

Lack of Mentorship for Inner-City School-Children

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Abstract

Throughout the United States, chronic absence is becoming a problem that many people are starting to be aware of. It is more than just the simple missed school day here and there. It is missing multiple days of school per month, or even per week. This is a problem that is affecting inner-city schools all over the United States, and specifically in the city of Columbus. One major factor in a majority of the cases is the lack of mentorship at home, school, or in general. During the research process, the goal was to find information that would indicate that there is a problem, there are a variety of factors leading to this problem, and there are solutions in place to help decrease chronic absence. However, the key finding is that it all was connected to mentorship. There are mentoring agencies pushing for programs to prevent and terminate absenteeism and delinquent tendencies by creating incentives. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America have published research about how they have impacted children to work towards greater goals. Additionally, there has been research done that proves that kids with a lack of mentorship, such as single-parent families, are more inclined to act delinquently, due to the fact that there are less people there to guide them. Overall, it can be seen through research that the lack of mentorship, especially for young kids, is a large reason why chronic absence is an on-going problem.

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Truancy in America and Buckeyes in the Making

Throughout the United States, attendance rates are declining while truancy is on the rise. Specifically, this problem is affecting inner-city Columbus at an extreme rate. According to the Columbus Dispatch, “At 1 in 10 public schools in America, 30 percent or more of the students are chronically absent...In central Ohio, one-sixth of all schools find themselves in that most extreme category, of 30 percent or more of their students not consistently attending school” (Gilchrist). As these rates continue to rise, more and more students are not receiving an education. As a result, they are falling behind in their classes and are making it harder and harder to obtain an education. Many people in the Columbus area have seen this problem grow from something relatively small to a dilemma being recognized nationally. One group that has acknowledged this problem is *Buckeyes in the Making*. *Buckeyes in the Making* is among the thousands of student organizations at The Ohio State University. The group itself strives “to create/restrengthen the bond between OSU and the Columbus community” (“Buckeyes in the Making”). Essentially, the goals of the group are to provide children of inner-city Columbus with equal opportunities to achieve academic success, increase awareness about the ongoing problem, and give undergraduate students at Ohio State the opportunity to mentor and serve the children of Columbus. *Buckeyes in the Making* is dedicated to solving the education crisis in inner-city Columbus.

The article from the Columbus Dispatch provides a great deal of information regarding the chronic attendance problems in the Columbus area, as well as the United States as a whole. It is a great source for giving the perspective of the Columbus area, and it even provides a variety

of statistics to reinforce the claims. The main source of information mentioned in the article came from a study done by Attendance Works. Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that is actively pursuing advances in student success with the desire to reduce chronic absence. Their goals are to build awareness, foster campaigns, and encourage local practice. One specific study that is relevant to the information presented in the article is “A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades.” Altogether, this study briefly examines “the causes and consequences of chronic absenteeism during the early school years” (Lee, Romero 2). The big topics discussed in the report are how widespread the problem is, the impact of family income, race and ethnicity, and the connection between early absenteeism, latter absenteeism, and academic success. From these overarching topics, one of the biggest takeaways is that if absenteeism starts early, then the trend is most likely to continue throughout the grades. This is a major reason why students need mentorship from the beginning to the groundwork can be set for them to succeed in school. Overall, this source has provided a great deal of data and evidence that clearly shows how truant behavior is on the rise and how it affects kids everyday.

Single-parent households nationwide.

Raising a child is already a time-consuming and difficult task when split between two people, but the challenge becomes infinitely harder when taken on by one person. The United States’ Census Bureau in 2016 found that 31% of American households are supported by single-parents, and single-mothers make up 80.4% of that population. Due to the concentration of generally more inexpensive housing and tax rates in America’s urban areas, the percentage of single-parent households is even higher in cities. The city with the highest percentage is Rochester, New York, with a shockingly high number of 73.7% of households being supported

by a single-parent. Accordingly, the poverty rate in Rochester is high as well, being 32.3% as of 2017. Unfortunately, Rochester is not alone. Cleveland's, Birmingham's, Detroit's, and Springfield's percentage of single-parent families is higher than 65%. Columbus' households, although not in the top 25, are still 43.6% parented by a single figure. (US Census Bureau 2018).

Necessity of Mentorship

Between balancing work, home-life, and other circumstances, a single-parent is often not as available to guide, mentor, teach, and bond with their child. This, by no means, does not mean it is impossible for a child raised by one parent to have a good role model, but it does mean it is much less common due to the many responsibilities a single-parent must take care of. Therefore, it is often times left up the school systems and after-school programs to provide role models, tutors, and mentors for the children. School-based mentorship programs, either facilitated by volunteers or faculty, has become more prevalent in Western societies as urban cities have grown and become more densely populated. Having these opportunities available in schools is an effective way to reach large numbers of children consistently, as school is in session for a large portion of the year and attendance is required. Relationships between children and mentors can be fostered in both group settings and one-on-one, and the content covered over the sessions ranges from academic help to personal growth and future-planning. A 2008 study of the SMILE program (the Study of Mentoring In The Learning Environment) found significant improvements in inner-city children provided with mentors in areas such as self-esteem and peer support. Additionally, a 2009 study by the U.S. Department of Education Student Mentoring Program also found measurable improvements in mentored youth in their academics, truancy, and attendance.

Truancy agencies have recognized how important these mentoring programs have become. To accommodate for bettering programs, agencies such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Disciplinary Prevention (OJJDP) have begun funding prevention mentoring programs. The OJJDP believes children being involved in mentoring programs prevents “at-risk students from becoming involved in delinquency activities and also helps those who are already delinquent to change their lives for the better” (Rogers, pg. 186).

Correlation Between Single-Parents and Delinquent Behavior

A study was conducted in 1998 in Santa Fe which empirically put to the test the commonly held belief that low-income and single-parent families led to increased delinquent behavior like truancy, sexual activity, and drug and/or alcohol use among children. The study followed 250,000 eight-grade students from diverse backgrounds throughout high school and beyond, observing their behavior in regards to delinquency. It was found that “*Low income was not significant in increasing youth sexual activity and actually decreased the likelihood of youth drug and/or alcohol problems...* Parental oversight shows the strongest reducing effect on the likelihood that youth will exhibit a drug and/or alcohol problem” (Garris 1998). Therefore, the extent to which both parents are involved within the process of raising their children is the most influential factor in predicting the child’s engagement in at-risk behavior like truancy, substance abuse, and sexual activity. The reason this behavior is often correlated with single-parent families in poverty is that when divorce occurs within them, children lose the close association with their fathers more than 50% of the time, thus reducing the influence on their upbringing. This lack of parental oversight, according to the *Kids Count Data Book*, is indicative that the children “are more likely to drop out of school, to give birth out of wedlock, to divorce or

separate, and to be dependent on welfare... as well as have increased difficulty in today's labor force" (Casey 1994). These consequences therefore propagate the vicious cycle that is unfortunately found commonly in many urban areas, such as Columbus.

Positive Role Models

Positive role models can range widely in characteristics and identity in a child's life. An article on centerforparentingeducation.org states that positive role models for children are typically fulfilled in people such as club leaders, teachers, and coaches. These leaders can impact a child's life by "supporting, mentoring, and encouraging" children positively (Krisbergh). Peer groups are also very beneficial to a child's growth and development. Within these groups, children learn social skills, ideas beyond their parents', understanding of others, and learn how group dynamics work. These groups can consist of peers that child's age, older children, and even peer leaders such as teenagers or young adults not related to the parents.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America

The Boys and Girls Clubs of America aim to guide children in the right direction. Once a child joins a Club they are introduced to people who will seek to push them towards being the best person they possibly can. The kids who normally are apart of Clubs come from low income families, single parent households, and violent rural areas. Club leaders seek to enrich their focus in school, future, and help them find good people to connect with. The Children are receive access to STEM clubs, mentorship, and overall academic help. The 2017 National Outcomes Report shows that the hard work and passion the Club Directors put into children pays off. Children from the age range of 9-16 show exciting results within the topics of education, social life, violence, and giving back to the program that gave them so much.

References:

Boys and Girls Club of America “ *Measuring the Impact of Boys & Girls*

Clubs”, https://www.bgca.org/-/media/Documents/AboutUs/2017_NYOI_Report_LR.pdf

The cited source give percentages and graphs from the annual boys and girls club impact research. The research gives a clear insight into the work they put into the children. They discuss how they have impacted children from the age ranges of 9-16, in aspects of their social and educational life. It helped to see in number how much work they really do and how much they help. The information goes further into depth about the factors and work the Club Leaders do set the children up for success.

“Buckeyes in the Making.” *Student Activities*,

activities.osu.edu/involvement/student_organizations/find_a_student_org/?i=f6569dde-fb1e-40d5-b1ab-73e3cbfa2dea&l=B&c=Columbus&page=7.

One source that was valuable to the research process was the Ohio State student activities website, specifically the one about Buckeyes in the Making. This source provided a variety of information about the student organization, such as, their mission statement and what they believe in, the leaders of the organization, how to get in contact with them, and much more. Also, the information that has been displayed is reliable because it comes from the Ohio State website for student activities and organizations, which provides information and a description about nearly every club on campus. Ultimately, the goal of this source is to inform students and other people about the organization and how to get involved. Altogether, this source is relevant to the research being conducted,

as well as the project because it outlines how one group plans attack and attempt to solve the problems in the inner-city. Additionally, it has shown that there is an organization on campus that has seen the lack of mentorship in the city and wants to provide whatever is necessary to see the problem diminish.

Burgett, Brittney. "Cities With the Most Single Parents." *Havenlife*, 27 Nov. 2018, havenlife.com/blog/cities-most-single-parents/.

This source was used to gain information on the concentration of single-parent households within urban areas across America. It uses data from the US Census Bureau from 2017 to validate its information. In addition, it provides common factors between the listed cities as to possibly explain why there is a large concentration of single-parent households there.'

Garis, D. (1998). Poverty, Single-Parent Households, and Youth At-Risk Behavior: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 32(4), 1079–1105. doi: 10.1080/00213624.1998.11506110

This source is valuable in that it contains a summary and in-depth analysis of empirical research conducted over the course of 6 years. Garis provides formulas, contextual formation, and exhaustive analysis of the results of his research. This validity of this source is further improved by its objectivity; Garis does not offer his own opinions, but purely relies on research and data to support his statements. However, this source does

lose some applicability to the Social Change Project research in that Garis' research was conducted twenty years ago within a different city than Columbus.

Gilchrist, Shannon. "1 In 6 Central Ohio Schools Has Chronic Attendance Problems." *The Columbus Dispatch*, The Columbus Dispatch, 10 Sept. 2017, www.dispatch.com/news/20170910/1-in-6-central-ohio-schools-has-chronic-attendance-problems.

Unlike the other sources, this article provides perspective from the Columbus area. It comes from the Columbus Dispatch, which provides local and world news for the city of Columbus. Specifically, this article focuses on the growing problem of chronic attendance in Columbus and throughout the United States. This is a valuable source because it provides the perspective of the Columbus area, which other sources do not provide. Additionally, Shannon Gilchrist supports her claims with a vast amount of research. In turn, this article lead to the direct research conducted by Attendance Works supplying the group with additional data to strengthen the idea that the lack of mentorship is a major problem in inner-city schools. On that note, this source was extremely helpful. It provided perspective and content that many other sources did not have. By including perspective, it helps to show that there is a problem not only throughout the United States, but specifically located in Columbus. Lastly, it helped to discover studies that have been done on the topic, which allowed the group to have real and genuine data in the research for the project.

Krisbergh, Audrey. "Being a Role Model - The Promise and the Peril." The Center for Parenting Education,

<https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/focus-parents/role-model-promise-peril/>.

This source is valuable as it provides background information linking parental roles and the effects of other role models within a child's life. Here, good role models outside of the parental leaders are assessed and deemed valuable to the development of a child's personality, habits, and life structure.

Rogers, L. T. (2014). Absenteeism and Truancy Issues: Are Mentoring Programs Funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention the Answer? *Children & Schools*, 36(3), 185–188. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdu013>

This source is of importance as it provides information, supported by research from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on the importance of the longevity and success of mentoring programs. The OJJDP rewards programs based on these criteria, creating more initiative for keeping school children off of the streets and in programs based off of avenues created by truancy, such as student violence.

Romero, Mariajosé, and Young-Sun Lee. "A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades." *Attendance Works*, Oct. 2007, www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/A-National-Portrait-of-Chronic-Absenteeism-in-the-Early-Grades-Oct-2007.pdf.

Throughout the research process, the group realized that it would be important to include primary sources for each topic of interest. This source is one of the pieces of primary evidence found. It comes from Attendance Works, which is a national and state initiative that wants to reduce chronic absence. Specifically, this source provides a variety of information for this research project ranging from race and ethnicity to the impact of early absenteeism. Additionally, Attendance Works is the one who conducted the research, and therefore this is a primary source that provides the group with data and evidence of the problem of chronic absenteeism. This fits into the group's research because it focuses on the problem of absenteeism and how that affects students in the present-day and in the future. This source is extremely valuable because it displays the research conducted first-hand and not through a third party source. Lastly, it has helped shape the group's argument into being more broad because the data presented shows that, while the lack of mentorship is a large part of the problem in the inner-city, there are a variety of factors that impact absenteeism, like income or race.

“School Based Mentoring.” *National Mentoring Resource Center*,

nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/30-topic-areas/182-school-based-mentoring.html.

This source is valuable in that it provides information, backed by research, on different types of mentors and why they are important for the success of school children, especially those who lack mentorship otherwise. However, this source does likely contain

some bias because it is the website for the National Mentoring Resource Center, so it will want to depict mentorship as a positive and effective resource.

US Census Bureau. "The Majority of Children Live With Two Parents, Census Bureau Reports."

The United States Census Bureau, 10 Apr. 2018,

www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-192.html.

This is an accredited United States government website which summarizes and reports the status of American families in regards to the number and relation of adult guardians to children. It compares and provides statistics on the number of households with two parents to households with only one, and also reports on the number of both married and unmarried parents raising children. This census, released in 2018, additionally compares birth rates of today to birth rates of past years. This source was valuable in that it is an objective source that does not take into account personal perspectives or offer opinions, and it was used to gain perspective on the number of single-parent households in America.