services, and extra-curricular activities would also motivate students to come to school. In addition, the schools need to employ teachers and administrators who care and believe all students can learn and graduate. The data showed that many participants felt learning was no longer fun and they devalued the importance of school because the school system devalued them.

Finally, many of the participants reported that if there were stricter consequences for being truant, students would improve their attendance. For example, some students received detention and others were suspended for being truant, which only perpetuated the students’ truancy. Most schools have disciplinary actions to be used when a student is truant but according to the participants it is not being fully enforced.

Conclusions from the Findings

The following are four major research outcomes that evolved from the data: (1) the ARC program needs to be improved, (2) schools contribute to student truancy, (3)
students are victims, and (4) the school serves more roles than just an educational institution.

*Program Improvements*

Overall, the ARC program has good intentions and has made decent attempts at identifying and reducing truancy. Though it is a collaborative program, which the literature argues is the best model approach, it is not making a significant difference in students’ attendance (OJJDP, 2005). From the students’ perspectives, the data shows that the program only has minimal affects on improving students’ attendance. In addition, the ARC program does not complete substantial follow-up with students. Services are not continual and only last the duration of the current academic school year. Therefore, students who are identified and brought to the ARC are not automatically rolled over to the next academic year for services. For example, if a student is picked up in April two months before the school year concludes, they would only receive services for the two months. Once school resumes in August, that student does not continue to be monitored nor does the student receive any services unless picked up by law enforcement again. Also, the program is geared toward high school aged students, but the data shows students start to become truant in middle school, if not earlier. In addition, the ARC does not offer services to students who are habitually truant but never caught by police officers and taken to the ARC. These findings are significant to the school district, community stakeholders, local council, and congress members who support and help fund the program.
School Contributes to Truancy

Truant students’ academic needs are not being met at school and issues at school also contribute to truancy. The participants reported school changed from a fun supportive, encouraging place to attend everyday in elementary to a non-supportive, challenging place that judged and gave up on them in middle and high school. The participants reflected on how they were unnoticed by teachers and felt discouraged if they learned differently or could not comprehend the curriculum. In addition to the issues with the teachers, the participants stated the culture and climate at school were not always conducive to learning. Many participants stated it was at school where they first were introduced to drugs and ditching class.

As the participants reflected, they felt the lack of consequences given by the school for being habitually truant communicated that it was not a big deal or that nobody cared whether they showed up or not. In so many words, they were not missed at school. The participants reported that few interventions were offered when they started to have excessive absences and few consequences were given to rectify student attendance. Also, the researcher found that teachers represent more than just teachers to these students. It is critical the teachers possess leadership skills that help promote student success. The participants in this study reported that teachers need to be approachable, encouraging, and equipped to handle students whose basic physical, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs are not being met.
Students are Victims

The third finding in the data was that many of the participants were victims and were dealing with serious issues. The participants reported that they and other students were dealing with deep-rooted issues such as abandonment, violence, drug abuse, trauma, and poverty. The data demonstrated that students are coming to school with severe personal challenges and undiagnosed emotional and mental health needs. The data gathered reminded the researcher of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs for human growth and positive development. Maslow stated that for human growth and positive development, the following needs must be met: physical needs/basic survival, safety needs, social needs/since of belonging, esteem needs, and self-fulfillment (see Figure 11) (Jones, 2004; Perks, 1999). As it relates to this study, if truant students’ needs are not being met, it will affect their academic growth as well. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs also coincide with the themes that emerged from the data in Chapter 4.
This leads to the final finding that if schools truly want to help reduce truancy and complete high school, the school must recognize that it represents more than an institution for learning to some students; it also represents a home away from home.

*School Serves Many Roles*

The final overall finding from the data was that the school obviously represents more to truant students than just an institution for learning. Some of the participants reported that the school site itself was seen as a *safe haven* and was the only stable, consistent environment for them. This seemed to be contradictory because if the student is truant he/she is not attending school so how is the school seen as a safe haven.
Participants reported they would still come to school but would not attend every period, and some would even be on the school campus but would not go to class at all. This revealed that the students were going to school for other reasons, such as socializing with peers. Other participants reported that once they started to care about school again, they would show up to school by any means necessary even if it was just for one class period. Others reported that school was where they would go when in times of trouble or when they had issues. The fact that the students viewed school as a place to go when in need of help led the researcher to the conclusion that the students’ expectations of the school included more than it being just an institution for learning. The school should be a safe haven for students but it should also offer the support and services students need that they may not be getting at home. If the school, staff, and teachers provided a climate and image that it was a safe haven and a place to turn to, it would improve the student school relationship and provide students with additional resources such as mental health counseling and more. Though students reported they did not always receive the help and support they needed, the school was the only place they knew of to go to for help.

Limitations

The limitations are as follows 1) the study only covers one program in the geographical area of Sacramento County and is limited to only one district, 2) the study only focused on a small sample size, and 3) there was a lack of sufficient data, therefore, the researcher was only able to track down a small number of participants.
Justifications

1) The primary focus of this research was to complete a case study on one local truancy program in Sacramento County that has received rave reviews and has been featured in the local newspaper and documentaries as one of the programs geared toward reducing high school drop-rates in California.

2) The researcher intimately studied six habitually truant 12th-grade students who went through the ARC program.

3) There was a lack of sufficient data available for the researcher to track down additional participants for this study.

Recommendations

The Educational Leadership and Policy Administration doctoral program at California State University, Sacramento focuses on three themes: Transformational Leadership, Critical Policy Analysis and Action, and Informed Decision Making. The researcher’s recommendations for this study align with the focus of the doctoral program.

Transformational Leadership

The researcher suggests that to dramatically reduce truancy and address the concerns raised in this dissertation, a transformational leader will need to rise to the occasion and lobby. A transformational leader would be able to inspire a team with a shared vision and have great communication skills. A transformational leader would use integrated decision making skills such as using evidence-based practice to make political
changes to reduce truancy and high school dropout rates. More importantly, a transformational leader would not continue to allow truants to fall through the cracks and get lost in the system. Students need a leader who is going to understand their needs and who will consider the constructed realities and develop long-term solutions. Truants are the unforgotten students who eventually disappear and become high school dropouts. Dropout rates are on the rise and one of the first indicators is truancy, but a transformational leader could lobby individuals to convince policymakers to complete a policy and cost/benefits analysis and help save our future. Ultimately, the researcher recommends that someone leads this battle and “Get on the Balcony.” Get on the balcony is a term used by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) that suggest taking a step back and asking “what’s really going on here.” Transformational leaders are needed on every level, from the classroom, the ARC, the school site, district, county, and state legislature to make a true difference and to see change.

Policy Analysis/Informed Decision Making

The researcher also recommends that truancy and attendance policies be addressed by the U.S. Department of Education to develop a national standardized definition for compulsory school attendance and truancy. As stated in Chapter 2, compulsory attendance laws and truancy are under the control and regulation of each individual state in addition to the interventions and disciplinary actions taken to address truancy. States report attendance numbers to the U.S. Department of Education, but there is no funding or federal support to help reduce truancy and improve attendance (U.S.
Department of Education, 2010). The researcher strongly suggests a policy evaluation and a funding source be developed to help states and local districts address truancy similar to the Mc Kinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Act. The U.S. Department of Education allocated funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for homeless youth and children through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program Fund act that provides support and funding to homeless children and families (Education, 2009). If U.S. Department of Education can secure funding for homeless children and youth, they should be able to secure funding for truancy and high school dropout prevention.

The U.S. Department of Education should try to find long-term solutions to help states address truancy. For example, they could develop a national student database that can track students from state to state and district to district. This would help prevent students from falling through the cracks and off the radar. Families and students are mobile and frequently move from county to county and state to state with a national database that tracks these mobile families it would help keep track of student records, academics, and services. Some states have developed computerized databases that track students from kindergarten to 12th grade. The U.S. Department of Education could provide funding to the state and local school districts to identify truant students at an earlier stage like elementary and provide services to the whole child that includes services to the parents and family. Studying the perspectives of truant students revealed that truancy is a result of self-identity issues, family/peer/teacher influences, and experiences
at school; therefore, developing programs and interventions that address all the themes and provides continual long-term services is desperately needed.

On a local level, California’s Department of Education (CDE) addresses attendance and truancy but does not provide funding to schools and districts to support truancy reduction programs such as School Attendance Review Board (SARB), described in Chapter 2. SARB is California’s recommended truancy program and each year the State Superintendent recognizes model SARB programs throughout the state. This year, State Superintendent Tom Torlakson mentioned in a March 2011 press release that model SARB programs have been exemplar in these dire fiscal times (Slater, 2011). If the state acknowledges these programs’ progress with no funding sources imagine how many students they could impact and how many more services could be offered with financial backing.

CDE’s core purpose is to “lead and support the continuous improvement of student achievement, with a specific focus on closing the achievement gap” (CDE, 2011, para. 1). If the core purpose is to lead and support the continuous improvement of student achievement, then why are high school dropout rates on the rise, and truancy rates increasing? CDE has yet to make this population of students a priority and provide funding or programs to combat these issues that in turn would help the state save money for the cost of high school dropouts. The California high school dropout rate cost the state an estimated over $54 billion per year in lost personal taxable income because
statistics show that high school drop outs are more likely to be unemployed (Stuit & Springer, 2010).

Another policy recommendation would be to make school social workers mandated in every school and district in California. School social workers could be working side by side with teachers and administrators addressing the social, emotional, and mental health needs students have. School social workers’ primary role is to assesses the home, school, community, and personal factors that may influence a student’s academic growth (California Association of Social Workers, 2010). Adding school social workers to schools and districts would provide the additional support students need from school. The themes that emerged from this study are areas that school social workers are trained to handle. School social workers serve as a liaison between students, parents, staff, teachers, and administrators to assist with building positive learning environments. They also help students develop resiliency strategies, coping skills, and help redevelop the relationship between the student and school. In so many words, school social workers could be the answer to the solution by allowing them to address the emergent themes that developed from the perspectives of truant students. This led to the researcher’s final recommendation of integrating coping and resiliency skills in education.

Resiliency

As mentioned previously, students are victims and are dealing with several social and emotional needs and the sad reality is that students’ needs are not being met at home
or in school. Therefore, the researcher proposes that the educational system integrates resiliency and coping skills curriculum into every school. It should be required that students participate in resiliency classes throughout their academic experience and should be given the techniques to address problems. Life challenges, such as grief, anger, neglect, abandonment, and substance abuse are prevalent in the lives of many students and pierce through racism and social economic status. Resiliency and coping skills could benefit all students and teach them how to continue to press forward and accomplish their academic goals regardless of their circumstances. Resiliency and coping skills would be a preventative method that would help students better prepare and handle challenges that arise and coupled with the support of school social workers could produce confident, ambitious, students equipped to survive any obstacles life throws at them.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research can expand upon this study through completion of a qualitative case study with a larger and more geographically diverse sample of truant students. A study of the perspectives of parents of truant students would also help provide an even deeper understanding of how to address the truancy issue. The researcher also suggests a longitudinal study tracking and monitoring elementary or middle school truant students who have participated in truancy reduction programs to assess the long-term program effects. In addition, there is a strong need to study the school environment and
educational system to determine how they are contributing to the rise of truancy and dropout rates.

Researcher Reflections

The professional background of the researcher led to the involvement and desire to work in the education system. After working in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, the researcher gained interest in serving children and youth in the education system because education provides services to children and families for the longest period of time, Kindergarten to 12th grade, which led the researcher to pursue a career in education. That was where the researcher could make the greatest difference in the lives of children.

While completing this study, the researcher gained the opportunity to hear directly from truant students about their personal backgrounds and school experiences. During a review of literature, the researcher quickly became aware that the voices and stories of truant students were absent. The majority of the literature focuses on programs and services developed to reduce truancy. The strategies and programs have made strides in reducing truancy but very few have taken the time to hear from truant students about needs and services they feel would be critical to helping reduce truancy. As a practitioner, the researcher gained in-depth insight into how students became truant and how they felt about the services offered.
After reviewing the data, the researcher realized it truly takes a village to raise a child and the school is a major resource in the village. With that being said, for students to be successful, the education system needs to take more responsibility to see that students are being educated and supported emotionally. The education system can no longer afford to just ignore the social and emotional needs of our students and expect them to be able to sit in class for six hours and learn mathematics and language arts when their basic needs are not being addressed. The education system needs to become better equipped and trained to address the needs and issues students are bringing with them to school. This would not only improve student attendance but would also help reduce school violence. Incidents like the Columbine shooting and violent acts of bullying may be prevented if more emotional and mental health services were offered on campus.

The researcher also learned that the education system is archaic and is not meeting the needs of these students. At what point are educators/policymakers going to understand that the clientele (students) is begging for new products and services. It is time that educators listen to what the students are asking for and make changes in how services are being delivered and make it more conducive to the needs of the students.

The researcher became more aware that the students have a lot to say and their input is underutilized. When one of the participants stated that the “school changed on me,” the researcher had a paradigm shift and started to look at the school differently and questioned what is taking place that students feel that the school changed. It is almost as
if the school system provides a false reality for students in elementary school teaching
them that their possibilities are endless and to dream big, telling them they can become
doctors, lawyers, and firefighters when they grow up. Then the school system *changes
on them* and almost sets them up to fail and provides minimal to no support when
students need support the most. Maybe the students should be taught that to graduate and
receive a high school diploma, it is “survival of the fittest.” Students must be able to play
the game, jump through the hoops of teachers and administrators while juggling life
pressures and trying not to drown.

**Conclusion**

In David’s story in Chapter 1, he was a homeless student whose basic physical
needs were not being met, therefore resulting in poor attendance and low grades. It was
not until his needs were met that his attendance started to improve. Sadly there are
several more students like David sitting in classes, roaming the hallways, and in our
schools. Therefore, the time is *now* to re-evaluate the entire K-12 education system
because according to the students, it is archaic and needs to be redeveloped to change the
future of California and the nation. It is our responsibility to *change the game* these kids
are playing and develop educational systems designed so nobody fails and every student
is a winner. The researcher concludes with challenging you to ask yourself based on the
literature, the data, and the recent rise in truancy/dropout rates: does our education system
truly desire to leave *no child behind* and save truant students? Our society cannot afford not too!
APPENDIX A

Attendance Resource Center Staff Approval

Panacea Services

September 30, 2010

Dear Attendance Center Resource Staff,

I am a former employee of the District X and previously served as the Supervisor of Prevention & Intervention Programs under the Student Services Department. Currently, I am an education doctoral student at CSU Sacramento in the Independent Education Doctorate Program. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the student’s perspective of truancy and their experience at the Attendance Resource Center.

I am writing because I would like to conduct a research study that involves 12th grade District X students who were truant and received services at the Attendance Resource Center in the past three years. As you are probably aware, the Attendance Resource Center is a collaborative program aimed to reduce truancy by providing students and families with academic and social support services. This program opened at High School A in 2007 and has served over 1200 students. Truancy statistics and program evaluations are gathered and reported yearly for program monitoring and grant funding; however, few studies or reports have focused on evaluating the program from the student’s perspective. I would like to complete a case study on the Attendance Resource Center focusing on capturing the voice and experiences from the truant students themselves.

I am requesting permission to have one of your staff provide me with a list of District X 12th grade students who received services in multiple years between 2007-2010 so that may participate in this case study. I plan on gathering data from these participants through qualitative means that will include reviewing the student’s academic cumulative file and completing informal interviews. In addition, I am requesting that your staff make the initial inquiry with the students about their willingness to participate in the study. The information that the students provide will reflect on their experiences going through the Attendance Resource Center and services received, as well as their causes for truancy. As part of my research I will also gain approval from the parents and students consenting to participate in this case study. The results of the research study may be published, but participant names will not be known or used. In addition, participation is voluntary, and participants may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. Moreover, participants will be informed there is no penalty for doing so.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me by e-mail at teradiggs@yahoo.com. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Daniel Orey at orey@csus.edu. I would also be happy to meet with you regarding this study.
Your signature at the bottom of this letter verifies your permission for this study to be completed.

Sincerely,

Tera Diggs

I, Trisha Seastorm, Executive Director of Panacea Services Inc that supervises the staff at the Attendance Resource Center give permission to Tera Diggs to complete this study as discussed via email communication and in this letter.

_________________________________ _____________________
Signature     Date
October 4, 2010

Dear Assistant Superintendent Kornblum,

I am a former employee of the District X and previously served as the Supervisor of Prevention & Intervention Programs under the Student Services Department. Currently, I am an education doctoral student at CSU Sacramento in the Independent Education Doctorate Program. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the student’s perspective of truancy and their experience at the Attendance Resource Center.

I am writing because I would like to conduct a research study that involves 12th grade District X students who were truant and received services at the Attendance Resource Center in the past three years. As you are probably aware, the Attendance Resource Center is a collaborative program aimed to reduce truancy by providing students and families with academic and social support services. This program opened at High School A in 2007 and has served over 1200 students. Truancy statistics and program evaluations are gathered and reported yearly for program monitoring and grant funding; however, few studies or reports have focused on evaluating the program from the student’s perspective. I would like to complete a case study on the Attendance Resource Center focusing on capturing the voice and experiences from the truant students themselves.

I am requesting permission to use the District X 12th grade students who received services in multiple years between 2007-2010 as my participants for this case study. I plan on gathering data from these participants through qualitative means that will include reviewing the student’s academic cumulative file and completing informal interviews. I will only be reviewing documents that pertain to the student’s attendance history. The information they provide will reflect on their experiences going through the Attendance Resource Center and services received, as well as their causes for truancy. As part of my research I will also gain approval from the parents and students consenting to participate in this case study. The results of the research study may be published, but participant names will not be known or used. In addition, participation is voluntary, and participants may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. Moreover, participants will be informed there is no penalty for doing so.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me by e-mail at teradiggs@yahoo.com. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Daniel Orey at orey@csus.edu. I would also be happy to meet with you regarding this study.

Your signature at the bottom of this letter verifies your permission for this study to be completed.
Sincerely,

Tera Diggs

I, Howard Kornblum, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services at District X, give permission to Tera Diggs to complete this study as discussed via email communication and in this letter.

______________________________  _______________________
Signature                      Date
Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a former employee of the District X and previously served as the Supervisor of Prevention & Intervention Programs under the Student Services Department. Currently, I am an education doctoral student at CSU Sacramento in the Independent Education Doctorate Program. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the student perspectives of truancy and their experience at the Attendance Resource Center.

I am writing to you today because I am conducting a research study on the Attendance Resource Center in District X. As you know, your 12th grade student received services from the Attendance Resource Center between academic school years 2007-2010, which is why they have been selected to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to hear directly from the students about their experience at the Attendance Resource Center and causes for their truancy. Truancy statistics and program evaluations are gathered and reported yearly for program monitoring and grant funding; however, few studies or reports have focused on evaluating the program from the student’s perspective. I would like to hear in the students own words what they experienced and what services are needed to help reduce truancy. I have already received permission from the District X to complete this research study on the Attendance Resource Center.

Therefore, I am requesting your written consent to allow your student to participate in this study. I plan to meet with your student individually at a neutral location that they are comfortable with to interview him/her for no more than one hour. I will audio record the interview so that I can document exactly what they say. I will also be reviewing their academic cumulative file to gain more information about their attendance history over the past 11 years of school. I will only be reviewing documents that pertain to your student’s attendance history. Questions will be generated based on the information gathered from the student’s cumulative file. At any point during the interview, your student is free to withdraw participation and can decline to answer any questions. I have also enclosed a copy of the questions that will be asked during the interview and if you are uncomfortable with any of them they will be removed. Also your student may be contacted after the interview if follow-up questions are needed. I will record the interview only if your student agrees.
Their participation in this study will be completely confidential. I will use pseudonyms (fake names) for all participants in any documents made public, for example, transcripts, research papers, or research presentations. All interviews will remain confidential. The audio tapes will be destroyed as soon as the discussions have been transcribed, no later than two years after they were made. Until that time, they will be stored in a secure location. You or your student may withdraw without penalty from the study at any time. If your student feels any discomfort or experiences any psychological distress and wants help, please contact the Minor Emergency Response Team (916) 875-1113. It also should be noted that as a mandated reporter, I am obligated to notify the appropriate authorities; such as, Children’s Protective Services or your local law enforcement agency, if your student discloses any abuse, neglect, harm to themselves or other.

As a result of your student participating in this study, they may gain additional insight into services that may reduce truancy or offer suggestions how to improve services offered at the Attendance Resource Center, or they may not personally benefit from participating in this research. I hope that the results of my study will help improve the services offered to other students in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me by e-mail at teradiggs@yahoo.com. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Daniel Orey, at orey@csus.edu.

Your student’s participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read and give permission for your student to participate in the research study.

________________________________________________________________________
Student’s Name

________________________________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Name Signature Date

Sincerely,

Tera Diggs

Independent Education Doctorate Student

California State University Sacramento
Student Consent Form

Dear 12th grade Student,

I am a former employee of the District X and previously served as the Supervisor of Prevention & Intervention Programs under the Student Services Department. Currently, I am an education doctoral student at CSU Sacramento in the Independent Education Doctorate Program. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the student’s perspective of truancy and their experience at the Attendance Resource Center.

As you know, your parents/guardian have already given permission for you to participate if you choose to do so. I have met with your parents/guardian and received written consent to contact you about participating in this research study. I have also received permission from the District X to complete this research study on the Attendance Resource Center. You have been selected to participate in this study to hear directly from students like yourself about your experience with the Attendance Resource Center. Truancy statistics and program evaluations are gathered and reported yearly for program monitoring and grant funding; however, few studies or reports have focused on evaluating the program from the student’s perspective. I would like to hear from you in your own words what you experienced and what services are needed to help reduce truancy.

I would like to meet with you individually at a neutral location that you are comfortable with to interview you for no more than one hour. I will audio record the interview so I can document exactly what you say. I will also be reviewing your academic cumulative file to gain more information about your attendance history over the past 11 years of school. I will only review documents in your cumulative file that pertain to your attendance history. The questions I will ask will be based on the information gathered from your academic cumulative file. At any point during the interview, you are free to withdraw participation and you can decline to answer any questions. You may be contacted after the interview or if follow-up questions are needed. I will only record the interview if you agree and have signed below.

Your participation in this study will be completely confidential. I will use pseudonyms (fake names) for all participants in any documents made public, for example transcripts, research papers, or research presentations; in addition, all interviews will be kept confidential. The audio tapes will be destroyed as soon as our discussions have been transcribed and no later than two years after they were made. Until that time, they will be stored in a secure location.
You can withdraw from the study without penalty at any time or if you feel any discomfort; in addition, if you experience any psychological distress and want help please contact the Minor Emergency Response Team at (916) 875-1113. It also should be noted that like all other school staff, I am a mandated reporter. If you disclose abuse, neglect, harm to yourself or others, I am obligated to notify the appropriate authorities; such as, Children’s Protective Services or your local law enforcement agency.

As a result of participating in this study, you will likely gain additional insight into services that may help reduce truancy, offer your suggestions on how to improve services offered at the Attendance Resource Center, or you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. I hope that the results of my study will help improve the services offered to other students in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me by e-mail at teradiggs@yahoo.com. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Daniel Orey, at orey@csus.edu.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and want to participate in the research study.

____________________________________________   _______________
Student’s Name  Signature    Date

I, agree to allow the researcher to record this interview.

______________________________________________________
Student’s Signature

Sincerely,

Tera Diggs

Independent Education Doctorate Student

California State University Sacramento
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

California State University, Sacramento
Independent Education Doctorate

Diggs Dissertation

Interview Questions:

1) Why were you brought to the Attendance Resource Center?

2) What was your experience like at the Attendance Resource Center?

3) What services did you receive from the Attendance Resource Center?

4) Did the services you received help improve your attendance?

5) Has your truancy or lack of attendance affected your academic goals?

6) Looking back over the last 11 years of school, is there anything you would have done differently?

7) What do you think are the causes for truancy?

8) What could be done to help reduce truancy?

9) Do you think the program works and is doing a great job?

10) When do you think students start to become truant? Why?

11) What do students need to improve attendance and be successful in school?

**Additional questions will be asked based on the data gather in the student’s academic cumulative file and any probing questions based on the participants’ responses.**
REFERENCES


