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Higher Education Leaders' Transformative Learning and Leadership Experiences Responding to Student Drug Abuse

James Vernon Battin
Walden University

Abstract

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Responding to Student Drug Abuse

by

James Vernon Battin

MA, Walden University, 2010

BS, Bowling Green State University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Adult Education Leadership

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August 2017

Abstract

Today's academic and social environment creates uncertainties, new roles, frequent changes, and challenging situations for student affairs academic leaders. The purpose of this study was to explore how student affairs academic leaders described their recent challenging experiences in addressing student drug abuse in higher education. The conceptual framework was based on adult transformative learning theory and applied transformative leadership perspectives. An interview format with open-ended questions was used to explore the experiences of 8 student affairs leaders who had faced challenging situations in the context of student drug abuse. A qualitative interpretive analysis was used that involved open coding of significant words and statements that were further classified into themes. Results from the leaders' experiences indicated 4 themes associated with transformative learning: challenge, reflection, constructive dialogue, and action, as well as 7 themes related to transformative leadership: accurate information, collaboration, constructive dialogue, critical reflection, responsibility, support, and vision. Critical reflection and vision were also found to have aided leaders faced with challenging situations. A significant finding was that all participant leaders asserted the importance of applying evidence-based research in the hope of developing positive action for both the students' well-being and the growth of the academic institution. The results of this study have the potential to inform best practice in adult transformative learning and adult transformative leadership, benefiting academic leaders facing challenging situations in their social and academic environments.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wife, Tina, who has supported me throughout my doctoral journey. Along the journey, we have faced new and sometimes heartbreaking challenges, principally with the unexpected loss of loved ones, which brought on many new responsibilities. Tina has demonstrated the qualities of an exceptional leader with her love and support; through this rigorous doctoral journey, she has persevered in creating positive change for our family and social environment. Thank you for making life comfortable.

Acknowledgments

      I never had anyone push me as hard as Dr. Alice Eichholz, my mentor and chair. I have learned and have gained new knowledge throughout our time together. I am forever grateful for her tough love. I am also thankful to my second committee member, Dr. Cheryl Keen, another beautiful woman who picked me up from my stagnation on many occasions with her quick, enlightening, friendly responses, pertinent articles, quality information, and advice; her support was treasured. I also want to acknowledge my mother, Margaret Mary Battin, a quality educator who has inspired and motivated me to dream big and to go beyond the ordinary, helping others along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Uncertainties and constant change in today's fast-paced society and academic environment often leave the academic leader overwhelmed and unable to meet challenges, overcome burdens, and create new opportunities (Beer et al., 2015; White, 2013). Mezirow (1991) asserted that when adults face challenging situations, they have difficulty learning and applying actions. Some of the most challenging issues that can quickly arise within institutions of higher education involve student drug abuse (Champion, Lewis, & Myers, 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Although research has shown that drug prevention strategies, models, and programs aid in deterring student drug abuse (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Walter & Kowalczyk, 2012), drug abuse remains (Champion et al., 2015). The academic environment may be affected by issues arising from drug use, such as bullying, dropouts, campus crime, poor enrollment, and lost technology (Hanson, Ventrurelli, & Fleckenstein, 2015). Such issues lead to challenging situations involving both the academic institution and the local community (Johnson & Newcorn, 2015; Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008) and create difficulties for academic leaders (Champion et al., 2015; Demers et al., 2013; Foster, Bass, & Bruce, 2011; Gomes, Song, Godwin, & Toriello, 2011; Ringwalt, Paschall, & Gitelman, 2011). In this investigation, I explored the experiences of academic leaders in their response to adversity in the context of student drug abuse issues as a vehicle for understanding the leaders' experiences of transformative learning and transformative leadership. This study

could help academic leaders apply best practices of transformative leadership and applied leadership, which could aid them in handling leadership responsibilities in addressing this and other critical issues in higher education.

In Chapter 1, I provide a background on higher education leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences in addressing critical issues, such as responding to student drug abuse. I then provide a description of the gap in the research literature, followed by a problem statement that describes the problem's relevance to today's academic leaders, academic institutions, and society. Further, I describe the purpose of the study and research question. Next, I define the conceptual framework, describe the nature of the study, and define key words and phrases. This is followed by a discussion of the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study. I conclude with an explanation of the significance of the study and a summary of Chapter 1.

Background

Research-based strategies, models, programs, and policies significantly contribute to the application of quality leadership in preventing student drug abuse in higher education (Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). In my investigation, I found numerous studies that highlighted quality leadership development and applied leadership behaviors as they could apply to academic leaders dealing with such things as student drug abuse. Such behaviors include networking, sharing power, engaging in rational dialogue (Donaldson & Scribner, 2003; Gmelch, 2013; Knapp, 2013; Simon, Christie, Graham, & Call, 2014), collaborating (Donaldson & Scribner, 2003; Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014), reflecting critically (Crudo-Capili & Concepcion,

2013; Knapp, 2013), promoting positive moral and ethical values (Dempster, Lovett, & Fluckiger, 2011; Gmelch, 2013; Nica, 2013; White, 2013), empowering others (Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014), providing accurate information to encourage positive action (Crudo-Capili & Concepcion, 2013; Rikkink, 2014), understanding responsibilities that significantly enable opportunities (Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013; Parker et al., 2011; Simon et al., 2014), achieving high outcomes, and creating dynamic academic institutional growth.

However, drug abuse in higher education is an ongoing problem, generating major concerns for social and academic institutions throughout the nation (Champion et al., 2015; Demers et al., 2013; Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The fast rate of change in higher education and modern society places leaders in many new roles, some of which evolve quickly. As they face new roles and unfamiliar situations, academic leaders can experience difficulty in applying positive leadership behaviors, which can, in turn, create stress levels that hinder the transformation of learning and the building of leadership capacities (Beer et al., 2015; White, 3013). Academic leaders often find themselves in difficult situations that are prevalent, complex, and dynamic, such as those presented by student drug abuse (Hanson et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Because of the limited research pertaining to academic leaders who have faced challenging situations, it is unclear how they are responding to such circumstances. In this study's exploration of the experiences of academic leaders who had faced challenging situations, student drug abuse was the focus in order to determine whether the best practices of leadership development and applied leadership

behaviors contributed to overcoming negative consequences of student drug abuse in higher education. In that regard, this study was needed to further aid the understanding of the transformative leadership development and transformative applied leadership behaviors of leaders who are involved in challenging situations such as student drug abuse in higher education.

Problem Statement

Today's academic and social environment creates uncertainties, new roles, and frequent change, which lead to challenging situations for which many academic leaders are not prepared. Leaders are left overwhelmed by the need to take on issues, overcome burdens, accept challenges, and create opportunities (Beer et al., 2015; White, 2013). Mezirow (1991) noted that it is difficult for adults to learn when they experience difficult situations. The prevalence of student drug abuse in higher education—which creates many challenging situations such as student crime, drug addiction, poor student retention, and student death—has the potential to severely impact the academic institution and social community (Champion et al., 2012; Demers et al., 2013; Hanson et al., 2015; Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). It is unclear how academic leaders are developing leadership capacities and applying leadership behaviors when they are faced with challenging situations such as those caused by student drug abuse. Problem situations can quickly, and unexpectedly, lead to many negative consequences for academic leaders and their institutions. There is an academic and social need to know more about how higher education leaders are reflecting or not reflecting the best practices of transformational adult learning and transformative leadership. More

research is needed to understand the challenging experiences of academic leaders in the context of student drug abuse in higher education, especially research focused on ways in which these leaders learn and lead that can further the development of applied leadership approaches.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how academic leaders described their recent challenging experiences in the context of addressing student drug abuse in higher education. This study explored the leadership capacities of academic leaders who had been recently involved in challenging drug abuse situations. The main objective of the study, using an interview format, was to develop further understanding of academic leadership experiences when faced with challenging situations in the context of student drug abuse in higher education.

Research Question

The research question was the following: How do higher education student affairs leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment?

Conceptual Framework

Mezirow's (1991) adult transformative learning theory and Apps's (1994) transformative new-era leadership perspectives grounded this study in terms of further understanding academic leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences in responding to student drug abuse. Mezirow's theory is based on the key transformative components of accurate information, empowerment of others, critical reflection,

knowledge sharing, and rational discourse significant to the development of new knowledge. Cranston (2014) applied adult transformation learning theory to identifying the constraints of teaching based on the experiences of academic leaders who are faced with ethical dilemmas. Brock (2010) also focused on adult transformative learning theory to better understand the experiences of students facing uncertainties as they enter new academic learning environments.

Apps (1994) developed transformative new-era leadership perspectives to make leaders caught up in rapid changes and uncertainties more aware of how to apply positive leadership behaviors. The key leadership components of Apps's transformative new-era leadership perspectives are the same as some of the components of adult transformative theory, including critical reflection and support that leaders can use to apply positive action. Other key components of transformative new-era leadership perspectives include praxis, trust, elimination of bias, challenging the self and others, empowerment, collaboration, and shared vision. Transformative new-era leadership perspectives have been used in other studies as a conceptual framework to support the building of leadership capacities in leaders who are involved in difficult situations of change and uncertainty. For instance, Einsiedel (1998) applied new-era modern leadership perspectives to help frame a study of emerging trends on college campuses and determined that successful institutions have leaders who face the challenges of society and provide academic programs that take action to address society's needs and concerns. Hall (2010) also used the transformative new-era leadership perspectives lens in analyzing contemporary academic leadership literature to determine leadership best

practices, finding that the key components of applied leadership are empowerment, shared leadership, shared vision, collaboration, and critical reflection. I provide a more detailed analysis of both studies in Chapter 2.

The conceptual framework of this study was used to develop an interview protocol that was aligned to the research question and sample population of academic leaders. The framework also provided a lens for data collection and analysis to further understand academic leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences in the context of responding to student drug abuse in their institutions. In Chapter 2, I provide more detailed discussion of both Mezirow's (1991) and Apps's (1994) theoretical lenses, as well as key elements of the framework that aligned with the central question, problem, and purpose of this study.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative interpretive study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) using interviews was used to gain rich description and understanding capturing the essences of the lived experiences of academic leaders. The participants were recruited from a professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues that supports academic student affairs leaders in creating campus environments that are healthy and safe. The administrators selected were those who responded to an invitation to participate presented in a member email sent out by the director of the organization and who reported that they had recently been involved in student drug prevention in higher education. The expectation was that a group of these participants who had 5 or more years' experience in their positions could provide an understanding of how and whether

adult transformative learning and transformative applied leadership concepts had been part of their approach. Data were collected through semistructured, open-ended interviews to allow academic leaders to reflect on experiences. Data were analyzed from transcripts of the interviews for significant words, phrases, and statements based on the conceptual framework and research question. The analysis consisted of using the adult transformative learning theory and the new-era leadership perspectives lenses to determine reflective practices of leadership, the basis for coding the data to determine emerging patterns and themes. Words, phrases, and statements were interpreted as belonging to the same code, which were then categorized and further themed, staying in alignment with the conceptual framework and research question, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Definitions

The following definitions are related to this study:

Academic leaders: For the purpose of this study, academic leaders were individuals in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators such as academic and student affairs administrators who held leadership positions in higher education and who self-reported having had experiences in the context of student drug abuse.

Adult transformative learning: A change of one's frame of reference based on a proper interpretation of a challenging experience resulting in the transformation of new meaning, such as a change in a belief or perspective that could lead to communicative action (Mezirow, 1991).

Rational discourse: An aid in the transformation of knowledge using accurate information in a nonbiased environment involving equal participation that allows for critical assessment of the issue at hand (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformative leadership: A perspective that enables leaders to adapt continually to uncertainty and change, which involves a process of learning leadership and adapting leadership skills through experience in building leadership capacities. Key components include critical reflection, collaboration, and clear communication (Apps, 1994), also referred to in literature as *new-era leadership perspectives*.

Assumptions

To clarify aspects of this study and support its reliability, I must identify the following assumptions, which were believed to be true but could not be demonstrated to be factual. It was assumed that participants had a complete understanding of the interview questions. It was also assumed that participants felt free to reflect on challenging situations in a safe and open environment, and that they provided honest and in-depth responses to interview questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative study was bound by the research problem, which addressed how academic leaders in higher education perceived their experience in challenging situations in the context of student drug abuse. The scope was narrowed by a sample population of student affairs leaders with a minimum of 2 years' leadership experience in higher education, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, with consideration for public and private institutions as well as profit-based institutions. The

scope did not include academic administrators in higher education, K–12 education,

online academic leaders, or academic leaders in corporate or small businesses involved in

continuing adult education. The theoretical constructs of Mezirow's (1991) adult

transformative learning and Apps's (1994) new-era modern leadership perspective also

determined the scope of the study. Other transformative learning theories and leadership

theories were not investigated in order to develop specific interview questions. The data

collected and the data analysis were based on Mezirow's and Apps's theories, further

narrowing the scope of the study. The potential transferability of the findings from this

study may inform future research in leadership development and applied leadership

behavior specific to critical issues in the academic and social environment.

Limitations

The sample population of academic leaders limited the transferability of results.

The sample included student affairs leaders in higher education from various academic

institutions throughout the United States who had responded to challenging situations in

the context of student drug abuse. Because of the broad range of academic leaders and

the variety of challenging experiences they reported, the results may not be transferable

to a specific population of local academic leaders who are involved in a precise

challenging issue, although the findings suggest further studies in that regard. The self-

selected nature of the sample may have resulted in hearing about more extreme

experiences from people who were seeking an opportunity to talk over difficulties, or

from people who had been particularly successful and wanted to talk about their

strategies. I am also aware that responding to drug abuse challenges on campus is very

time consuming, and those in the midst of a challenge may not have chosen to take time for an interview.

Another potential limitation of this study was my personal bias as the primary research tool in the development of the research question, collection of data, and data analysis. As an educator in higher education in the areas of community health, personal health, and drug use and abuse for the past 10 years, and as an educator who has been involved in a challenging situation involving students' drug issues, I may have had personal bias that influenced the development of interview questions and their interpretation. In order to address possible bias, I maintained a research journal to allow for critical reflection on the alignment of the study from its initiation until its conclusion. Procedures designed by Walden's Institutional Review Board and input from my research committee aided in keeping the study aligned and reducing bias to ensure the study's reliability.

Significance

The potential significance of this study resides in what it does to increase understanding of how higher education academic leaders learn and lead from their response to the management of challenging drug abuse situations. My hope is that this study will aid in the development of best practices related to adult transformative learning and transformative leadership. Because a challenging situation can be extremely harmful in its effect on the academic environment, the results of this study could aid in procedures for overcoming burdens, meeting challenges, and greeting positive opportunities in areas that pose difficulties to the academic environment. In that today's society presents

uncertainty and changes for academic leaders and students (Beer et al., 2015; White, 2013), the results of this study could also aid in the development of leadership programs and adult education programs on the social and academic environment, leading to improved adult transformational and transformational applied leadership behaviors.

Summary

Chapter 1 has introduced this study on higher education leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences in responding to student drug abuse. Mezirow (1991) noted that adults who face adversity have difficulty in learning and applying positive action. Much is unclear about how academic leaders in higher education are developing their leadership capacities and applying leadership behaviors when faced with challenging situations such as student drug abuse. To further understand the complexities of developing leadership capacities and applied leadership behaviors, this study explored the experiences of academic leaders in higher education who had faced challenging situations such as student drug abuse. The results of this study have the potential to aid best practice in adult transformative learning and adult transformative leadership benefiting academic leaders and their social and academic environments.

Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the library search strategies I used and their alignment to the research question, problem, and purpose of this study. The conceptual framework is also discussed in further detail, followed by its relationship to contemporary research addressing student drug abuse, adult transformative learning, and transformational leadership behaviors in a literature review. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the major themes and gaps that emerged from the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Contemporary research has indicated that student drug abuse remains systemic in higher education, creating challenging situations for many academic leaders, including student affairs leaders (Champione et al., 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Foster, Bass, & Bruce, 2011; Gomes, Song, Godwin, & Toriello, 2011; Ringwalt et al., 2011). Student drug abuse creates dynamic problems, including crime, teacher and student bullying, lack of resources, injuries, addiction, rape, student retention, attrition, limited support, and death, all of which may harm students and the academic and social environment (Hanson et al., 2015). Although higher education institutions provide drug awareness programs and drug abuse policies, models, and strategies based on empirical data regarding best practices for reeducation and elimination of drug abuse (Russett & Gressard, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Walter & Kowalczyk, 2012), recent research has indicated that student drug abuse remains prevalent in many institutions (Champion et al., 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Ringwalt et al., 2011). The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study (Merriam, 2009) was to explore how academic leaders in higher education described their learning and leadership experiences when they were confronted with challenging situations involving student drug use and abuse in higher education.

Mezirow (1991) asserted that when adults are faced with a difficult situation, it is difficult for them to learn. Because of the prevalence of drug abuse in higher education, it is uncertain how leaders in higher education such as student affairs leaders are learning and leading in response to these challenging situations regarding student drug abuse.

This chapter begins with the literature search strategy used, which involved library databases, specific search engines, and search terms designed to narrow the scope of the study in relationship to further understanding higher education leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences in responding to student drug abuse. To explore reflective, positive leadership and learning behaviors in this study, in the second section (describing the conceptual framework), I discuss key components of Mezirow's (1991) adult transformative learning theory and Apps's (1994) theory of new-era leadership perspectives. In this way, I establish adult transformative learning theory as the foundation for the dynamics of new learning and the development of new leadership capacities, as well as new-era transformative perspectives as a foundation for the application of positive leadership behaviors. This discussion includes an analysis of the application of transformative learning and transformative leadership in current studies correlated to a rationale for their use in this research.

The third section, which contains a literature review related to key variables, consists of a reasonably exhaustive review of the contemporary empirical literature associated with programs, policy models that address the prevention of student drug abuse in higher education, leadership development, and applied leadership behaviors. The synthesis in this section involves an analysis of the methodologies, strengths, and weaknesses of research studies, as well as a justification for the literature reviewed aligned with the central question of this study. In the final section, I summarize how the problem of student drug abuse has been addressed in higher education, leadership development in higher education, and applied leadership behavior. These are the major

themes I discuss in the literature review in relation to what is known and not known about the main dynamics analyzed in the literature review. Additionally, I provide a justification for the study based on the conceptual framework of transformative learning and leadership behaviors in relation to how academic leaders are approaching the problems of student drug abuse.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden Library provided me access to the following databases—Education Research Complete, ERIC, ProQuest, and Sage Premier—in which I used often-interrelated search terms to compile literature related to the research question and conceptual framework. The search terms included *campus drug abuse*, *student drug abuse*, *student affairs drug policy, student affairs leadership, substance abuse higher education*, *student affairs leadership difficulties*, *problematic leadership approaches*, *leadership development*, *Apps leadership*, *academic new-era leadership*, and *Mezirow*, with and without *transformative learning*. The Google search engine was also helpful in gathering literature from Google Scholar. Based on the key terms, appropriate articles were then cross-referenced for scholarly articles to further exhaust the literature review. The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators professional organization, and *Inside Higher Education* online news source were also used to generate ideas, identify field trends, and locate news about current research.

Conceptual Framework

Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory with an emphasis on rational discourse in the transformation of new meaning and Apps's (1994) perspectives on new-era leadership theory with an emphasis on the transformative new-era leadership behaviors during difficult experiences formed the foundation of the conceptual framework for this study. These lenses helped me to focus on how leaders learn and develop their leadership behavior skills in working with student drug abuse challenges. Both theories directly relate to the process of learning for adult leaders and provide a way to further understand experiences of student affairs leaders who have responded to student drug abuse in higher education. In the next two sections, I present a brief overview of both theories, followed by a description of previous research that has applied the constructs of transformative learning theory and transformative new-era leadership theory, concluding with how the current study explored this framework in that relationship.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1991) asserted that the context of transformative learning theory specifically related to constructivism (meaning constructed from experiences and praxis), critical theory (confrontation of social constraints in cultures), and social theory (negotiated social changes), which stress the need for autonomous, responsible thinking in new-era society. Mezirow explained that adults develop frames of reference (beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, concepts, and values) that define them as individuals and guide their actions. The transformation of new meaning develops when frames of references

are challenged by a difficult, significant, or critical (central) experience that is

problematic, such as student drug abuse in higher education, which can give cause for

reflecting critically. The transformation of new meaning occurs if there is a change of

one's frame of reference, such as a change in a belief or perspective that could lead to

communicative action, a key element in individual or social change transformation

(Habernas, 1981; Mezirow, 1991). Next, I discuss three core elements of Mezirow's

transformation theory: *central experience*, *critical refection*, and *rational discourse*.

These were described as the mechanics of transformational learning (Mezirow, 1995;

Taylor, 1998).

     Mezirow (1991) contended that the transformative process of new meaning

emerges when one confronts a disorienting dilemma related to a central experience, the

first core element in the transformation of learning. These central experiences vary for

individuals and have a great range; they include death, arguments, reading a book,

viewing a painting, divorce, politics, religion, and drug abuse. They can give cause to

reflect critically, which is the second core element in the transformation process.

     Mezirow (1991) asserted that when individuals confront a central experience, they

must interpret the experience in terms of what they perceive as proper according to their

circumstance to guide positive action. Mezirow referred to this as *premise reflection*,

part of the critical reflection process. Premise reflection involves an individual

understanding that there is a dilemma or distortion that leaves the individual unsettled,

which can lead to a process of reflection or reflection-in-action for proper interpretation.

This analysis of how an individual perceives, judges, and acts that can give cause for

making a perspective transformation in meaning. *Perspective transformation*, according to Mezirow, can lead to the development of unique plans of action away from one's old perception, with a significant relationship to the development of new opportunities and positive relationships.

The third core element of Mezirow's theory (1991), *rational discourse among groups or individuals*, permits an unbiased, accurately informed consensus, critical of assumptions from different perspectives, to determine meaning. Acknowledging that adults have difficulty in learning when faced with a dilemma, Mezirow's conception of rational discourse provides seven principles as a guide to create understanding in the transformation of knowledge. The first is that participants have accurate and complete information to prevent inconsistencies among individuals and groups adding focus and direction in the transformative learning process. The second is the importance of the individual being free from coercion and self-deception to strengthen a nonbiased, trusting environment for the exchange of viewpoints and ideas. The third is the ability to weigh evidence and evaluate arguments, which also calls for leaders to eliminate bias and judge situations fairly for all stakeholders. The fourth principle is that leaders must also have the ability to reflect critically and to create new ideas, opportunities, and new solutions. Being open to alternative perspectives is the fifth principle; such perspectives can bring new ideas and opportunities, as well as concerns and desires of participants in the rational discourse procedure. The importance of creating an equal-opportunity environment is the sixth principle; Mezirow thought that such an environment would allow all viewpoints to be considered. The seventh and final principle, accepting an informed, objective, and

rational consensus, validates the rational discourse process (Mezirow, 1991). When the seven rational discourse conditions outlined above are applied within a central experience, participants are expected to have positive conditions to critically assess the transformation of meaning to create positive action (Mezirow, 1997). When these rational discourse conditions are met among participants, transformation of perspectives can occur in the acquisition of new meaning (Mezirow, 1991).

Recently, Christie, Carey, Robertson, and Grainger (2015) emphasized that Mezirow's adult transformative learning theory has been used as a lens in many adult educational studies over the last couple of decades that have involved such central experiences as changing teaching procedures and confronting health issues and that have shown positive results. Baumgartner (2001) also pointed out that the adult transformative lens has been widely used to improve group relationships, mentoring, teaching environments, and collaborative inquiry. Recently, Cranston (2014) reinforced Mezirow's adult transformative learning theory by focusing the critical reflection component on the context of teaching to identify constraints of teaching in today's academic and social institutions in an attempt to expand the scholarship on teaching and learning. Brock (2010) applied transformative learning theory to the understanding of the learning experiences of college students involved in disorientating dilemmas or new roles. Brock determined that although other components of transformative theory were present, such as shared discourse, a catalyst to a disorientating dilemma (central experience) followed by reflective thought were the main components of the

transformative theory that moved individuals to a higher level of knowledge in the transformative process in establishing new meaning among students.

Marlow's (2012) study on promoting lifelong learners in the medical field also used the transformative learning lens and stressed that the most effective forms of continuing medical education involve programs that allow for critical reflection on one's assumption in the transformation of new meaning. Recently, Knapp (2013) applied the transformative learning lens as a guide to aid university dance students in establishing new meaning and purpose in the field of dance as well as their personal lifestyles. Knapp identified the transformative learning component of critical reflection as a means to help transform frames of reference to eliminate personal and group biases. Further, rational discourse was identified as an essential means to promote new ideas, share artistic concepts, create opportunities, and improve group relationships.

Although Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory provided a guide to Cranston's (2011) study, Apps's (1994) new-era modern leadership perspectives can also be seen reflected in the Cranston study. Cranston explained that in order to serve the best interests of today's social and educational environments, educators must engage in premise reflection (Mezirow, 1991), challenge, and ask critical questions concerning components of what Apps (1994) termed *new-era leadership-embedded ideologies* in the transformation of learning and leadership development on social and academic levels. Because Mezirow's (1998) concepts of critical experience, reflection, and rational discourse will be among the lenses applied to the experiences of college leaders in this study, in the next section, I discuss Apps's transformative new-era leadership.

New-Era Transformative Leadership

In this study, Apps's (1994) new-era transformative leadership perspectives were used in focusing on the experiences of higher education leaders in transformative learning and leadership when responding to student drug abuse. Apps ascertained that educational leadership in many instances develops from cultural beliefs passed on through generations. Because new-era society reflects a time of rapid social and technological change, Apps stressed that new-era leaders must continually adapt their leadership approach to changes. To aid in the development of new-era leadership capacities, Apps established a new-era approach to new-era leadership, a transformative process in learning leadership and adapting leadership skills according to the experience, which is referred to as *new-era transformative leadership* in this study.

The foundation of the new-era transformative leadership approach was developed from both the *transactional approach* (based on leaders working with followers in reaching objectives valued by both parties) and the *transformational approach* (based on leaders with high moral values communicating clearly and positively to motivate followers) to leadership (Apps, 1994). Both of Apps's leadership approaches focused on the needs, concerns, and desires of participants in reaching objectives. Because new-era transformative leadership theory focuses on dynamic leadership behaviors according to experiences of reaching positive outcomes, the new-era transformative leadership lens helped to focus this investigation on student affairs leaders' experiences of learning and leading in correlation to addressing student drug abuse in higher education. Apps

asserted that because leadership is not linear and change is random, leaders must continually build upon their leadership capacities in order to effect positive change.

Apps's (1994) perspectives on a new-era leadership approach to aid leadership transformation are interrelated with an emphasis on reflecting critically on personal values and beliefs. Apps postulated that leaders who understand the importance of critical reflection in order to move to a higher level of consciousness maintain core values and beliefs. Apps's perspective may be applied to the fast-paced student affairs higher education environment, where leadership approaches may be challenging. If new-era leaders have the ability to share power as well as empower others, according to Apps, this will allow for new learning opportunities for all stakeholders.

Apps (1994) stressed that new-era leaders understand that power is a collection of relationships. Listening, examining, and analyzing are essential in the sharing of power in the transformative new-era leadership process. Apps also stressed that new-era leaders understand that change can happen quickly, work to create clarity by asking analytical questions, and demand accurate information to assist critical reflection to overcome burdens and difficult experiences. Apps's new era-leadership perspectives pertain to new-era leaders who become progressive and flexible, maintain an open mind, and allow for new ideas and opportunities in moving toward objectives. New-era leaders, according to Apps, eliminate the fear-of-failure syndrome and take risks while also understanding the need to reflect critically on difficult situations in order to effect positive change in finding new meaning for the good of the whole.

According to Apps (1994), new-era leaders encourage and support individuals and groups so that they too are engaged, responsible, and accountable in striving for quality objectives. Apps asserted that new-era leaders who challenge groups and individuals prevent complacency and assist them in becoming more knowledgeable in their skills. Appreciating humor was another aspect of Apps' transformative new-era leadership perspective. When used wisely can ease tensions. Apps also pointed out that new-era leaders who collaborate with other academic leaders learn new procedures from multiple perspectives in a reflective process. Apps stressed the importance of new-era leaders to learn the organizational mission, values, and vision in order to incorporate strategies that promote organizational success. New-era leaders know that leadership is ongoing processes of critically reflecting on personal and leadership experiences; they also encourage others to become lifelong learners so that they too can become leaders in helping others based on needs, concerns, and desires (Apps, 1994).

Many of these transformative new-era leadership characteristics cited by Apps (1994) have been used to frame past research to aid in the improvement of leadership capacities, whether in the development of an individual or an organization. The application of Apps's (1994) new perspective on leadership in modern society has been used as a conceptual framework in development of different leadership development programs-- educational, industrial, political, and religious (Apps, 1994; Barnard, 1999; Einsiedel Jr., 1998; Hall, 2010; Hill & Welton, 2008; Knapp, 2013; Main, 1997; Phipps, Prieto, & Ndinguri, 2013). This lens has provided a focus on positive leadership change based on the situation to enhance change. For example, in relationship to nonlinear

economic development, Barnard (1999) used transformative new-era leadership lens in relationship to individuals working in collaboration on the application of hard information to enhance best practices for organizational growth. Hall (2010) also used the transformative new-era leadership approach in an analysis of contemporary academic leadership literature to help reveal leadership themes in today's society. Hall determined that best practices in leadership included empowerment, shared leadership, shared vision collaboration, critical reflection, and engagement in decision making that increases leadership capacities. These are some of the same critical components of Apps's transformative new-era leadership that promotes dynamic leadership.

Recently, Apps's (1994) new-era leadership constructs were reflected in Einsiedel's (2013) investigation of changes and emerging trends in continuing education functions in higher education. Einsiedel determined the need to provide programs that reflected critical issues that society is facing if the programs were to be successful in the future. Main's (1997) study of adult education principles in the workplace encouraged praxis, to engage workers in creating positive outcomes, a key aspect of both Apps's new-era leadership and Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Main (1997) determined that when accurate information is provided to workers, intended outcomes are achieved efficiently, a key concept in both new-era leadership and transformative theory. Knapp (2013) related to Apps's (1985) book Teaching from the Heart in his investigation of teaching and learning with passion. Transformative new-era leadership was revealed in the collaboration of leaders who had high values and beliefs while working with

followers in reaching objectives, while at the same time creating positive influences in the social environment.

The new-era transformative leadership lens was reflected in Phipps' (2013) adult study of self-efficacy. Phipps asserted much like Apps (1991) that because of the fast-pace of society many adults are not prepared to take on new learning or working opportunities and left behind in their ability to contribute as members of society. Phipps stressed for leaders within different environments such as the industrial and technological to put in opportunities for adults to acquire new knowledge to help increase self-efficacy, which in turn creates a dynamic relationship between the adult learner and the organization aiding in promotions, job retention, and personal motivational involvement for the success of the adult and the group. Phipps asserted that adults want to learn, stressing the importance for leaders to provide new learning opportunities and assist them in acquiring new knowledge both key perspectives in the transformative new-era leadership theory.

Apps's (1994) new-era transformational lens focuses on significant new-era leadership perspectives related to the experiences of student affairs leaders in higher education in the context of student drug abuse. The new-era transformative lens links the perspectives of new-era leadership with the following: (a) critical reflections on personal values and beliefs; (b) the sharing of power; (c) the empowering of others; (d) the importance of creating learning opportunities; (e) the understanding of power as a collection of relationships based on listening, examining, and analyzing; (f) an understanding that change can happen quickly; and (g) the understanding that people

need to work to create clarity by asking analytical questions and demanding accurate information. The new-era transformative leadership lens also focuses on the leadership perspectives of leaders, the importance of being progressive and flexible with an open mind, allowing for new ideas and opportunities to arise, the elimination of the fear of failure syndrome, taking risks while reflecting critically on difficult situations to create positive change, and finding new meaning that is good for the whole. The new-era transformative leadership lens perspectives also focuses on encouragement and support while engaging responsibility and accountability, striving for quality objectives; challenging groups and individuals to prevent complacency and to assist them in becoming more knowledgeable; and collaborating with other academic leaders to learn new procedures (Apps, 1994).

In the next section, both Mezirow's (1991) and Apps's (1994) theories are discussed in relationship to my investigation, which pursues an understanding of the learning and leading of student affairs leaders as they describe their experiences related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment.

Conceptual Framework Summary

Both the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) and the new-era transformative leadership theory (Apps, 1994) appeal to this investigation of understanding experiences of higher education student affairs leaders in the context of student drug abuse. Transformative learning theory has been used as a framework to aid in the transformation of new knowledge and the transformative new-era leadership theory has been applied to improved current leadership behavior in many investigations. Key

components of both theories have been applied in research related to critical reflection, and the effects of providing support, collaboration, and accurate information. The rationale for using transformative adult learning theory and the transformative new-era leadership theory is to provide a basis for developing interview questions and interpreting the data related to understanding how student affairs leaders learn and reflect leadership behaviors from their experiences when faced with higher educational student drug abuse. As previously stated both theories have been applied in past research as a conceptual frame that was interested in improving leadership and learning development of individuals and groups in different environments. Although the theories were not specifically designed for higher education, both theories appeal to the positive development among individuals and groups in different environments.

Based on the assumption of the importance of individual and group development those theories validate the conceptual design to address the understanding of how student affair leaders learn and reflect leadership skills from difficult experiences such as drug abuse behavior among students in higher education. Neither of the theories have been fully integrated to investigate the experiences of student affairs leaders or to determine how they learn and reflect on their leadership skills when faced with a difficult experience. However, the new-era transformative leadership lens and the adult transformative learning lens will guide this study based on the underlining core principles of each. Together, these principles allow for the creation of an environment that enables individuals and groups to participate equally in an unbiased way in a critical reflective process. By integrating both theories, this investigation can focus on the challenging

situation of leadership experiences in the context of student drug abuse, which aligns with the research question. Together, both theories will form the basis for the development of an interview protocol and for the data analysis.

If we understood more of how the concepts in Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory and Apps's (1994) transformative leadership theory were or were not reflected in the experiences of student affairs leaders who have attempted to respond to student drug abuse in higher education, that understanding might contribute to best practices in learning and leadership for these academic leaders in their response to student drug abuse in higher education. Transformative learning theory and transformative new-era leadership theory align with the purpose, problem, and central question of this study: How do higher education leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment? Together the combined lenses guide the development of interview questions and interpretative of the resulting data.

It is the intent of this study, by using the new-era transformative lens in connection with the adult transformative learning lens, to help further understand how student affair leaders learn from their response in the management of drug abuse situations in the hopes of aiding best practices

Literature Review of Key Components

The literature review begins with a discussion based on contemporary research addressing student drug abuse in association with drug abuse policies, programs, or strategies in higher education. Next, leadership development in higher education in

relationship to problematic leadership approaches is reviewed, followed by a review of applied leadership behaviors in higher education that have shown success, such as overcoming burdens, creating new opportunities, and meeting new challenges. Those discussions align with the problem, purpose, and research question of this study, which includes the methodologies, strengths, and weaknesses of the research reviewed. Finally, studies are synthesized in relationship to prominent themes, gaps related to the research questions, and a rationale as to why the literature selected was meaningful.

Contemporary research indicates that drug abuse remains prevalent among students in higher education despite drug abuse programs, policies, and strategies, causing challenging situations such as crime, violence, addiction, rape, attrition, and at times death—all of which has deeply concerned the nation's academic leaders (Arria et al., 2013; Champion et al., 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Ringwaltet al., 2011). Based on Mezirow's (1991) transformative theory, adults have difficulty learning when faced with adversity. Because of limited research on experiences of student affairs leaders correlated to student drug abuse in higher education, it is uncertain how academic leaders such as student affairs leaders are learning and leading when faced with drug-abuse challenging situations. This investigation seeks to explore the experience of student affairs leaders who have faced challenging student drug situations in higher education to aid further understanding of applied leadership practice and leadership learning behaviors in response to challenging drug abuse situations to aid in the reduction of student drug abuse.

Addressing Student Drug Abuse

Prior research indicated that drug abuse was systemic among students in higher education and continually created difficult situations in the social and academic environment notwithstanding research-based drug abuse policies, rules, and regulations to deter student drug abuse (Champion et al., 2012; Demers et al., 2013; Russett & Gressard, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education (2008) explained that programs and policies in higher education do help to reduce drug abuse. However, the U.S. Department of Education warned that, while positive drug awareness procedures might be in place in higher education institutions, this did not mean that drug abuse was non-existent or not prevalent on campus. Drug abuse does not discriminate between large academic institutions or small city colleges; drug abuse is ongoing and sometimes is directly related to the social environment (Hanson et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Whether using alcohol, which is a stimulant and a depressant, or highly psychologically addictive opioids drugs, educational institutions must be aware of the different potential harmful effects that drugs can cause in order to combat their negative effects with positive educational awareness programs (Hanson et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Higher educational institutions must also note that drug abuse is dynamic, which can be seen in heroin abuse in the Northeast United States or the abuse of methadone throughout the Southwest (Hanson et al., 2015). Academic leadership awareness can aid in developing the proper procedure to help combat specific drugs that are prevalent in the social and academic environment of learning institutions (Hanson et al., 2015).

Because of the prevalence of drug abuse among students in institutes of higher education and the different types of abuse, whether alcohol binge drinking (Ringwalt et al., 2015) or the use of highly addictive opioids for tension relief (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), academic leaders have been addressing student drug abuse with a variety of approaches. Such approaches include personal-health awareness programs, reduction of on-campus alcohol sales, police monitoring, and parental involvement to help curtail specific drug-abuse issues (Ringwalt et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Russett and Gressard (2015) developed an educational approach called Teaching Responsible Alcohol Choices and Knowledge (TRACK) to address students' high-risk drinking behaviors. Russett and Gressard's quantitative study was framed using a stage-of-change model associated with alcohol abuse that included the stages pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, maintenance, and relapse and involved a sample population of 431 students from 10 sororities and 11 fraternities. The authors provided 21 full programs using three interrelated phases of engagement—an initial meeting, peer education, and a final program—to address high-risk drinking, motivation, and behavior change.

In Russett and Gressard's (2015) study, the initial meeting focused on the student's needs and concerns related to high alcohol risk to determine the possible stage of alcohol risk. The second phase, peer education, consisted of "change talk" with peer educators about motivation, establishing goals, and ideas to change alcohol-related risk behaviors. The third phase, the final program, was primarily student driven and continued with change talk about refraining while others drink, drug-abuse education,

drinking in moderation, the avoidance of high-risk drinking, and the consequences of alcohol abuse. The study's survey results indicated that the program caused the students to reflect on their alcohol abuse and on possibly changing their risky behaviors. Russett and Gressard postulated that the TRACK program shows promise because it provides high-risk groups of students, such as those in sororities and fraternities, opportunities to present their concerns and ideas so that the academic institution can implement an effective procedure to reduce alcohol abuse. The authors asserted that academic leaders must stay abreast of the dynamic social and academic student drug culture, hear the voices of the students, and aid in the approaches to effectively address student drug abuse.

Approaches to dealing with drug abuse vary among the academic institutions and the students. Arria et al. (2013), in their four-year quantitative study of illicit drug use among college students, determined that illicit drug abuse was a major cause of discontinuous enrollment. Arria et al. stressed the need for higher education leaders to become involved early in the fight against student drug abuse by implementing intervention programs specific to the students' illicit drug of choice. Arria et al.'s study primarily focused on use of marijuana, alcohol, inhalants, cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, amphetamines/methamphetamines, and Ecstasy. Although Arria et al. did not offer any intervention program concerning student drug abuse, they suggested that academic leaders and families of students collaborate to discuss appropriate intervention programs that can put students back on their original intended path to achieve their higher education goals. Arria called for immediate discussions of families and academic leader

in the process of developing a drug intervention program focused on early prevention that is dynamic. A key concern regarding the discussion is through positive dialogue in a collaborative process as presented by Apps (1994) and Mezirow (1991) to aid in the transformative process of developing an intervention program.

Because alcohol-related deaths among students have increased, Ringwalt et al. (2015) also recommended that higher education institutions enact programs and strategies to prevent student drug abuse before something catastrophic happens. However, it was Ringwalt et al.'s suggestion that many higher education institutions will only enact drug-abuse-prevention procedures after negative incidents already have occurred. Ringwalt et al.'s quantitative investigation focused on identification of key programs and strategies to help prevent and control the abuse of alcohol among higher education students. Some of those programs and strategies included sobriety checkpoints, reduction of alcohol sales around the institutions, and working closely with community leaders to implement alcohol prevention strategies.

Although Ringwalt et al.'s (2015) study did reveal positive results of programs and strategies seeking to prevent drug abuse, such results were limited to direct understanding of the correlation between best practices of alcohol prevention and deaths among students. Ringwalt et al., much like Arria et al. (2013), stressed the need for the academic institution leaders to work collectively with the community in the development of positive relationship to help strengthen programs to reduce student alcohol abuse, which involves engaging with key concepts in the transformative process of learning and leading.

Both Arria (2013) and Ringwalt et al. (2011) revealed the difficulties academic leaders face in reducing drug abuse among higher education students. In 2016, the National Council on Patient Information and Education of Students (NCPIES) emphasized that although the abuse of alcohol as a drug is a major concern of academic leaders across the nation, illicit use of prescription drugs such as pain relievers, sedatives, and stimulants are on the rise among college students. NCPIES asserted that without parental guidance and support college students are subject to drug temptations and the stresses of college life. Based on empirical research, NCPIES asserted that some of the temptation and stressors are associated with the pressures of high GPAs, diet, and enhanced athletic performance. NCPIES emphasized that educators should become more aware of illicit abuse of prescription drugs, most notably performance-enhancing stimulants in order to address their illegal use and abuse adequately.

Akins's (2011) research provided and awareness to educators to help address the increase of prescription drugs on college campuses that students use for cognitive and performance enhancement. Akins (2011) did not suggest a prevention strategy addressing illegal or unnecessary use of cognitive enhancement prescription stimulants. However, because of increased pharmacological dependence among students, Akins did suggest that academic leaders and researchers take notice of stimulant use as cognitive enhancers and their ethical implications while addressing drug prevention and student health in future discussions and research.

Although Ringwalt (2011) provided effective ways to monitor and control alcohol consumption among students, Moshki's et al. (2014) quantitative study revealed that

behavior prevention methods such as life-training skills in drug awareness can aid in the reduction of higher education student drug abuse. Moshki et al. determined that life-training skills aid in student knowledge about preventative behaviors and decreases risks of drug abuse. Moshki et al. also ascertained that drug awareness programs provide better insights into the harmful effects of drugs. In addition to those findings, Moshki et al. concluded that students who come from families that have high academic levels have more life-training skills in drug abuse preventive behaviors.

As discussed earlier, the U.S. Department of Education (2008) not only warned of the potential and continuing dangers of drug abuse in higher education, but also provided model programs that have shown some success. Some of these award-winning, research-based programs come from universities throughout the country, including Boston College, San Diego State University, State University of New York, Syracuse University, University at Albany, and the University of Northern Colorado . They have developed positive relationships with community leaders to help address alcohol consumption and especially underage drinking. Another award winner, Grand Valley State University, provided a media campaign on the negative consequences of drug abuse, alcohol-free housing for students, and counseling for recovering students, aiding in the reduction of binge drinking from 37% in 1999 to 25% in 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Models that included the restriction of alcohol promotions, banning the sale of alcohol on campus, providing alcohol-free social events applied by Boston College, Lehigh University, and monitoring fraternities and sororities applied by University of Arizona all showed promise in the re-education of higher education students regarding

abusive alcoholic behaviors (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The award-winning

Massachusetts Institute of Technology's quantitative study identified high-risk drinkers

through a survey and provided them with drug-abuse intervention, which has reduced the

risk of heavy drinking by 38% since the initiation of the program in 2000 (U.S.

Department of Education, 2008). The use of strict disciplinary measures on repeat

offenders, along with the notification of the students' parents, to curtail drug abuse was

also part of some award-winning strategies to address student drug abuse that included

Boston College, Syracuse University, and The State University of New York at New

Paltz (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Based on quantitative survey reports,

Boston College determined that the severe punishment for students who disregarded the

college's alcohol and drug-abuse policy and the ban on marketing or selling alcohol at the

college's events reduced alcohol abuse by 33% among seniors. Police reports in the

Boston community also indicated that students' abusive alcohol behaviors declined from

43% to 16% within one semester. Providing student drug-use and abuse courses faculty

training on student drug abuse and health-awareness clinics were other positive drug-

abuse strategies that were designed to help academic leaders address student drug abuse

and that effectively reduced alcohol abuse (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Because of the consistent evidence of ongoing drug abuse on campus in higher

education, Fachini, Aliane, Martinez, and Furtado (2012) addressed student drug abuse in

their systematic review of literature that related to higher education student intervention

programs specific to alcohol abuse and efficacy treatment programs. Using a meta-

analysis based on positive empirical data Fachini et al. summarized the efficacy of brief

alcohol screening intervention for college students that they called BASICS. Fachini et al. explained that BASICS was an intervention method that was delivered face-to-face with empathy, warmth, and motivation with feedback to aid students in changing alcohol abusive behaviors. They analyzed 18 pertinent studies related to the effect of BASICS motivational interviews, personalized feedback, and face-to-face intervention of students in higher education. Fachini et al. determined that addressing student alcohol abuse through early intervention could lower both alcohol consumption and negative results specific to high-risk higher education students.

Walter and Kowalczyk (2011), in their quantitative study of the effectiveness of alcohol policies in higher education, noted the negative consequences related to heavy drug abuse associated with alcohol and stressed that alcohol abuse is a possible gateway to heavier drug abuse and serious student issues such as suicide attempts, addiction, unwanted sexual advances, and fierce arguments. Walter and Kowalczyk's study was limited to four universities in a Midwestern city; their results indicated that even with alcohol polices in place students continued to abuse alcohol. Walter and Kowalczyk (2011) determined that alcohol abuse affects certain populations more than others, including males, student athletes, and students over 21. Although Arria et al. (2013) called for academic leaders to implement drug abuse programs specific to the students' illicit drug of choice, Walter and Kowalczyk suggested academic leaders put in place intervention programs that target specific populations who are vulnerable to drug abuse instead of a drug abuse program that is universal to the college environment. Similar to Ringwalt et al. (2011), Walter and Kowalczyk also emphasized that academic leaders

should use best practices in environmental strategies to reduce student drug abuse, which include limiting alcohol both off and on campus and providing non-alcohol recreational opportunities.

In a similar quantitative study involving 422 freshmen, Marshall et al. (2011) focused on the strict alcohol and abuse policies of Northeastern University. Key components of the policy included the fact that any public intoxication, driving while under the influence, or possession or consumption of alcohol by a minor was considered a severe punishable offense, with potential punishments including expulsion. Marshall et al. determined, as did Akins (2011) and Walter and Kowalczyk (2011), that students often did not know about the university's drug abuse policies. Marshall et al. asserted that students who knew of the drug abuse policies drank less than the students who were unaware of the drug abuse policies. Academic leaders who take this into consideration provide students with hard copies of the academic drug abuse policies when addressing student drug use and abuse (Akins, 2011).

Notwithstanding of positive programs, policies, and strategies that help deter drug abuse, it was the belief of Champion et al. (2015) that because drug abuse, especially alcohol abuse, remained prevalent over the past couple of decades causing a serious problem among students and academic institutions, student drug abuses are not being addressed effectively. Champion et al. stressed that newer preventative drug abuse models were needed to address higher education student drug abuse. Champion et al. explained that their investigation focused on alcohol abuse because it is a primary concern of academic leaders in the continued development of maintaining and creating a

healthy academic environment for the institution and the emotional and physical well-being of students. Because of the limited research concerning students' health beliefs related to social norms of drug abuse, Champion et al. explored that relationship to help academic leaders build better antidrug programs for today's higher education student. Champion et al. conducted their quantitative investigation in the Southeast involving three universities with a sample population of 283 students. Champion et al. gathered data from survey questionnaires that focused on personal health beliefs and social norms related to alcohol abuse. The analysis of data determined that academic leaders can better address student drug abuse by implementing drug abuse intervention programs that are geared to the students' personal health and social health beliefs that focus on a mature approach to drinking alcohol that strives for moderation in the prevention of alcohol abuse. Because of the limitation of the specific geographical area, Champion et al. stressed that future research should investigate the influence of students' health beliefs using random sampling over a wider geographic area. Another consideration was to involve a longitudinal study using cohorts to determine alcohol-related health beliefs from freshmen to senior year.

Akins (2011), Walter and Kowalczyk (2011), and the U.S. Department of Education (2008) indicated that because of the differences in the effects of drugs and how they are used for cognitive enhancement, tension relief, performance enhancement, weight loss, and sexual enhancement, it can be very perplexing for academic leaders to address their abuse in relation to the academic institution's drug abuse policies and procedures. Akins, Holloway and Bennett (2012), Moshi et al. (2014), NCPIES (2016),

and Walter and Kowalczyk all provided academic leaders with an awareness of the newer methods needed to address drug abuse, such as personal drug abuse intervention programs and research-based educational programs focused on prescription drug abuse.

Research-based procedures and policies designed to overcome drug abuse, such as the Russett and Gressard's (2015) TRACK study based on the stage-change model, the Moshi et al.'s (2014) drug-abuse behavior prevention methods that used life-training skills, and the award-winning student drug-abuse models presented by the U.S. Department of Education (2008), provide academic leaders helpful ways to address drug abuse. As Champion et al. (2015) suggested, because of the ongoing drug abuse in higher education, preventative programs needed to improve in effectiveness to contest drug abuse among students. Champion et al., Moshi et al., NCPIES (2016), and the U.S. Department of Education (2008) provided awareness to academic leaders of the prevalence of drug abuse among higher education students and offer ways to help reduce and deter in addressing drug abuse among students in higher education. Emerging from the above studies was the importance for academic leaders to become dynamic in the collaboration with the community, students, faculty, and parents in addressing student drug abuse in higher education (Champion et al., 2015; NCPIES, 2016; Walter and Kowalczyk (2011), U.S. Department of Education, 2008). In the next section, leadership development in higher education is reviewed as leaders prepare or become involved in unexpected roles.

Leadership Development in Higher Education

It is uncertain how academic leaders in higher education, such as student affairs leaders, are learning and leading in reaction to challenging drug abuse situations. In this section, contemporary research in leadership development is reviewed in relationship to the key components of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory and Apps's (1994) new-era modern leadership perspectives. Key components of both theories that were discussed in the conceptual framework included developing plans of action, developing new relationships, and exploring new possibilities. Other components included the strength to take responsibility when faced with difficult situations; and rational discourse, which involves reflecting critically on accurate information in a nonbiased, equally contributing environment. Discussed next in relationship to the transformative learning and leadership theories are some of the significance components of leadership development determined by contemporary research such as critical reflection, establishing trust, taking responsibility, understanding world issues, and support of new and aspiring leaders in the continued development of leadership capacities to affect quality leaders. This section ends with a summary of positive leadership components in relationship to leadership development.

Gmelch (2013) stressed that a leadership crisis existed in institutions of higher learning in that higher education leaders appeared unprepared for the many challenges and changes occurring in the academic environment. This has creating unwanted stressful situations in both their personal and their academic lives. Gmelch's assumption was that too few universities support continued development of their academic leaders

and designed research to aid in campus leadership development. Gmelch's investigation

involved a one-year cohort leadership training program centered on the three spheres of

leadership developed from a joint partnership of three academic deans from their colleges

who provided 28 academic leader participants. The 28 academic leaders from the three

colleges joined   as cohorts in an academic leadership forum. Gmelch developed a pre-

and post-survey for gathering data. Gmelch's literature review of leadership

development asserted that leaders learn from one another in a supportive environment

when there is time for reflection, permitting honest feedback. Daloz, Keen, Keen, and

Parks (1996) also stressed that shared experiences provided expressive conversation in

the development of new meaning.

Gmelch (2013) asserted that leaders should become more involved in leadership

development programs such as cohort leadership programs. Gmelch discussed key

components of leadership development stressing the need for decisive leadership support

of aspiring leaders who were involved in leadership development programs. Gmelch

found significance in leaders developing the abilities to stay in tune with world issues,

identify beliefs, and accept feedback as significant components in leadership

development that can create quality leaders in today's society.

Gmelch (2013) determined three intersecting spheres of leadership development

for the analytical framework—conceptual understanding, skill development, and

reflective practice. The first sphere, conceptual understanding, was based on

understanding roles and responsibilities, empowering others, and setting the direction in

the building of a dynamic educational community. The understanding of roles and

responsibilities was a key component in transformative learning that can move the learner

to what Mezirow (1991) called a higher level of knowledge. The empowering of others

in the use of their abilities and skills to set directions with accurate information can be a

positive new-era leadership perspective as determined by Apps (1994) essential for

dynamic leadership in today's society and when employed it can create a positive,

effective environment to allow stakeholders to reach outcomes. Gmelch asserted that

when interrelated with the second sphere, skill development, leaders improve their

leadership capacities as they learn through workshops and training programs and then

apply their new skills in leading real-world situations to create dynamic leadership

development. Gmelch's third intersected sphere, reflective practice, revealed key

components of both Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Apps's new-era

modern leadership perspectives in relationship to reflection to creating new meaning and

positive action. Gmelch explained that good leaders use reflective action as a guide, a

critical leadership behavior when a leader is confronted with stressful or difficult

situations.

Gmelch's (2013) investigation of leadership development within cohorts, framed

by the three spheres of development revealed that a supportive mentor, one who

implement reflective dialogue among cohort participants and who encourages supportive

networking benefits the development of new leaders. Gmelch also asserted that academic

leaders and institutions that provide progressive leadership learning opportunities and

those institutions that create leadership learning opportunities applicable to the needs,

concerns, and desires of the academic institution assist both the development of the leader

and the academic institution. Gmelch determined that the importance of building

leadership through reinforcement of positive ideas learned through intervention with

others based on trust were also key components of leadership development. Another key

component that emerged from the investigation of the cohort leadership program was in

the importance for leaders to regularly take the time to reflect critically, allowing for

positive actions and the use of corrective feeds based on high morals and ethics. The

investigation determined leaders who have the ability to step back and see the big picture

of the system and worldly developments, who can persevere through long stretches of

difficulties are better qualified to lead, essential in modern academic leadership

development.

Donaldson and Scribner (2003) confirmed the benefits of cohorts in their study on

fostering transformative learning in leadership. Donaldson and Scribner's field-based

action research took place within five Missouri universities over a 10-year period. The

case study investigation involved 67 midcareer academic leaders who participated in a 2-

year cohort leadership development program where they discussed case studies of

organizational difficulties. The action research of the cohort was to determine ways to

overcome organizational difficulties using the collective leadership capacities.

Donaldson and Scribner (2003) determined that cohorts allow individuals to

develop a better ability to explore assumptions and question sociocultural norms as actors

within the organization. They explained that cohorts are dynamic social structures

subject to burdens, challenges, and opportunities in striving for group outcomes.

Effective cohorts provide beneficial leadership development that include creating

authentic relationships based on trust and support among members, critical to promoting

new meaning among members and for the cohort's effectiveness. Support in the form of

mentoring was also determined as essential for the improvement of leadership capacities

in Gmelch's (2013). Other key leadership development components determined by

Donaldson and Scribner included the need for each member to reflect critically to

evaluate self and others concerning experiences to focus outcomes to the goals of an

organization's mission.

Donaldson and Scribner (2003) emphasized that the ability to critically reflect

allows for new perceptions and that rational dialogue among members promotes actions

that aid in the construction and evaluation of new meaning. An important aspect of the

critical reflection process as found in their study was the importance of collaborating with

others in taking action. Cohorts allow individuals to have the ability to add to existing

concepts, challenge ideas, explore perspectives, assumptions, and beliefs, and create

social networks that foster the transformation of leadership development (Donaldson &

Scribner, 2003; Gmelch, 2013).

Both Gmelch (2013) and Donaldson and Scribner (2003) explained that cohorts

aid leadership development and stressed the importance of continued leadership skill

development as essential for improving leadership capacities. Dempster, Lovett, and

Fluckiger (2011) stressed in their literature review that schools are morally obligated to

develop quality leadership capacities for both the improvement of schools and student

achievement. Academic institutions should include a number of leadership

developmental strategies connecting learning to practice to ensure quality leadership in the pursuit of academic institutions' goals.

Dempster et al.'s (2011) study on leadership development related to successful higher academic institutions in Australia, Canada, England, New York, New Zealand, Singapore, and the Netherlands. The literature review of best practices in educational-leadership policies provided a framework for interrelating pedagogical and transformative leadership theories. As Dempster et al. explained, transformational leadership requires that leaders have the ability to have a vision and clear understanding of outcomes with a collaborative process in place among contemporaries in decision-making to build a quality community related to innovative research-based pedagogical methods for improved student outcomes.

Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Cohen (2007) asserted that leadership development includes influential goals that align with student development and are dynamic in building school communities. Dempster et al. (2011) asserted that academic institutions need to provide learning opportunities to aid in leadership development. These learning opportunities must be aligned with the academic mission and the personal leadership in promoting the dynamic development of both the leaders and the learning institution. Dempster et al. also postulated that leaders should take charge of improving leadership capacities. Much like Gmelch (2013), Dempster discussed the need for leaders to become responsible in today's society to stay abreast of worldly developments and to seek out and understanding of the politics of the educational system for the good of the academic leader and the institution. Dempster explained the

significance of identifying beliefs to aid in the provision of corrective feedback and to employ collaborative decision-making practices to engage individuals and groups in achieving superior outcomes as fundamental components in the continuance of building leadership capacities. In a similar study of building leadership capacity Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, and Ryland (2012) postulated that when academic leaders develop the ability to collaborate and share in the decision-making process, group and individual outcomes can be improved, which is significant in today's academic society.

Based on the review of literature Dempster et al. (2011) provided, significant leadership development strategies to aid academic institutions, this included strategies for aspirant leaders, novice leaders, and experienced leaders. Providing leadership developmental opportunities with new roles in academic institutions, coaching, and leadership courses related to personal interest can aid aspirant leaders and help academic institutions to identify quality leaders. Leadership developmental strategies related to novice leaders included supporting new leaders' needs and concerns in relationship to the academic institution's mission. Dempster et al. also stressed that novice leaders become involved with other leaders from other academic institutions whether face-to-face or online, and that they seek out research-based leadership self-assessment tools, such as the Self-Assessment of Leadership, Teaching and Learning tool (Dempster et al., 2011), to help develop leadership goals and assess leadership abilities. When it comes to leadership development strategies for experienced leaders, Dempster et al. explained that experienced leaders need new challenges, often found in mentoring novice leaders, aiding in the fundamental development of novice leaders.

Dempster et al. (2011) postulated that academic institutions provide a base for leadership development and for authorities in leadership development to engage academic leaders in becoming better aware of educational politics and the community at large for their continued development as quality academic leaders. Dempster et al. stressed the need for academic authorities to improve their content leadership framework to create action in sustaining quality leadership and to increase leadership pools to ensure quality leadership.

Simon, Christie, Graham, and Call (2014) related the importance of leadership skills and knowledge development to aid in higher education leadership development, explaining that quality leaders are essential for responding to quickly changing academic situations. Simon et al. (2014) asserted that today's leaders are unprepared for leadership roles. Because of the complexities and uncertainties in academic leadership, Simon et al.'s investigation focused on pivotal ways of improving learning and leadership among academic leaders. Simon et al.'s action research included six academic leaders from different academic institutions in Australia who participated in leadership development classes and leadership lectures at an Australia university. These lectures focused on facilitating leadership development throughout the region.

Simon et al. (2014) framed their study with a review of contemporary literature involving leadership development, which included Dempster et al. (2011), who explained that today's leaders need to see the big picture because of the demands of today's complex educational system; this is necessary for them to effectively become quality leaders. Daloz et al. (1996) in their narrative study of successful leaders throughout a complex

world stressed the importance of leaders who see the big picture for the good of stakeholders at all levels of the system, stressing that leaders can help others to overcome problems and provide better opportunities for success. Other researchers, such as Nica (2013), have also established the need for more leadership development because of the complexities of today's academic and social environments. In an investigation of leadership development in higher education, Nica postulated that leadership development involves becoming morally accountable to the needs and demands of stakeholders, involving stakeholders in the decision-making process related to the mission of the academic institution. As discussed by Simon et al. (2014), becoming morally and ethically accountable to the institution benefits students and supports one's leadership development.

Simon et al.'s (2014) investigation related to Vassiliou (2013), both investigations focused on improving leadership development in higher education supported by the academic institution. Vassiliou, who asserted that because of the complexities in today's academic institution, academic authorities must be able to identify aspiring leaders and to implement programs for continued leadership development. Also, as Gmelch (2013) pointed out, academic authorities must aid in the development of experienced leaders as supporting mentors. These lectures focused on facilitating leadership development throughout the region. Simon et al. used an interview format to collect data and determined that academic leaders who are involved in continuing education strengthen their leadership capacities most notably in taking action that creates a positive result.

Leadership satisfaction and self-confidence were also found to improve among academic

leaders as result of applied leadership action (Simon et al., 2014).

Key transformative learning and leadership development components emerge

from the above articles include critical reflection to create positive dialogue and action

(Daloz et al., 1996; Gmelch 2013), leadership support from experienced leaders for

groups and individuals (Dempster et al., 2011; Nica, 2013; Simon et al., 2014), the ability

to see the big picture(Daloz et al., 1996; Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014), high moral

and ethical values (Nica, 2013), moral obligation of higher education institution to

provide continuous leadership education (Donaldson & Scribner, 2003; Gmelch, 2013;

Vassiliou, 2013), and the ability identify beliefs for positive feedback (Gmelch, 2013),

empowerment of others in a collaborative relationship (Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch,

2013), rational dialogue, and the utilization of cohort leadership groups to improve

leadership capacities and organizational outcomes (Donaldson & Scribner, 2003;

Gmelch, 2013). Because of today's fast-paced academic environment, many leaders are

often unprepared when they find themselves in situations that are stressful and difficult to

overcome, hindering outcomes, goals, and challenges for the leaders and their academic

institutions (Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014). Today's academic leaders must be

morally responsible for developing their leadership capacities, keeping pace with the

rapidly changing academic environment. That development includes becoming

responsible to their academic intuition's goals and mission statement and understanding

role responsibilities (Nica, 2013). Corresponding to moral responsibility, an academic

institution must also provide leadership development strategies focused on the needs and

concerns of their leaders, which in return will strengthen the leadership foundation within

the academic institution (Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013). Strategies include

providing research-based leadership workshops, forums, courses, and lectures focused on

understanding roles and responsibilities, empowering others, and setting the direction in

the building of a dynamic educational community (Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013).

Other significant leadership development components that emerged from the

literature review include the need for leaders to find time to reflect critically on

perspectives and assumptions and to accrue new meaning, which allows positive dialogue

to create positive action among stakeholders (Daloz et al., 1996; Gmelch 2013). Building

community with a progressive intervention based on trust to reinforce positive ideas

concerning student drug abuse also emerged, with an emphasis on the reinforcement of

positive ideas (Daloz et al., 1996; Donaldson & Scribner, 2003).

Empowerment of others was another key leadership development component

discussed in the research. Both Dempster et al. (2011) and Gmelch (2013) asserted that

collaboration among leaders is beneficial for improved group outcomes, a core leadership

skill that should be an essential part of leadership development programs. Change and

Jones et al. (2012) supported the significance of collaboration, explaining that leaders

who employ collaborative decision-making practices strengthen their institutions'

leadership structure and individual leadership capacities. Collaborating using cohorts

with a group leader is also a key component in leadership development that focuses on a

supportive environment involving reflective dialogue. Donaldson and Scribner (2003)

and Gmelch stressed that experienced leaders also improve leadership abilities while

working with a supportive nature, fostering leadership growth among aspiring and novice leaders.

Other leadership components that emerged include the need for academic leaders to understand better their roles and responsibilities, help focus outcomes, empower others, enhance others' leadership abilities, and set the direction for the building of a dynamic educational community (Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014). In this section, I discussed key transformative learning and leadership development components aligned to positive leadership and learning behaviors. In the next section, I discuss applied leadership behaviors in relationship to academic leaders in higher education as they are prepared for new or unexpected roles.

Applied Leadership Behavior

Contemporary research has indicated that academic leaders can struggle in applied leadership behaviors, especially new leaders when faced with a difficult situation (Beer et al., 2015; Gmelch, 2013; White, 2013). Discussed next are applied leadership behaviors in higher education, such as overcoming challenges seeking knowledge, applying leadership behaviors to create opportunities, overcoming burdens to enhance a particular situation, and guiding individuals or groups into achieving outcomes that influence the positive growth of the academic institution. White (2013) explained that because of the fast-paced nature of today's academic environment, academic leaders such as associate deans find that their roles are expanding, but many academic leaders are not prepared to apply leadership behaviors effectively. White's qualitative investigation of the challenges of associate deans' first-year experiences in applied leadership involved a

sample population of 24 associate deans from three different research universities, 18

newer associate deans with under five years of academic leadership, and six associate

deans with five years or more of academic leadership. Data were collected using a

semistructured interview format and then coded for emerging patterns and themes.

     White's (2013) study indicated that new academic leaders face stressful,

overwhelming situations that cause difficulty in applying positive leadership behaviors,

such as when making personal and professional decisions, budgeting, time management,

student affairs, and positive decisions based on organizational operating procedures that

include an understanding of the academic system. However, toward the end of the first

year and based on leadership experiences, White determined that positively applied

leadership qualities, such as perseverance, the seeking of new knowledge, moral

obligation, developing networks among other academic leaders, and the ability for critical

reflection, brought a new perspective in further developing their leadership capacities.

White asserted that academic leaders improved their applied leadership behaviors in their

personal lives, and aiding the faculty, students, and the academic institutions' objectives.

White determined that over time the academic leaders gained confidence and were able to

apply improved leadership behavior skills that strengthened their leadership roles using

vision, integrity, respect, trust, positive dialogue, and a sense of humor. To positively aid

administrators in developing, retaining, and recruiting new academic leaders, White

discussed inhibitors of leadership development. The leadership behavior inhibitors

included egocentricity among the faculty and demands, the oversized bureaucracy, which

limited the leader's ability to make positive changes, and the lack of interaction with students, which limited their ability to engage students.

White's (2013) study involved the difficulties that academic leaders face as they take on new leadership roles. Rikkink's (2014) qualitative investigation focused on applied leadership behaviors based on the situation at hand (situational leadership), which involved a sample population of 23 healthcare leaders from the Netherlands that averaged 7.7 years of leadership experience with an average of 64 followers. In explaining the situational leadership, Rikkink inferred that applied leadership behaviors vary according to the situation and that more research is needed to determine the different behaviors of applied leadership that effectively influence the situation. In the literature review, Rikkink identified four interrelated leadership components in the application of positive leadership: common goals, influence, motivation, and vision. Rikkink linked these components with applied rational discourse in the influence of followers' positive action. Providing value to outcomes was also a key link in applied leadership. Rikkink stressed that leaders who apply value to the outcome also motivate followers to overcome burdens and accept new challenges. Another key link in applied leadership was in the application of direction and organization toward the common goal of all stakeholders, and when leaders apply, the vision follower can focus the direction on positive future outcomes.

Rikkink's (2014) investigative framework consisted of the situational leadership theory, behavioral leadership theory, and trait theory that focused on leadership behaviors. Rikkink recognized four leadership behaviors: change-oriented, passive leadership, task-oriented, and relation-oriented. A leadership change-oriented behavior

allows for collaboration in the transformation of positive outcomes and the dynamic growth of the institution; they are leaders who are committed and have open mind. Passive leadership behavior involved limited decisions that create fewer actions to affect change. Rikkink determined that task-orientated leadership includes leaders who can focus on the organization's mission and use people skills to provide clarity and responsibility to followers in order to reach objectives. Leadership relation-oriented behaviors include the leader's ability to build respect and trust through counseling and support as well as by identifying future needs and concerns.

Rikkink (2014) gathered data through an interview format and then analyzed the data for emerging patterns with the use of hierarchical leadership taxonomy. The results indicated that leadership behaviors do change according to the situation. For example, when there is a power issue, leaders might apply task-oriented behaviors or, in the case of personal concerns for feelings of subordinates, leaders might apply a passive leadership behavior. Also, when involved with highly educated subordinates, leaders could apply relationship-oriented behaviors. However, depending on the situation, leaders primarily applied relation-oriented leadership that was centered on collaboration with others to influence change, with support being a key applied leadership behavior involved in a change process. Task-oriented behaviors were highly applied by leaders and used for tasks in creating, clarity, responsibilities, and expectations. Rikkink's investigation determined that change-oriented and passive leadership behaviors were occasionally applied to leadership and that future research is needed to determine why these leadership behavioral aspects were limited.

In a similar qualitative investigation of academic leaders' experiences, Sypawka, Mallett, and McFadden (2010) also postulated that academic leaders' roles, such as the dean and associated deans, are expanding and becoming more complex because of the fast pace and unexpected change in higher education institutions. The Sypawka et al. investigation included 132 community college leaders in North Carolina and focused on how academic leaders applied their styles of leadership based on experiences in the forms of leadership frames, which have similarities to Rikkink's (2014) investigation of applied leadership behaviors. Sypawka et al. (2010) collected data using an interview format with 139 higher education deans. The analysis involved Bolman and Deal's (1984) four-frame model of leadership, which included structural, human resource, political, and symbolic views. Although the frames are interrelated, Sypawka et al. determined that academic leaders primarily apply leadership behaviors based on the human research frame that involve the academic leader who has a focus on building relationships to improve morale directed toward value-added productivity. Leaders also applied the structural frame often, which emphasizes clear direction and responsibility to others.

Leadership behaviors can be seen in Rikkink's (2014) investigation of relationship to the task-orientation and relation-orientation leadership behaviors. Rikkink emphasized that when leaders apply clarity and demand individual responsibility, tasks are accomplished at a high level of achievement, and when applied to relation-oriented behaviors, collaboration stands out integrated with respect, trust, and support as a critical leadership applied behaviors in the achievement of positive outcomes that promote the dynamic growth of the institution. Sypawka et al. (2010) determined that the symbolic

frame was applied on occasion by academic leaders, which involved the sharing of vision and values. Apps (1994), Rikkink, and White (2013) pointed out that sharing vision and values was an important leadership behavior in the development of successful dynamic strategies that last well into the future. The political frame was the least used by the 139 academic leaders that Sypawka et al. interviewed, who held mainly master's and doctorate degrees primarily related to other frames in the study, and possibly had limited prior political business experiences among the academic leaders. However. it was determined substantial in developing networks to influence and build relationships, and although it did not resolve conflicts, the leadership behaviors included negotiation and compromise. Sypawka et al. asserted that academic deans strengthen behavior skills in the political frame to aid in the development of diplomacies and plans that are beneficial to continue the progressive growth of the academic institution.

In the qualitative investigation of Parker, Grenville, and Flessa (2011), many of the applied leadership concepts that have been previously discussed, such as collaboration, sharing of power, support, and rational discourse, stand out as significant applied leadership behaviors that attributed to the success of school communities involved in challenging circumstances related to poverty areas. In a setting of 10 urban Canadian elementary schools, Parker et al. used an interview format to collect data involving 100 community leaders who were involved in a social, academic, and parental change project to overcome students and community poverty hardships. The interviewed population consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, and community groups. The analysis of data-determined individuals who shared a common goal toward value was

essential in creating action in meeting the needs, concerns, and desires of all stakeholders for the success of the community at large. That process involved collaboration, teacher mentorship, and community building based on trust and rational discourse. Parker et al. stressed that those actions created caring and improved social and academic community where individuals and groups took responsibilities and learned from each other as they shared power in the development of dynamic academic and community programs. The significance of leaders applying value to the goals or outcomes was reinforced in the investigation of Rikkink (2014), who identified that individuals and groups who shared a common goal toward value promote a high level of motivation and achievement toward reaching the outcome. White (2013) also found that building trust and using positive ethical values enable a safe working environment to create positive action.

Crudo-Capili and Concepcion (2013) asserted that best practices in applied leadership could be better understood from leaders' experiences. The Crudo-Capili and Concepcion investigation to identify effective dynamic leadership behaviors based on the experiences of academic leadership involved six academic deans who averaged 2 years of leadership experience from a private university. Data were initially collected through an interview format and then analyzed by the researchers and participants through a two-tier primary and secondary reflective process to help focus on the emerging patterns and themes. The first tier of primary reflection (an overall reflection in applied leadership skills), Crudo-Capili and Concepcion determined that academic leaders believed that their leadership skills were innate but fine-tuned through difficult experiences, primarily teaching experiences. Based on the primary reflection, tier academic leaders also had a

great respect for subordinates and superiors who are dynamic leaders and gain support for
the academic institution's improvement, which involves their ability as visionaries,
relationship builders, and mentors of emotional strength. The second tier of the
secondary reflective process allowed the leaders to focus on how they apply their
leadership, and Crudo-Capili and Concepcion determined that positively applied
leadership skills included the ability to establish a positive affiliation with faculty and
administration, form positive relationship skills, and collaborate in the decision-making
process with individuals and groups in order to meet challenges and overcome burdens
for the present and future success of the academic institution.

The analysis of the literature suggests the importance of knowing academia as a
system, the importance of collaboration, the sharing of power, critical reflection,
providing value to outcomes, being morally obligated, and the building of networks that
can create positive action are significant in applied leadership behaviors that align with
the conceptual framework involving positive transformative leadership learning and
development. Next, I summarize Chapter 2 as it aligns with the research question and
conceptual framework and indicate where the gap in the research literature is.

Summary

Chapter 2 provides awareness of challenging situations of student drug abuse
addressed by academic leaders, positive components of leadership development, and
quality applied leadership behaviors addressed by academic leaders to aid what is known
as well as what is not known in the discipline related higher education leaders'
transformative learning and leadership experiences responding to student drug abuse. A

review of the literature included higher education leaders' transformative learning and leadership experiences responding to student drug abuse. Literature search strategies were first discussed in alignment with the research question to focus the study and to direct the literature review. This was followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework in relationship to the transformative learning theory and new-era transformative leadership. The conceptual framework set the foundation for the reviewed literature related to addressing student drug abuse, leadership development in higher education, and applied leadership behavior. Best practices, models, and strategies that academic leaders employ to aid in the prevention and reduction of student drug abuse in higher education were the focus of the first section. Then literature on leadership development was reviewed to explore significance leadership development based on academic leadership experiences in higher education when confronted with difficulties and challenging situations. The literature review concluded with literature on applied leadership behavior that supports positive action.

Emerging from the review of research related to addressing student drug abuse was the importance of academic leaders' understanding of the need to implement programs, strategies, and models that aide in the reduction of specific drug-abuse problems in the academic and social environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Another significance in addressing student drug abuse was early prevention with effective drug-abuse prevention models and strategies before something dire occurs, which often is not the case (Arria et al., 2013; Ringwalt et al., 2011). What did not emerge was why some academic institutions lack early drug prevention procedures.

Other effective programs that stood out in the literature review in addressing student drug abuse included personal health awareness programs and parental involvement to help with curtailing specific drug-abuse issues (Ringwalt et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Russett and Gressard (2015) developed the TRACK program that was determined to be effective in reducing drug abuse among high-risk groups, such as sororities and fraternities in higher education.

Ringwalt et al. (2011) postulated that although many effective programs are available, leadership motivation and capability were lacking. More research concerning leadership motivational drives and capabilities regarding student drug abuse could help address that problem. Key leadership development components that emerged from the reviewed literature in the transformation of quality leadership included the need for academic leaders to continuously seek new knowledge through leadership education programs that build leadership capacities enabling positive action (Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014). Collaboration with other leaders was a core leadership component constructive for improved group outcomes and leadership development (Dempster et al. (2011) and Gmelch (2013). Jones et al. (2012) emphasized that collaborative decision-making practices build individual leadership capacities and fortify institutions' leadership structures. The empowerment of others was also an essential component of leadership development that can motivate followers and can develop aspiring leaders in the building of a dynamic educational community (Gmelch, 2013; Simon et al., 2014). Donaldson and Scribner (2003) and Gmelch (2013) asserted that mentoring new leaders builds leadership capacities of experienced leaders and strengthen the mission of the institution.

Another major theme that emerged was the moral obligation of academic leaders to stay abreast of the rapidly changing social and academic environment and being held accountable to focus the intuition's goals and fulfilling the mission statement (Nica, 2013).

Because of rapid change in the academic environment, much remains unknown concerning leadership development (Nica, 2013). Closing the leadership development gap involves commitment from higher education institutions, and many research-based strategies are needed (Dempster et al., 2011). Although future research is needed to enhance the support structure in the development of leadership capacities, Jones et al. (2012) stressed the need for active participation in a collaborative process of academic leaders in the development of dynamic, systematic leadership. Because support structures, accountability, commitment, and collaboration are essential in leadership development, it was not apparent throughout the review how they can contribute to leadership development when academic leaders face challenging situations such as student drug abuse situations.

In the literature review I established that leadership roles are infinite and diversified in today's academic institutions (White, 2013; Sypawka et al., 2010) and that applied leadership behaviors vary according to the situation for positive outcomes, which focus on fostering the dynamic growth of the academic institution (Rikkink, 2014; Sypawka et al., 2010). Although many situations are different in the use of applied leadership behaviors, some of the significant applied leadership components that do stand out in creating positive leadership actions include collaboration in the building of

relationships and networks through trust and support (Parker et al., 2011; Rikkink, 2014; Sypawka et al., 2010; White 2013). Leaders who have a vision and apply value to outcomes possess significant applied leadership behaviors that enhance the outcomes and future goals of their followers and of the academic institution as a whole (Rikkink, 2014 Sypawka et al., 2010). Academic leaders who share power, keeping their minds open to new ideas and opinions based on rational discourse, are also possess applied leadership behaviors that move individuals and groups to a higher level of achievement (Parker et al., 2011). With regard to rational discourse, Rikkink (2014) pointed out the need for accurate information in a nonbiased, equally contributing environment to create a positive action for the benefit of all stakeholders. The reviewed research of applied leadership behaviors indicated the positive aspects of applied leadership, such as networking, the sharing of power, and rational discourse. Still, because of the fast pace of social and academic environments, change and unexpected changes create difficulties and uncertainties in applying leadership behaviors. This is why research, such as Crudo-Capili and Concepcion's (2013) and White's (2013), has called for more research on applied leadership behaviors related to leaders who are faced with difficulties and uncertainties, such as student drug abuse in higher education proposed in this research. That research is needed to determine how higher education personnel describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education.

In Chapter 2, I established that while the ongoing drug abuse among students in higher education is not the focus of this research, but the response to it could provide

insight into the critical situations academic leaders face, how they develop as leaders, and how academic leaders apply leadership behaviors in higher education to effect positive change. Emphasizing these experiences of academic leaders in higher education may provide academic leaders with an understanding of best practices, strategies, and programs in addressing the development of leadership, and applied leadership for the improvement of leadership learning in higher education. Extending the research has a more direct focus on leadership experiences. The focus on this research was on how leadership is or is not applied in relationship to the experiences of student affairs academic leaders in higher education.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study, which involved self-reflection

using qualitative guidelines to aid in the interpretation of the experiences (Creswell,

2007) of student affairs leaders, was to explore how student affairs leaders described their

recent challenging experiences in the context of student drug abuse in higher education.

The main objective of the study, using an interview format, was to develop further

understanding of student affairs academic leaders' experiences when faced with these

challenging situations. This chapter begins with a description of the research design and

rationale, followed by an explanation of my role as the researcher. Next, I describe the

methodology in depth in order to facilitate replication of this research, including

participants, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, and data collection. I then

provide a description of the data analysis plan used to identify emerging patterns and

themes, followed by a discussion of issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures and

a summary of the main points of this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question was the following: How do higher education student affairs

leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student

drug abuse in the higher education environment?

The central focus of this study was how student affairs academic leaders

described their responses to student drug abuse in higher education. A qualitative

interpretive methodology (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) determined the design of this

study. The design was a good fit with the aim of exploring the experiences of student

affairs academic leaders to capture the essence of those challenging experiences and identify reflected or not-reflected transformational learning and leadership behaviors in response to challenging situations such as student drug abuse in higher education. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, the phenomenological approach is useful to a researcher who has been involved in the phenomenon of interest, has a deep understanding of it, and seeks to focus on the lived experiences of participants. This study did not deal with that level of depth or with a central phenomenon, in that all participants were expected to have varying experiences in relationship to transformational learning and leadership behaviors in dealing with student drug abuse.

Other approaches such as a narrative or case study present alignment problems in relation to the research question. For example, a case study approach involves a bounded system that requires an event or program that is ongoing over a period of time (Creswell, 2007), and in this study, the difficulties resided in developing a bounded system of the same challenging experiences among higher education leaders, as well as personal time constraints affecting my dissertation process. The narrative approach also posed an alignment problem. The narrative approach involves the life stories of individuals (Creswell, 2007), whereas this investigation involved participants who had varying challenging experiences in the context of student drug abuse within only the past couple of years. The incorporation of the qualitative interpretive approach (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) in my investigation allowed the exploration of academic leaders' experiences when involved in challenging student drug abuse situations, aiding in

capturing and describing the essence of those experiences to understand what best practices in transformative learning and transformative leadership may be employed.

Role of the Researcher

As the study's primary research instrument and the only researcher in this study, I was responsible for developing and establishing positive relationships with participants, conducting interviews, transcribing recordings, and providing an analysis of the participants' responses. It was equally important for me to eliminate bias from the initial stages of the study until the conclusion through critical reflection. My personal experiences as an educator in higher education facing challenging situations such as student drug abuse could have interfered with my objective interpretation of the experiences of the participants. In that regard, I kept an electronic journal to organize the data collection and engage in reflection on interviews. Additionally, a general representation of the interview questions was provided to participants in advance to allow them to reflect critically and provide truthful, in-depth responses. This, too, aided in the reduction of bias. Other procedures for the elimination of bias involved the recruitment of participants with whom I had no association and a continuous review of the research process with committee members to ensure trustworthiness.

Methodology

In this methodology section, I focus on the participant selection logic related to the alignment in this study, followed by an explanation of the instrumentation used and recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures. I conclude the section with an explanation of the data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

To create a comprehensive understanding of the transformative learning and leadership of academic leaders in higher education in response to student drug abuse, and to capture the essence of that experience, I purposefully selected eight student affairs academic leaders who had experienced adversity in the context of student drug abuse in higher education. The inclusion criteria specified that participants needed to be student affairs academic leaders with at least 5 years of experience in higher education who were active members of a professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues. For this investigation, the selection criteria also required academic leaders to have responded to student drug abuse within the past 5 years. The participants of this study were contacted and recruited via emails through the membership site of the professional organization, of which I am a member.

To keep the research question, problem, and purpose of the study aligned and to ensure a rich description of the experiences, I purposefully select the eight participants through snowball sampling, which helped to identify participants who had similar experiences for more in-depth exploration (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). This, in turn, led to saturation of quality data in the collection process. Because the participation selection logic allowed for a smaller sample population, I chose to stay with a smaller number of participants (eight). The small number of participants also allowed more time to interpret responses in depth in the data collection process, which was important to me as a new researcher (Creswell, 2007). As Moustakas (1994) explained, it is not how many participants are involved in the investigation but the quality of the participants'

responses that can provide a comprehensive understanding of the essence of the experience.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through an interview protocol (see Appendix) developed with the frameworks of adult transformative learning and transformative applied leadership behaviors. I designed the protocol specifically for this study using qualitative interview guidelines established by Patton (2015). The instrumentation also involved field notes, transcription of audio tapes, and review of audiotapes for voice inflection. The interview questions were reviewed by the instructor and peers in an advanced qualitative research course, as well as by my committee, in order to ensure content validity. To ensure quality data, the interview questions were pretested among colleagues to provide additional information to aid content validity. The interview questions reflected key terms from a combination of new-era transformative leadership and adult transformative learning theories, such as *support*, *critical reflection*, *vision*, *empowerment of others*, *challenge*, *shared power*, *collaboration*, *accurate information*, *rational discourse*, and *equal participation*. The interview format was chosen as the data collection tool in order to keep the study aligned with its research question, purpose, and conceptual framework (Creswell, 2009). The interview format allowed members of the sample population, through relevant, open-ended questions (Patton, 2015), to describe their experiences in a way that aligned with the study's qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009).

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To begin the participant recruitment process, the director of a professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues agreed to post my email letter of invitation with my contact information to constituent group leaders of the organization, asking them to participate in my research. The invitation to participate explained the purpose and procedures of the study, as well as my role as the researcher. Those who responded and were identified as meeting the criteria for participation were asked to sign a consent form, in which I provided background information; explained study procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, risks and benefits of participation, and privacy measures; and offered contact information. In addition, snowball sampling was used to reach those who met the criteria but were not members of the professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues.

Once selected, participants were contacted via email to set up a time at their convenience for an audio-recorded interview of approximately 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted via telephone. All interviews were audio recorded to allow for accurate transcription of the data upon the completion of each; participants also reviewed their personal transcripts in order to validate their responses.

The interview began with an introduction to the study and its purpose, followed by assurance of confidentiality, information about participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, and contact information for myself and the Walden University IRB. At the conclusion of the interview, upon participants' review of the transcripts,

participants were thanked for their participation and sent a $25 Amazon gift card in appreciation for their participation. A summary of the results of this study was sent once it was completed.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan focused on responses to specific interview questions (see Appendix) developed in accordance with adult transformative learning theory and modern leadership theory. These theories served as lenses to align and focus the study and to accurately develop the interview questions in order to identify high-quality and unexpected data. This study's unit of analysis came from the sample population of student affairs academic leaders who had challenging experiences dealing with student drug abuse in higher education. The data analysis process began with creating folders on my computer for field notes, my critical reflections, and audio-recordings and Word document transcripts of the interviews for each of the participants. Once participants returned member-checked transcriptions, I reviewed each interview, searching for repetitive words, phrases, and statements through open or emergent coding to generate an inductive analysis framed through the interview questions based on the conceptual framework. Field notes were also used to organize and capture new ideas in alignment with the research question and conceptual framework, as suggested by Maxwell (2013).

The coding method used was as described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). Significant words, phrases, and statements were interpreted as belonging to certain codes, which were then categorized and furthered themed, staying in alignment with the conceptual framework and research question. The themes were then organized

into meaningful units as they related to the research question, followed by a description of the context. I then synthesized the themes based on the core experiences of student affairs leaders. Constant comparison was employed in the data analysis to determine variations in the experiences of student affairs leaders in relationship to the research question. Constant comparison based on those experiences of student affairs leaders also aided in the identification of meaningful units in the assessment of experiences in relationship to transformative learning and transformative leadership, fortifying the conclusion of the data analysis authenticating the research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of this study, it was important for me as the researcher to remain reflective throughout the study. I sought to convey a clear understanding of the qualitative interpretive approach in expressing the core of how higher education student affairs leaders described their experiences related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment. The following subsections on the constructs' credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are provided to ensure the validity of this study, followed by a description of the ethical procedures for this study.

Credibility

To safeguard the credibility of this study, I confirmed that there was data saturation to establish quality emerging patterns and themes, reviewing data consistently to support a significant narrative (Creswell, 2007). Committee review also added to the

credibility of this study. My committee reviewed my preliminary analysis, as suggested by Maxwell (2013), to ensure that the data were represented correctly and to aid me in the reduction of personal bias. Because reflection was also a key component of this study, being reflective at each step of this qualitative process confirmed the validity of this study (Creswell, 2007).

Transferability

Transferability was achieved through a thick, rich description based on detailed accounts of in-depth interviews, setting, participants, and themes of this study to achieve external validity (Creswell, 2007). This approach may also aid future studies in the comparison of academic leaders involved in challenging situations in relationship to adult transformative learning and transformative leadership behaviors.

Dependability

As Miles et al. (2014) explained, it is important to remain consistent throughout a study to maintain its dependability. I ensured consistency by maintaining detailed records of data collection procedures, accurately transcribing interviews, and coding and analyzing the data. Audit trails involving committee review and constant comparison also ensured dependability.

Confirmability

I used reflection as a significant component of my effort to reduce bias to establish the confirmability of this study. I focused on my experience associated with challenging events in the context of student drug abuse. Maintaining a personal journal throughout the study, as suggested by Maxwell (2013), aided me in the reduction of bias

in the collection of quality data and proper data analysis to ensure that the results were not related to my personal biases, further supporting the trustworthiness of this study.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical concerns in this study were remedied using procedures outlined by the Walden University IRB to safeguard trustworthiness and ensure the integrity of this study. No data were collected until I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB. Upon IRB approval, I emailed an invitation to participate to the membership of a professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues. After receiving responses from eight participants who met the criteria, I emailed an informed consent document and interview protocol to them and established a day and time for each audio-recorded interview. I used pseudonyms for participants and their schools as an additional ethical procedure. Materials for the study, including audio recordings and transcriptions, were placed in a secure location to be kept for 5 years, at which time the documents will be destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 has included the research design and rationale for the use of the qualitative interpretive approach in alignment with the research question for this study. My role as the researcher was also discussed regarding the establishment of a positive relationship with the selected eight participants, who were members of a professional organization for student services personnel and were dealing with student drug issues. Key elements of the methodology have been described in this section, including the participant selection logic and the instrumentation of this study. I presented the data

collection process based on a semistructured interview format that I designed in

relationship to qualitative interview guidelines. Data analysis involved a qualitative

approach with four key organizational procedures, as suggested by Creswell (2007), for

the analysis of data for emerging patterns and themes. Issues of trustworthiness were

also specified to aid in the validation of this study. Chapter 3 concluded with a

discussion of ethical procedures, with an emphasis on staying within Walden University

IRB guidelines to ensure the integrity of this study. Next, Chapter 4 provides a

description of how the interpretative qualitative approach determined the results of this

study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how academic leaders described their recent challenging experiences in the context of addressing student drug abuse in higher education. Using an interview process for data collection, the main objective of the study was to develop further understanding of academic leadership experiences when faced with challenging situations in the context of student drug abuse in higher education. Therefore, the research question for this qualitative study was the following: How do higher education student affairs leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment?

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The setting is first described, including the participants' scheduling and interview conditions, followed by the participants' demographics relevant to this study. The data collection and analysis are then discussed, followed by the evidence of trustworthiness involving the implementation of credibility strategies. The results are then presented, followed by a summary of this research.

Setting

The study took place at higher education learning institutions and involved eight student affairs leaders: Four were living in the northeastern United States, and four were living in the Midwest. Based on the email invitation, the participants agreed to take part in the study because of their previous experience in challenging situations pertaining to student drug abuse in higher education. There were no known personal or organizational

conditions that appeared to influence the participants or their experiences at the time of this study.

Demographics

The participants of this study included eight student affairs leaders who each had over 5 years of leadership experience in student affairs in higher education. I interviewed eight higher education student affairs leaders—three with EdDs, one with a PhD, two with M.Eds, and two with M.As—who held the title of director at their academic institutions. These leaders all worked in higher education institutions, four from the Northeast, and four from the Midwest region of the United States, with an average of 16 years of experience. Table 1 lists the participants by their assigned pseudonyms.

Table 1

Demographics of the Participants

Participant	Position title	Years of experience	University region	Education
Rick	Director	17	Northeast	EdD
Steve	Director	30	Northeast	PhD
Jill	Director	10	Northeast	MEd
Ally	Director	10	Northeast	EdD
Dave	Director	26	Midwest	MA
Sandy	Director	7	Midwest	MEd
Jan	Director	16	Midwest	MEd
Deb	Director	19	Midwest	MA

Three men and five women participated in this study who worked at higher education institutions with programs focused on deterring student drug abuse. All of the participants had doctoral or master's degrees, expressed deep concern for the success of their students and educational institution, and had faced challenges in deterring student drug abuse in higher education. All of the participants were interviewed once for 35-45

minutes. The interviews were conducted using phone numbers provided by the participants; seven were located at their office at their learning institution, and one was at a home office.

Data Collection

The data collection process began with me contacting the project director of a U.S. professional organization for student services personnel dealing with student drug issues programs. I explained the purpose and procedure of this study to the project director and the need for student affairs participants. Upon Walden University IRB's approval (02-20-17-0145017), the project director agreed to send out emails containing my invitation to participate in this study to the constituents of the organization. The first eight constituent leaders of the organization who responded to the email invitation and self-identified as fitting the inclusion criteria for the study were the participants. I replied to those who responded, sent informed consent forms, and set up interviews with each one individually. The consent form email included a thank you for the individual's participation and provided a reminder of the purpose and procedure of this study, participants' right to withdraw at any time, and how to schedule the phone interview time. An interview protocol was used with open-ended questions aligned to the research question and a conceptual framework to allow the participants to express themselves freely. Each 35- to 45-minute interview was recorded with both an iPad memo recorder and Sony tape recorder. As suggested by Maxwell (2013), I used an electronic journal as well as field notes to organize and express new ideas following each interview, which help me to stay aligned with the research question and conceptual framework. There

were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participants and reminded them that they would receive a transcript of the interview to aid in validation, along with a summary of the study's results and a $25 gift card.

Data Analysis

I modified the data-analysis process described by Miles et al. (2014) and Maxwell (2013) to align it with the research question and the conceptual framework. This allowed me to move inductively from the significant words expressed by participants to themes in the data. Significant words, phrases, and statements were interpreted as belonging to specific codes, which were then categorized and furthered themed, staying in alignment with the conceptual framework and research question. The themes were then organized into meaningful units as they related to the research question, followed by a description of the context. The data analysis plan included review of all responses from the participants to the specific interview questions (Appendix), which I had developed in alignment with the adult transformative learning theory and modern leadership theory lenses from the conceptual framework. I first identified words, phrases, and statements that involved significant concepts from both adult transformative learning theory and modern leadership theory, such as *advocate, critical reflection, collaboration, challenge, vision, respect, engagement, responsibility, action, opportunities, ideas, shared discourse, challenge, critical questions, personal values and beliefs, accountability, listening, examining, analyzing, sharing of power, empowerment,* and *accurate information*, followed by phrases and statements used by the participants that reflected

the conceptual framework and research question. The process allowed me to look for any outstanding words, phrases, and statements using open or emergent coding, which then allowed me to generate an inductive analysis framed through the interview questions based on the conceptual framework, which I then coded for phrases and statements that represented the two theories.

I identified those code words, phrases, and statements that involved significant concepts from either adult transformative learning theory or transformative leadership theory. The most frequently used code words reflecting adult transformative learning theory found in the data included *accurate information*, *beliefs*, *communication*, *concern*, *data*, *dialogue*, *evaluation*, *ideas*, *listening*, *opportunities*, *reflection*, *responsibility*, *support*, *understanding*, and *values*. These code words, phrases, and statements that were repeated were then interpreted as belonging to certain themes. These resulted in the themes of *challenge*, *reflection*, *constructive dialogue*, and *action*. (See Table 2 for a list of these four themes and the code words that were combined to form each theme.)

Table 2

Four Themes Related to Adult Transformative Learning

Themes	Codes that led to themes
Challenge	Responsibility, concern
Reflection	Values, beliefs, ideas, reflection, evaluation
Constructive dialogue	Accurate information, data, dialogue, communication, support, listening
Action	Understanding, opportunities

Code words that were used frequently in relation to transformative leadership were the following: *big picture*, *collaboration*, *communication*, *conversation*, *coordination, data*, *dialogue*, *empower*, *information*, *listening*, *perspectives*, *questions*, *reflection*, *responsibility*, *sharing*, *support*, *trust*, and *vision*. I combined them into a smaller number of themes, resulting in the seven themes of *accurate information*, *collaboration*, *constructive*, *dialogue*, *responsibility*, *support*, and *vision*. These code words and themes related to transformational leadership are found in Table 3.

Table 3

Seven Themes Related to Transformative Leading

Theme	Code words
Accurate information	Information, data
Collaboration	Collaboration, dialogue, sharing, coordination
Constructive dialogue	Communication, dialogue, conversation
Critical reflection	Challenge, reflection, questions
Support	Support, trust, empower
Responsibility	Responsibility
Vision	Big picture, perspective, vision

I used constant comparison, as suggested by Miles et al. (2014), in the data analysis to determine similarities and variations in the experiences of the student affairs leaders to aid in identifying meaningful units in relationship to the research question and conceptual framework. Meaningful units were then organized into transformative learning and transformative leadership themes related to the research question and contextual framework, with critical reflection and accurate information as the most predominant constructs related to both themes emerging from the data. Finally, all of the themes were synthesized into a summary of the significant results based on the core experiences of the student affairs professionals. Each experience of the academic leaders was unique, and there were no discrepant cases.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was established using strategies as recommended by Creswell (2007), Maxwell (2013), and Miles et al. (2014) to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study, which supported its validity and quality.

Credibility

I reviewed the data consistently to confirm that there was data saturation to establish quality emerging patterns and themes, as suggested by Creswell (2007) to safeguard the credibility of a study and to support a significant narrative. I also used member checks during transcript review to reduce bias and ensure the proper representation of data (Maxwell, 2013). Lastly, I reflected critically throughout this

study to keep the study aligned with its purpose, research question, and conceptual framework to support this study's validity.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved through use of thick, rich descriptions from the detailed interviews with each of the participants. This approach may aid future studies in which researchers seek to understand academic leaders who have faced challenging situations regarding adult transformative learning and transformative leadership behaviors.

Dependability

Consistency in applying the proper research methods is key to maintaining dependability (Miles et al., 2014). Throughout the study, I maintained detailed records of the collection procedures, accurate transcriptions of the interviews confirmed by committee members, and an accurate account of the coding and analysis of the data process to ensure the dependability of the research process. Additionally, I incorporated committee review and maintained an audit trail to ensure the dependability of the research.

Confirmability

I used reflection as a significant component for reducing bias to establish fairness and impartiality and thus establish the confirmability of this study. In doing so, I kept a personal journal throughout the study, as suggested by Maxwell (2013), containing reflections on my own experience with challenging events to aid me in reducing personal bias and collecting quality data for proper data analysis. That procedure allowed me to

safeguard the results from my personal biases, further ensuring the trustworthiness of this study.

Results

I organized the results of this study based on the following research question: How do higher education student affairs leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment? I asked participants to describe their challenging experiences in higher education concerning student drug abuse using interview questions found in the Appendix. I analyzed the interviews through the conceptual lenses of both adult transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) and transformative leadership theory (Apps, 1994). The results of the study revealed four themes as seen through the lens of adult transformative learning theory: challenge, reflection, constructive dialogue, and action. Because the experiences of each leader participant were unique in relationship to the other participants, I present the themes of accepting challenge, reflection, constructive dialogue, and action within each individual experience of the participants and then summarize them across the eight interviews in the next section.

I then present the seven themes related to transformative leadership: accurate information, collaboration, constructive dialogue, critical reflection, responsibility, support, and vision. In that section, I describe emergent themes from the data regarding applied leadership related to transformative leadership, as represented in Table 3.

Themes Related to Adult Transformative Learning

The coding of the student affairs leaders' responses using the constructs of adult transformative learning theory revealed high concentrations of experience related to challenge, reflection, constructive dialogue, and action. All eight student affairs leaders made statements related to these themes, yet analysis of the data revealed that each of the eight student affairs leader participants faced unique challenging experiences in relationship to student drug abuse in higher education. Presenting the evidence of the themes within each participant's experience gave me the best opportunity to present the findings in relationship to the context of the experience of the eight participants. I have pulled out the most dominant experience shared by each participant and how the four themes are reflected in that experience. The following experiences begin with Rick and Jill's experiences concerning suspension and expulsion, followed by the experience of Ally in relationship to student drug abuse policy. Next, Dave's experience of student neglect is presented, followed by the experience of Sandy concerning injury from student drug abuse and Jan's experience with cultural drug abuse changes, ending with the experiences of Steve and Deb concerning student death.

Rick: Student suspension. A *challenge* for Rick, who had 17 years of experience, involved a student who had been suspended by the academic institution for repeat drug use. Rick spoke highly of the academic institution's drug prevention policy, which allowed him to learn more about the factors regarding a student's suspension. Following components of the institution's drug abuse policy, Rick said that he generated *constructive dialogue* among the stakeholders by requiring a series of meetings with the

associate dean of students, the resident life director, student counseling, and the student to

gather accurate information about the behavior leading to the suspension. This allowed

for better evaluation of the behavior and created new knowledge among those

participating in the meetings that could lead to appropriate *action*. Because of the

possibility of reinstatement following suspension of the student, Rick stated, "That type

of information is a part of my decision of whether or not to end the suspension." Rick

also expressed the need for quality conversations with the student to learn of the student's

needs and concerns: "The challenging part [in gathering quality information from the

student] is when I've had to meet with the same student multiple times ... just *reflecting*

in terms of just the quality of the conversation with the student." The multiple

conversations allowed him better *reflection*. Rick sought further understanding to create

knowledge.

Positive communication among stakeholders guided by the academic institution's

drug abuse policy was evidenced by Rick in the interview as significant components that

aided in rectifying that student's suspension for student drug abuse to produce the proper

action, which led to allowing the student back into school. It was Rick's belief that the

institution's student drug abuse policy aided greatly in determining what procedures to

follow regarding the student suspension and his re-admittance. Although Rick learned

the importance of staying within the guidelines he expressed the need for *action* and how

that authority figures need to stay abreast of drug abuse issues to keep improving the

policy by using research-based evidence in the prevention of student drug abuse in higher

education. For example, Rick referred to a research-based strategy that worked involving

drug abuse prevention procedure related to incoming freshmen that they are planning to implement this fall that supports the present drug abuse policy. Although the institution had a good drug prevention policy in place to further fortify the academic drug abuse policy Rick stated, "Why wouldn't we implement that [the new drug prevention strategy for freshmen] strategy; it's been a couple years in the making the timing for it to actually get it together and ready to go is something that needs to be done starting in the fall semester."

Jill: Student expulsion. Academic drug abuse policy was also a concern for Jill, a leader participant with 10 years of experience who lost a student through expulsion because of the student's drug abuse issues. Jill discussed the drug-abuse policy at a former higher education institution where she was employed. Jill stated, "I really struggled with seeing the student who I thought had so many positive things going for him. It was heartbreaking to see that his future just had taken a major turn." The student's drug abuse issues could not be rectified based on the institution's drug abuse policy. Jill identified a concern regarding the institution's drug-abuse policy, which created an unsettling *challenge* to the leader's values and perspective regarding positive youth development.

> So sometimes, when you're in a role like mine it can be hard because there are people that work more on the policy side than there are people that maybe work more on directly helping the students. Every student had a unique story and I found that particular situation hard because I didn't want him to be kicked out. I wanted to give him another chance and I know that that doesn't always work out.

Jill's compassion for the student provided opportunity for *reflection* concerning the student expulsion, which led her to speak out (*action*) about the student policy and those who implement it. Jill stated, "I felt as though I was able to advocate the best that I could. However, I think that the other arguments that were contributing to the decision were maybe stronger (in direct relationship to the drug abuse policy)."

In regard to *constructive dialogue* among authority figures concerning the student expulsion Jill stated, "I think everyone brought a different perspective to the table. In that sense it's probably a good collaboration because we all had different expertise and backgrounds and working with students in different capacities." However, she expressed the need for the people who implement such policies to be more aware of the characteristics of drug abusers to help them instead of punishing them. Jill asserted that it is critical for academic authority figures to review quality data for accurate information for further understanding and to apply research-based strategies for preventing student drug abuse to increase awareness to further add to the knowledge base on preventing drug abuse to help all students.

> People who don't know the characteristics that are associated with substance abuse, they can be quick to judge and less sympathetic. I think a leadership opportunity is always to just help people see that adolescence is a really dynamic time in a young person's life. … I try to educate people on adolescent brain development because there is pretty solid research to show that there is a reason that adolescents are typically much higher users of drugs and alcohol and its not just that they are making bad choices and are disrespectful of rules.

Ally: Student drug abuse policy. Another *challenge* identified by Ally, with 10 years' experience, concerned a drug-abuse policy related to the improper implementation of the peer-reviewed drug-abuse program strategy. This strategy requires offering an alcohol intervention program for abusers that is also open to students who would like to know more about student alcohol abuse. Ally stressed that students were being improperly sanctioned into the program because of their association with college roommates who were found guilty of being involved with alcohol abuse on campus. This caused perplexing and difficult conversations for those who had been improperly sanctioned. Those experiences challenged Ally's perceptions regarding the proper implementation of the drug abuse program strategy as well as fairness to students:

> It really undermined the program but the decisions were being made at a much
>
> higher level. Even though we could cite all the research that said, "This is not the
>
> right population to be sending" there was not much that we could do about it.

As Ally asserted that, the experiences undermined the drug abuse program, a quality alcohol-prevention program. She demonstrated evidence of *reflection* by seeking different perspectives for new knowledge to properly implement the program. Ally sought accurate information to gain new knowledge stating, "Trying to touch base with others in the field, trying to figure out what other schools are doing. …touching base with them and seeing what's working with them." Ally reached out to colleagues at other universities to engage in *constructive dialogue* their success with the program, invoked evidence-based prevention research, and reached out to members for feedback.

It was trying to build my case around why this was not the right approach to take. So looking at what other successful programs had done and looking at anything that was published but also to talk to colleagues in other universities.

Although Ally did not get the intended changes at her university, she identified that the attempt to rectify a negative issue through *action* resulted in new knowledge concerning student drug prevention shared with other colleagues. In relationship to new knowledge gained, Ally stated, "Even if it didn't come out with the result that I was hoping for at least I was able to share it."

Dave: Student neglect. Dave had 26 years of experience and had worked with 21 universities as a research and prevention coordinator and data analyst specialist. Dave also had a negative encounter with higher authority figures. Dave encountered challenges—sometimes on a daily basis—related to what he perceived as administrators protecting their ideologies, personal gains, and salary rather than protecting and supporting students regarding the drug-abuse policy. In that relationship Dave stated, "it's kind of a game for most of the administrators and people above me. They'll use their ideologies and the structure for personal gain and salary." Dave stated, from a macro-level perspective, "I've seen it across the board. They are missing a lot of leadership training and organizational structure that's conducive to retaining good staff and holding people accountable."

 In regard to *constructive dialogue* with higher authority figures in the attempt to improve the overall situation of student health and well-being Dave stated, "Within the sphere of influence that I have, things work well on a lateral level. But on a level or two

up it's much more about providing the deliverables that they're asking for and there is not

a lot of interest in our opinions or insights into what could improve the situation." Based

on *reflection* he believed that higher education institutions were not up to par regarding

leadership structures of quality organization and that higher education leaders are poorly

trained in their application of quality leadership:

> Good business is good business. There is nothing specific about higher ed. ….
>
> Many of things that we are seeing in the private sector that would contribute to
>
> healthy work environments would also be applicable to higher education. I think
>
> a lot of people go into higher education and student affairs because they think it's
>
> different than the private sector as far as working environments. You still get the
>
> same level of higher exploitation, marginalization, and disempowerment with the
>
> one difference being we have very few MBAs in higher education administration.
>
> Even [in] the for profit private sector they realize that bad business practice within
>
> the organization is going to lead to a higher turnover, worse outcomes, financial
>
> situations due to poor organizational practice.

The data revealed through this statement that Dave perceived poor leadership created a

complicated *challenge* when he was attempting to enact educational procedures that

would benefit student health and well-being:

> If we are selling soap or encouraging prevention you still have to have good
>
> leadership. Where is the higher education administration getting that training?
>
> My guess is they are not getting it. Master's level or Ph.D. programs in higher
>
> education administration.

The evidence demonstrated that notwithstanding the challenges with higher authority figures, Dave persevered with direct *action* toward students in drug prevention awareness as well as providing an engaging, healthy, and safe environment for recovering students.

> I'm the advisor to our sober college group, which is our recovery environment.
> With that group, I just provide a lot of direct support to students in their recovery
> process and help to make the recovery community welcoming and engaging. For
> that group it's a lot of unlocking doors, making coffee, making sure they have
> spaces and places that are safe from use and supportive in recovery.

Sandy: Injury from student drug abuse. Data that emerged from the interviews with the all the leader participants revealed that at times authority figures from academic institutions lacked quality evidence-based information, had poor awareness, and had poor vision, leaving the students and academic institution vulnerable should a challenging situation arise. For example, data supporting those factors materialized from Sandy, a leader participant with 7 years' experience, concerning the need for improved higher leadership across the nation in regard to drug prevention.

Sandy's *challenge* was an on-campus incident that left a security officer severely injured by a student who was abusing drugs. Sandy was grateful for the supportive procedures in place for both the victim and the assailant at her academic institution. However, the incident gave cause for Sandy to *critically reflect.* Supported by evidence-based research and as a data analysis research specialist herself, Sandy explained that many times across the country, problems such as injury or death are often the catalyst for change that improves prevention procedures, which should not be the case. Sandy stated,

"When you look across the country where intervention and coordinated efforts happen, it is after a student death." She stated that injuries and deaths on-campus, "are my biggest fear and concern." Sandy learned that there was a lack of consistency across the nation in prevention measures: "In order to see behavior change or campus change you need to be able to measure it and people need to do a better job of putting those initiatives into action and assessing effectively." The data shown throughout the interviews with all eight participants suggested that better preventative *action* should happen involving reeducation, coordination, collaboration, evidence-based prevention procedures, and *constructive dialogue* to provide better awareness and prevention in the changing cultural scene of drug abuse.

Jan: Cultural drug abuse changes. Data also emerged from the experiences of the eight participants that correlated with continuous drug-scene changes across the nation, such as need to address prevention of the high priority prescription drug, heroin, and marijuana abuse at their higher education institutions. For example, Jan, a leader participant with 16 years' experience, oversaw a statewide coalition on the prevention of student drug abuse at the time of this interview. She was involved in addressing prescription drug abuse and had a deep concern in addressing a dangerous heroin problem that had shown signs of increase on campus. Jan asserted that a *challenge* for academic institutions was in maintaining a continuous positive healthy environment for all students' well-being and holding other leaders accountable. She stated: "The hard work that was getting people to understand this was sort of their shared responsibility with all of us." In relationship to the heroin problem Jan saw the importance of

understanding the big picture and *reflection* stating, "We always need to be looking at that data, thinking of what the next epidemic/issue is going to be on campus and thinking about what strategy we need to have. That's a huge part of prevention as well." The themes of *constructive dialogue* and *action* were evident in her thoughts, "I work in troubling situations and I'm always talking to campuses about how they need to address these issues."

Jan noted that quality leaders were those who see the big picture concerning the health, wellness, and safety of all students and who have awareness of the changes regarding drug abuse within the local communities and the nation. "It is not just about the traditions of excellence in academics or the engagement of the student but it takes a broader perspective." Jan stressed that other leaders should stay abreast of changes in cultural drug abuse and use evidence-based approaches to deter student drug abuse for the well-being of all students stating. "It's almost a breach of practice in prevention, not to use evidence based approaches but at the same time data driven strategies to implement those evidence based approaches." The significance for Jan was for leaders to continue to learn and adjust research-based strategies, aided by the sharing of accurate information in a collaboration process with other leaders as changes occur within the student drug abuse cultural scene in higher education. Accurate information in a collaboration process was evidenced by the leader participants throughout the interviews to aid in a positive transformation learning process. In this way, as Jan stated, "leadership can learn more about what they need to know about their students or what

they might not know" to create positive *action* in the deterrence of student drug abuse in

higher education, aiding in the transformative learning and leadership process.

Steve: Student death. Steve, who had 30 years of experience, faced the

challenge of creating a safe environment for all stakeholders after the death of two

students from a drug overdose, Steve stated, "Whether it was a bad buy or an intentional

thing or an accidental thing, nobody knows. But one of the students was a resident

student so it kind of shook the community to its foundation." Steve critically reflected on

the situation that created a sense of urgency for him and the academic institution and

community authority figures. Steve stated, "that real transformative change has to start

with a sense of urgency." A team effort of *constructive dialogue* and coordination aided

Steve because the college did not have an exact protocol in place for responding to

student deaths. The authority figures (consisting of Steve, dean of students, family,

police, and counseling center) coordinated reaching out to all stakeholders to provide

positive, compassionate *action* by communicating with others in the campus community

and social community as well as *reflection* by asking key questions that include all parties

who may have known the student. Such questions included, "Did the student have a

girlfriend or boyfriend?" "Do we know if that person is on campus?" "How is he or she

doing?"

From experience, Steve discussed how the challenging experience caused

reflection on his part and a deep need for a college protocol that allowed for adjustments,

since campus environments change over time. It was Steve's belief that the protocol

needs to include wherewithal to think in broad terms about providing positive *action* for

the stakeholders. In addition, in relationship to taking *action* from the knowledge gained from challenging experiences. Steve stressed that the protocol can limit the importance of conveying values and knowledge gained from challenging experiences and asserted the need to present the knowledge learned through positive dialogue and communication:

> Telling the story can sort of convey some of the values and important lessons that do get passed on and become a part of culture. Responsiveness, we're responsive. It's a message that comes out of telling stories like that [referring to the knowledge gained in relationship to student death from a drug overdose]. So it's not always specific protocols but organizational sagas are a way that creates a big opportunity and I don't think we use them as a profession, I don't think we use them intentionally enough.

As he reported, the importance of quality leadership is in conveying lessons learned, which the leader believes other leaders are not capitalizing on. "There is a lot of power in [lessons learned] and I think they can be taken advantage of more."

Deb: Student death. Drug abuse caused a student's death, which created personal and professional challenges before and after the student's death for Deb with 17 years of experience. Deb, knowing that the student had a severe drug abuse problem, reflected critically in a transformative learning process to secure help for the student and wondered, "How can I best serve the student and what can I do to keep the student safe, getting the support, trying to communicate with their parents? . . . Foreseeing that this was a dangerous situation, the student needed additional help." In this specific experience, Deb attempted to provide healing *action* for the student. Negative

communication was evidenced from the parents and student who no longer wanted to engage in *constructive dialogue* and support from the academic institutions' support center, a care team that involved, including Deb, all of the deans of the colleges, associate deans, and the director of the psychological and counseling center. Deb reported that communication was lost among stakeholders:

> The parents actually said that they thought that we shouldn't communicate anymore because they didn't think that their son wanted us to communicate even though he signed a release form. So, they basically cut off all communications with me. It was a challenging situation.

> The student overdosed soon after. Deb indicated the significant need for positive communication to transform a negative situation into a positive one. Deb reported the situation regrettably lacked positive communication and had limited collaboration among stakeholders. Deb also reported that because of the student's death, she felt tremendous grief and faced a new *challenge* to stay mentally strong to support others and stated, "How do you tend to your grief while also maintain the ability to lead students and help with their recovery?" *Critically reflection* while facing personal difficulties and the *challenge* of helping others who turned away from help, Deb sought personal support and stated, "For me, it was one of the best things I could have done because it made me a better leader for my students." It was evident that support through the transformative learning process allowed Deb to stay strong as well as to provide help and support to individuals and the student body. Deb's experience of trying to take positive *action* and listen to the needs, concerns, and desires of those stakeholders who were affected was

evidence of how she sought to improve communication and support through *action* to reach positive outcomes for stakeholders and significant future decisions for positive change.

The data related to adult transformative learning revealed that all of the participants had challenging experiences that they accepted, and within that *challenge* was evidence of *reflection*, *rational discourse*, and *action* for the sake of students in the deterrence of student drug abuse, which are significant constructs of the adult transformation theory. Next, I discuss transformative leadership themes from the interviews in relation to experiences of the student affairs leader in responding to student drug abuse.

Themes Related to Transformative Leadership

Analysis of the interviews revealed that the student affairs leaders demonstrated strong leadership skills, which I organized in seven themes: *accurate information*, *collaboration*, *constructive dialogue*, *critical reflection*, *responsibility*, *support*, and *vision*. (See Table 3 for codes that led to themes). The participant leaders spoke highly about the importance of vision to move both the students and the institution forward in preventing student drug abuse, aided by evidence-based research. Another important and highly visible factor in the data review was that all of the leader participants took positive action to rectify challenging experiences, as discussed throughout this section. Of note, the most dominant finding from the interview data was that all of the participants believed that their leadership capacities improved after experiencing challenges, whether in terms of leadership confidence, listening, seeing the big picture, perseverance, or the

ability to reflect critically. In this section, I discuss emergent themes from the data across all eight participants regarding applied leadership related to transformative leadership theory in response to student drug abuse in higher education.

Accurate information. The participant leaders commented that they frequently needed detailed information that was accurate and essential to enact the correct action for positive outcomes. Rick and Jan both explained the importance of accurate information, and Rick emphasized that gaining such information could require multiple meetings to aid in determining the real problem: "That type of information is a part of my decision of whether or not to end the suspension." Jan said,

> Missouri is the "Show Me" state meaning that literally people in Missouri do not doing anything unless you show them the data, you show them why. There is not a blind trust: even though the Midwest is sort of famous for being friendly, we are also known for being incredibly guarded when it comes to making decisions as a whole.

Jill believed using specific terminology that all stakeholders understand would enable accurate information, so that all stakeholders would be on the same page for improved implementation of student drug abuse policies.

> We work with all the different stakeholders in all the different schools. We primarily do the alcohol and substance abuse programming with the undergrads because that is the group that needs it the most in all honesty. When we are changing things, doing things, we reach out to them and share what we're doing with them so that folks are about to use the same language and terminology.

Another leader participant Sara explained that confrontations among stakeholders can occur when information is inaccurate, creating negative outcomes; the leader stressed the significance of providing accurate information to those who are out of the loop to prevent misleading them through their neglect.

> I think I'm able to rein in some of those [negative] ideas [with accurate data]. … When there is a circumstance, I basically have to communicate that I don't think it is accurate [and] I will definitely approach that individual [with accurate data].

Ally stressed that accurate information allows one to challenge individual perspectives. That concept is also evidenced in a statement also from Sara on the importance of accurate information, which is needed "when you're dealing with high-profile donors or when you're dealing with an upper leadership that don't always have the most accurate perspective or idea." Jan also reported that quality leaders do not rely on begging or pleading from individuals; rather, they want accurate information and to provide an understanding in attempting to gain new knowledge.

Collaboration. All of the participant leaders made statements demonstrating an understanding of collaboration based on positive dialogue, sharing of information, and ideas as an essential component of reaching outcomes, goals, or objectives and establishing responsibilities. Collaboration was evidenced as an essential need when executing the institution's drug abuse policy to properly evaluate the drug-abuse situation. Although all of the leaders reported that they used collaboration to rectify drug-abuse situations or improve student drug-abuse prevention, Dave discussed that collaboration with higher authority figures was limited in student drug prevention issues,

and Jill stressed that higher authority figures sometimes had limited knowledge about student drug abuse issues, despite having accurate information from the collaboration process. Jan described the significance of involving all stakeholders in collaboration to avoid poor communication, which could result in negative issues.

Constructive dialogue. All of the participants discussed the need for positive communication and constructive dialogue in reaching objectives. Although difficult at times, such positive dialogue was needed to enact positive change. As Rick stated, "a challenging time is trying to connect with a student, reaching them, and having that quality conversation." He expressed that quality conversation with student helped to further support the student's well-being. Rick stated, "We are trying to evaluate whether or not if there's a significant drinking problem here in terms of the jeopardy to the student's safety and safety of others." Ally used constructive dialogue with students in determining "what their [the students'] needs were" accurately through "back-and-forth dialogue." Ally also discussed the importance of maintaining positive dialogue with students so that they can contribute equally to student drug abuse prevention, "to put students in a position where they had to say that they had autonomy and the ability to do something that could be beneficial for the campus." Deb expressed that constructive dialogue is needed to coordinate and share power to deeply connect with stakeholders after a student's death and to establish a compassionate environment that meets their needs and concerns;

> We constantly are in dialogue [among authority figures and students] of how do
> we support students and best reevaluate what we are already doing to make sure

that this doesn't happen again. …So being able to process that with students and help them work through it because we ultimately know that, yes, an environment can be helpful or not helpful.

Steve discussed the importance of positive dialogue for conveying knowledge learned from challenging experiences, so that others can benefit through understanding and new knowledge. Steve referred to passing important information on from challenging experiences through story telling involving collogues.

…[Y]ou make sure that that you don't lose that knowledge …you have to think broader than just your immediate incident. … what I've done is story telling. I think that in the organization theory research, they call them organization sagas but these are like critical incidences that have happened that can be passed on in certain organizations. They stay alive because people shared their stories.

Jan expressed that constructive dialogue allows one to gather quality data as well as present research-based data.

The important thing for us to talk to other leaders about was about what the problem [regarding student drug abuse] was specifically on their campus. ... I work in troubling situations and I'm always talking to campuses [regarding student drug abuse].

Jan stressed the importance of accurate data in the communication process to aide academic leader awareness in drug abuse issues across the nation in order to implement proper drug prevention strategies. Positive communication for networking, as reported by Sara, is essential to create positive actions to support the institution and aid its growth.

Sara stated that the networking process "has been devoted to communication. Usually, that is me reaching out to those individuals with the hope that they will then reach out to me in a time of need."

Critical reflection. The leader participants used critical reflection when involved in challenging experiences to deter student drug abuse. The interview data provided evidence that those experiences included asking challenging questions to bring the leaders and others to a higher level of understanding to create new knowledge for action. The challenging questions included challenges to oneself and others. For example, as stated by Jill, "I always think when someone is struggling with something or even just using [drugs] moderately, you look at what are the risks. What are the negative consequences? How is this affecting their success? How is it affecting their life?" To improve the health, safety, and well-being of college students, Ally invited colleagues to partake in critical reflection and asked significant questions: "Here is how I did this. What are your thoughts? How could I have done this better to get my point across? How do I make my case?" Dave sought better understanding of a drug-abuse issue and called out to colleagues regarding the need for more information by asking significant questions such as, "Why is this an issue? How many people does this effect?" Steve explained that asking significant questions can result in clarity to allow all parties to work well together in reaching outcomes.

Responsibility. All of the leader participants expressed the responsibility for leaders to use evidence-based research for strategy and guides in the prevention of student drug abuse as well as leaders in student affairs to accept the responsibility to

gather evidence-based data to help deter student drug abuse in higher education. Four leader participants discussed the responsibility of seeking and sharing research-based data with other colleagues to help create proper procedures for challenging prevention issues. As stated by Jill, authority figures "have a responsibility to keep up on what's happening with young people and share that information with other colleagues" so that others can gain knowledge. Also, the leader participants often referred to higher authority figures to have more knowledge about responsible drug prevention and contribute effectively. For example, Dave stated, "So often we may have a penalty or practice in place that benefits the administrator but really doesn't make much of a strong impact on students." Also regarding responsibility, a leader participant Jan stated, "If you're not thinking about social justice issues and diversity on campus, if you're not thinking about health, wellness, and safety of students, then you're not doing the due diligence of being a leader of your campus."

Ally expressed the need to share responsibility and empower others so that they can grow in their leadership capacities and aid students and the academic institution in the prevention of student drug abuse. Regarding sharing responsibility by empowering student leader-followers, Ally stated, "It gives them experience in a new way to approach education, but it also gives us more capacity." The participant leader provided students with an opportunity to become leaders in drug prevention within higher education.

Support. The leader participants used support in various ways to reach positive outcomes. Specifically, they often used research-based data to support positive action to deter student drug abuse. As Jan explained, "research-based data strengthens your

argument." Dave gave recovering students direct personal support to establish a healthy and safe environment where they could go to relax and feel secure. The leader participants often took an extra step in providing support services to students who are emotionally troubled from a circumstance, as evidenced by Sara who stated in regard to a particular case, "I was really trying to provide services to that student and support what they needed, knowing that he had been through a pretty emotionally challenging time . . . [and] didn't necessarily have the support of family or friends." Also, Deb expressed how support and trust from colleagues aided the leader's self-confidence when involved in challenging situations.

Sara stressed that authority figures were more attentive in creating positive action when backed by colleagues with evidence-based research. She stated, "If you've got colleagues at your level or beneath you supporting you, that grassroots support and effort will help you and support can help bring messages forward and be supportive of your leadership in that area." Ally also established support in presenting evidenced base drug prevention procedures with support of colleagues. She stated, "But we really take the lead on what is being presented, how it's being presented and what language is being used. They've looked to us as the experts on this." Also, the leader participants used collaboration as a supportive means to improve correspondence and communication and to support students' well-being. Jan and Sara also stressed the significance of seeing the big picture of drug-culture changes across the nation and called for support from all leaders to enact better programs and services to deter student drug abuse in higher education.

Vision. The participant leaders often discussed positive aspects of continued transformative applied leadership regarding thinking broadly and envisioning positive change for the good of the whole. For example, Steve stated, "Keeping your perspective broad enough to think of things outside of your specific area or responsibilities is a leadership challenge." Jan referred to students' health and well-being and stated, "It is not just about the traditions of excellence in academics or the engagement of the student but it takes a broader perspective," emphasizing the positive health and mental capacities of the student. Deb discussed listening to others' viewpoints to create positive future outcomes and deter student drug abuse: "If you have a narrow idea of what the vision should be, sometimes you don't listen to what others are saying. It's opening up that channel, so that there are more voices that are able to express what the vision can be for all." The importance of leadership seeing the big picture was evidenced frequently, including the need for leaders to stay well informed of evidence-based and research-based prevention procedures. As Sara reported, because of changes in drug culture nationwide, leaders need to be aware and see the big picture so that proper research-based prevention procedures can be developed, enacted, and implemented to deter student drug abuse.

Regarding adult transformative learning, the leader participants repeatedly discussed how their learning came from challenging experiences and the time they spent as authority figures learning from changes in the education process and applying policies over time. As for transformation in applied leadership, all of the participants expressed that they had developed in their leadership capacities and had continued to grow and

adapt in their applied leadership skills. The dominant results in relationship to both frameworks suggested that reflecting critically was a key component in the application and growth of leadership, as well as in the transformation of their learning. All of the participants expressed a deep concern for student well-being when applying student drug abuse policy. The results showed regarding the application of student drug abuse policy, the participants had both positive and negative concerns regarding strategies to deter student drug abuse.

In addition to the results on adult transformative learning and transformative leadership, a significant finding of the data was that the leader participants were visionaries who relied on asking challenging questions in a collaborative process to create knowledge for deterring student drug abuse, both now and in the future.

Summary

The results of this study provided evidence that all of the leader participants identified significant constructs of the adult transformative theory, the accepting of *challenge*, *reflection*, *constructive dialogue*, and *action*. Accurate information was also evident as significant that aided constructive dialogue in preventing student drug abuse. The participants also showed both positive and negative concerns regarding policies to deter student drug abuse. It was evident that they perceived that many higher authority figures they interacted with were not knowledgeable in research-based prevention procedures specific to the students' well-being as well as the changes in the drug cultural scene across the nation. It was also evident that they perceived drug prevention policies act as a positive guideline in the deterrence of student drug abuse that must be

implemented properly for the success of drug prevention programs that benefit the well-being of all students, and the academic institution.

In relation to the transformative leadership theory, the leader participants most often identified *accurate information*, *collaboration*, *constructive dialogue*, *critical reflection*, *responsibility*, *support*, and *vision* as significant in the drug abuse prevention. At times throughout the interview process the leader participants identified other positive factors of transformative leadership but did not standout as dominate themes, such as empowerment and the asking of analytical questions, as being an importance in applied quality leadership and believed that many leadership factors are being neglected by many with higher authority in deterring student drug abuse in higher education.

These findings supported the adult transformative theory and transformative leadership theory constructs of this study's conceptual framework. This study supported current literature and the further development and understanding of academic leadership learning and leading approaches in response to student drug abuse in higher education demonstrated by participant leaders in the acceptance of challenging drug abuse situation in the application of quality leadership to create positive action.

The results of the study presented in this chapter included the study's setting, demographics, data collection, and data analysis were described. Next, to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, I discussed credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability strategies to enhance the validity and quality of this study. The results of the data analysis were presented in relation to the research question and the conceptual lenses of both adult transformative learning theory and transformative leadership theory

in relation to how student affairs leaders described their challenging experiences in higher

education concerning student drug abuse. In the final chapter, chapter 5, I revisit the

purpose, and nature of the study along with a discussion of the results and

recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how academic leaders described their recent challenging experiences in the context of addressing student drug abuse in higher education. The eight participating academic leaders of student affairs each had 5 or more years of experience in their positions, with an average of 16 years of academic leadership experience. The main objective of this study was to develop a further understanding of the academic leadership experiences of those faced with challenging situations in the context of student drug abuse in higher education. Using the conceptual frameworks of adult transformative learning theory and transformative learning theory, I analyzed the leaders' challenging experiences pertaining to student drug abuse in higher education to gain an understanding of how and whether those frameworks had been part of the participants' approaches when they were faced with challenging situations regarding student drug abuse in higher education.

Summary of Findings

All eight leader participants expressed deep concern and compassion for student well-being in relationship to drug abuse in higher education. The participant leaders' concern and compassion led to the acceptance of challenging situations in the prevention of student drug abuse, in which they became deeply involved in creating positive action in drug prevention procedures. Although all leader participants reported action, the consequences of the actions did not always meet expectations for some participant leaders. In addition, their experiences explicitly reflected collaboration, constructive dialogue, the ability to reflect critically, and providing support and vision. All participant

leaders asserted that their vision included the importance of applying evidence-based research in the hope of developing positive action for both the student's well-being and the growth of the academic institution—all directly related to the transformative leadership theory. Other dominant findings included the importance of personal leadership responsibility in the acceptance of challenging drug-prevention situations to enhance student well-being. The need for support also stood out as a significant finding, whether in the gathering of accurate information or the asking of analytical questions in an attempt to realize positive change in the prevention of student drug abuse. The leader participants did not report any negative personal encounters with students; however, the participant leaders reported both positive and negative concerns about the student drug prevention policy, the most significant of which was the need for administrators in their institutions to improve their knowledge bases concerning prevention strategies that support all students' well-being.

Interpretations of the Findings

Guiding this study was the following research question: How do higher education leaders of student affairs describe their experiences in learning and leading in relation to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment? Data pertaining to the research question were analyzed through the conceptual lens of adult transformative theory and the lens of transformative leadership theory. The data analysis revealed that the adult transformative constructs (Mezirow, 1991) of challenge, critical reflection, constructive dialogue, and action were evidenced by all of the leader participants in their experiences with student drug abuse in higher education. The data analysis also revealed

that the transformative leadership constructs (Apps, 1994) of accurate information, collaboration, critical reflection, responsibility, sharing, support, and vision were frequently mentioned in the leader participants' statements. Further, these leader participants, based on their experiences, had a strong understanding of how to create positive change for the benefit of students' well-being in the prevention of student drug abuse, which is a significant concept of both the transformative and transformative leadership theories.

Contemporary research has also established the importance of accurate information for constructive dialogue, which enables positive action (Crudo-Capili & Concepcion, 2013; Rikkink, 2014). My research supports the need for accurate information, which is critical in the attempt to rectify a situation that has created hardships for families, academic institutions, and social environments related to student drug abuse. Such information, according to the leader participants' responses, assisted in establishing positive results for leader participants, whether in knowledge gained or in rectifying a challenging situation. The leader participants routinely reported the need for accurate information in support of constructive or positive dialogue to move beyond difficulties, hardships, and challenges in the attempt to create a positive environment for all stakeholders.

The interview questions did not elicit many responses from leader participants in relation to the elimination of personal bias in how they conducted themselves during conflicts or how they made decisions, which is an important aspect of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, I cannot conclude from the data whether

personal bias elimination was part of the leader participants' learning process. Because the elimination of personal bias in participants' relationships with rational discourse is considered an important transformative theory concept, more research related to personal bias elimination in correlation to academic leaders' challenging experiences is needed.

Transformative Learning Constructs

The leader participants identified the transformative learning constructs (Mezirow, 1991) of challenge, critical reflection, constructive dialogue, and action as significant in influencing positive outcomes in the prevention of student drug abuse in higher education. All eight leader participants expressed compassion and concern for student well-being in their willingness to accept difficult challenges. Understanding that there was a difficult or significant problem (Mezirow, 1991), which all the leaders reported, gave cause for the participant leaders to reflect critically, as evidenced in statements by all participants about seeking to overcome barriers to aid and support students, reflecting critically a significant construct of Mezirow's transformative learning theory.

Constructive dialogue and action, central aspects of Mezirow's (1991) theory, were also evident in the leader participants' statements concerning their search for new understanding and meaning. This was readily apparent through their reports of positive communication and constructive dialogue supported with accurate information in the attempt to apply appropriate actions. Both constructive dialogue and action are significant constructs of transformative learning in the attempt to create new meaning and knowledge based on challenging experiences.

Transformative Leadership Constructs

The analysis of the data revealed significant transformative leadership constructs suggested by Apps's (1994) transformative learning theory—most notably, high moral and ethical values in the acceptance of challenging situations and responding to student drug abuse in ways meant to support all students' well-being. These constructs were used in the transformative leadership process as indicated in the responses of all eight participant leaders and were significant factors in the application of Apps's quality leadership. The participants illustrated compassion and concern in response to student drug abuse, which are also aspects of Apps's transformative leadership theory. Accurate information in a collaborative process, another aspect of transformative leadership theory, was also evident, as participants reported fortifying their actions with evidence-based data to support clear, positive communication and constructive dialogue in the attempt to rectify challenging situations related to student drug abuse. Also evident was the use of encouragement and support while engaging responsibly with stakeholders—a key aspect of Apps's transformative leadership theory. The eight leader participants reported that asking questions to create clarity and assist in critical reflection were important to move forward in the deterrence of student drug abuse.

Other qualities of Apps's (1994) applied transformative leadership skills that appeared in the responses of the eight participant leaders included seeing the big picture and having the vision to adapt leadership skills as the cultural drug scene changes throughout the nation. Leadership vision reflects a significant construct of Apps's transformative leadership, based on the understanding that leadership is nonlinear and the

importance of adapting leadership approaches to changes, as well as the importance of building on leadership capacities to effect positive future change. The participant leaders reflected on the quality of their applied leadership in terms of vision and their development as leaders in the face of challenges whether in the sharing of power, analysis, perseverance, or responsibility. It was beyond the scope of this study to understand if they would have developed their leadership capacities if they had not been involved in challenging situations regarding student drug abuse in higher education.

Current Research Addressing Leadership Challenges Associated With Student Drug Abuse

Contemporary research has indicated that drug abuse remains prevalent among students, is systemic in higher education, and can create difficult, persistent challenges for authority figures in higher education and the social environment in higher education despite drug abuse programs, policies, and strategies (Arria et al., 2013; Champion et al., 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Ringwald et al., 2011). This study supports contemporary research about abusive student drug behaviors, as evidenced by eight leader participants who experienced challenging situations, including student death, student suspension, and student incarceration. Two participants noted that heroin abuse was on the rise among higher education students, causing great concern for those on their campus responsible for maintaining the health and well-being of all students. Two other leader participants noted that, because of the legalization of marijuana in many areas throughout the nation, new challenges had developed as they tried to prevent marijuana abuse and create a healthy and safe environment for all students.

Although the participant leaders spoke positively about the significance of academic institutions' drug policies in drug abuse prevention procedures, there was nonetheless concern among all participants about both future prevention procedures and existing drug abuse policies as they sought to address ongoing negative consequences of student drug abuse cause and the changing, detrimental drug-scene culture in higher education across the United States. In light of systemic drug abuse having been recognized in higher education (Arria et al., 2013; Champion et al., 2015; Demers, Beauregard, & Gliksman, 2013; Ringwald et al., 2011), the leader participants spoke about staying focused on the policies and procedures of the academic institution to protect students' health and well-being and support the institution's growth. The leader participants also stressed that academic leaders should collaborate to deter student drug abuse. The collaboration process aided academic leaders in gathering accurate information concerning student drug abuse and supported the claims of Champion et al. (2015), Moshi et al. (2014), and Russett and Gressard (2015), who stressed that academic leaders must stay abreast of the dynamic social and academic student drug culture, hear students' voices, and aid in developing approaches to effectively address student drug abuse.

Current Research on Leadership Development

There are many uncertainties about how academic leaders in higher education are learning and leading in response to challenging situations (Beer et al., 2015; Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013; White, 3013). The findings of this research involving eight participant leaders support current research pertaining to leadership development in

relation to demonstrating responsibility, gathering or providing support, or developing the ability to see the big picture. The findings may provide valuable information to academic leaders involved in challenging situations such as student drug abuse. The eight leader participants in this study did not indicate agreement one key factor that is most relevant to applied leadership. However, the importance of the ability to see the big picture (vision) was frequently noted. Given the demands of a complex academic system and a changing drug scene, leader participants often described seeing the big picture as helpful in addressing students' needs and concerns, as well as supporting the academic institution's future growth. That evidence supports the findings of Daloz et al. (1996), Dempster et al. (2011), and Gmelch (2013), who stressed the importance of seeing the big picture to overcome problems, to stay abreast of developments, and to seek out understanding to initiate better opportunities for stakeholders.

All of the participants made statements related to challenging situations, critical reflections, and rational discourses, which led to action. How committed these leader participants were to the prevention of student drug abuse and the health and well-being of all students became clear based on their responses. Leader participants reported that they readily accepted challenges in response to student drug abuse because of their high moral and ethical values, which exemplified quality leadership development, as described by Donald and Scribner (2003), Nica (2013), and White (2014). They did so, as they reported, by becoming morally accountable to the needs and demands of stakeholders, thereby reaching a higher level of consciousness in the development of leadership qualities through applying positive action. Critical reflection was also strongly evidenced

by leader participants in the acceptance of challenging situations. In that critical

reflection relationship, all leader participants sought accurate information, whether

through positive communication or through evidenced-based data, to promote

constructive dialogue in a collaboration process with the aim of achieving better

understanding that would allow positive action. Those findings support the views of

Daloz et al. (1996), Donaldson and Scribner (2003), and Gmelch (2013) on relationships

between critically reflecting and promoting positive dialogue and how this accrues new

meaning to create positive action among stakeholders. In relationship to contemporary

research, as Gmelch explained, good leaders use critical reflection to help guide action;

this is significant when a leader is confronted with challenging situations.

Contemporary literature has revealed that collaboration is a significant quality in

applied leadership development, enabling different perspectives and opportunities, better

outcomes, and support for others (Arria et al., 2013; Crudo-Capili & Concepcion, 2013;

Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013; Jones et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2011; Rikkink,

2014). Collaboration was seen as essential in all leader participants' experiences to help

build relationships, develop strategies, align goals, share information, network, or create

support, all of which leader participants described as aiding them in establishing positive

action. Although all leader participants discussed positive aspects of collaboration and

the use of collaboration, three leader participants reported a breakdown in the

collaboration process, such as in limited support, limited positive communication, or lack

of evidence-based information that led to poor outcomes concerning the prevention of

student drug abuse or adverse consequences such as death or expulsion.

Transformative leadership qualities related to understanding responsibilities—such as gathering evidence-based information, sharing new meaning and knowledge, empowering others, networking, building leadership capacities, staying abreast of world situations, supporting others, and taking on new responsibilities (Apps, 1994)—emerged from the data given by leader participants. Those findings also support contemporary research based on the importance of understanding responsibilities, which has been found to enable opportunities that facilitate good outcomes and dynamic academic institutional growth (Dempster et al., 2011; Gmelch, 2013; Nica, 2013; Parker et al., 2011; Simon et al., 2014).

Support is key to applied leadership behavior in the change process (Parker et al., 2011; Rikkink, 2014; Sypawka et al., 2010; White 2013). The significance of support was apparent through the leader participants' responses. Additionally, support stood out in various ways in relation to applied leadership among leader participants, whether in demonstrating quality leadership, in taking extra steps in relationships to provide for student needs and concerns, in providing support to colleagues, in receiving support from others, or in using supporting data to create action and build leadership capacities, as Gmelch (2013) found in a study of the development of campus academic leaders.

In summary, this study's results from interviews with eight student affairs leaders located primarily in the Midwest and Northeast regions of the United States revealed that these leader participants, who had strong moral and ethical values, demonstrated critical reflection, which aided with evidence-based research and the support of others to create a solid foundation for a collaborative process. This process aided in the attempt to rectify

the challenging situations that participants faced regarding student drug abuse in higher education. The results suggest that challenging experiences can increase individuals' leadership capacities. Whether through confidence building or knowledge gained, all participants described an increase in their leadership capacities. Further, leadership vision was a key factor in the academic institution's growth and all students' well-being.

Limitations of the Study

This study's limited transferability is related to the potential for researcher bias and research design. The sample population of eight student affairs leaders in higher education was solicited from various academic institutions throughout the United States, but those who responded were only from the Northeast and Midwest who self-identified as facing challenging situations regarding student drug abuse. This may limit the transferability results. The self-selected sample of student affair leaders who indicated that they had faced challenging situations may have represented more extreme experiences than other student affairs leaders in that they appeared to accept and respond to students seeking an opportunity to talk over difficulties. They may have been leaders particularly successful and wanted to talk about their strategies in a research study and to a good listener. Responding to drug abuse challenges on campus is very time consuming, making it less likely for those in the middle of a challenge to take the time to choose to participate in an interview study. Because the range of academic leaders on higher education campuses and their various challenging experiences is broader than those related to student drug abuse, the results may not be transferable to other populations of academic leaders and their distinct challenges.

Another potential limitation of this study included my bias as the primary research tool in the development of the research question, collection of data, and data analysis. As an educator in higher education within the concentration of community health, personal health, and drug use and abuse during the past 10 years who has also been involved in a challenging situation regarding student' drug issues, personal bias could have resulted in the interview questions' development and their interpretation. Addressing my potential bias involved keeping a research journal to allow my critical reflection in the study's alignment from the initiation until the conclusion. Because of the use of member-checks, the leader participants confirmed that the interview transcripts were accurate and agreed with the account of their experiences and the interpretation of them. This added to this study's validity. Procedures designed by Walden's Institutional Review Board and the input from my research committee also aided in keeping the study aligned, which further helped in the reduction bias throughout the study to ensure the study's reliability and trustworthiness.

Recommendations

To help further validate this study's results, future researchers could increase the sample population using a quantitative study. A case study could be employed to gain a deeper understanding of academic leaders' perceptions, specifically from those who have faced acute challenges and the role of collaboration and action played by multiple parties to the challenge. Such acute challenges might include those related to heroin abuse, now on the rise in many academic institutions across the nation, or the proper implementation of drug prevention policies, which proved a deep concern for some participants in this

investigation. Also, evident in this research were issues related to poor communication, causing a breakdown in collaboration among stakeholders in student drug abuse prevention. Therefore, another consideration for future research may involve a qualitative methodology relating to how people recover from the breakdown in the collaboration process or how breakdown occurs in the collaborative process related to student drug abuse in higher education. Another possibility for future research is to employ a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of a small sample of academic leaders who have had the same experiences, possibly in association with student death from drug abuse, to gain a deep, richer understanding of the phenomenon to aid in transformative learning and transformative leading. Use of collaboration, however, needs further research to determine why positive communication broke down during some of the leader participants' experiences. Also, because of the limitation in the research design, it was not concluded whether student affairs leaders had a strong knowledge base regarding transformative learning and transformative leadership before the study began, suggesting further research is needed to determine that.

Implications

This study could aid academic leaders with guidance regarding the challenges, commitments, and successes described leader participants. This study could also aid in understanding the uses of transformative learning and transformative leadership best practices toward quality leadership in the prevention of student drug abuse in higher education. Since participants reported they had improved leadership capacities based on their lived experiences with challenges in response to student drug abuse in higher

education other student affairs leaders may find guidance from learning of the challenges these eight participants and how they were faced. This finding could lead to a suggestion that employers asking academic leader applicants probing questions concerning their past challenging experiences in drug prevention, allowing for the possibility of adding depth to quality leadership in the academic environment. Because of drug abuse challenges across the nation, employers from both the social business and educational environments might also explore with potential hires their experiences in learning from and leading in situation of drug abuse at the workplace, which would aid positive institution growth and individual well-being leading to positive social changes for both the academic and social business environments in direct relationship to the well-being of individuals.

The results suggested that if academic leaders were to seek accurate information to aid critical reflection and constructive dialogue in the collaboration process the potential to rectify negative challenges would be better supported for all stakeholders. The results also suggested that higher authority figures of academic institutions need to become more informed concerning characteristics of student drug abuse whether in individual drug abuse or the changing cultural drug scene across the nation to support their leadership abilities should challenging drug abuse problems arise.

Conclusion

The eight leader participants' acceptance of challenging situations was captivating to me. Leader participants' compassion and concern for students were revealed in how deeply the leader participants critically reflected in the attempt to rectify challenging situations pertaining to student drug abuse. Contemporary researchers have asserted that

drug abuse is prevalent and often misunderstood as student affairs leaders attempt to rectify challenging situations pertaining to student drug abuse. This investigation has provided more awareness into the transformative learning and leadership qualities of academic leaders. This investigation has also provided insight into leaders who willingly accept the challenge to respond to negative drug abuse situations that are often seen as extremely detrimental to the social and academic environment to aid positive social change in the deterrence of student drug abuse and aid higher education in the transformative learning and leadership process.

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Appendix: Interview Questions and Probes

Research question: *How do higher education student affairs leaders describe their experiences in learning and leading related to addressing student drug abuse in the higher education environment?*

1. Please describe your role in student affairs on your campus.

Probe 1: Are there ways you experience your role as demonstrating leadership on campus? Can you tell me about them?

2. Describe one or two challenging situations involving student drug abuse that you have had to address.

Probe 2a: Can you tell me what you were considering as you approached the challenging situation?

Probe 2b: What were the outcomes for you, the students, and/or the campus of the experiences you described? Can you describe them?

Probe 2c: How did you measure the success of any strategies that presented positive steps for the benefit of the student and the academic institution in the future reduction of student drug abuse?

Question 3: Were there aspects of a collaboration process with others within the academic community, social community, with parents, or students? If so, can you describe how you managed collaboration process with others?

Probe 3a: Were other leaders involved in positive dialogue inviting alternative perspectives in addressing the challenging situation?

Probe 3b: Who participated? Was there an equal opportunity to participate among the stakeholders in the academic and social community? Did you present accurate and complete information to the consensus involved? Can you tell me how?

4. Based on the challenging situation(s) you described, can you describe changes that have occurred for the campus or you during or since?

Probe 4a: Can you describe the leadership and learning changes regarding how you handled the situation?

Probe 4b: Can you describe your leadership choices if you were given another opportunity to "redo" the challenging experiences?

5. Tell me, based on the challenging situation, have you had a change in your perspectives regarding your leadership capacities? If so, can you tell me about your new perspectives toward leadership?

Probe 5a: What were some of your perspectives in relation to a challenging situation that you had to critically reflect on?

Probe 5b: Have any of your leadership capacities improved because of those challenging situations? Can you share that with me?

Probe 5c: Based on the challenging situations you handled, can you describe skills that others might use?

6. Looking back at the challenging situations that you have managed in student drug abuse, have any other new knowledge, ideas, roles, actions, or opportunities emerged from those experiences?

7. Is there anything you would like to add based on your challenging experience

involving student drug abuse?