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Perceptions of Adolescents Suspended for School Drug Abuse

Katherine Bomba-Edgerton
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Katherine Bomba-Edgerton

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Review Committee

Dr. Tony Hobson, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Rolande Murray, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Valerie Worthington, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

Perceptions of Adolescents Suspended for School Drug Abuse

by

Katherine Bomba-Edgerton

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology, Education Track

Walden University

July 2017

Abstract

School drug use has been attributed to the annual suspension of thousands of secondary adolescents, subsequently contributing to poor academics, low graduation rates, and continued school drug use. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of former adolescents who engaged in school drug use. Social learning theory suggests that behaviors observed from within the environment may later be modeled. Using Bandura's social learning theory, 10 participants, 18 years old and older responded to open-ended questions about how they processed school drug use. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, the responses to the open-ended questions were coded and analyzed. Bandura's social learning theory supports the key findings. Findings indicated that former students reported being influenced by their environment and others around them, such as friends. Additional findings from the study suggest that boredom was another reason students engaged in school drug use. While a few students enrolled in a new school after being suspended for school drug use, the findings suggest that out-of-school suspensions are not meaningful to students. After returning to school from their suspension, students felt behind in their school work. Implications for social change include understanding potential influences of school drug use on students and their environment. This understanding can benefit schools, parents, and the community through interventions and proactive measures that target school drug use among adolescents.

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Dedication

This work is also dedicated to the two most important people in my life- my mother and my husband. Without the two of you, this wouldn't be possible.

Mom, thanks for always making me feel like I could be anything and do anything that I wanted in life. You always modeled good study habits and the drive needed to accomplish your goals. Watching you put yourself through school when I was younger provided me with a feeling that I too could accomplish anything that I set out to do. Thanks for always asking about my progress and being willing to talk about this with me. My only regret is that I did not finish before you passed away. I know how proud you would be.

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I wouldn't be where I am today nor would I be the person that I am today without the two of you in my life, and for that, I am forever grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Substance use among adolescents is a complicated, on-going problem and as more adolescents become users, issues with school drug use are becoming more prevalent (Elkins, Fite, Moore, Lochman, & Wells, 2014; Shekhtmeyster, Sharkey, & You, 2011; Tze, Li, & Pei, 2012). School drug use refers to adolescents being under the influence of drugs while on school campus during school hours. Recent reports from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS, 2013) indicate that drug use among adolescents is increasing while school districts are also reporting an increase of school drug use. School drug use among adolescents is an issue that requires attention as many of the behaviors surrounding drug abuse are hidden from the public eye (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2010). Drug use among adolescents increases with age (Fox, Towe, Stephens, Walker, & Roffman, 2011; Elliott, Carey, & Scott-Sheldon, 2011) and adolescents between the ages of 13 to 18 are the group with the highest risk of illicit drug use (Johnston et al., 2010). According to the 2013 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 28% of freshmen used marijuana one or more times during their life and the percentage increases to 47% with seniors in high school. Substance use increases as adolescents get older with 12th grade having the highest percentage of substance use among any other grade (Cleveland, Feinberg, & Jones, 2012; Tucker, Green, Jr, Zhou et al., 2011).

In 2012, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 6% of high school adolescents used marijuana on school campus, but what influences school drug use among adolescents is still unknown. There is a need to understand why adolescents

engage in school drug use (Elkins, et. al. 2014; Shekhtmeyster et al. 2011; Tze et al., 2012). School is a most popular time for adolescents to socialize outside of the family (Moon & Ando, 2009) and yet, to date little research has been conducted exploring school drug use. In general, studies have been conducted relating to adolescents and drug use separately, but few studies have directly explored what influences adolescent school drug use behaviors in a school setting (Salm, Sevigny, Mulholland, & Greenberg 2011). Learning how former adolescents describe their experiences with school drug use through retrospective accounts will provide a deeper understanding about influences behind school drug use.

Schools have the ability to strengthen adolescents' relationships with their families, peers, and school, leading to better achievement (Chin et al., 2012; Moon & Ando, 2009). Positive relationships with teachers can help adolescents see themselves in a different light (Michail, 2011). Teachers who develop positive relationships with adolescents can prevent adolescents from using drugs like marijuana (Tze et al., 2012). Adolescents who are more connected to school are less likely to engage with drugs (Estévez & Emler, 2010; Michail, 2011; Moon & Ando, 2009; Shekhtmeyster et al., 2011). It is no secret that drug use is associated with poor academics (Lasser & Schmidt, 2009; Rodriguez, 2013). In Nevada, 32% of high school adolescents report drugs being readily available either sold, or given by someone on school property (Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2013).

School drug use can result in suspension even though suspension has not demonstrated to mitigate the problem. Suspension is a common consequence for school

drug use even though suspension can actually intensify academic problems for adolescents because it denies them instructional time (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013). Out-of-school suspensions are a common form of discipline in secondary school settings for challenging behaviors (Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, & Rime, 2012; Gregory & Cornell, 2009; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Xitao, 2011; Michail, 2011; Skiba, 2008) even though research has suggested that suspensions are not effective in decreasing behavior problems (Chin et al., 2012; Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). Starting around 9 years old is when adolescent disengagement begins and school suspensions increase (Michail, 2011). Studies have shown that adolescents who have been suspended have lower graduation rates (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Rodriguez, 2013). School suspensions have increased over the years (Brown, 2007; Michail, 2011), from 34% in 2000 to 41% in 2007 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a). As many as 15 states across the nation, including the state of Nevada, use out-of-school suspensions as part of progressive discipline plans for adolescents who break school rules involving drugs (Chin et al., 2012; Estévez & Emler, 2010; Salm et al., 2011; Skiba, 2008; Skiba, Eaton, & Sotoo, 2004).

Adolescents who engage in inappropriate and harmful behaviors such as school drug use are typically banned from attending school with their peers (Estévez & Emler, 2010; Salm et al., 2011). Suspensions deny the opportunity for adolescents to attend school for a period of time, increasing learning gaps. On top of that suspensions can make adolescents feel estranged, uneasy, and stressed (Brown, 2007; Michail, 2011; Skiba, 2008). Some believe that suspensions help to remove inappropriate behaviors and

increase parental understanding of their child's unacceptable behaviors (Brown, 2007; Dupper et. al., 2009; Iselin & Duke University, 2010). However, some adolescents struggle to transition back to school once they have returned from suspension (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013). The shift back to school and the classroom is not always smooth (Brown, 2007; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013). Out-of-school suspensions make adolescents feel unwelcomed to school sending the wrong message (Suarez, 2010).

The 2012 Civil Rights Data Collection reported that 35% of high school adolescents in grades 8 through 12 in the United States were suspended once and 46% of those adolescents were suspended more than once during the school year (United States Department of Education, 2014). High percentages of out-of-school suspensions can have negative impacts on adolescents that can put an adolescent's future in jeopardy, especially with school (Brown, 2007; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Michail, 2011). Research suggests that adolescents who are suspended while attending elementary school have a higher rate of being suspended again while in middle school (Rodriguez, 2013). These findings have implications for the current study because students who are more connected to school are less likely to engage in drugs (Estévez & Emler, 2010; Michail, 2011; Moon & Ando, 2009; Shekhtmeyster et al., 2011).

Challenging behaviors from adolescents puts them at risk for academic failure (Chin et al., 2012; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Rodriguez, 2013), and dropping out (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Michail, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013; Suarez, 2010). When adolescents are suspended from school, adolescents lose instructional time. In other words, adolescents suspended for school drug use lose out on learning (Chin et al., 2012;

Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Rodriguez, 2013). Historically, studies have been conducted to learn about how much and how often adolescents use drugs, but few studies have reached the school setting (Salm et al., 2011).

This proposed study is needed to better understand what influences adolescents to use drugs at school. In this study, the focus is on how school drug use is perceived and what influences and impacts school drug use behaviors. In this research design, the degree to which school drug use impacts adolescents and their academics along with perceptions of school drug use will be explored. This study has the potential to address a gap regarding what influences school drug use among adolescents. More knowledge is needed to understand why adolescents engage in drugs during school hours. Having more information about what influences adolescents and school drug use will help close the gap. Much more work is required in this field to better understand the factors that influence school drug use (Cleveland et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

Too many adolescents are engaging in school drug use, and yet there seems to be little research examining the perceptions from former adolescents regarding school drug use. During 2009, 37% of high school adolescents across the nation reported being regular users of marijuana (CDC, 2009). School drug use is labeled a challenging behavior resulting in consequences such as out-of-school suspensions (Brown, 2007; Iselin & Duke University, 2010). School suspensions were designed to keep schools safe from disruptive behaviors, sending the message that disruptive behaviors are not tolerated (Brown, 2007; Estévez & Emler, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Skiba, 2008). Others assert that

suspensions are just a temporary band-aid of potential problems for the future, and may lead to further problems (Chin et al., 2012). Adolescents report school suspensions as being unsupportive, but also as a day off or vacation from school (Dupper et. al., 2009; Suarez, 2010). High suspension rates can be associated with high dropout rates among adolescents (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Lee et al., 2011). Out-of-school suspensions result in lost academic time along with other possible concerns such as continued drug use while suspended (Brown, 2007; Chin et al., 2012; Christie et al., 2004; Clark, 2010, Lasser & Schmidt, 2009; Michail, 2011). Given the correlation between school drug use, suspensions, and student dropout rates, there is a need to examine the influences of school drug use.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how former adolescents perceive factors that led to their own drug use and subsequent suspension from school through their own experiences. This phenomenological study examines former adolescents' experiences and retrospective perceptions related to drug use at school. The intent is to study this specific group of former adolescents with questions carefully designed to learn more about the factors that influence drug use among adolescents in secondary schools (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Perceptions can turn out to be an accurate predictor of future behaviors (Wagner, et al., 2010). Thus, this study is designed to help the researcher learn more about the factors that influence school drug use.

Conducting a qualitative study will help the researcher explore what influences school drug use through Bandura's social learning theory. This study will contribute to a

larger understanding of adolescent substance use. This study will attempt to help parents and school districts understand the influences that lead to school drug use while also learning the effects of suspensions, which could, in turn, warrant parents and schools to consider risk factors that predict possible school drug use, and possibly promote proactive measures to prevent drug issues at earlier ages (Chin et al., 2012; Moon & Ando, 2009). It is necessary to examine this area in order gain a better understanding about adolescent school drug use.

The following are the research questions for the study:

Research Question 1: Does Alberta Bandura's theory of social learning impact school drug use?

Research Question 2: What are the factors that exist? In other words, if the factors weren't there, would the former high school students still feel influenced to engage in school drug use?

Research Question 3: How do former students who have been suspended for school drug use describe their suspension?

Research Question 4: How did adolescents feel about school drug use once the suspension was over?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is centered on social learning theory. To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have used Bandura's social learning theory to explore what influences adolescent school drug use. Bandura's social learning theory asserts that behaviors are learned by one's surroundings and environment. Adolescents

encounter different environments. What is observed and learned from one's environment possibly becomes modeled and imitated later (Bandura, 1977). Just observing another adolescent can make an impression that attracts one to imitate a behavior even when the behavior may not be respectable or appropriate. If friends feel that drug use is acceptable, then others may be influenced by this attitude. Exposure and imitation of behaviors can occur due to social reinforcement (Bandura, 1965; 2002; Bandura & Kupers, 1964), and the more positive outcomes that result from the behavior, the more likely the behavior will continue (Bandura, 1977). Sometimes adolescents perceive outcomes to be positive. For instance, the feeling that drugs provide may make an adolescent feel good for a short time, but in the long run, addictions and the consequences of using drugs are actually negative. If parents do not engage in drug use and have strong beliefs against drug use, these beliefs can also influence children (Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995). Adults play an important role because adults can be the most influential in one's life (Bandura, 1965; Bandura & Kupers, 1964).

Petraitis, Flay, and Miller (1995) suggest that experimental substance use is a critical construct in understanding specific attitudes and behaviors that individuals have about substance use. Social learning theory asserts that children who observe others engaging in substance use are influenced by others' beliefs about drugs. Under social learning theory, adolescents attain beliefs surrounding substance use from their role models. Role models can help shape a child's views on substance use, both negative and positive. Whether a role model is for or against substance use, these beliefs can influence adolescents socially, personally, and physiologically. For example, watching a peer

refuse drugs can have an influence on what an adolescent believes when it comes to engaging in substance use. Having friends that say no to drugs can boost an adolescent's skills to say no to drugs as well. Observing a friend refusing drugs is not the only influence, but also hearing others refusing drugs can also influence other adolescent beliefs and attitudes surrounding substance use. Social learning theory advocates for positive role models when it comes to adolescents and substance use. Favorable statements from parents and friends about drug use may influence children to use drugs, and unfavorable statements with negative attitudes and beliefs surrounding drugs may influence adolescents to stay away from drugs (Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995).

It is known that social relationships influence life (Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995; Thornberry, Freeman-Gallant, Lizotte, Krohn, & Smith, 2003). Various environments and people such as family and close friends can promote positive and negative behaviors. The outcomes of certain behaviors, such as school drug use can lead to unwanted consequences. The consequences may include out-of-school suspension from school. While adolescents may know the difference between a good decision and a poor decision, adolescents may not know how to behave appropriately in some situations (Chin et al., 2012). Social learning theory, adolescent drug use, and out-of-school suspensions will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Nature of the Study

The design of the research study is qualitative in order to explore former adolescent experiences with school drug use. Qualitative research is consistent with increasing knowledge and understanding of adolescent behaviors. The self-reporting from

the adolescents through carefully crafted open-ended questions with help uncover the factors that influence school drug use among adolescents bringing forth views and accounts describing adolescent behaviors. While the focus of the study is to understand what influences school drug use among adolescents, effects of the consequences surrounding suspensions for school drug use are also of interest (Cooper, May, Soderstrom, & Jarjoura, 2009; Moon & Ando, 2009).

Opened-ended questions will be provided through an anonymous online website to collect insights and retrospective accounts from former adolescents' experiences with school drug use and subsequent suspension from school. The responses to the open-ended questions will be analyzed through coding meaning of perceptions according to each adolescent using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA explores how participants make sense of their experiences, personally and socially, in particular situations (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The IPA process is dedicated to understanding first person accounts from the third-person position (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). Using the IPA method, the goal is to learn something through the participants' perceptions to understand what influences school drug use. IPA attempts to enter the psychological and social world of the participants. Responses will be coded extracting central themes among participants that emerge while looking for connections (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions for key concepts and constructs to support the present study:

Adolescent is defined a student who is between 13 to 18 year olds.

Drugs are defined as a controlled substance such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin.

Challenging behaviors are defined as behaviors that impede learning (Michail, 2011).

Out-of-school suspension is defined as the state of being excluded or barred from the school setting for a specific amount of time for challenging behaviors including school drug use (Brown, 2007; Christie et al., 2004; Michail, 2011).

School drug use refers to adolescents being under the influence of drugs while on school campus during school hours.

Social learning refers to adolescents learning behaviors from others through modeling, observing, and imitation (Bandura, 1977).

Assumptions

In this study, it was assumed that the participants presented accurate and honest information when answering the open-ended questions in order to support the intent of the study. Additionally, it was assumed that each open-ended question promoted answers concentrating on social learning and influences surrounding school drug use.

Scope

This study did not investigate how adolescents obtain drugs nor did it investigate how often adolescents use drugs. More must be understood regarding what influences school drug use. Open-ended questions are needed concentrating on adolescent experiences from their perceptions to gain a better understanding of what influences adolescent behaviors. The study includes former adolescents 18 years old and older who

were suspended for being under the influence of drugs at school. The participants attended public high schools in a rural area of Northern Nevada.

Limitations

Before considering the implications of this study, it is important to recognize some of the study's limitation. Due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, otherwise known as FERPA, semi-structured interviews cannot be used due to the risk involved in identifying participants; therefore, anonymous open-ended questions will be utilized for this study. Dependence on data from former adolescents can be a concern based on what the participants prefer to share and disclose. While the open-ended questions are carefully crafted, the information may not be as rich as an interview. Additionally, anonymous open-ended questions do not allow for follow-up questions. Another limitation to this study is relationships with parents. How relationships change with parents will not be directly reflected in any of the open-ended questions. Another limitation includes the sample size, as this study will use a small sample of participants.

Significance of the Study

Little is known about what influences school drug use among secondary adolescents. The ultimate purpose of this study is to contribute to the small body of literature that currently exists surrounding school drug use, which through social learning could impact adolescents in negative ways.

This study explores experiences to uncover what influences school drug use. The goal is to learn through former adolescent accounts what influences school drug use to help identify trends among adolescent experiences, exposing this issue even more in

order to better understand school drug use among adolescents. Examining influential factors of school drug use allows for increased knowledge about adolescent drug use in order to proactively prevent school drug use.

The study could potentially provide new ways of working with adolescents and their families with drug issues. This study could help support how schools, families and even communities positively impact adolescent choices surrounding drugs. A social concern exists among adolescents and school drug use. Additional research is required in this area to better understand school drug use through social learning.

Summary

This is one of the few studies focusing on adolescent school drug use from the perspective of the former adolescent. Anonymous, open-ended questions were used to gain information about the perceptions of school drug use. According to social learning theory, behaviors are obtained from one's surroundings (Bandura, 2002). Social learning theory is supported by previous studies indicating that adolescents model risky behaviors observed by others. For this reason, school drug use is a concern. It is possible that this study will enhance the understanding of what influences school drug use and its impacts.

In Chapter Two, a review of literature is presented on adolescent drug use and out-of-school suspensions with a section on social learning theory supported by empirical studies. In Chapter Three, the qualitative method of research is presented. The research design, which includes a restatement of the major research questions, is discussed. Later in the chapter, the procedures for data collection and data analysis are discussed. Chapter Four will focus on the findings where parts of the anonymous, open-ended questions are

included in this section, and Chapter Five will summarize and discuss the findings presented in Chapter Four in order to draw implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To begin, this chapter starts with information about the literature search. Then, this chapter expands on the literature review with detailed information regarding adolescent drug use, out-of-school suspensions, and social learning theory. The major sections of this chapter include information regarding the theoretical framework for the study to include adolescent drug use, out-of-school suspensions, and social learning theory. The review will examine insights on how and why school drug use, through social learning, could affect behaviors in a negative way.

Literature Search Strategy

For this study, literature was found from PsycArticles, Psycinfo, Academic Premiere, Thoreau, and Eric. One source used was the Walden University online library to search for literature from the past 5 years. The library at the University of Nevada, Reno was another source used in order to find additional peer-reviewed articles. Because there is little research which investigates school drug use, out-of-school suspensions, and social learning collectively, these topics were researched separately.

Adolescent Drug Use

School drug use amongst adolescents is a social problem, not just a personal problem (Tze et al., 2012). Research surrounding substance abuse among adolescents has been proven to be needed and reported (Johnston et. al., 2010). With increasing concerns, school drug use can impact adolescents in negative ways. A considerable amount of research has been conducted in three separate areas: adolescent drug use (Fox

et. al., 2011; Michail, 2011; Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995; Tze et al., 2012), out-of-school suspensions (Clark, 2010; Rodriguez, 2013; Stamm & Frick, 2009; Suarez, 2010), and social learning theory (Bandura, 1965; Bandura & Kupers, 1964; Bandura, 2002; Petraitis, Flay, & Miller, 1995), but very little research has been included with all three. Little attention has been given to school drug use and what lies beneath the reasons. The literature on school drug use is small. The bulk of the work in this area examines how many adolescents have tried marijuana and other illegal drugs along with the frequency of usage among adolescents.

Frequent use of drugs among adolescents is a major concern for the health and safety of children (Johnston et. al., 2010). From coping with negative situations such as divorce, a family loss, or other problems, adolescents may turn to drugs (Fox et. al., 2011). Social and emotional factors may also influence drug use among adolescents (Michail, 2011; Tze et. al., 2012). Stress and anxiety are other reasons why adolescents may turn to drugs (McCarty et. al., 2012). Additionally, lack of family and parental support can also influence drug use (Cleveland et. al., 2012; Moon & Ando, 2009). In the late 1990s and in early 2000, substance use declined among students in grades 8 and 10; however, beginning in 2008, drug use increased and continued to rise in 2011 as well. Prevalence has been the highest among high school seniors, followed by sophomore students and middle school students. Drug use increased among adolescents from 2009 to 2011, and daily use of drugs rose from previous years as well (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2013). There are reasons why adolescents use drugs, but it is unknown if these

are the same reasons that influence students to use drugs during school hours while on campus.

Marijuana is the most commonly used drug among adolescents with 1 in every 19 high school seniors using marijuana daily (Johnston et. al., 2010). The National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) monitors behaviors and social problems among adolescents in the United States and they report that from 2005-2011, marijuana use on school property increased. They also report that more adolescents are being sold and offered drugs on school property. During 2009, 22.7% of adolescents reported that they could obtain drugs from school and in 2011, the percentage rose to 25.6%. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2013, Nevada was one of the top states where adolescents reported drugs being sold and bought directly on school property.

In Nevada, 22% of seniors in high school admit to being current marijuana users (Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2013), which does not include another 20% of high school seniors in Nevada that report taking other prescription drugs such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, and Xanax. Salm et al. (2011) investigated the prevalence of substance abuse in a rural Canadian school district with adolescents in grades 6-12. They found that 35% of the youth surveyed admitted to being under the influence of drugs while at school within the last 4 months and 69% of those adolescents reported that it was easy to get drugs on school campus. These are alarming percentages.

Elliott et al. (2011) explored perceptions from adolescents regarding the pros and the cons of marijuana use, using Decisional Balance (DB). DB is an approach to

weighing out decisions of behaviors with the costs and benefits in mind. DB provides a framework for understanding drug use (Janis & Mann, 1977 as cited in Elliott et. al., 2011). Identifying the pros and cons of using drugs, the DB process was used to address marijuana use to predict usage patterns (Elliott et. al., 2011). Using the DB scale, the participants were encouraged to rate the reasons for using and not using marijuana. They found that males reported more pros than females and adolescents that endorsed using marijuana were associated with more use and continued future use. More can be done to understand influences surrounding school drug use specifically.

Out-of-School Suspensions

Over 97% of schools in the nation have drug policies, and these policies play an important role as they set the behavioral norms and establish rules to ensure school safety (Clark, 2010; Rodriguez, 2013). Public schools feel that suspensions are necessary to protect all adolescents; however, schools have not been proven to be any safer with out-of-suspensions. Zero tolerance policies play a role in many school systems across the country making out-of-school suspensions mandatory for certain behaviors displayed at school (Rodriguez, 2013), even though this type of discipline has not been proven to eliminate certain behaviors (Stamm & Frick, 2009; Suarez, 2010). School drug use is one of those behaviors. Stamm and Frick (2009) found that while school administrators viewed drug policies and suspensions “consistent” and “standard practice,” school board members thought that adolescents should be viewed as individuals with each case being different. During the 2011-2012 school year, every state but Hawaii reported using out-of-school

suspensions as a form of discipline (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

Out-of-school suspensions are used to help prevent adolescents from impeding the learning of others while in class, but recently out-of-school suspensions have increased (Rodriguez, 2013). Suspensions in rural school districts in Nevada have increased every year since 2010 for distributing drugs on school campus, while the State's average of suspensions have decreased. Suspensions are not to be taken lightly as they are used, in part to get parents' attention about their child's behaviors, to deter other adolescents from misbehaving, and to ensure that classes are conducive to teaching and learning with the most appropriate learning environment (Surez, 2010). Suspending adolescents to get parents' attention does not always work to the school's advantage. While the adolescent is temporarily removed from the school setting, there is no evidence that sending the adolescent home will improve future behaviors, especially if the parents have weak parenting skills. Suspended adolescents can be home alone unsupervised during their suspension because parents need to work (Rodriguez, 2013).

Additionally, research states that suspensions can have a negative impact on adolescent achievement (Chin et al., 2012; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Michail, 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). Suspended adolescents are less likely to graduate (Brown, 2007; Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Michail, 2011; Moon & Ando, 2009; Rodriguez, 2013). While the adolescent and the negative behavior are removed from school, suspensions put adolescents at risk for dropping out and not graduating (Hemphill & Schneider, 2013; Michail, 2011). School suspensions have also

predicted future misbehavior among adolescents (Chin et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2013).

Suspending adolescents for school drug use can increase drug use when sending the adolescent home without any adult supervision (Christie et al., 2004). Suspended adolescents often represent a group of adolescents who have the least amount of supervision at home (Rodriguez, 2013).

If suspensions were effective at deterring behaviors, then being suspended once would improve future behaviors, but this is not the case. There is no research to support the idea that suspensions improve future behaviors (Losen, 2013). Furthermore, if suspensions are used to suspend adolescents who impede the learning of others, adolescent achievement should be higher as well and this is also not the case. Research does not show any academic benefits (Fabelo et al.; 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). Zero tolerance policies take away the ability for administrators and teachers to work together to support adolescent behaviors, making the expectations clear (Suarez, 2010).

Adolescents who feel supported and connected with teachers and staff are less likely to engage in substance use (Grana, Black, Sun, Rohrbach, Gunning, & Sussman, 2010; Rodriguez, 2013; Shekhtmeyster et al. 2011; Tze et al., 2012). The more teachers can engage adolescents; the more negative behaviors tend to decrease (Losen, 2013). The transition from elementary school to middle school can be the hardest. Transition can be a factor in an adolescent's motivation and attitudes towards school (Theriot & Dupper, 2010).

Research has examined teachers' perceptions surrounding adolescent drug use. A study from Salm et al. (2011) found that teachers have varying opinions on suspension

policies. Some teachers felt that suspended adolescents influenced other adolescents to skip school. Other research links adolescent drug behaviors with negative family factors such as poor relationships between the child and the parents (Cleveland et al., 2012; Gutiérrez, Rodríguez-Cerda, & Álvarez-Nemegyei, 2006; Shekhtmeyster et al., 2011; Tucker et al., 2011).

Grana, Black, Sun, Rohrbach, Gunning, and Sussman (2010) found that physical environments can influence mental health and attitudes. The health and safety of schools along with the overall learning environment is critical to adolescent achievement. Schools with negative climates, low morale, and unequipped classrooms can have a negative impact on adolescents. When a school campus is maintained, adolescents are respected and classrooms are ready for learning, adolescents tend to have a better outlook. Schools with positive cultures have fewer suspensions and better attendance. Having a common vision and working together to support adolescent achievement promotes learning eliminating out-of-school suspensions (Ohlson, 2009).

Other studies include perspectives among the staff, teachers, administrators, and counselors, as to who is responsible for helping adolescents with substance use issues. Weak communication among staff members at schools regarding adolescent school drug use has been reported (Salm et al., 2011). Administrators, teachers, and other staff that take a proactive approach to school behaviors can together collaborate to handle discipline head on coming up with solutions before out-of-school suspensions are certain (Ohlson, 2009).

Social Learning Theory

To date, social learning theory, which has been accepted among educators to help better understand adolescent behaviors (Clark, 2010) has not been used to explore school drug use. Little research has used the social learning theory specifically to explore what influences school drug use. Social learning theory can help explain and predict how one behaves. Social learning theory suggests that adolescents learn how to behave from parents and other social figures (Bandura, 1977; Clark, 2010; Croghan, 2005), but there are still questions surrounding what influences school drug use. Bandura (1974) believed that observations of behaviors were an essential part of social learning and that adolescents imitated behaviors.

Social learning theory presumes that effects from one's behaviors are learned, the results become part of one's repertoire based on positive or negative reinforcements provided by others (Bandura & Kupers, 1964). One's behaviors can change with social models and reinforcements (Bandura, 1962). Social learning theory also presupposes that modeling varies in strength depending on how much the adolescent connects with others and what is observed. For example: the more a child identifies with an adult, the more likely the child will mimic the adult behaviors (Bandura, 1974; 1986; Bandura & Kupers, 1964).

Social development model (SDM) suggests that adolescents learn from behaviors from four socializing units. These include: family, school, community, and friends. SDM proposes that developed social bonds between an adolescent and one of the socializing agents depends on the perceived opportunities and rewards for involvement. Estévez and

Emler (2010) studied relationships among families and communities that exist between youths and parents and found that interactions among the parents, the community, and the school help to shape a youth's perceptions and attitudes and in turn, also influence behaviors.

Adolescents pay attention to details, such as consequences and begin to understand the values that guide their behaviors (Clark, 2010). Modeling behaviors is one of the strongest influences on self-worth, making individuals feel accepted within their circle of friends (Bandura, 1997). Even with influences, outside consequences are not always the sole determinants of human behavior (Bandura, 1974). Learning from others' experiences can possibly tell us more about "the why" with school drug use. Adolescents come from various backgrounds so their experiences can be diverse as well (Bandura & McDonald, 1963).

Observing the outcomes of behaviors, one distinguishes which behaviors are suited for different settings. Adolescents behave in certain ways according to the outcomes they expect to receive in return (Bandura, 1974; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). The expected outcomes can be the motivation behind substance use (HeavyRunner-Rioux, & Hollist, 2010; Patrick, Schulenberg, O'Malley, Maggs, Kloska, Johnston, & Bachman, 2011). If the outcomes are positive, such as positive attention from friends and family then the behavior is more likely to be copied and repeated. If the outcome is negative, the behavior may be less likely to be imitated (Clark, 2010). Reinforcements can be a motivating influence. Positive behaviors can become part of one's repertoire through the help of modeling. Positive outcomes affirm to adolescents that results will

bring certain rewards and benefits. Adolescents behave in ways that promote self-worth and avoid punishment. If a modeled behavior is not appropriate, there is still a chance that the behavior will still continue based on who modeled the behavior, even if negative consequences follow the behavior. Consequences can be recognized by some as a source of motivation (Bandura, 1974).

There are questions about whether older siblings influence younger siblings. Siblings can be similar academically and also be involved in substance use (Samek & Rueter, 2011). The closer the siblings are, the more similar they may be (Gamble, Yu, & Cards, 2010). Samek and Rueter (2011) examined if closeness to elder siblings can help predict younger sibling substance use. The study explored whether younger sibling behaviors were influenced by older siblings. But in the end, closeness to elder siblings did not predict younger sibling substance use.

Moon and Ando (2009) conducted a quantitative study hypothesizing that adolescents are less involved with drugs when there are stronger ties to family, peers, and school. The study's focus was to inspect how much family, peers, and school influenced substance use and school achievement. The study included social attachment theory and social learning theory. Families with low supervision have higher rates of adolescent substance use. Cleveland et al. (2012) conducted a comparable study and found similar findings. Family bonds and parental supervision may have beneficial effects on adolescent substance use.

Because of the social rewards, peers are the most influential motivators in adolescent lives (Cooper et. al., 2009; Tucker et al., 2011). Many adolescents engage in

substance use to fit in with their peers (Patrick et. al., 2010; Tucker et al., 2011; Tze et al., 2012; Suarez, 2010). Social interactions can be impactful with adolescents (Suarez, 2010). High school appears to be the time when peer influence peaks (Cleveland et al., 2012). Adolescent substance use often occurs in the home, during down time, and also during school break times with friends (Van Hout & Connor, 2008). Roy et al. (2011) suggest that children with friends that inject drugs play a role in influencing them to also inject drugs. Social networks of friends have a greater influence on others to start using drugs. Social disapproval of substance use may help adolescents avoid using drugs if their friends dislike drugs (Patrick, et al., 2010). When adolescents begin engaging in risky behaviors with friends, those behaviors can be difficult to turn around (Suarez, 2010).

Many children try drugs to be accepted by friends and to feel independent. Most young adults use drugs in social settings (Shrier et. al., 2012). “Hanging out” with others who use drugs provides a reason for certain groups of adolescents to hang out. Using drugs bonds adolescents together, making substance use a thing to do while together. Fulton, Krank, and Stewart (2012) found that adolescents report using marijuana because it is “fun.” Peers can highly influence substance use in other adolescents (Henry, Kobus, & Schoeny, 2011; Tucker et al., 2011), especially as children get older and start spending more time with friends and less time with their family (Cleveland et al., 2012).

The research questions in this present study will attempt to bring forth accounts from former adolescents, who have been suspended out of school for being under the influence of drugs while at school, to learn what factors influence school drug use.

Learning from former adolescents' experiences will potentially allow for increased understanding into the reasons why adolescents are under the influence of drugs while at school. The goal is to prevent school drug use among adolescents. Using the social learning theory to help explain school drug use, a clearer picture can emerge to help understand adolescent drug behaviors at school (Clark, 2010).

Summary

Behaviors are observed and often become imitated (Bandura, 1977). The purpose of this present study is to explore the scope to which ideas from social learning theory can help us understand school drug use. Through adolescent experiences and retrospective reports, this study aims to expose factors that influence school drug use. Firsthand accounts from former adolescents will provide new information adding to the reasons answering the "why" questions. Measuring outcomes of school drug use and what an adolescent experiences is critical to understanding who is at risk for school drug use (Fulton, Krank, & Stewart, 2012).

Different environments and different people create experiences for adolescents with models and behaviors that can be observed and imitated by young adults. Behaviors that are observed can be positive and negative, which lead to different outcomes. Understanding school drug use through social learning theory can lead to additional information to understanding what influences adolescent behaviors surrounding school drug use. More information is required in order to prevent school drug use. Learning about adolescents' experiences involving school drug use through retrospective stories will extend knowledge in this area that may prevent these behaviors in adolescents in the

future. Making sense of adolescents' experiences through the IPA method used in this study will allow for more detailed information about school drug use (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Older studies involve perceptions and experiences from school administrators, teachers, and counselors, but not from adolescents. The literature review reports that studies indicate that social learning has significant links to substance use (Cooper et al., 2009). There are ample studies examining motives for drug use among youth (Fox et al., 2011), but few studies bring drug use and school together. There is a need to study school drug use to preserve the health and safety of all adolescents. Drug use is very much alive in middle schools and high schools (Lee et al., 2011; Michail, 2011). Various factors can play an influential part in behaviors during adolescents (Estévez & Emler, 2010). Research has not revealed why adolescents attend school under the influence of drugs.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This chapter will include detailed information addressing the intent and the purpose of the research along with the research design and the role of the researcher. Participant selection and the procedures are outlined with how the data will be analyzed. Ethical procedures are included as well. This chapter will also include information regarding the scope and the methodology of the study.

Purpose of the Study

This proposed study is needed to better understand what factors influence school drug use among adolescents. This study is potentially important because it addresses a gap in the research, specifically analysis of cases, regarding what influences drug behaviors at school. The purpose is to understand what influences school drug use from the perspective of the former adolescents affected.

The following are the research questions significant to the study:

Research Question 1: Does Alberta Bandura's theory of social learning impact school drug use?

Research Question 2: What are the factors that exist? In other words, if the factors weren't there, would the former high school students still feel influenced to engage in school drug use?

Research Question 3: How do former students who have been suspended for school drug use describe their suspension?

Research Question 4: How did adolescents feel about school drug use once the suspension was over?

Research Design

This is a phenomenological study. Phenomenology is the study of one's perception of events as they occur. Phenomenology focuses on things that occur in an experience, and the ways adolescents' experience events and life situations (Husserl, 1913). Phenomenology focuses on the meaning of experiences, including the importance of things, people, and events. Phenomenology examines many types of experiences ranging from perception, recall, feelings, and desires (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cooper, 2012). Edmund Husserl (1913), known to some as the founder of phenomenology, asserted that phenomenology attempted to explain the world as it exists. Husserl (1913) believed that the consciousness is where experiences function. Experience includes passive experiences as in vision or hearing, but also active experience as in walking, talking, or conversing with others (Behnke, 2015; Smith, 2013). Phenomenology turns directly to an adolescent's experience in order to provide descriptions of moments in time (Behnke, 2015) and to provide responses to a given situation (Jennings, 1986). There are different approaches to perceiving a given moment (Jennings, 1986) and how adolescents live through experiences (Vernon, 2005).

This approach was chosen because the questions in the study focus on learning from former adolescents about the reality of what they have lived and experienced with school drug use. This approach was selected to understand school drug use through anonymous, open-ended questions to find meaning through former adolescent

experiences and to understand the process by which events took place to provide more insight into what the influencing factors are when it comes to school drug use. How the participants perceive their experiences to uncover the influences and learning how the influences impact school drug use will lead to a stronger understanding of school substance use among adolescents. Each question in this study was shaped with the phenomenological strategy in mind, while also being tied to social learning theory, knowing the goal is to gain and gather patterns and relationships among experiences with school drug use. Other forms of qualitative inquiry such as narrative research and case studies were not selected for the study because of the desire to learn from adolescents' lived experiences and history to gather patterns and relationships. Narrative research was not selected because the study is not looking to combine participants' life stories with that of the researcher. This study is not bound by time or an activity as with case studies. This study goes beyond hearing the participants' stories with the plot, setting, climax, and denouement (Creswell, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

Using social learning theory, the intent of this study is to understand what factors influence school drug use among adolescents and the effects of school drug use. The central concepts in the study include substance use, out-of-school suspensions, and social learning. Substance use involves adolescents engaging in marijuana or other drug use on school campus. Social learning theory by Bandura (1974) asserts that one imitates behaviors that are observed. Peers, family, and the community play a role in which behaviors are modeled. Behaviors of friends, family, and members of the community can

become imitated by adolescents. The environment and one's surroundings can be very influential when it comes to adolescents because observed behaviors become imitated. Observing other behaviors within one's environment may influence certain behaviors such as adolescent drug abuse. If a friend, family member, or someone in the community is using drugs, then it may be that the drug behavior gets imitated by adolescents.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher was to code anonymous responses to open-ended questions from former adolescents who have experience with school drug use. The opened-ended questions are available to qualified participants through an anonymous online website. The researcher's role was to create and guide the participants through detailed questions (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The participants were reminded that their responses are confidential and no personal information is obtained or required anywhere in the study. The researcher was required to read all responses and code all responses before interpreting and analyzing the data. The researcher extracted common ideas from the participants' experiences connecting central themes surrounding what influences school drug use (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012; Creswell, 2012).

Participants

Participants for the study were selected from a rural area in Northern Nevada who attended the public school district. The purposely selected participants who participated came from a general list of all former students. Eight responses was the target number. Through a data base, school districts can provide a general list of all former students who attended the school. Purposeful selection helps to identify characteristics of a particular

subgroup of interest, in this case, former adolescents who have been suspended for school drug use. Former students who were suspended for school drug use were invited to participate. This type of selection also promotes comparisons between the different adolescents. Exclusion criteria included factors such as age, being cognitively impaired, in a crisis, or incarcerated. All of the participants were 18 years old and older, and each participant was suspended out-of-school for school drug use.

Information regarding students, suspensions, and school drug use is not provided to the public, but the school district can provide a general list of all former students. The school district supplying the information for the recruitment of participants to the researcher was provided with a proposal to address why the research topic was chosen for the study. How the results are reported and what the school district gains from the study are all addressed. The researcher then contacted potential participants based on the list generated from the school district. As stated by Creswell (2012), a phenomenological study involves a small number of participants for intense responses to explore patterns and connections. To begin, eight participants are desired for detailed examination of similarities and differences among the anonymous, open-ended response to questions; however, the number of participants may increase as long as more individuals respond. The goal was to gain insights about school drug use and how adolescents who were suspended due to school drug use describe their experiences and the influences with school drug use. Because this is phenomenological research, a smaller number of participants are required in order to find specific trends among each former adolescent's experience (Creswell, 2012).

Procedures

The protocol for the study involved each participant responding to anonymous, open-ended questions allowing the researcher to learn more about what influences school drug use. Refer to the appendix for the complete protocol that includes the questions and recording answers. Participants were asked to log-in to a secure website to respond to anonymous, open-ended questions. The researcher noted whether the information presented is primary or secondary information. Primary information is generated from the participants, and secondary information includes information that comes from another source other than the participants. Afterwards, the responses were reviewed, coded, and analyzed. The responses were coded to include the questions (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Questions were arranged so that participants had the ability to ease into the questions with less intense questions asked in the beginning and more sensitive questions at the end, which is what the IPA process recommends (Smith & Osborn, 2003). All responses were anonymous so names are not linked to any participants, and all data is protected on a computer by a password and stored in a locked cabinet (Cooper, Fleischer, Cotton, 2012). Guidelines were listed to follow to ensure consistency among all of the responses so each question is standardized. Questions were listed for each participant with space provided for a reply, and a thank you to each participant was provided for the time given answering the questions (Creswell, 2012). Participants exited the study by submitting responses to the open-ended questions.

IPA was used to collect data. This was an appropriate approach when trying to understand experiences of others surrounding their personal and social world. Questions

were developed to be broad and open in order for the participant to explore the topic. “Funnelling” is a questioning technique used to provide a way to elicit general views from each participant, but also more specific viewpoints from the participants are gathered through more specific questions (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The IPA approach offers a focused and systematic way to understanding perspectives. IPA helped the researcher learn how former adolescents construct meaning in both social and personal worlds. IPA helped the researcher connect with people’s words, thoughts, and emotions (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This approach has been used in past research. For example, the IPA approach was used in research to help understand chronic pain as it is understood by the sufferers. Because chronic pain can be understood differently, how sufferers make meaning of chronic pain through their experiences can be described in a different way (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). School drug use among adolescents can also be described and perceived differently depending on experiences.

Data Analysis Plan

Data was collected during a four week span starting June, 2016. This timeframe was provided time for participants to respond to the open-ended questions online. Data analysis with IPA needs to include what is exclusive to each participant in relation to what is common among all the participants. Taken from Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012), the IPA process starts with creating a set of descriptive comments for each response. The data was read and reread so the researcher could become familiar with each participant’s accounts. Here key phrases, explanations, descriptions, and emotional responses were identified within each response.

Data analysis also required making sense of the information presented in the anonymous responses, moving deeper into understanding to interpret meaning brought forth about school drug use. Next, the researcher concentrated on how the responses reflect ways in which the subject matter and meaning were disclosed, focusing on the comments provided in each transcript. This included looking at the “how” and the “what” to understand the meaning behind each participant’s words. Attention was also given to pronoun use, reiterations, and any figurative language used. Data from the open-ended questions were analyzed to learn something about each participant’s psychological world drawn from experiences focusing on significant influences through specific words from the participants. The idea was to focus on meaning within the content. Reading through each response similarities, differences, and contradictions were noted.

Later in the analysis, themes were abstracted and coded the same with connections within and across each participant. This third step included identifying key concepts. After each response was reviewed and coded, the researcher looked for emerging themes across all participants, which were supported by comments within each response. Each response was analyzed recognizing themes that emerged from each participant to help recognize similarities and differences from each participant’s account. At the end, a final table of themes was produced. Writing up the themes from each participant’s experience involved bringing forth the themes and then also relating the themes to current literature. The number of themes indicated the richness of each participant’s response. Actual words were then checked with the responses. Tables were

created organizing the clustering of themes with key terms capturing each participant's responses (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Validity of research is important to ensure accuracy of the information.

Organization and preparation are the first steps in reviewing responses to support the study's validity. Reviewing the data thoroughly multiple times provides a sense of general information within the participants' responses, but it also allows for more information as far as what the tone is of the ideas and what the participants are sharing in the responses. Coding of the responses is equally important to the credibility and validity of the research study. Such coding of data using wording from participants to form codes and themes might include activity codes, process codes, relationship codes, and perspectives held by the participants and the way that the participants think. In the end, interpretations of the data were done to make meaning to find out what was learned from the participants' responses (Cooper, Fleischer, Cotton, 2012; Creswell, 2012).

Validation of results for this is also important. Validation of results focused on the level to which two or more adolescents agree. A peer reviewer was chosen to support the validation of the findings of the study, increasing believability of the outcomes (Cooper, Fleischer, Cotton, 2012; Marques, 2005). The peer reviewer provided in-depth content and format analysis along with editing recommendations. The peer reviewer understands qualitative research. The aim was to pull perceptions and common themes surrounding the social learning theory to understanding what influences drug use with a group of

former adolescents who were suspended for engaging in school drug use between the ages of 13 and 18 (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Stamm & Frick, 2009).

Utilizing specific procedures for validity and having a consistent approach for reliability is also important to the study. To assist with reliability, the researcher needed to carefully craft questions to support the purpose of the research study (Smith & Osborn, 2003). It was also important to check all coding for precision to support analysis.

Other strategies used in the research to support reliability and validity are triangulation and using strong, full descriptions. The peer examiner described above was also used in the study to help with internal validity. Data collection included detailed responses from each participant, documented analysis of the responses, and coding validation. The researcher accounted for discrepant data that were an exception to patterns found in the data. The goal was not to generalize, but to provide rich, background information with a contextualized understanding of school drug use through former adolescent experiences (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Ethical Procedures

Due to the nature of the topic each participant's identity was not required or obtained in any fashion. All responses were anonymous. At any time, participants could decline to answer questions or decide to not participate. This information was provided as part of the opening invitation letter before the participant decided to answer the open-ended questions so that each participant understood that they had the right to decline answering any questions.

All former students were sent a letter explaining the importance and the intent of the study, and how their participation in the study could add to understanding school drug use. By logging on to the survey, participants gave consent and were anonymous when responding to the questions. Participants were recruited from a list of former adolescents who are now 18 years and older and were suspended for school drug use, which is the first step to gaining participants for the research study. All participants were invited to participate responding to open-ended questions and prior to responding to the questions, the participants were reminded of their right to pass on questions. Also, participants had the right to excuse themselves from the study at any time. If participants withdrew from the study this was addressed and disclosed. The data is kept confidential and stored with passwords and in a locked cabinet so only the researcher has access to the information.

At one time, the researcher taught English at the high school where the participants have attended school. It is possible that participants in the study are a former student or a sibling of a former student that the researcher taught in the past. In these cases because all of the participants do not disclose their identities, the researcher may not know this. In the event a participant revealed being a former student, the responses were not included, but would be reported in the end.

Summary

This chapter explored the steps of the qualitative study with guidelines and procedures for a valid and reliable study. The characteristics of a qualitative study outlined in this chapter provide an understanding of the methodology including the

researcher's role, data collection, and analysis. Looking ahead, Chapter Four will discuss the results and findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Results

This chapter presents the data that was collected for the study through open-ended questions. The purpose of the study was to uncover what influences secondary students to use drugs on campus. Using Bandura's theory of social learning, the goal was to explain if social learning plays a role in school drug use. This chapter organizes the study's data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness along with the results. The findings are discussed and presented under each of the research questions.

The research questions include the following:

Research Question 1: Does Alberta Bandura's theory of social learning impact school drug use?

Research Question 2: What are the factors that exist? In other words, if the factors weren't there, would the former high school students still feel influenced to engage in school drug use?

Research Question 3: How do former students who have been suspended for school drug use describe their suspension?

Research Question 4: How did adolescents feel about school drug use once the suspension was over?

Data Collection Process

Data collection started after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Walden University granted approval. Walden University's approval number for the research study

is 612-312-1210. All ethical and legal procedures held by Walden University's research program were followed.

The participants for the study were invited to take part in the research study in June 2016. It was the intent of the researcher to send out invitations using the United States Postal Service (USPS) to the graduating class of 2014. Invitations were sent out to students from the graduating class of 2014, but the invitations did not bring enough participants. Former students in the graduating class of 2015 were also sent invitations using USPS. All former graduates from the classes of 2014 and 2015 were sent an invitation explaining the study. Former students qualified to participate in the study if certain qualifications were met. Former students qualified to participate in the study if they were at least 18 years old and had been suspended for school drug use. This study relied on participants reflecting on their own experiences. All of the participants graduated and are no longer in high school. Participants were given two weeks to respond to the open-ended questions. There were 10 participants in the study.

The sample selected for this study was a purposeful selection in order to attempt to identify characteristics of a particular subgroup of students who were suspended for school drug use. All of the participants are former students from the Douglas County School District. The collection of data occurred from the end of June to the end of July 2016.

In total, 793 former students were sent invitations using the USPS. All former Douglas County students from the graduating classes of 2014 and 2015 were sent an invitation to participate if they qualified for the study; having been suspended for school

drug use. 412 invitations were sent to the graduating class of 2014 and 381 invitations were sent to the graduating class of 2015. Overall, 75 invitations total were returned and undeliverable by mail. 42 invitations were returned by mail from the class of 2014 and 33 invitations were returned by mail from the class of 2015. Seven separate individuals telephoned inquiring about the invitation asking for more details about privacy and confidentiality. Additionally, nine emails were received inquiring about the study as well. Ultimately, 10 participants logged on to the website in order to answer open-ended questions regarding their experiences. By logging on, all participants acknowledged that they were at least 18 years old. All participants remain anonymous; therefore, no names were ever asked. The opened ended questions were predetermined and presented in the same order for each participant. The participants were asked to share their experiences using their own personal thoughts and words. The open-ended questions focused on influences of school drug use and individual experiences being suspended out-of-school for school drug use.

All participants logged on to the website provided. The length of time to complete the open-ended questions ranged from a minute to almost six minutes. All of the data collected were stored electronically with a password and were not shared with anyone else. All the data were used to search for diversity in the participants' answers looking for emerging patterns and common themes surrounding influences of school drug use.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, each set of responses were read several times in order to identify emerging themes in each of the participants' responses. The responses to

the open-ended questions were analyzed through coding meaning of perceptions according to each participant's responses using the IPA method. IPA was selected to help with understanding how the participants make sense of their experiences, both on an individual level and social level (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The participants' responses were coded extracting central themes among participants that emerge while looking for connections (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The data provided noteworthy statements regarding school drug use and out-of-school suspensions. Deviations and discrepancies from the emerging themes were included. The use of IPA assisted in gaining a better understanding of school drug use and out-of-school suspensions from former student experiences in the Douglas County School District. Common themes that emerged were identified supporting the research questions. The review of the data brought forth themes and similar responses among the participants. During the data analysis process, numerous readings of all of the responses helped to find connections among the responses. Common themes such as friends, boredom, catching up in classes, and attending a different school emerged from the participants' responses.

Key Findings

The IPA process was used to code common themes and to look for discrepancies in the responses provided. Responses from questions were used to provide answers to the research questions. IPA was used to gain a better understanding about school drug use and out-of-school suspensions through the participants' own words and thoughts when sharing their experiences. Each common theme identified such as friends, making up

work, being bored, and attending a new school are all supported with data from the responses. The key findings indicate that friends and others around the participants had an influence on school drug use. Out-of-school suspensions were not meaningful leaving former students bored and behind in their classes when they returned to school. Further details are provided after each research question.

Research Question 1: Does Alberta Bandura's theory of social learning impact school drug use?

Bandura's theory of social learning asserts that behaviors are learned from one's environment and surroundings. Behaviors in one's environment are copied and imitated by others (Bandura, 1977). Just observing another adolescent can make an impression that attracts one to imitate a behavior even when the behavior is not appropriate. If friends feel that drug use is acceptable, then others may be influenced by this attitude. Imitation of behaviors can occur due to social reinforcement (Bandura, 1965; 2002; Bandura & Kupers, 1964).

When the participants were asked about what influenced school drug use, Participant #9 stated, "I was having fun with my friends." Friends were a common theme among the participants in the study. Several participants stated that friends were an influence. Participant #10 reported that "It was something to do with my friends." Participant #4 responded saying, "It was my friend's idea." From these experiences disclosed from the participants, Bandura's social learning theory could help understand school drug use. Environmental influences such as friends can play a role in how others

behave (Bandura, 1977). If a friend sees another friend behaving in a certain manner on school campus, the others around them could copy that same behavior.

Besides friends, boredom was another emerging theme among the participants' experiences. Participant #7 shared that there was "Nothing else to do so I did them with my friends." This statement reinforced that like other participants' experiences, this participant did drugs with their friends because they were bored. Participant # 2 also shared that they were bored and friends influenced them to use drugs on school campus.

Two participants shared experiences that were much different, providing other insights to what influenced school drug use. Participant #1 stated, "I like drugs." This statement does not conform to the rest of the experiences shared from other participants. This participant shared a different experience providing another insight regarding school drug use. Participant #3 also shared a distinct experience stating, "Thought it would be fun with my friends." This participant is connecting fun with drug use and friends providing more details about what possibly influences school drug use. Table 1 shows the experiential claims, identifies the emerging themes, and also the differences.

Table 1

Participant Quotes on Influences

What influenced you to use drugs on school campus when you attended XYZ High School?

Participants	Quotes	Emerging Themes	Differences
1	Boredom, people around me; I like drugs.	boredom, others around	liking drugs
2	Boredom and friends.	boredom, friends	
3	Thought it would be fun with my friends.	friends	fun
4	It was my friend's idea.	friends	
5	Probably my friends.	friends	
6	Friends and I were just messing around.	friends	
7	Nothing to do so I did them with friends.	boredom, friends	
8	Friends.	friends	
9	I don't know. I was hanging out with friends.	friends	
10	It was something to do with my friends.	friends	

Research Question 2: *What are the factors that exist? In other words, if the factors were not there, would the former high school students still feel influenced to engage in school drug use?*

This question asked for participants to ponder whether their behaviors would have been different if the influences mentioned in question #1 were not present. A few participants reported that they still would have engaged in school drug use even if the factors were not there. Boredom and friends were the two most common answers reported by the participants regarding what influenced school drug use. The feedback stated that some of the participants would have engaged in school drug use even without their friends. Participant #1 answering, “Yes, I was making my own decisions.” Participant #10 reported, “It made the day more interesting. There wasn’t much more to do at school.” On the other hand, others revealed that they were unsure if they would have engaged in school drug use if the factors such as friends or boredom were not present as influences.

Figure 1 shows how many participants would be influenced to engage in school drug use if the factors listed in question 1 were not present. Figure 1 below illustrates the division of responses from the participants about their decision to engage in school drug use if the factors were not there. It is possible that there is a connection between what influences school drug use and Bandura’s social learning theory. With friends being the most common theme among the participants, if the participants’ friends condone certain

behaviors, then others around them may follow them imitating their behaviors (Bandura, 1974), which could include school drug use.

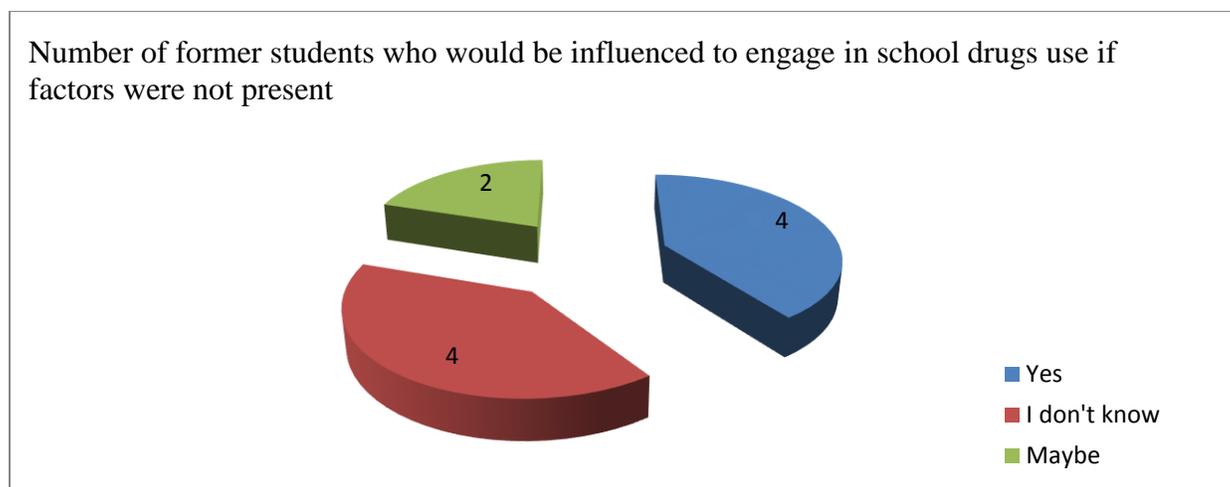


Figure 1. Number of former students who would be influenced to engage in school drug use if factors were not present

Research Question 3: *How do former students who have been suspended for school drug use describe their suspension?*

A few different themes transpired from the participants' responses. The participants' describe their suspension as "boring" and a "waste of time." The participants were not sure what they were supposed to get out of the suspension. Suspension did not help the participants while a few participants stated that as a result they attended a new school. When describing their suspensions, Participant #1 reported that it was "Beneficial, only because I actually had gotten expelled and moved to a different school where I did better in school."

Several of the participants described their suspension as "boring" and "a waste of time." Participant #4 stated, "I didn't do much so I am not sure what I was supposed to

get out of it.” Participant #6 described their suspension as “useless, didn’t help me at all.” Additionally, Participant #5 described their suspension saying, “I didn’t get anything out of being suspended.”

In this study the participants did not describe their suspensions as being a positive experience. The participants did not find their time away from school helpful to them and the participants were not sure what they were supposed to get from being suspended from school. While schools across the nation use out-of-school suspensions as part of discipline plans to keep negative behaviors out (Stamm & Frick, 2009), the responses from the participants in this study report that out-of-school suspensions may not help students who are suspended for school drug use because the participants did not find any meaning behind their suspensions. Table 2 outlines the emerging patterns from the participants’ experiences with out-of-school suspensions.

Table 2

Participant Quotes on Describing Out-of-School Suspensions

As a result of your school drug use, you were suspended out-of-school. How would you describe your out-of-school suspension?

Participants	Quotes	Emerging Themes	Differences
1	Beneficial, only because I actually had gotten expelled and moved to a different school where I did better in school/frustrating.	attended new school	did better in school
2	A waste of time.	waste of time	
3	A waste of time.	waste of time	
4	I didn't do much so I am not sure what I supposed to get out of it.	didn't do much, not sure the purpose	
5	I didn't get anything out of being suspended.	not sure the purpose	
6	Useless, didn't help me at all.	useless, no help	
7	I did nothing.	didn't do anything	
8	I found a new school to attend.	attended new school	
9	Boring.	boring	
10	Boring, no one was around.	boring	

Research Question 4: *How did adolescents feel about school drug use once the suspension was over? Did anything else happen as a result of your suspension?*

While there were a few common connections among the participants' experiences, former students did express a few different experiences returning to school after their suspensions. In their own words, some of the participants disclosed that they experienced some hardship from the suspension with school work. There were other participants who attended a new school after their suspension. Participant #6 recounted their experience as "others asking me questions about what happened. It was annoying." Participant #4 expressed, "I was happy to see my friends again."

Participant #3 did not report anything about returning to school following their out-of-school suspension. Other participants described their experience going back to school after the suspension as feeling behind in class and having to make up class work and tests. Participant #7 shared "had to make-up work and tests from classes." Being away from school and out of the classroom for long periods of time does negatively impact learning. Participant #5 conveyed their experience about their suspension as "just a lot of bad grades and make-up work." Without instruction and practice, students are not exposed to new concepts and skills. Consistent effective instruction in the classroom closes the gaps in a child's learning (Chin et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2013; Marzano, Warrick, & Simms, 2014).

There were other responses from participants who attended a new school. Participant #1 stated, "I had new friends, nothing extreme." Participant #8 shared that "The new school helped me graduate." Participants #4 and #10 revealed information

about their friends. Participant #4 explained, “I was happy to see my friends again.”

Participant #10 shared, “My friends and I hung out.”

To conclude, the participants shared different experiences about returning to school. A few participants shared they had to make up class work and tests. Some participants shared that they saw their friends again. One participant shared that they graduated from another school. Table 3 delineates emerging themes and patterns among the participants describing their return to school.

Table 3

Participant Quotes Describing Their Return to School

What did you experience when you went back to school after your suspension? Did anything else happen as a result of the suspension?

Participants	Quotes	Emerging Themes	Differences
1	I had new friends, nothing extreme.	new friends	new friends
2	Went to a different school.	attended new school	
3	Nothing.		nothing to report
4	I was happy to see my friends again.	happy to see friends	
5	Just a lot of bad grades and make-up work.	bad grades and make-up work	
6	Others asking me questions about what happened. It was annoying.		annoyed by others asking questions
7	Had to make-up work and tests from classes.	make-up work	
8	The new school helped me graduate.		graduated from new school
9	A lot much work and tests to take.	make-up work	
10	My friends and I hung out.	hung out with friends	

Evidence of Trustworthiness

At the start of the study, it was believed that only the graduating class of 2014 would generate enough participants. This was not the case so the graduating class of 2015 was also invited to participate in the study. Evidence of trustworthiness was implemented in the study through organizing and reviewing the data. Coding the responses from each participant's experience was completed as outlined in chapter three. Extracting common themes and also accounting for discrepant data was finished as well. The researcher crafted questions to support the purpose of the study.

A peer reviewer was utilized. The peer reviewer helped with the validity of the study helping to increase believability of the study. The peer reviewer focused on the analysis and outcomes giving any needed recommendations. For this study, the peer reviewer and the researcher had comparable outcomes interpreting the data with similar conclusions. Together, discussion about the data was verified and coded.

The researcher relied on former students to provide information regarding their experiences as a student who was suspended for school drug use. While these students are now graduated and at least 18 years old, it is recognized that some participants may have a different perspective about their experience now than when the situation took place. With time passing, it is possible that the participants' views and attitudes may have changed, therefore; giving different answers than possibly given when the participants were younger.

Every participant remained anonymous, and participants were not required to answer every question. To the researcher's knowledge, no former students of the

researcher participated nor were there any siblings of former students taught participating in the study. There were no issues with the researcher knowing any of the participants in the study. The researcher depended on former students explaining their experiences.

This study can be handed over to another researcher. Following the steps in this study will make it easy to pass on and try in other settings such as larger school districts. Now that the results of the research have been provided, the last chapter, chapter 5 will summarize the results. Chapter 5 also discusses the limitations, recommendations, implications for social change, and a final conclusion for the research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Interpretations of Findings

This type of study has never been done with former students. Past research has focused on drugs obtaining perspectives from school administrators, school counselors, and school teachers. School drug use, out-of-school suspensions, and the social theory learning have not been studied together. No study has included open-ended questions asking for perspectives from former students. The findings add knowledge about school drug use, out-of-school suspensions, and the social learning theory with insights from former students who were suspended out-of-school for school drug use.

According to the Douglas County Community Prevention Plan (2015) drug use is a concern among secondary students in Douglas County. The purpose of the research study was to uncover influences of school drug use. The findings suggest that Bandura's social learning theory could be used to understand what influences school drug use. Bandura's (1969, 1999) theory states that individuals will behave similar to those around them. Many participants indicated that their friends played a role in their school drug use. Friends can be influential and if individuals see other engaging in behaviors, others will follow and mimic those behaviors, regardless if the behaviors are appropriate or not (Clark, 2010). School is a time where students hang out with their friends and spend a great deal of time socializing (Moon & Ando, 2009).

Boredom was another common theme that emerged from the study that the participants shared. This insight brings in a new idea to the research topic that was not

expected. Nonetheless, this information is important and should not be ignored. Knowing that participants indicated boredom as a reason to engage in school drug use provides more data to the study. The experiences shared from the participants also indicate that boredom may have also been a factor explaining why the former students engaged in school drug use.

Furthermore, from the responses provided by the participants, the study suggests that out-of-school suspensions were not meaningful to students. The participants in this study did not find any meaning in being suspended for school drug use. The participants used phrases like “useless” and “a waste of time” to describe their time out of school during their suspension. Participants also mentioned being behind in their school work when returning from school which could produce more stress and feelings of not being welcomed back to school (Brown, 2007; Michail, 2011; Skiba, 2008). On the other hand, there were a few students who found their suspension beneficial because they ended up attending another school.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of the study. First, participants shared an experience that occurred in the past. The participants were asked to share an experience that happened during high school and now all of the participants have graduated. It has been at least a couple of years since these situations occurred so the participants have been able to reflect on their experiences, which can change perspectives and viewpoints over time. An additional limitation is not having any information about the participants. The researcher does not know the gender or age of the participants. Knowing that drug use

increases with age, this information would be significant (Fox et al., 2011, Elliott et al., 2011).

Because face to face interviews were not allowed, some of the responses were not as detailed. Follow-up questions were impossible because all of the participants were anonymous. There were some responses that led naturally to additional questions, but follow-up questions were not an option in this study. For example, asking the participants to elaborate on why they were bored would have provided more details. It could be beneficial to also follow-up with those participants who attended another school to gain a better understanding about why and how they made the decision to attend another school. It would be worthwhile to know what the new school offered that the previous school did not offer.

Another limitation to this study is relationships with parents. How relationships change with parents or what type of relationships the participants had with their parents were not directly addressed in any of the open-ended questions. Another limitation includes the sample size, as this study used a small sample of participants.

Recommendations

There are some recommendations that would further the research based on the strengths and limitations of the current study as well as with the literature reviewed in chapter 2. First, this study could be done in a metropolitan area to see if similar results are found. This study was conducted in a rural area. It would be valuable to see if results differ in a more populated area. It would be useful if participants could take the survey closer to turning 18 years old rather than waiting a few more years. Getting anonymous

responses from participants sooner closer to when they graduated and turned 18 years old could provide more detail and specifics into school drug use so participants do not have time to think about the situation and have different perspectives.

Obtaining more personal information from the participant could be useful as well. Knowing the gender and grade level of when participants engaged in school drug use could be revealing information. This information could help to know if one gender is more at risk and whether there is a grade level where students are more likely to engage in school drug use.

Finally, it would be beneficial to ask the participants to explain their experiences using more details. Getting more information from the participants regarding the boredom that they experienced in school could help local schools, reminding the participants in the open-ended questions to provide more of what they were thinking at the time, how they responded to school administrators, their parents, and what actions they took throughout the process. Further details could include questions about whether the out-of-school suspension improved future behaviors. Including these types of questions could provide more facts enriching the research surrounding school drug use.

Implications for Social Change

With this study comes some positive social change. From an organizational stand point, the school district could review their out-of-school suspension policy. The policy could be reviewed to what needs to be included, looking at any needed improvements to the policy. Possible changes could be in order depending on what the current policy states and what the limits are in the current policy. Reviewing the current policy could change

how school districts approach this with students and families so there is meaning. If there is no meaning for students, out-of-school suspensions may not have a positive impact. Depending on what the school district wants students to take away from out-of-school suspensions, this could possibly deter students from future discipline problems. Communicating with the family could have a positive impact. With family involvement, schools and parents can work together to prevent school drug use. Providing tools for parents to help them at home can have a positive impact on students. Parents can be positive resources for students.

Besides policies, school districts may want to visit with their community partners to discuss how to approach students about drug use. Maybe there are some changes to current programs that would be more effective for secondary students. Knowing that some students are influenced by their friends to engage in school drug use, or even the fact that one participant shared the likeness for drugs, working with local law enforcement and community prevention programs could have positive implications and change how students learn about the risks of school drug use.

Another implication of this study includes how students perceive school. Because some of the participants reported being bored, schools need to take a closer look at what these schools offer to students. Schools need to be sure that students feel connected to their school. Looking at what the school currently offers and how many students participate in activities, classes, clubs, and sports could promote some positive change and keep students from feeling bored.

Conclusion

Schools need to be proactive through their programs and policies working positively with their students and families regarding situations with drugs to ensure that any discipline given as a result for school drug use has meaning. More work needs to be done with community partners to confirm effectiveness of programs provided so students are aware of the risks of using drugs. Making students feel empowered to make good decisions may decrease others from copying negative behavior like school drug use. Students need to feel more connected to teachers and staff members to prevent the likelihood of engaging with drugs (Grana et al., 2010; Rodriguez, 2013), and to feel welcomed back to school following a suspension.

Tze et al. (2012) report that school drug use is not just a personal problem, but also a social problem. Bandura's social learning theory helps to understand that students are influenced to engage in school drug use because of those behaviors displayed around them. Friends have the ability to influence school drug use among others. Bandura's social learning theory helps to understand that the environment is an active part on how individuals behave. In conclusion, this study provides more knowledge regarding what influences school drug use among secondary students, and this study also recognizes that there is more research to be done.

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Appendix A: Open Ended Survey Questions

Question 1: What influenced you to use drugs on school campus when you attended Douglas High School?

Question 2: If these influences were not there, do you think you still would have used drugs on campus?

Question 3: As a result of your school drug use, you were suspended out-of-school. How would you describe your out-of- school suspension?

Question 4: What did you experience when you went back to school after your suspension?

Question 5: Did anything else happen as a result of the suspension?

Appendix B: Research Questions

Research Question 1: Does Alberta Bandura's theory of social learning impact school drug use?

Research Question 2: What are the factors that exist? In other words, if the factors weren't there, would the former high school students still feel influenced to engage in school drug use?

Research Question 3: How do former students who have been suspended for school drug use describe their suspension?

Research Question 4: How did former students feel about school drug use once the suspension was over?

Appendix C: Invite Letter

Dear former Douglas County student,

My name is Kathy Bomba-Edgerton. I am a doctoral candidate in the Psychology Department at Walden University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in psychology, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying what influences students to use drugs on campus that result in out-of-school suspensions. If you decide to participate, you are over 18 years old and you were suspended for school drug use. You will be asked to log in to a website to answer a few anonymous questions about school drug use and out-of-school suspensions. In particular, you will be asked questions about what influenced school drug use and you will be asked to about your out-of-school suspension. All of the questions are located on a website and all of the responses are sent back anonymously to me.

If you don't speak fluent English, the questions may be difficult to answer. Please do not participate if you are incarcerated or in a treatment facility. Additionally, if you are experiencing a crisis or are under the care of your doctor for mental or emotional needs, please do not participate. You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. By participating, I hope that others such as administrators, teachers, parents, and counselors will benefit by having a better understanding of school drug use and out-of-school suspensions.

Taking part in the study is your decision. Participation is confidential. Research information will be kept in secure locations such as a locked cabinet and with passwords for electronic data. The results of the study may be published or presented at profession meetings, but I will not have your identity.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at Katherine.bomba-edgerton@waldenu.edu or by phone at 775-588-9108 if you have study related questions or problems.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please read the rest of the documents enclosed then log on to the website provided. Please respond to the questions by June 30, 2016.

With kind regards,

Kathy Bomba-Edgerton
P.O. Box 2717
Stateline, NV 89449
775-588-9108
Katherine.bomba-edgerton@waldenu.edu

Appendix D: Superintendent Approval Letter

April 15, 2016

Kathy Bomba-Edgerton
Ph.D. Candidate

Dear Kathy,

Thank you for your email regarding your upcoming dissertation research. I know that the work involved in preparing your dissertation can be both rewarding and important in your growth as an educational leader.

Our cabinet meeting included a discussion around your research plans and your specific request. We understand that it is your intention to ask former students (who are now 18 years of age or older) to complete a survey of open-ended questions and we believe the information that you are requesting as outlined below can be provided without any violations of the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act. (FERPA).

Once you have received your IRB approval from your university, please let my office know which groups of senior classes you wish to contact. (For example, Douglas County School District: Class of 2014 and Class of 2013.)

In this regard, we believe your most appropriate procedure will be to obtain a master list of "directory information" on these students. Your letter would then be addressed to each of them, requesting that they consider participating in your research. Because they will all be 18 years of age, you should not need parental permission.

You may contact me for the directory spreadsheets when you are ready.

All the best to you in your pursuit of your Ph.D.!

Sincerely,
Teri White
Superintendent

Appendix E: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study focusing on out-of-school suspensions due to school drug use. The researcher is inviting former students from Douglas County who were suspended for school drug use to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Kathy Bomba-Edgerton, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to learn what influenced school drug use among former secondary students.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to log on to a website:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/douglas-students and respond to a few questions by June 30, 2016.

Here are some sample questions:

- What influenced you to use drugs on school campus when you attended Douglas High School?
- If these influences were not there, do you think you still would have used drugs on campus?
- How would you describe your suspension from school?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one in Douglas County will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing because neither your name nor any personal information is obtained. While you will not be provided any compensation, this study will help inform the school district, parents and the community about school drug use and out-of-school suspensions.

Privacy:

All information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not have your name or any of your personal information. The researcher has no way of linking responses back to any individuals. Data will be kept secure by locking all printed documents in a cabinet. All electronic data will be locked with passwords. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions, you may contact the researcher via email at Katherine.bomba-edgerton@waldenu.edu or by phone at 775-588-9108. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University’s approval number for this study is 05-18-16-0139193 and it expires on May 17, 2017.

Statement of Consent: Consent is given by proceeding to the website below and logging into the website acknowledging that you are over 18 years old; www.surveymonkey.com/r/douglas-students

Appendix F: IRB Permission Letter and Number

Dear Ms. Bomba-Edgerton,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Perceptions of Adolescents Suspended for School Drug Abuse."

Your approval # is 05-18-16-0139193. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on May 17, 2017. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden

website: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,
Libby Munson
Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance
Email: irb@waldenu.edu
Fax: 626-605-0472
Phone: 612-312-1283
Office address for Walden University:
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401