SECONDARY STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFICACY OF DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAMS TAUGHT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION

Presented to

The Faculty of the Education Department

Carson-Newman University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

Misty Meadows

2019
Dissertation Approval

Student Name: Misty Dawn Meadows

Dissertation Title: Secondary Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Efficacy of Drug Prevention Programs Taught in Elementary Schools

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by the faculty of the Education Department, Carson-Newman University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

Dissertation Committee:

Signatures: (Print and Sign)

Dissertation Chair
Brian Kelleher Sohn, Ph.D.

Methodologist Member
P. Mark Taylor, Ph.D.

Content Member
Andy Rines, Ed.D.

Approved by the Dissertation Committee Date: April 15, 2019
Abstract

This qualitative study researched the efficacy of drug prevention programs taught in elementary schools as perceived by secondary students and teachers. The study was established to determine the correct age to introduce and spiral drug prevention programs to students. A total of 161 high school senior students from a rural school district in middle Tennessee completed a survey via random sampling. Twenty senior students that were deemed at risk by teachers and guidance counselors were used for a focus group, and a small group of 10 high school teachers participated in an independent focus group. After collecting and analyzing raw data, three main findings emerged. Alarmingly, high percentages of secondary students continue to consume alcohol and participate in illicit drug usage. Both teachers and students suggest prevention programs are needed in upper grade bands to promote retention of information obtained though prevention programs. It is fundamental to spiral communication skills needed to avoid drug and alcohol use in teens. Also, teachers consider student relationships built with law enforcement a positive aspect of prevention programs offered in schools.
Copyright © 2019 by Misty Dawn Meadows

All rights reserved
# Table of Contents

Introduction and Background of Study................................................................. 1

Statement of Problem............................................................................................ 3

Purpose of Study/Significance of Study ................................................................. 4

Research Questions .............................................................................................. 7

Theory and Framework ......................................................................................... 7

Limitations and Delimitations .............................................................................. 8

Assumptions ........................................................................................................... 9

Definition of Terms ............................................................................................... 10

Organization of the Document ............................................................................. 11

Summary ............................................................................................................... 11

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED MATERIALS ......................................................... 12

Literature Review Methods................................................................................... 12

Theoretical Lens- Sociocultural Theory ............................................................... 14

Origins .................................................................................................................. 14

Development ......................................................................................................... 15

Contemporary Issues ............................................................................................ 16

Sociocultural Theory and Perceptions of the Efficacy of Drug Prevention Programs ..... 16

Conceptual Framework- Positive Youth Development ......................................... 17

The Framework ..................................................................................................... 17

Positive Youth Development and Perceptions of the Efficacy of Drug Prevention Programs .......................................................... 20

Discourse Analysis ............................................................................................... 23

Background .......................................................................................................... 23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY, AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ADOLESCENT DRUG USE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACADEMIC CONSEQUENCES</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PUBLIC SCHOOL PREVENTION PROGRAMS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDEAL AGE/GRADE FOR DRUG/ALCOHOL PREVENTION PROGRAMS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH APPROACH</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH QUESTION</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SAMPLE</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SETTING OF STUDY</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DATA COLLECTION</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DATA ANALYSIS</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH PROCESS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DATA</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DATA SOURCE - SURVEY</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Source – Student Focus Group Interviews ................................................................. 56
Data Source – Teacher Focus Group Interviews ............................................................... 59
Data Source – Artifacts ..................................................................................................... 62
Data Analysis .................................................................................................................... 65

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .................................................................. 73
Research Design ............................................................................................................... 73
Discussion of Findings ..................................................................................................... 74
  Secondary student drug and alcohol knowledge and usage ............................................. 75
  Elementary awareness in isolation is not enough ......................................................... 76
Implications ...................................................................................................................... 78
  Sociocultural theory ..................................................................................................... 79
  Positive youth development ......................................................................................... 79
Limitations of the Research ............................................................................................. 80
Future Research ............................................................................................................... 81
Recommendations ........................................................................................................... 82
Final Thoughts ................................................................................................................. 84
References ......................................................................................................................... 86
List of Tables and Figures

Figures

Figure 2.1 Vygotsky’s Basic Mediated Triangle.................................................................19
Figure 2.2 The Positive Youth Development Model of Change........................................21
Figure 2.3 Adverse Childhood Experiences Pyramid.......................................................30
Figure 2.4 12th Grade Dropouts Compared to Non-Dropouts.........................................32

Tables

Table 4.1 Responses from Survey to Inform Research Question One...............................53
Table 4.2 Responses from Survey to Inform Research Question One...............................54
Table 4.3 Responses from Survey to Inform Research Question One...............................55
Table 4.4 Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question One.............................70
Table 4.5 Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question Two.............................71
CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

Introduction and Background of Study

Historically, the influence of drugs, mainly marijuana and alcohol, has been prevalent in society. Numerous people fail to realize that marijuana/hemp was formerly a lucrative cash crop, and alcohol was free flowing before and after prohibition. Prohibition did little to stem the process of producing and consuming alcohol. For many, the realization that alcohol was banned brought more appeal. Speakeasies were generated, and alcohol was smuggled to undisclosed sites. Many believe that prohibition failed because humans dislike being told what to do or how they must do something (Barry, 2013).

Presently, a dominant addiction trend in society is the misuse of prescription drugs and opioids. NIDA, National Institute on Drug Abuse, (2018) defines addiction as a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences. Addiction involves functional changes to brain circuits involved in reward, stress, and self-control, and those changes may last an extended period of time after a person has stopped taking drugs.

According to The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), in October 2017, President Donald Trump acknowledged the opioid crisis as a national public health emergency. Opioids are drugs that include pain medication obtained legally by prescription, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and morphine, as well as heroin and synthetic opioids like fentanyl. The U.S. Department of Education is uniting with Federal agencies to fight the opioid crisis that is killing Americans at a higher rate than roadway accidents (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The Office of Adolescent Health (2017) reported that in 2016, more Americans died due to opioid overdoses than car crashes. While the causes of opioid misuse are determined by multiple
elements, the goals of prevention and recovery focus on reducing risk and promoting factors that increase resiliency among secondary school students. As with drug and alcohol abuse, schools play an essential function in grasping these goals.

Prescription drug and opioid abuse is an escalating issue in the United States among adolescents. Volk (2016) found that more than 5,700 teens in 2014 admitted to using prescription pain medication without a physician’s direction for the first time. In 2016, 3.6% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 reported misusing opioids over the past year. This percentage is twice as high among older adolescents and young adults aged 18 to 25. Based on this research, it is the job of parents, educators, and stakeholders to inform today’s youth about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

In 2017, the National Institute on Drug Abuse sponsored a national survey on drug use titled Monitoring the Future (MTF). Conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (2018), MTF reported substance use trends, attitudes, beliefs, and perceived ability of drugs and alcohol in grades 8, 10, and 12. According to the report, substance use by secondary students in the United States can be tracked as a rapidly changing phenomenon. To gather statistics of youth usage for analysis, MTF collected data through frequent assessments and reassessments. The 2017 summary of key findings reported the rise in several illicit drugs. Annual marijuana prevalence rose by 1.3 percentage points, and the use of any illicit drug, including inhalants, rose by 2.0 percentage points. Relatively few illicit drugs showed a decline in 2017, while most illicit drug use remained steady during 2017. Those drugs included LSD, hallucinogens other than LSD, ecstasy, cocaine, crack, and heroin.

According to Johnston, Miech, O’Malley, Bachman, Schulenberg, and Patrick (2018), alcohol remains the most frequently abused substance by secondary students. Even with recent
declines, 62% of these students have consumed more than just a sip of alcohol by the end of high school. Of those students reporting alcohol consumption, 23% have done so by 8th grade. Upon further analysis, it was noted that 45% of the 12th graders and 9% of the 8th graders reported being drunk at least once in their life.

This misuse of drugs and alcohol among today’s youth establishes a cause for concern and a need for a remedy. Drug and alcohol consumption in teens contributes to further struggles for adolescents: grade-level retention, decrease in school activities, increased high school dropout rate, and lower academic success (Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2018; Heradstveit, Skogen, Hetland, and Hysing, 2017; McCabe, Modecki, & Barber, 2016; Simpkins, 2015).

School districts are approaching the abuse of drugs and alcohol through drug intervention and education programs. Based on the premise that knowledge is power, districts are hopeful adolescents may use information that they gain through school prevention programs to make informed decisions.

**Statement of Problem**

Secondary students continue to use drugs and alcohol despite school and community efforts to decrease adolescent usage. Current data indicates that drugs and alcohol are concerns in the world of secondary education. Walsh’s (2016) study found the following:

By the age of 18, nearly 70% of teens admit to having had at least one drink, and about one in five teens admit to binge drinking. Marijuana is also frequently abused by teens. In 2011, approximately 40% of high school students had admitted to ever using marijuana. About 7% of high school seniors admit to using it every day. In 2013, about 25% of high school students admitted to smoking cigarettes or using other tobacco products in the past month.
Consequences associated with drugs and alcohol use in secondary schools are extensive. Alcohol can affect a student’s quality of education and academic performance. Reanna (2008) contended that excessive drinking does not affect high school completion rates, but it considerably increases the likelihood that a student graduates with a GED rather than a high school diploma (as cited in Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2018). The 2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed a negative association between drug and alcohol use and academic achievement. Attendance issues are also a factor when teens turn to drugs and alcohol. Socialization and involvement in school and school-related functions decline as the use of substances increase (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Prevalent drug prevention programs in schools are a vital component of continuing the anti-drug effort. However, according to Ellickson, McCaffrey, Ghosh-Dastidar, and Longshore (2003), only 9% of school districts are utilizing a curriculum that has established success. There are existing gaps in research attributable to programs being implemented in certain grades without being sustained. Therefore, the question remains, “Are districts and communities that are choosing to offer drug prevention programs in late elementary school equipping students for peer pressure associated with drug usage encountered during secondary school years?”

**Purpose of Study/Significance of Study**

School districts are not in control of student choices when it comes to their experimentation with alcohol and drug use; however, they are in control of improving student knowledge so students may make more informed decisions that will lead to healthy, productive lifestyles. According to Provoni (2011), past studies have shown that only 35% of public schools and 13% of private schools are implementing prevention programs with demonstrated
effectiveness. For school districts to gain feedback crucial to inform students properly, responses from adolescents are needed.

There are variances in data throughout schools, districts, states, and the nation that must be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of drug prevention programs being taught in today’s schools. Student perceptions, beliefs, and desires vary within a district; therefore, some programs may work in certain districts but may be unsuccessful in others. Another inconsistency of prevention programs is the time frame in which the curricula are taught. One study reported on average, students participate in 1.62 prevention programs from elementary through high school. However, it was also reported that many U.S. middle and high schools do not provide the evidence-based curricula, suggesting only a third of the nation’s secondary schools offer prevention programs (Gottfredso & Gottredson, 2001; Ringwalt, Ennett, Vincus, Thorne, Rohrbach, 2002, as cited in Kumar, O’Malley, Johnston, and Laetz, 2013).

These inconsistencies drive the foundational question for this study: Is there efficacy in prevention programs offered only in elementary schools? Roberts (2010) suggested that successful prevention programs should be associated with developmental appropriateness and key methods of delivery. One study indicated that 48% of students recalled prevention presentations being boring, offered when they were not interested, or found the information was irrelevant to them (as cited in Ogenchuk, 2012). Drug Abuse Resistance Program, D.A.R.E., is a widely known drug and alcohol prevention program that strives to create a cluster of students that are educated to combat drug and alcohol use and other dangerous behaviors.

Freiheit, Montague, & Wigginton (1999) state that the D.A.R.E. was founded in 1983. D.A.R.E. provides in-class lessons to students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Lessons are provided weekly for a 16-week period by a local police officer. Instruction deals with how to
confront peer pressure and lead constructive lives that are free from drug and alcohol use.

D.A.R.E. is taught in approximately 80% of school districts in the United States, in 54 other countries around the world, and 36,000,000 students are educated through Drug Abuse Resistance Education each year. With many students being introduced yearly to the D.A.R.E. program, it is essential to know if this widespread program is effective in decreasing alcohol and drug use among teens, and if the program is being introduced at the right time in students’ lives.

Offering the D.A.R.E. program in rural schools is valuable to secondary school stakeholders (Caputi & McLellan, 2017; Lucas, 2008). The viewpoint of stakeholders is important when analyzing student and teacher perceptions of D.A.R.E. and other prevention programs. Having evidence on the position of stakeholders can help drive the curriculum needed to implement and utilize a productive program that develops knowledgeable and drug-free students.

In light of the results of Ogenchuk’s (2012) research, modifications for educational practice and programs need to be considered when providing prevention programs for adolescents. Significant findings from the study reported students’ views about the need for increased information on alcohol education at the high school level and clearly stated that information should be provided at a stage in development that is relevant to students. To determine a good program fit, it is essential to study a district, its students, and students’ strengths and struggles. By scrutinizing these avenues and comparing to data obtained on various programs, the district will be able to find a curriculum that meets its needs.
Research Questions

This study was designed to determine how secondary students and teachers depict their perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs, such as D.A.R.E. that are only taught in elementary schools through talk. Two questions guided the statistical analysis:

1. What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?
2. What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their students’ elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

Theory and Framework

Sociocultural theory is an approach to human development and thinking. This theory focuses on the relationship between social, cultural, historical, mental, and institutional influences and competences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Schoen, 2011). Sociocultural concepts can be applied to numerous influences, activities, and factors when researching secondary student drug and alcohol use. Outside elements examined in this study include society, peers, siblings, family history, mental health, home life, socioeconomic status, and adverse childhood experiences. According to Bobo and Husten (2000), outside sociocultural concepts are related with first time and continued drug and alcohol use in adolescents. Therefore, to understand behaviors and perceptions of adolescent drug and alcohol use, it is vital to understand social, cultural, historical, mental, and institutional influences and competences.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework that promotes achieving a vision of healthy, productive, and engaged youth. This framework relies on positive social and cultural influences to guide youth toward productive outcomes. PYD programs, practices, and policies work with youth to improve four key domains: Assets, Agency, Contribution, and Enabling
Environment. Sociocultural theory is the foundation of the four domains and is characterized by focusing on a variety of seven different sociocultural program features with embedded indicators.

It is not necessary for all aspects of PYD to be used at one time. The domains, features, and program indicators used depend upon the framework focus of particular studies (Hinson, Kapugnu, Jessee, Skinner, Bardini, & Evans-Whipp., 2016). Using sociocultural ideas and PYD concepts, this study applied all four of the key domains and several of the features/indicators to create focus groups, develop survey questions, and build rubrics to drive observations.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

There are several noteworthy delimitations of this study. The target population for this research was high school students and teachers from two different high schools in one Middle Tennessee school district. This population was chosen due to the accessibility of the participants. From the population, stratified sampling was used during the beginning steps of the research process for focus group selection. This method was selected to ensure all targeted subgroups were represented in the sample. This approach limits the research and sample to schools with similar demographic groupings, geographic regions, and socioeconomic credentials. Another delimitation of the study comes from researcher bias. Whether conscious of bias or not, researchers must plan for personal positions and prejudice to be present during research. When proofing the study, the researcher was especially critical in reviewing how the problem was stated, how the data to be studied were selected, what components of the study may have been omitted, how people, places, or things were represented, and the connotation, positive or negative, that was used with possible words. Delimitations can also be found if bias is evidenced
in prior research. In this event, the bias must be acknowledged and the researcher must explain what measures were taken to avoid perpetuating similar prejudices.

Limitations for this study include self-reported data, time, and funding. According to the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research (2018), the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on Substance Abuse with adolescents recommends the CRAFFT 2.0 as a behavioral health-screening tool for use with children ages 12-18. (2018). By using the CRAFFT health-screening tool, survey results were limited to self-reported data that could not be independently verified. Four factors of this limitation could have included selective memory, enhancement, untruthfulness, and exaggeration. Time was also limited based on deadlines for research. Additionally, external funding placed limitations on programs that could be purchased for data collection. The results of the study were limited to the population of high school students and educators in a rural Middle Tennessee school system that is predominantly a low-to-middle socioeconomic area. The study focused specifically on teachers’ and educators’ beliefs for determining the necessity of developing and modifying drug prevention programs in schools. These limitations are in line with research conducted by Kumar et al. (2013), which focused on a descriptive report of what prevention programs exist in schools.

Assumptions

I assume that students initially develop a positive perspective of drug and alcohol prevention programs after the completion of the elementary school program. However, throughout secondary schooling, it was also assumed that there was a shift in the thought process. Additionally, it was believed that teachers question the validity of drug and alcohol prevention programs. Furthermore, it was expected that all participants would answer each survey, interview, and focus group question truthfully and in a non-biased manner. It was
anticipated that the research would find most participants view elementary drug prevention programs as unsuccessful in preventing secondary student drug use.

**Definition of Terms**

When used in the Positive Youth Development framework, **Domains** refer to the four larger, overarching themes of a PYD approach (Hinson et al., 2016).


**Drug prevention programs** are designed to provide the education and support necessary to diminish drug dependency in communities, schools, and the workplace (Caputi & McLellan, 2017).

**Efficacy** is the ability to produce a desired or intended result or effect (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

When referencing **Enabling Environment**, the term suggests social, normative, structural, and physical aspects of a setting (Hinson et al., 2016).

A **Feature** is an approach or activity that a program can implement with youth (Hinson et al., 2016).

An **Indicator** is a specific, observable and measurable characteristic used to demonstrate changes or progress in a program toward a particular outcome (Hinson et al., 2016).

**Intervention techniques** are professionally directed, education processes resulting in face-to-face meetings of family members, friends, and employer with the person in trouble with alcohol or drugs (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 2015).
**Positive Youth Development**, PYD, is a philosophical approach to adolescent development based on nurturing one’s ability to grow and succeed throughout life (Hinson et al., 2016).

**Retention** takes place when repeating an academic year of school is necessary. Retention is commonly referenced as being held back (National Association of School Psychologists, 2003).

**Substance abuse** is the excessive use of a drug, such as alcohol, narcotics, or cocaine, or the use of a drug without medical justification, including tobacco (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

**Organization of the Document**

This proposal is arranged in five chapters. The second chapter is limited to a review of relevant literature that includes sociocultural theory and PYD framework. A review of pertinent literature is exclusive to those that inform and apply to the research questions. The third chapter itemizes the methodology in use for the study. The fourth chapter explores the findings of the study. The fifth chapter offers conclusions, implications, and recommendations. Prevention planners should consider appropriate audiences and provide programs that support each developmental stage of this study.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. A statement of the problem was specified. Chapter one also included the purpose and significance of the study. Two research questions were identified, as well as the theory framework. Limitations and delimitations were recognized, and pertinent definitions of terms were listed.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED MATERIALS

The first chapter introduced readers to the problem of drug and alcohol use among secondary students and the role that student and teacher perceptions play in drug prevention programs. In this study, student and teacher perceptions are measured by focus groups, observations, survey questionnaires, and artifacts. This chapter includes pertinent introductory literature related to the study, which facilitates readers with a greater understanding of secondary student participation in drugs and alcohol, a summary of the D.A.R.E. program, and an overview of sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development framework. The research was analyzed and investigated to determine related studies, as well as gaps in documented findings.

Literature Review Methods

The review of correlated literature prompted a comprehensive search of articles that examined drug prevention programs that are offered in schools, factors that influence adolescent drug and alcohol use, and the academic consequences associated with drug and alcohol use in secondary schools. The purpose was to investigate related topics that would offer readers an understanding of the topic. For recent and meaningful findings, studies were limited to the late 1990s to present day.

The following databases were utilized: Google Scholar, Education Source, ERIC, ProQuest, JSTOR, Super Search, and Sage Premier. Searches were conducted using keywords: drug use, high school, education, effects, prevention, D.A.R.E., America, and secondary students. This featured allowed findings in relevant studies. Throughout the search process, many texts were located. Upon completion of the search and review process, over 60 studies, dissertations, articles, and books were used.
The review of related materials is arranged beginning with an in-depth analysis of the theoretical lens, conceptual framework, and discourse analysis used in this study. The theoretical lens, sociocultural theory, includes the origins, development, and contemporary issues that surround the sociocultural theory. The conceptual framework, Positive Youth Development (PYD), follows the theoretical framework. The PYD section is divided into the history, overview, and application of the framework. Discourse analysis includes background and applications to sociocultural theory as well as PYD.

The review of literature continues by exploring factors that impact adolescent drug and alcohol use, including societal influences, peer groups, siblings, family dynamics, mental health issues, home life, and socioeconomic status. Subsequent research includes Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), academic consequences, public school prevention programs, and the ideal age and grade level for prevention programs.

D.A.R.E. is a specific prevention program that is highlighted in the study. D.A.R.E. is the most popular and widely used substance abuse prevention program in America (Kumar et al., 2013). This study sought out research concerning the connection between student and teacher perceptions as reported through discourse and the efficacy of drug and alcohol prevention programs. The theoretical lens and conceptual framework of this study help address many aspects and roots of adolescent substance use. Sociocultural theory and conceptual youth development frameworks are applied to combat drug use in pre-teens and teens. These factors can be utilized to assist with approaches and expectations of alcohol and drug use.
Theoretical Lens- Sociocultural Theory

Origins

The term “sociocultural” is defined as the state of, relating to or involving a combination of social and cultural factors (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Socioculturalism, sociocultural methods, and sociocultural theories are applied when one wants to understand the philosophy of how people act based on cultural, institutional, individual, and societal factors as they relate to learning and development. Before the 1920s, philosophical and mental processes had not been approached from a sociocultural perspective. Psychologists during this period were content with simple explanations of human behavior studied in isolation. However, sociocultural approaches emerged, and human behavior began being considered based on society, culture, and history (Gredler & Shields, 2008).

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, is often thought of as the initiator of sociocultural approaches. These approaches and mindsets originated in the early 1900s, after the Russian Revolution. In his early years, several philosophers influenced Vygotsky’s fundamental belief about cognition and cognitive change, such as Spinoza, Hegel, Potebnya, Marx, and Engels (Yaroshevsky, 1989; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Potebnya, 1913/1993; Vygotsky, 1982-1984/1997, as cited in Gredler & Shields, 2008). These philosophers directed Vygotsky’s work and prompted him to focus on the development of higher-order mental processes in human beings.

Vygotsky based his concept of sociocultural approaches on three ideas. These concepts have deep roots in the social aspects of (a) human activities, which include individual development; (b) human actions, which are mediated by language and symbol systems; and (c) cultural development, which focuses on genetic analysis (Wertsch, as cited in Moll, 1990).
These sociocultural concepts, philosophies, and theories are applied universally and are continuously adjusted to fit various areas of study (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). However, no matter the analysis, the primary focus always remains on the social and cultural aspects driving what is being researched.

Development

The development of sociocultural theory was not a continual process. As Vygotsky began creating a sociocultural theory of mind, his health became an issue. Unfortunately, his developments and works were halted by his passing due to tuberculosis in 1934 (Wertsch, 1990). After his death, Vygotsky’s ideas on the social and cultural origins of mind remained stagnant for almost a century. During this time, USSR dictator Joseph Stalin was opposed to the concept of sociocultural approaches. Stalin used his position to ban the publication of Vygotsky’s ideas and works for more than 20 years. The Cold War also played a part in suppressing sociocultural ideas from the migrating to the West. When Vygotsky’s ideas and works made it to the West, language barriers and interpretation only seemed to make matters worse. All references to Lenin were removed, as well as most of the Marx and Engels references, in early translations (Au, W., 2007, as cited in Sawyer, 2014).

The state of educational psychology remained in disarray for many years after Vygotsky’s death. However, over the past decade, there has been an increased interest in his ideas, beginning with the 1960s discovery and reprinting of his work (Verenikina, 2010). This discovery led to the first English translation of Myshlenie I rech and publication of Thought and Language in 1962 (Vygotsky, 1962/1986). After the first translation of Vygotsky’s work, the number of his English writings continued to increase, causing rapid growth in the use of Vygotsky citations used in the West. The latter part of the 20th century aided in the progression
of sociocultural theory when a revived interest in the study of developmental psychology and mental processes emerged (Wertsch & Tulviste, 2005).

**Contemporary Issues**

Socioculturalism is centered on a real-life approach to accepting human activity and mental functioning as a unit instead of two separate factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Schoen, 2011). Before sociocultural methods, human development and thinking were generally approached from the behaviorist and cognitivist perspectives. However, with the rise of sociocultural theories, human development and thinking are now studied and researched as a relationship between social, cultural, historical, and institutional influences as well as mental competences. Today, most research seeks to explain a broad assortment of contemporary issues using sociocultural theory as the framework. The purpose of the questions, studies, and designs used within a sociocultural framework is to understand and appreciate the complex factors that guide human activity.

**Sociocultural Theory and Perceptions of the Efficacy of Drug Prevention Programs**

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is grounded in developmental psychology. Approaching studies from a sociocultural development perspective creates a real-life facet of the research. Vygotsky’s ideas and sociocultural theory provide the framework for analysis that questions how society and culture impact student mental processes, behaviors, and outcomes. Based on this theoretical perspective, behavior and thinking are determined by the dynamic and continual interaction of social and environmental factors (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). For this study, sociocultural theory frameworks were used to develop an understanding of secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through the use of discourse.
Bobo and Husten found outside sociocultural factors are related with first time and continued drug and alcohol use in adolescents (2000). When exploring secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs, the center of this theoretical work attempts to understand several external forces: society, family, peers, school, community, and prevention programs. Based on these factors, the question must be asked, “Does the framework explain individuals’ learning and behaviors in successful contexts according to external factors?” Successfully answering this question, while applying the sociocultural theory, requires a conceptual approach based on understanding and nurturing the development and growth of adolescents during drug prevention stages based on social and cultural factors.

**Conceptual Framework- Positive Youth Development**

**The Framework**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a philosophical approach to adolescent development based on nurturing one’s ability to grow and succeed throughout life. Adolescents move through several critical phases as they progress through all developmental stages. These periods of time involve rapid social, emotional, and physical changes. As students progress through these critical phases and periods of time, outside sociocultural factors of society, family, peers, school, community, and prevention programs considerably influence developmental stages.

PYD’s methodology is based on molding the competencies, skills, and abilities to address fundamental developments as adolescents mature. The focus of PYD is to build positive and powerful relationships between youth and their peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, societies, and cultures. Each connection established strives to support healthy growth and enrich knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities (Hinson, Kapungu, Jessee, Skinner, Bardini, & Evans-
Whipp, 2016). Using the PYD approach can be beneficial and have a positive impact with any number of programs directed at the secondary school level. Youth projects concentrated on sexual and reproductive health, mental health, education, crime, and violence have all reported a positive impact when Positive Youth Development methods have been implemented (Catalano, 2002; Gavin et al., 2010; Roth, 2003, as cited in Hinson et al., 2016).

The Positive Youth Development framework indicates that to achieve a vision of healthy, productive, and engaged youth, practices and policies must focus on working with adolescents to improve four overarching domains: Assets, Agency, Contribution, and Enabling Environment. The Asset domain works to safeguard the essential resources, talents, and capabilities youth need to achieve preferred results. The Agency domain works to improve adolescents’ perceptions of themselves by using their assets and aspirations to guide their decisions, set their goals, and to act in a manner to achieve positive outcomes. The Contribution domain aims to engage youth as a basis of change for the positive self and community development. In the Enabling Environment domain, all youth are encompassed by an environment that will assist with developing and supporting their assets and agency. The Enabling Environment delivers comfort, safety, confidence, and reassurance. This encouraging environment provides opportunities and assists youth with becoming productive citizens without the stress and anxiety of violence. When referencing environment, the term suggests social, normative, structural, and physical aspects. Social aspects include the ability to form relationships with peers and adults. The normative facet considers attitudes and beliefs. The structural feature embraces laws, policies, programs services, and systems. Finally, the physical element ensures safety and supportive spaces (Hinson et al., 2016).
Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory aligns with the approach and methodology of the PYD framework. Figure 2.1 represents what is noted as Vygotsky’s basic mediated action triangle (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The principles of PYD can be observed through the progression of the illustration. The subject in this graphic is the individual or individuals engaged in PYD activities. The mediating artifact/tool can include artifacts, peer groups, societies, and prior knowledge that contribute to the subject’s mediated action experiences within the PYD activity. Each of the four core domains is encompassed within the top of the triangle. The object is the goal and anticipated outcome of the PYD activity. Vygotsky’s triangular representation of mediated action provides an illustration of the core domain aspects of the Positive Youth Development framework.

*Figure 2.1 Vygotsky’s basic mediated triangle (adapted from Cole & Ergestión, 1993, as cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).*

Embedded within the four domains are seven different program features that can be implemented with youth: skill building, youth engagement and contribution, healthy relationships and bonding, belonging and membership, norms/expectations/perceptions, access to age-appropriate and youth-friendly services/integration among services, and safe space. PYD indicators are also included as measurable aspects of the domain and feature categories. Both the
program domains and features are grounded in work and literature from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (Hinson et al., 2016). It is important to note that it is not necessary to address all the domains and embedded features for the framework to be effective. When applying the domains, features, and indicators, it is vital to select the most appropriate targets for the program. The mixture of domains, program features, and indicators are dependent upon the specific area of framework focus.

**Positive Youth Development and Perceptions of the Efficacy of Drug Prevention Programs**

Studies conducted on drug prevention programs and the efficacy of those programs would concentrate on several, but not all, of the different approaches. The domains, program features, and indicators utilized in the Positive Youth Development framework for this purpose were selected based on and informed by Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theories. The goal of this conceptual framework focused on increasing, developing, and understanding both the social and cultural aspects of secondary student drug use and perceptions conveyed by students of prevention programs. The indicators selected were based on the ability to effect positive change among youth who are participating in this research. Using Vygotsky’s sociocultural ideas and PYD concepts, this study applied three indicators from the Assets domain, one indicator from the Agency domain, and one indicator from the Enabling Environment domain. These indicators included interpersonal skills, higher-order thinking, self-control, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms.

Figure 2.2 represents the basic progression and approach to the domain, program feature, and indicator components used in this study. There is a clear connection between the Positive Youth Development model of change and Vygotsky’s basic mediated action triangle. The graphic depicts the same evolution as Vygotsky’s methodologies. Key input represents
adolescents participating in PYD programs targeting basic functional development. Key components of PYD speak to the characteristics of the PYD program being implemented. This area of the illustration exemplifies the specific goals of the PYD program being used. The desired outcome is the long-term goal of the PYD activity.

By using skill-building indicators of the Assets domain, PYD concepts aim to ingrain the abilities that help youth integrate feelings, thinking, and actions to achieve specific social and interpersonal goals. Increasing interpersonal skills emphasizes the range of skills used to
communicate and interact with others. Essential strategies for drug prevention include verbal and non-verbal communication skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and negotiation strategies. Another skill-building indicator centers on higher-order thinking skills. Higher-order thinking allows adolescents to recognize an issue, absorb information from various sources, and assess options to reach a reasonable conclusion. When students are in drug-related situations, thinking at higher-order levels allows them to successfully problem-solve, plan, make decisions, and think critically. The last indicator used in the skill building feature concentrates on increasing self-control. Increasing self-control enables students to adjust their behaviors, control their emotions, manage their impulses, and focus on making good choices (Merrick, Shek, & Ma, 2012).

The Agency domain includes the self-efficacy indicator. Building self-efficacy in today’s adolescents and secondary students creates an opportunity for individuals to have an open mindset about one’s abilities. Encouragement of self-efficacy at young ages leads to self-confidence in multiple areas. During PYD programs, the self-efficacy indicator encourages youth to focus their abilities to avoid occurrences that are negative in nature. The last indicator included in this research comes from the Enabling Environment domain. An environment where prosocial norms, expectations, and perceptions are valued is vital for healthy adolescent social and cultural development. It is crucial for youth to develop prosocial norms when considering drugs and alcohol (Hinson et al., 2016). When adolescents establish these norms, they have a clear understanding of healthy and positive behaviors, beliefs, and engagements (Merrick, Shek, & Ma, 2012).

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development focus on social and cultural aspects that drive development and the way individuals make decisions. Sociocultural
theory explains the foundation for each domain of the PYD framework; all mental processes, assets, agencies, contributions, and enabling environments are influenced by the social and cultural experiences of individuals. Using the Positive Youth Development approach based on sociocultural theory will help provide an understanding of secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs as discovered through verbal and nonverbal communication.

Discourse Analysis

Background

According to Hodges, Kuper, and Reeves (2008), discourse analysis is about studying and analyzing language. Discourse being paralleled to language is often misunderstood as grammar for the purpose of communicating information. However, it is important to note not all language and communication is verbal or written. Gee (1999) stated that discourse analysis can also take place through language used in conjunction with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing.

Discourse is not mastered through instruction, but by scaffolded models of social practices and interactions with people who have already mastered those discourses (Gee, 1989). However, discourses are not sets of knowledge that can be taught due to the changing nature of values, beliefs, and attitudes. According to Gee (1989), acquiring discourse is a process that begins early in life. Individuals acquire primary socialization discourse early in life at home and through peer groups. Primary discourse is the first used to interact with others and make sense of the world. Primary discourses are based on interactions with family and provide the foundation for all other discourses developed later in life. After individuals acquire initial socialization in
homes, secondary discourses begin. Secondary discourses are based on various non-home based social interactions and institutions. These discourses are extended beyond the family and immediate peer group and can encompass local community groups, churches, schools, other state and national agencies, etc.

**Discourse Analysis, Sociocultural Theory, and Positive Youth Development**

Discourse analysis serves as one of the principal methodologies of sociocultural research. Sociocultural research centers on understanding cognitive, social, cultural, affective, and communicative factors (Forman & McCormick, 1995). Sociolinguistics is defined as the study of language in relation to sociocultural factors (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Taking a sociolinguists approach to discourse analysis allows individuals to apply sociocultural research and theory to explain assumptions discovered through research (Potter & Edwards, 2003).

According to Forman and McCormick (1995), discourse analysis has given researchers an extensive tool for understanding how cognitive, social, cultural, affective, and communicative process are connected to educational and instructional situations. Through the application of discourse analysis, Gee (2005) suggested using seven building tasks of language to guide seven different questions about any language-in-use. These seven questions will guide the study and build upon Positive Youth Development features.

**Review of Literature**

The purpose of this review of literature was to examine and review relevant topics that will provide readers a foundation for understanding the current study. According to the Council on School Health and Committee on Substance Abuse (2007), alarmingly high levels of illicit drug use continue to be a problem among American teenagers. As a physical, social, and
psychological second home for most youth, schools naturally undertake the main role in substance abuse education, prevention, and early identification.

This review of literature focused on articles and books that investigated factors found to influence adolescent drug use, adverse childhood experiences, academic consequences of adolescent drug use, public school prevention programs, and the ideal age and grade for drug and alcohol prevention programs. The literature was organized by category, with a description and/or history of each concept, while also integrating and relating to relevant studies.

Factors that Influence Adolescent Drug Use

When scrutinizing the American population, people have different intentions when they begin using drugs and alcohol. Drugs are not limited to the rich or the poor, the old or young, the happy or sad. Drugs and alcohol are prevalent in all walks of life. Presently, turning on the television or looking on the internet can create a world of enticement. Commercials and advertisements for drugs and alcohol are used to lure and attract people from every age group, socioeconomic group, gender, and ethnicity. Viewers are subject to these ads and view drugs and alcohol as pleasurable, exciting, and relaxing (Grube, 2004).

Societal factors influence drug use in teens. Why do people choose to use drugs and alcohol? The answer varies. Mood altering substances can be viewed as recreational, social, a means to gain prosperity, or as a way to diminish trials and tribulations. Today’s society, especially youth, look to athletes as role models. Unfortunately, some athletes also fall into the trap of substance use to better themselves or their game. Research from Corzine (2016) found:

Financial gain and employment security are rational motives for using performance-enhancing drugs. Besides, if one looked out beyond the diamond world, were not many workaday Americans using drugs—some traditionally used in the Major Leagues—to
perform better at their jobs? Students across America popped Adderall to get through study sessions and grueling exams (and behold, today, critics worry about the influence of ADHD drugs in the game!). Surgeons and legal professionals relied on amphetamines or other uppers to keep their edge in a highly intense workplace. When it comes down to it, few things could be more American than using a supplement to improve job performance.

Young adults are susceptible to positive and negative influences in all realms of life. Drugs and alcohol are not exempt from this trajectory. Although society prefers to think that adolescents do not begin experimenting until later in their teenage years, there are studies that show some youth begin even earlier. According to a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, it was indicated “some children are already abusing drugs at age 12 or 13, which likely means some begin even earlier. Early abuse often includes such substances as tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, and prescription drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-anxiety medicines” (NIDA, 2003). Research also indicates that the younger students are when they begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol, the more difficult it will be for them to discontinue use in later years.

Peers can influence drug usage in teens. Often, adolescents look to celebrities, athletes, older siblings, and their peers for popular, well-liked choices. Regrettably, these are not always the positive choices that should be encouraged. Several theories highlight the position of peers in adolescents' drug use. As noted by Farrell and Danish (1993), the clearest stance is taken by Oetting and Beauvais’s (1986, 1987) peer cluster theory. This theory states that peer variables are a primary projection of drug use. Although other psychosocial factors could contribute to the likelihood of drug use potential, it is debated that this potential is generally
recognized through communications with peers. It is further stated that the use of drugs originates through peers, and that peers commonly provide drugs, model drug usage behaviors, and assist with developing mindsets about drugs and drug usage. Conversely, as noted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2016), adolescents are less likely to participate in drug use if their friends view it as normal to be drug and alcohol free.

**How do siblings impact drug use?** Parents and guardians are continually searching for ways to keep their children safe and free from danger, including substance use. Often, sibling influence is one of the factors that shape thoughts of drug and alcohol use. Needle, McCubbin, Wilson, Reineck, Lazar, & Mederer (1986) found there is a correlation between siblings and alcohol and/or substance use. Research states that older siblings are frequently a connector between information about different substance use and the younger offspring. Younger siblings often look up to their big brother or sister and are conscious of decisions being made. If older siblings are making poor choices, younger siblings could choose to model that learned behavior. Conversely, when older siblings do not use drugs and/or alcohol, younger siblings have a drug-free model to follow.

**Does a family’s history influence drug use?** A family history of drug and alcohol use can play a pivotal role in determining if adolescents will choose to proceed on a destructive path. It is probable that teens who are predisposed to substance use will become dependent on drugs and alcohol (Crano & Hemovich, 2009). Some adolescents may see family members using drugs and alcohol and identify that as an appealing factor for experimentation. According to Kessler, Chiu, Demler, Merikangas, and Walters (2005), drug and alcohol abuse displays a strong pattern within families. Chassin, Pitts, and DeLucia (1999) stated that studies confirm that teens of substance abusing parents are two times more prone to having an alcohol and/or drug use
problem that is established by young adulthood opposed to peers without substance abusing parents. Nonetheless, it is a significant realization that many children of substance abusing parents show positive outcomes regardless of their family exposure to drugs and alcohol (as cited in Solis, Shadur, Burns, and Hussong, 2012).

**Mental health issues can influence drug use in high school students.** Teens who are dealing with a mental health issue or concerns could be more susceptible to drug and alcohol use. It is important to recognize that mental health issues do not cause substance use; however, these issues can create a direct line to experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Frequently, there is a commonality between substance use and mental health components such as mood, anxiety, or learning disorders. Teens and young adults may begin experimenting with certain drugs or alcohol to numb these issues. In like manner, partaking in drugs and alcohol could also lead to different types of disorders (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016).

**Home life will impact drug use.** Adolescents want to feel safe and secure from the worries of the teenage world. If the home is not the place that they are receiving refuge, teens can retreat to drug and alcohol use. Research shows that youth from single-parent homes have a greater risk of drug and alcohol use. Observations from studies have indicated that single-mother households are more likely to be underprivileged, which has been associated with higher levels of drug and alcohol use in adolescents. Studies based on father-only homes have indicated a higher level of drug use among daughters. The sex of the parent is not associated with drug use among male children. (Crano & Hemovich, 2009).

**Socioeconomic factors can lead to drug use in high school students.** According to Barrington (2008), there is a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and drug and alcohol use. Continued drug and alcohol use by teens in secondary schools is an ongoing public
health concern; this is particularly accurate for students living in rural, low-income areas where it is monetarily challenging to gain access to intervention and treatment services. Another concern relates to students living in higher socioeconomic areas. Chen, Sheth, Krejci, and Wallace (2003) found that alcohol consumption is considerably higher among upper middle class white high school students when compared to poor black high school students. These findings are supported by a history of research showing that alcohol abuse is far more prevalent among wealthy people than those labeled as poor (Diala, Muntaner, & Walrath, 2004; Galea, Ahern, Tracy, & Vlahov, 2007, as cited in Gorski, 2008).

Although some teens may choose to consume drugs and alcohol for recreational purposes, many adolescents view types of substance use as a way to manage adversities and let the stress of the world slip away; however, this is not the best method to solve problems or issues. No matter the reason the path of drugs and alcohol is chosen, the reality is that turning to these methods tends to create far more serious ramifications and consequences than intended (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events that put individuals at a significant risk for substance use disorders (LeTendre & Reed, 2017; SAMHSA, 2018; Wade, Shea, Rubin, & Wood, 2014). ACEs can include incidents where students are involved with abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), neglect (physical or emotional); growing up with household substance abuse, criminality of household members, mental illness among household members, and parental discord and drug use (Chakracarthy, Shah, & Lotipour, 2013). According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2018), when
children are exposed to chronic stressful events, their neurodevelopment can be disrupted, which can impact drug prevention efforts.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the likelihood of results due to adverse childhood experiences. These adverse childhood experiences are indicative of outside factors, such as drug and alcohol use, physical and emotional abuse, criminal activity of household members, and mental illness. The higher a score on an ACEs scale, the higher the likelihood for the student to travel up the pyramid.

Figure 2.3. Adverse Childhood Experiences Pyramid. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2018).

Studies suggest that children with particular adverse childhood experiences may initiate drinking earlier than their peers. In 1998, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with the Kaiser Hospital in San Diego, released a landmark Adverse Childhood Experience study, which documented a link between adverse childhood experiences and subsequent adult health outcomes. The ACE study suggested that individuals who experienced four or more types
of adverse childhood experiences were at a four to twelve-fold increased risk of developing alcohol or drug abuse problems (LeTendre & Reed, 2017).

A later retrospective study by Dube, Felitti, Doug, Chapman, Giles, and Anda (2003) measured correlations between the number of ACEs and future substance abuse behavior. The study specifically compared the number of ACEs resulting in a greater likelihood of drug use commencement under the age of 14 and also compared the number of ACEs linked with amplified risk of developing addiction. The study established that as ACEs increased, the likelihood for drug use under the age of 14 also increased by two to fourfold. It was also recognized that the risk of later addiction grew by five times. People with five or more ACEs were 7-10 times more likely to report illicit drug use than those with none (as cited in Chakracarthy et al., 2013).

**Academic Consequences**

Consequences associated with drugs and alcohol use in secondary schools are extensive. Alcohol can plausibly affect a student’s quality of education and academic performance. Reanna (2008) contended that excessive drinking does not affect high school completion rates, but it does considerably increase the likelihood that a student graduates with a GED rather than a high school diploma (as cited in Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2018). Attendance issues are also a factor when teens turn to drugs and alcohol. Socialization and involvement in school and school related functions declines as the use of substances increase.

**Drugs and alcohol can impact high school graduation.** High school graduation is a momentous occasion for adolescents; however, according to NSDUH data (2017), an average of approximately one in nine 12th grade aged adolescents are high school dropouts each year. The data also suggested these 12th grade aged students that have dropped out of school were more
likely than comparably aged adolescents, who were still in school, to have been involved with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs in the prior month. Figure 2.4 compared substance usage between 12th Grade dropouts to non-dropouts. 12th grade aged dropouts were more likely to be current cigarette users (55.9 vs. 20.2 percent), be alcohol users (41.1 vs. 33.7 percent), engage in binge alcohol use (31.8 vs. 22.1 percent), engage in any illicit drug use (31.4 vs. 18.1 percent), engage in marijuana use (27.5 vs. 15.6 percent), and engage in nonmedical use of prescription-type drugs (9.5 vs. 4.6 percent) (Tice, Lipari, and Van Horn 2017).

![Figure 2.4 12th Grade Dropouts Compared to Non-Dropouts. (Tice, Lipari, & Van Horn, 2017)](image)

The data used does not determine if an adolescent’s drug and alcohol use began prior to dropping out of high school or materialized subsequently. Regardless, this report indicated that youth who have dropped out of high school have an elevated risk of substance use. Working with prevention programs that are directed to adolescents in danger of dropping out of high school could assist with future happenings in a world of education, financial stability, health, and social aspects.
Drugs and alcohol can affect extracurricular school activities. The fact remains: drug experimentation and drug and alcohol use continue to haunt schools across the country. Adolescents encounter numerous situations in which they become exposed to binge drinking and drug use. It is suggested that educators and social scientists understand the importance of students being involved with structured after school activities (McCabe, Modecki, & Barber, 2016). Extracurricular activities are expected to help prevent students from being involved in drug use. To this point, research conducted by Shilts (1991) discovered abusers, students that have used drugs more than one time, consisted of individuals who reported little involvement in extracurricular activities. The abuser group also reported spending more time with friends, who were identified as individuals that use/abuse drugs and alcohol, than with their family.

Extracurricular activities are believed to promote positive development, provide a safe environment, and develop positive relationships among youth and adults. Academic studies have proven students involved in after school activities are less likely to be drug users or abusers (McCabe et al., 2016; Simpkins, 2015; Cooley, Nelson, & Thompson, 1992; Shilts, 1991; Jenkins, 1996). The question becomes: how can all students be exposed to those methods?

A study on secondary extracurricular participation and student alcohol and drug use surveyed students in grades 5-12 who participated in athletics, government/clubs, and music/drama. The study focused on the following objectives:

- Relationship of student participation in athletics on student drug and alcohol use
- Relationship of student participation in student government/clubs on student drug and alcohol use
- Relationship of student participation in music/drama on student drug and alcohol use
- Effect of student non-participation in extracurricular activities on student drug and alcohol use
- Effect of student participation in more than one extracurricular activity on student drug and alcohol use

The study concluded that extracurricular participation was a factor in reducing student experimentation and use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. It was also found that students who participated in extracurricular activities were less likely to use drugs than their counterparts who did not participate (Cooley et al., 1992).

**Attendance issues are created by adolescent drug use.** Research conducted by Heradstveit, Skogen, Hetland, and Hysing (2017) suggested strong correlations between alcohol/illicit drug use and the negative impact on student grade point averages and attendance. The study reported that even after adjusting for gender, age, socioeconomic status, and mental health problems, all the overtones between alcohol/illicit drug use and school attendance remained statistically significant. It was also noted that increasing the number of indications on alcohol/drug-related problems and levels of alcohol consumption were associated with a larger negative impact on school-related attendance. Data from another study proposed short-term consequences of drugs and alcohol correlated with a potent prediction of dropouts and attendance issues (Austin, 2016). Truancy and skipping school is also a major concern in secondary schools. Empirical evidence suggested that drug use was a common behavior that students engaged in when truant or skipping school (Henry, 2010).

Conversely, research has also been conducted to determine how reduced substance abuse can increase school attendance. A study by Engerg and Morral (2006) provided support for the claim that cessation or reduction of substance use increased the likelihood of positive school
attendance for secondary students. The study suggested that the use of marijuana, once or more often, negatively impacted attendance. However, the use of alcohol, stimulants, and the residual category of ‘other drugs’ a single time in a quarter did not measurably reduce the odds of school attendance, but more frequent use did. This research recommended that reducing the use of marijuana, alcohol, stimulants, and other drugs would increase student attendance percentages.

Public School Prevention Programs

Silvia and Thorne’s (1997) research found that Congress enacted the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA) in 1987 to combat alcohol and drug abuse among today’s youth. This initiative was aimed to encourage and support schools, communities, parents, and governmental agencies to assist with the drug and alcohol epidemic. Since the initiation of DFSCA in 1987, the law has been amended numerous times to accommodate for changes. Congress confirmed belief through amendments that educating today’s youth is a pivotal responsibility of schools and parents. By being progressive and teaching the youth of America about the dangers and consequences of drugs and alcohol, perhaps there will be advancements made in closing the gap on a drug-free nation. A significant amendment occurred in 2000 when referencing the national education goals. This modification integrated safety in schools. Congress changed the act from Drug-Free Schools and Community Act (DFSCA) to Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community Act (SDFSCA). With Congress supporting safe and drug-free schools, funding is available. Many districts and states take advantage of this funding. Local law enforcement agencies also contribute to the financing of prevention programs. Although strategies to fight drug and alcohol addiction and safety issues appear immense, district and county officials choose to direct limited resources to programs that allow law enforcement to
target at-risk adolescents (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2016). Law officials view this as being progressive and proactive.

The intended purpose for the education of drug prevention in schools is to avoid or lessen the desire to make destructive choices that will lead to increased drug and alcohol use in the future. Teaching drug prevention programs in schools could be considered both inadequate and advantageous. As stated by the Drug Policy Research Center (n.d.), there is one question that continually looms over such programs: how do the benefits of prevention programs surpass the expenses? (para. 10). Specific disadvantages to consider would be cost, manpower, and lost instructional time. Whereas, obtaining the knowledge needed to make crucial decisions relating to alcohol and drug use could be added to the list of benefits of prevention programs.

Numerous prevention programs are widely used throughout the nation. One program that has been implemented in several school districts is voluntary, randomized, student drug-testing (VRSDT). According to Carrington (2008), in 2004, President George W. Bush dedicated millions of dollars in federal funding to help schools implement VRSDT programs. To date, however, the effectiveness and efficacy of the VRSDT program has not been entirely determined due to two main factors: 1) school districts recently started to implement VRSDT; and 2) many researchers have assumed that all drug-testing programs are similar.

Project ALERT, a drug prevention program designed for middle and high school students, is also used in schools. The course uses videos and interactive teaching methods. By utilizing discussion, small group activities, and role-playing, learning becomes more collaborative, and students retain more of the information being introduced. Project ALERT has been tested in an array of rural, Midwestern schools and communities. The results show that school-based drug prevention programs can prevent occasional and more serious drug use, help
low- to high-risk adolescents, and be effective in diverse school environments. Project ALERT has been recognized as an exemplary program by the Department of Education and as a model program by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (Ellickson, McCaffrey, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Longshore, 2003).

In 1983, Los Angeles Police Department Chief Daryl Gates founded the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.). The program was created to fight the war on drug use and rising gang violence in Los Angeles. D.A.R.E. is the most widespread drug and alcohol prevention program that is introduced in schools in the United States (Caputi & McLellan, 2017). The program is taught over a 17-week span, and the curriculum is presented in schools by locally trained police officers (Lucas, 2008). Roughly 75% of school districts choose the D.A.R.E. program for their substance abuse curriculum. Using this data, it is imperative that those writing the D.A.R.E. curriculum utilize research and study information given to better the program (Caputi & McLellan, 2017).

The D.A.R.E. program has made several adjustments over the years to revamp the course. D.A.R.E. implemented a TCYL (Take Charge of Your Life, 2000) program, but found it ineffective. Therefore, the path was altered. In 2009, D.A.R.E. aligned with the creators of Keepin’ it R.E.A.L (Caputi & McLellan, 2017). Keepin’ it R.E.A.L, (KiR), is a prevention program that was established by researchers at Pennsylvania State University in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hecht, Colby, & Miller-Day, 2010, as cited in Caputi & McLellan, 2017). By uniting D.A.R.E. and KiR, Keepin’ it REAL D.A.R.E. was created. (Nordrum, 2014, as cited in Caputi & McLellan, 2017). Data review noted deficits with the KiR D.A.R.E. program. Without empirical evidence, the effectiveness of the program cannot be precisely stated. However, it can be concluded that the indication for the D.A.R.E. version of KiR is weak, and there is
considerable reason to believe that KiR D.A.R.E. may not be suitable for national implementation. (Caputi & McLellan, 2017)

The general educator and stakeholder perception of the D.A.R.E. program is that there are benefits on certain levels. There are three specific components of the D.A.R.E. program that appear to be particularly appreciated by parents and stakeholders; these factors could be weighted more heavily than the actual program when evaluating their children’s D.A.R.E. experiences (Lucas, 2008). First, parents rate the D.A.R.E. program for the practical instruction it offers. The program teaches resistance skills and communicates the effects of substance use. After having a student participate in the program, parents consider themselves to be more aware of the difficulties connected to drug and alcohol use. Thus, parents may consider the D.A.R.E. program as valuable and worthwhile because they witness the curriculum candidly addressing areas where most parents have inadequate information. Second, parents view D.A.R.E. as relevant because of the relationships that are developed between their children and the police service. Parents tend to view the personal interaction between their student and the D.A.R.E. officer as a positive attribute. The positive discernment of police officers is a beneficial component of the D.A.R.E. program. Finally, parents value D.A.R.E. because of the significant role it plays in cultivating conversation about drug use between parents and children. These difficult exchanges can flow a little easier considering that all parties involved have a knowledge base to derive information (Lucas, 2008). Although several components provide support for the D.A.R.E. program, many conclude that D.A.R.E. spread because of word-of-mouth marketing and popularity, rather than its effectiveness for preventing drug and alcohol use (Caputi & McLellan, 2017).
Ideal Age/Grade for Drug/Alcohol Prevention Programs

Fundamentally, drug and alcohol prevention discussions should originate at home. Parents should begin talking with their preteens and teens when they feel they are capable of understanding, or they become inquisitive about drug and alcohol use that they may see in photographs or movies. Being knowledgeable and having accurate information about the subject of avoidance will help adolescents understand how to react and make more informed decisions (Griffin, 2010).

School systems assist parents by communicating drug prevention information to students. Many districts have a drug and alcohol prevention program in place to aid with this effort. With substance abuse starting at earlier ages, many districts and schools are attempting to renew their drug education programs. Considerable focus is placed upon preparing elementary school-aged students to make positive choices, and many agree that elementary school is where concepts should be initiated. The D.A.R.E. program is generally introduced in the elementary school setting, but much of the research collected on the D.A.R.E. program has indicated that the program lacks key elements needed for success. These key elements include program longevity, needed interpersonal skills, and minimal social interaction with students (Lilienfeld & Arkowitz, 2014). Several argue that students need drug education during middle and high school. This is the time that many students are faced with peer pressure and are presented with choices to make (Stigler, Neusel, & Perry, 2011). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2003) suggested that prevention programs should be formatted to address concerns specific to particular adolescent audiences such as age, gender, and ethnicity. NIDA recommended focusing on these characteristics would improve program efficacy (2018).
Ultimately, with proper funding and resources, drug prevention should be taught throughout all schooling levels: elementary, middle, high, and college. Research shows that transitional periods are difficult among today’s youth. These transitional periods could be labeled as changes in physical development or social situations. Each facet of drug and alcohol prevention should be taught at length. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2003), risks appear at all transitions from early childhood through young adulthood.

Summary

Based on the review of literature, drug prevention programs should be introduced and taught throughout school years instead of formulating a direct focus on the elementary grades. By continually educating youth, the likelihood of preserving the information taught increases (Lilienfeld & Arkowitz, 2014). The widespread epidemic of alcohol and drugs can affect many variations of the adolescent community. Teens are subject to drugs and alcohol throughout their young years. Although the temptations may slow after adulthood, there must be a way to arm young adults with the tools they need to make meaningful choices that will lead to a healthier, more productive adulthood.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first chapter introduced readers to the problem of drug and alcohol use among secondary students and the role that student and teacher perceptions play in drug prevention programs. In this study, student and teacher talk will be obtained through focus groups, observations, survey questionnaires, and artifacts and will be used to measure portrayed perceptions. The second chapter included pertinent introductory literature related to the study, which facilitated readers with a greater understanding of secondary student involvement in drugs and alcohol, a summary of the D.A.R.E. program, and an overview of sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development framework. The research presented was analyzed and investigated to determine related studies, as well as gaps in documented findings.

The focus of this chapter is to present the research methodology for this qualitative study concerning the depiction of secondary student and teacher of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through discourse analysis. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding through analysis of portrayed student and teacher perceptions, feelings, and experiences connected to school related drug prevention programs using both written and spoken language and nonverbal ques. The relevance of discourse analysis and a sociocultural theoretical methodology are discussed in-depth within this chapter. The research plan, including methodology, research approach, sample, setting of study, data collection, and ethical considerations are additional key components of this chapter.

Methodology

This study was approached using qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is defined as focusing on opinions, feelings, and experiences as opposed to quantitative numerical data (Clark & Veale, 2018). The purpose of qualitative methods is to describe a process or
experience and to make meaning of those occurrences by following data as they materialize throughout the research (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Qualitative research methods are not a variation of an experiment, but are based on exploring and describing participants’ experiences. The overall goal of approaching research using qualitative processes is to gain an understanding of a situation and how something was experienced or perceived in a significant way.

Utilizing qualitative research allows researchers to explain a topic under inquiry by participating in the participants’ natural environment to collect and further analyze data. Researchers involved in qualitative analysis are immersed in the process and are considered the main instrument for data collection (Forister & Blessing, 2016). For the purposes of this study, qualitative methodology was selected based on the desire to understand the process of how teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of drug prevention programs. Employing qualitative methods allowed the researcher to interact with participants, observe behavior, and gain firsthand knowledge about the contexts of teacher and student perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through talk.

**Research Approach**

There are several different approaches to qualitative research. Discourse analysis is one method that developed in the 1960s as interest began to materialize in the depictions of reality through language (Grbich, 2009). This type of analysis is concerned with analyzing and studying written and spoken texts to reveal significant discourse. According to Xie, discourse analysis aims to thoroughly explore relationships of connectedness between language, events, and texts that often lack transparency to wider social and cultural structures, relations, and practices (2018). Bavelas, Kenwood, and Phillips described discourse analysis at the broadest level of meaning as the systematic study of naturally occurring communication (2002).
Grbich (2009) suggested one concept of discourse, the Foucauldian approach, which utilizes conceptual presumptions of power as a source for interpretation. From this point, Foucault’s literatures extensively focused on the notion of discourse analysis as technologies of power utilized in the creating and sustaining of mainstream cultural knowledge. The following guidelines for discourse analysis have been drawn from Foucault’s writings:

1. Track the development of the discourse over time and identify the participants and the social, economic, and political environment, which fostered growth.

2. Identify constituents in terms of objects, statements, themes, arguments, traces of challenges, traces of ideas, which changes directions. Seek disunity and discontinuity and the limits of discourse.

3. Locate challenges and see what happened to these: where did they come from? Why? And if they were rejected, how were they dispensed? And by whom? For what purpose?

In short, discourse analysis aims to make connections between practices and social aspects that are often unseen or unknown in the discourse and the social structure of experiences, perceptions, and opinions. According to Yang (2016), sociocultural theory can be applied to discourse analysis through researching communication, thinking, and learning as related processes that are shaped by culture. The essence of human activity is that language is shared and people mutually construct understanding of collective occurrences. A sociocultural approach to discourse analysis highlights the possibility that accomplishments and failures can be explained through significant discourse. Pacheco and Gutierrez (2009) suggested that sociocultural approach to discourse analysis is a particularly full-bodied theory by focusing on
the relation between an individual’s development, the contexts of development, and language of which individuals have been included (as cited in Yang, 2016).

For this study, discourse analysis was used to explore conveyed secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs. Data were drawn from the study of discourse by applying theories and frameworks of social aspects and cultural features to understand student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs.

**Research Question**

This study was designed to determine how secondary student and teachers depict their perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs that are only taught in elementary schools through talk. Two questions guided the statistical analysis:

1. What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?
2. What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their students’ elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

**Sample**

The sample for this study consisted of three different groupings of individuals: a small group of 20 secondary students, a larger group of 150 secondary students for survey completion, and a small group of 10 high school teachers to serve as an independent focus group.

According to Ratts & Hutchins (2009), students that are considered prone to alcohol and substance use and misuse, frequently come into contact with school counselors. Purposeful support includes the school counselors’ ability to recognize potential risk factors that could lead to future substance use and misuse (as cited in Haskins (2012). Guidance counselors, social workers, and previous teachers selected 20 secondary student participants for the small focus
group who were deemed at-risk for drug and/or alcohol use. The focus group students were considered as at-risk based on previous interactions, home life, peer groups, and socio-economic status. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), it is suggested that the ideal size for a focus group is six to eight participants. It is also stated that focus groups can be beneficial with lesser participants and as many 14 contributors (as cited in Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). For this study, a teacher focus group was also chosen. This group consisted of 10 high school teachers. These teachers were selected via random sampling to discern their perceptions of drug prevention programs currently taught in schools.

For survey completion, a larger student group was needed. One hundred and fifty secondary students that had previously participated in drug prevention programs were selected via random sampling to determine their perceptions of said drug prevention program that was taught during their elementary grade years. Sharma (2017) stated that random sampling is considered as a fair way of choosing a sample from a population. Random sampling allows each person an equal opportunity to be selected for the process.

Setting of Study

The study took place in a rural, low-middle socio-economic high school in Tennessee. Participants were representative of the current population within the local, public high school. Teacher participants were randomly selected among the current faculty and staff within the local, public high school in a rural, low-middle socio-economic district.

Data Collection

Survey and interview data were collected in January and February 2019. This data was analyzed as it was being collected. The CRAFFT 2.0 survey was utilized. According to the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research (2018), the American Academy of Pediatrics’
Committee on Substance Abuse with adolescents recommends the CRAFFT 2.0 as a behavioral health-screening tool for use with children ages 12-18. The CRAFFT contains a series of six to nine questions developed to concurrently screen adolescents for alcohol and other drug use (2018). Surveys for the student survey group were administered to students during the school day. Survey questions were geared toward alcohol and drug use and the prevention program taught in elementary school.

Interviews of the student focus group were facilitated using a discussion group method. Similarities and/or differences that exist among the students when referencing drug and alcohol prevention programs taught in elementary schools were studied. Interviews of the teacher focus group were conducted using a discussion group technique. The idea was to study and find similarities and/or differences that exist in the teachers’ opinions of drug and alcohol prevention programs taught in elementary school. I facilitated each discussion group session.

**Ethical Considerations**

Consent forms were given to parents, teachers, and students over 18 years of age. These forms were signed as informed consent stating the objective of the study, the structure and nature of the interviewing/observation sessions (duration, confidentiality, and anonymity warranties, etc.,) as well as the right to not answer a given question or even cease participation at any time.

Information that was requested and obtained via survey was not sensitive in nature. The use of the data ensured privacy of all participants. Surveys were taken under complete anonymity and remained confidential.

To date, I have worked in the educational setting for 19 years and hold a Bachelor of Arts in Education and a Master of Arts and Educational Specialist degree in Administration and Supervision. The participants in the study were students and teachers in the current school that I
serve as an assistant principal. The relationship between the researcher and participants was strictly professional and took place in a school environment. These relationships did not represent a conflict of interest due to random sampling and did not impart bias on the research study.

**Data Analysis**

Discourse analysis was used to analyze similar research and survey data from the CRAFFT 2.0. Discourse analysis was also used to examine conversations and actions during the teacher and student focus group meetings concerning perceptions of the drug prevention program. Using Gee’s seven building tasks of language, the focus of the study will emphasize building connections. To analyze building connections, four of Gee’s 26 suggested questions will be used as well as the recommended tools of inquiry to organize material developed through observations and focus group (1999). The tools of inquiry consist of situated meanings, social languages, Discourse models, intertextuality, Discourses, and conversations. The four questions studied for this discourse analysis included:

1. What sorts of connections-looking forward and/or backward-are made within and across utterances and large stretches of the interaction?
2. What types of connections are made to previous or future interactions, to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation?
3. How is intertextuality (quoting or alluding to other texts) used to create connections among the current situation or other ones or among different Discourses?
4. How do connections of the sort in the previous questions help (together with situated meanings and Discourse models) to constitute “coherence” – and what sort of “coherence” – in the situation?
The four questions validated the original research question or assisted with the revision of the study. Using discourse analysis and material developed clarified the final theme, issue, and point addressed in the study. Through the discourse analysis, contradictions were examined using student actions, body language, and posturing.

As data were gathered and discourse analysis questions asked, open, axial, and selected coding took place to develop major and core categories. There was also a rubric in place to evaluate the level of participation and engagement for each student during interviews. Interviews of teacher and student focus groups allowed the researcher to watch for body language and determine comfort levels with the questions being asked pertaining to drugs and alcohol.

**Summary**

According to the Drug Policy Research Center (2002), school-based drug prevention programs are aimed to prevent, or at minimum reduce, adolescent use of a variety of substances including drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. This study was conducted to determine student and teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. program or other drug prevention programs being taught in schools.

The emphasis of this chapter focused on the presentation of the research methodology for a qualitative study concerning secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through discourse analysis. This approach permitted an analysis of student and teacher perceptions, feelings, and experiences connected to school related drug prevention programs using both written and spoken language and nonverbal ques. Research questions, sample, setting, timeline, collection of data, and data analysis are components that were clarified for the study.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The first chapter introduced readers to the problem of drug and alcohol use among secondary students and the role that student and teacher perceptions play in drug prevention programs. In this study, student and teacher beliefs were obtained through focus groups, observations, survey questionnaires, and artifacts. Subsequently, they were used to interpret portrayed perceptions. The second chapter included pertinent introductory literature related to the study, which provided readers with a greater understanding of secondary student involvement in drugs and alcohol, a summary of the D.A.R.E. program, and an overview of sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development framework. Analysis of the review of literature revealed trends related to high school student drug use in American and the lack of effective prevention programs. The review also allowed connections to be made between successful prevention and the conceptual framework researched. The third chapter presented the research methodology for this qualitative study concerning the depiction of secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through discourse analysis. The approach allowed for a deeper understanding through analysis of portrayed student and teacher perceptions, feelings, and experiences connected to school-related drug prevention programs using written language, spoken language, and nonverbal ques. The relevance of discourse analysis and a sociocultural theoretical methodology were discussed within the third chapter. The research plan, including methodology, research approach, sample, setting of study, data collection, and ethical considerations are additional key components of the third chapter.

The focus of this chapter is the research process and the data that were obtained during the study. Different data sources are discussed in-depth, including surveys, interviews with focus group findings, and artifacts. Each data source was analyzed and phenomena were coded
accordingly. Based on the most relevant codes, categories were created and connections were made between each grouping.

**Research Questions**

This study was designed to determine how secondary students and teachers depict their perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs that are only taught in elementary schools through talk. Two questions guided the statistical analysis:

1. What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?
2. What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their students’ elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

**Research Process**

The goal of this research was to gather data using qualitative methods. A total of 161 high school senior students from a rural school district in middle Tennessee completed the CRAFFT 2.0 survey via random sampling. Twenty senior students that were deemed at risk by teachers and guidance counselors were used for a focus group. A small group of 10 high school teachers participated in an independent focus group. Permission from the school principal and the director of schools was obtained to conduct on-site surveys and focus group meetings. Artifacts were researched to determine previous connections and constitute coherence. I distributed surveys on two different occasions to the senior English department for completion. Due to time limitations, I met with the teacher focus group and the student focus group one time during data collection.
Data

The data collected are divided into three different categories: surveys, focus groups, and artifacts. Survey questions concurrently screened senior students for alcohol, drug use, and D.A.R.E. participation. The focus group of 20 students met in a collaborative setting and discussed student drug and alcohol use and prevention programs currently taught at the elementary level. The small teacher focus group of 10 participants met and discussed perceptions of the commonality of drugs and alcohol use among high school students and the efficacy of drug and alcohol programs being taught in district-level elementary schools. The third category of data included artifacts, which were collected before and after an initial analysis of the first two data categories. Data categories and coding methods used for each data source are clarified in the remainder of this chapter.

Results

Data Source - Survey

For the survey, the CRAFFT 2.0 was utilized to determine student opinion and perception regarding drug and alcohol use and the efficacy of drug prevention programs that were taught in late elementary school. Five of the 14 survey questions were formed to gather information to confirm or deny with a response of yes or no. Six of the 14 survey questions were targeted to gain information concerning student drug and alcohol substance abuse with a response of yes, no, or I have never used drugs or alcohol. The final three of the 14 questions were formed to determine student perceptions about the D.A.R.E. program using a scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree.
Survey Findings

Table 4.1 indicates student reporting of drug and alcohol usage, drug and alcohol related situations, and drug prevention participation. Sixty-three survey participants, or 39.1% of the survey population, reported having consumed alcohol in the last 12 months. Ninety-eight survey participants, or 60.9% of the survey population, reported to not consuming more than a few sips of alcohol in the previous 12 months. Forty-five survey participants, or 28% of the survey population, reported smoking marijuana in the last 12 months. One hundred sixteen survey participants, or 72% of the survey population, reported to not smoking marijuana in the previous 12 months. Students were surveyed concerning methods for impairment other than alcohol or marijuana. In the past 12 months, nine survey participants, or 5.6% of the survey population, reported using an alternate method other than alcohol or marijuana in the last 12 months. One hundred fifty-two survey participants, or 94.4% of the survey population, reported to not using an alternate method of impairment. The survey also required students to reported whether or not they have ridden in a vehicle with an impaired driver. Forty-three survey participants or 26.7% of the survey population, reported to riding in a vehicle with someone that has been impaired. One hundred eighteen survey participants, or 73.3% of the survey population, reported to not ever riding in a vehicle with a peer that was impaired. Of the 161 students surveyed, 18 students, (11.2%) indicated that they did not take part in the D.A.R.E. program in elementary school. One hundred and forty-three participants (88.8%) of the survey population reported to having participated in the D.A.R.E. program in elementary school.
Table 4.1
Number of Survey Responses to Inform Research Question One: What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have consumed more than a few sips of alcohol in the previous 12 months.</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have smoked marijuana in the previous 12 months.</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used another method for impairment other than alcohol or marijuana.</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have ridden in a vehicle with an impaired driver.</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participated in the D.A.R.E. program in elementary school.</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 displays evidence applicable to student behaviors and actions in relation to drugs and alcohol. For each of the survey questions listed below, 94 survey participants, or 58.4% of the survey population, reported to never using drugs and/or alcohol. Twenty-nine survey participants, or 18.0% of the survey population, reported to using drugs or alcohol to relax, feel better, or fit in. Thirty-eight survey participants, 23.6% of the population, stated that they use drugs and alcohol for different reasons. Ninety-four survey participants, or 58.4% of the survey population, reported to never using drugs and/or alcohol. When questioned about using substances when alone, 33 survey participants, or 20.5% of the survey population, conveyed that they use drugs or alcohol while unaccompanied. Thirty-four students, or 21.1% of those surveyed, stated that they use drugs and alcohol only with peers or in group settings. The survey questioned memory and recollection of activities during substance usage. Twenty-six survey participants, or 16.1% of those surveyed, stated that they forget things when using alcohol or drugs. Forty-one survey participants (25.5%) stated that they are not forgetful while using drugs and alcohol. Suggested intervention was also questioned. Fourteen students (8.7%) reported to having intervention suggested by family or friends. Fifty-three students (32.9%) stated that no intervention has been suggested to them by family or friends. When unlawful actions and behaviors were questioned, 16 students, or 9.9%, stated that they have been in trouble associated with drugs or alcohol. Fifty-three students (32.9%) indicated that although
they use drugs and/or alcohol, they have not encountered trouble as a result. Twenty-one students, 13% of students surveyed, admitted to purchasing and/or selling illegal drugs and/or alcohol. Forty-six students (28.6%) disclosed that although they use drugs and/or alcohol, they do not purchase or sell.

**Table 4.2**

*Number of Survey Responses to Inform Research Question One: What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>I have never used drugs or alcohol. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use alcohol or drugs to relax, fit in, or feel better about myself.</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use alcohol or drugs while alone.</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forget things I do while using alcohol or drugs.</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family or friends have suggested I need intervention.</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been in trouble due to drugs or alcohol.</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have purchased and/or sold illegal drugs or alcohol.</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 indicates students’ opinions of the D.A.R.E. program. Of the 161 responses, 73 students (45.3%) either disagree or strongly disagree that the D.A.R.E. program helped with education on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Students continuing the D.A.R.E. program in middle and high school. Fifty-four students, or 33.5%, agree or strongly agree that the D.A.R.E. program was beneficial in educating students on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, and 34 students (21.1%) remained neutral. Students were asked their opinion of how the D.A.R.E. program correlates with prevention. Eighty students (49.7%) either disagree or strongly disagree that the D.A.R.E. program relates to drug and alcohol prevention in later years. Forty-three students (26.7%) agree or strongly agree that the D.A.R.E. program was beneficial when dealing with prevention, and 38 students (23.6%) were neutral. Student perceptions on continuing the D.A.R.E. program in middle and high school were also reported. Of the 161 responses, 52 students (32.3%) either disagree or strongly disagree that the D.A.R.E. program should continue
in upper grade levels. Seventy-five students (46.6%) agree or strongly agree that the D.A.R.E. program could valuable if continued in middle and high school, and 38 students (23.6%) remained neutral.

Table 4.3
Number of Survey Responses to Inform Research Question One: What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The D.A.R.E. program helped with education on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The D.A.R.E. program helped prevent the use of drugs and alcohol in middle and high school.</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The D.A.R.E. program should continue in upper grade levels.</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By using the surveys to inform the study, insights were gleaned into the actions and thoughts of high school seniors. Of the most beneficial of the data received, a high percentage of students (46.6) think that the D.A.R.E program would be beneficial if continued into secondary grades. This information is relevant considering the number of students that when surveyed answered that they had used drugs and/or alcohol within the last 12 months. If students believe that an ongoing prevention program that spans into upper grade bands could prevent them or their peers from experimenting with illegal substances, the continued program would be a valuable use of time and money. Findings from the student survey suggest a lack of exposure to drugs and alcohol in elementary school indicates that prevention programs are being taught too early. Even with the D.A.R.E. program being presented in 5th grade, student survey responses imply that there are high rates of drug and alcohol experimentation in high school.
Data Source – Student Focus Group Interviews

The student focus group was comprised of 20 students that were chosen by guidance counselors and teachers. These students were deemed at-risk based upon previous encounters, attendance, grades, peer groups, and age. The student focus group meeting consisted of interview questions and documentation of nonverbal ques. Interview questions were obtained from the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (2014). The questions asked were acquired from the at-risk student portion of the script. There were 13 total questions asked during the group meeting. Some questions were presented in more than one part. During the interview, there were three students that appeared uncomfortable and continually would not make eye contact.

Student focus group interview findings. A summary of the questions and responses provided by participants 1-20 are listed below. The focus group meeting was conducted orally and the responses were scripted while the interviews were being conducted.

After the interview session, it was noted and recorded that three students, who are generally outgoing, did not participate in the discussion. They were closed off and appeared uncomfortable. The body language of the other 17 students was significantly different. They were forthcoming with information and volunteered more than asked.

During the focus group, students were asked about the commonality of youth drinking under the legal age. It was stated that a common age for drinking occurs in the junior/senior range or around 16 or 17 years old. Continuing with the discussion of underage drinking, students gave a description of young people that drink. Two students stated that people who drink brag and think it’s cool. They also stated that this is a way that they get caught. Three students said that they do not believe that there is a certain stereotype associated with drinking. Upon discussion, 12 of the 20 students believe that students who participate in drug and alcohol
use come from all spectrums of the social status. One student stated that home lives could play a role with students that choose to drink and that people who grow up around it are prone to try more things.

Another discussion during the focus group meeting concentrated on the ease of obtaining alcohol for minors in the community. Twelve of the 20 students stated and/or agreed that it is not difficult for underage youth to get alcohol. Five students stated that they were unsure how to acquire alcohol, and three students did not have a response. The conversation of alcohol acquisition, led to where do youth usually drink? There were a plethora of answers discussed concerning where students drink. One student stated that many youth drink before and after games. Another student said that lots of times their peers attend field parties where alcohol and/or drugs are present. Another comment was that teens also drink when they’re at friend’s house and some friends’ parents allow you to drink so you don’t do it elsewhere.

When asked what kinds of problems students see in youth who drink, they were forthcoming with answers. Bad home life was a suggestion of a problem that teens could face; however, another student contradicted by saying that there does not necessarily have to be a problem at home. They concluded by saying that people who have good home lives drink, too. Two students believe that depression could be a reason, and three students suggested that people are trying to drink away problems.

A question was posed to the students about what generally happens when underage youth are caught drinking by authorities. During the discussion, four of the students stated and/or agreed that if you get caught, the police usually call your parents and give you a warning. There was also discussion about receiving a citation
Following the conversation about authorities and citations, a discussion of drinking and driving among high school students and how young people learn about prescription drugs for recreational use ensued. All but three students (17 of 20) were vocal about the fact that neither they nor their peers drink and drive. The students conversed about how sporting injuries lead to addiction because it takes the pain away. One student agreed and stated that he was prescribed oxycodone after knee surgery. Most students (15 of 20) agreed that prescription painkillers are not very common and pain pills are not as big of a deal as it’s made out to be.

When asked about resources that exist within the community to prevent drugs and alcohol usage, students discussed knowledge of several community outreach services that assist people with drug and/or alcohol issues. The students shared that there are halfway houses and several churches have AA meetings. One student stated, “Although there are several known options for recovery, there are not a lot of options or programs for prevention.”

Of the 20 students selected for the focus group, 17 participated in the D.A.R.E. program in elementary school. When asked what they thought about the D.A.R.E. program, the student answers were similar. The majority of students in the focus group (14 of 17) suggested that D.A.R.E. would be more beneficial in middle school. One participant stated, “Elementary is too young. I don’t think you really understand what they’re talking about then, and high school is too late.” Students also stated that during the D.A.R.E. program, what they remember most is the conversations about tobacco and awkward peer pressure scenarios. During this section of the discussion, 15 of the 20 students suggested that during middle school would be an appropriate time to implement the D.A.R.E. program. Two students suggested continuing the implementation in 5th grade but continuing it in middle school.
Students were questioned about using D.A.R.E. in 5th grade as a preventative measure for high school substance abuse. Seventeen of the 17 students that participated in the D.A.R.E. program agreed that it wasn’t a preventative measure. This information from the focus group is a contradiction to the student survey. Table 4.3 shows that 49.7% of students surveyed disagree that the D.A.R.E. program assists with prevention in later years; however, when discussing with the focus group, the response was overwhelmingly that 100% of students do not believe that the D.A.R.E. program assists with prevention.

There were several confirmations and contradictions found during the student focus group interviews. The data received from the focus group students regarding drinking and driving contradicted the data given by students via survey. In the student survey, 43 participants, 26.7% of the survey population, reported to riding in a vehicle with a peer that has been impaired. One confirmation carried from the surveys into the focus group related to prescription pain medication. Table 4.1 shows that in the past 12 months, nine survey participants, or 5.6% of the survey population, reported using an alternate method other than alcohol or marijuana in the last 12 months and 75% of students surveyed agreed that prescription painkiller usage is not very common.

Data Source – Teacher Focus Group Interviews

Currently, the D.A.R.E. program is offered in the final year of elementary school. For most school districts, this occurs in 5th grade. The questions focused on teachers’ perception of the age-appropriate level of the D.A.R.E. program, the lasting effect on students, and the attitudes about officers, drugs, and alcohol that are developed through D.A.R.E.

Teacher focus group interview findings. The teacher focus group consisted of 10 teachers selected at random. The focus group meeting was conducted orally and the responses
were transcribed during the interview. An overview of questions and responses provided by participants are listed below.

During the focus group meeting, teachers were asked if they believe that the D.A.R.E. program is presented to students at an age-appropriate level. Of the 10 teachers interviewed, eight stated that they do not believe that D.A.R.E. is offered at an age-appropriate time. The remaining two stated that although they feel it is acceptable to introduce the program in 5th grade, it is imperative to spiral the lesson information and knowledge throughout secondary school years.

Teachers were also asked if they think it would be more beneficial to offer the D.A.R.E. at a different age or as part of an ongoing curriculum? All 10 teachers questioned believe that the D.A.R.E. program should be offered at a different age or as a part of an ongoing curriculum. One teacher suggested that it would be beneficial to introduced the program in elementary school and integrate the D.A.R.E. curriculum into health and physical education classes in secondary schools. Another teacher stated, “I think it is great that students are made aware of drugs early on; however, I think the program would benefit them more as teenagers rather than pre-teens.”

Teachers were also asked to state their perception of the D.A.R.E. program material and if it has had a positive effect on the students they have in class. Nine of the 10 teachers stated that they do not see an indication of the D.A.R.E. program having a positive effect on the students they have in class. Several teachers mentioned retention and that they program was too early to recall the information. One teacher stated, “Most students forget what they learn in D.A.R.E. because it is not spiraled. Spiraling information is vital especially when the information could be life altering.
When questioning teachers about student attitudes toward drug and alcohol abuse that participated in the D.A.R.E. program, all 10 teachers interviewed stated that they do not see a difference toward drug and alcohol use from students who participated in the D.A.R.E. program as opposed to students who were not participants. Another point of discussion revolved around the appropriate professional to deliver the D.A.R.E. Program. Four of the 10 teachers interviewed (40%) stated that they thought law officers are the appropriate professionals to deliver the program. Five of the 10 teachers (50%) believed that the program would be more beneficial coming from someone other than law enforcement, and one teacher suggested that the program be communicated through both law enforcement and educators. One teacher stated, “It could be beneficial to have recovering addicts speak to students to help them understand the magnitude of drug and/or alcohol abuse.” Although some educators thought it would be valuable to have students hear about prevention programs from someone other than law enforcement, all 10 teachers questioned stated that they think a positive rapport is developed between local law enforcement and students. They also agreed that the relationship could be more impactful if the lessons were ongoing.

The overarching theme of the teacher interviews was that 5th grade is too early to introduce the D.A.R.E. program to students and not revisit or spiral the information throughout secondary school years. During the interview, four of the teachers used the word retention of information; however, through discussion with the group, they were not specifically concerned with retention of the D.A.R.E. information but retention of the required skills and principles needed to resist peer pressure. Overwhelmingly, of the 10 teachers in the focus group, all 10 considered the D.A.R.E. program to help develop a positive relationship with local law enforcement; however, all 10 teachers continued the conversation by stating that relationship
building with police officers should not be a focus of D.A.R.E. The teachers were very vocal about the primary focus of D.A.R.E. should be educating students teaching prevention methods.

**Data Source – Artifacts**

Research of artifacts associated with perceptions of the efficacy of drug and alcohol prevention programs was conducted for triangulation. The research used for analysis focused on items that included high school drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and perceptions of school-aged prevention programs. Artifacts included newspaper articles, graphic organizers, exploration of the official D.A.R.E. website, videos, and mobile application, student writing samples, and infographic videos. Each artifact was examined with an emphasis on how and for whom the object was formed, what was and was not included, and how the piece was used.

**Newspaper articles.** Many newspaper articles have been written to inform readers about the history of the D.A.R.E program, the programs progression over time, and stakeholder opinions on effectiveness. Articles by McBride (2010) and Ingraham (2017) both suggested multiple perceptions of the efficacy of using D.A.R.E. in schools based on researched responses. The narratives reported that teachers and school leaders perceive students to leave the program with more knowledge about the dangers of drugs and a positive connection with law enforcement. However, high school students in the reports did not believe lessons learned in early grades impact choices during secondary education.

Several commonalities noticed during discourse analysis linked newspaper artifacts to student survey data and student focus group interview finds. In all three data sources students identified remembering the main message, “Just say no to drugs,” but nothing else. Similarly, the three data sources recognized the D.A.R.E. program focused on 5th grade but lost track in high school. Opinions of teachers in the newspaper articles and those interviewed during the
teacher focus group also aligned with certain discourse. Teachers in both agreed, “D.A.R.E. allows students and teachers to establish positive relationships with law enforcement.” However, teacher perceptions of the efficacy of the D.A.R.E program were inconsistent between the teacher focus group and newspaper artifacts. Newspaper artifacts quoted teachers as believing students retained information learned in D.A.R.E while teachers in the focus group disagreed.

**Graphic organizers.** Graphic organizers are tools often used to express thoughts, beliefs, concepts, knowledge, ideas, or relationships in a visual manner. The National Institutes of Health (2010) formed several graphic organizers based on positive action applications for drug and alcohol prevention programs. Each organizer focused on prevention programs that develop positive thoughts, actions, and feelings. The mantra and message of each was similar: “Doing Good Equals Feeling Good.” The interpretation of each graphic aligned with conceptions of sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development. Analysis of each organizer revealed common themes found in literature reviews for positive prevention programs: development of self-concept, self-motivation, self-control, social-emotional skills and character, mental health, and setting and achieving goals. The organizers were created with the intent to display and communicate approaches to develop positive programs based on research.

**D.A.R.E. website, videos, and mobile application.** The D.A.R.E website, videos, and mobile application promote a comprehensive drug prevention program created through joint efforts of Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District. While visiting each artifact, a variety of data sources related to the programs evaluations, curriculum, officers, resources, and programs. According to the D.A.R.E artifacts (2019), a transition was made to the Keepin’ it Real program after reviewing multiple criteria. The reason behind the transition was not reported. Research from the artifact indicated a 32%-44% reduction in
The purpose of the electronic sources was to provide potential users and interested stakeholders with information deemed relevant and positive about the D.A.R.E. program. When comparing these sources to the student survey and focus group answers, inconsistencies began to emerge. Based on student focus group responses, 17 of the 17 students (100%) that participated in the D.A.R.E. program agreed that it wasn’t a preventative measure and only 26.7% of student survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the D.A.R.E. program was beneficial when dealing with prevention.

**Student writing samples.** During the data gathering process, writing samples were collected from 15 high school students enrolled at the local high school where student surveys and focus groups took place. The purpose of the samples was to inform readers about current perceptions of the efficacy of the D.A.R.E. prevention program taken in elementary school. Students were given the following writing prompt and asked to respond: “How should D.A.R.E be presented to students and when?” From examining the writing samples, 100% of the students agreed that teaching the program in 5th grade alone is not enough. One student suggested the program should be taught in 5th grade and revisited every school year after, seven students proposed moving the program to middle school only, which the individual considered 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, and seven students recommended introducing D.A.R.E. in 5th grade and continuing the program in middle and high school.

The quick write artifacts were used as a part of a senior English project over adolescent drug abuse and prevention programs. Student projects were completed as a pre/post assessment
of the unit. Through comparison, the writing sample artifact data confirmed findings from student surveys, student focus groups, and teacher focus groups. All data sources indicate that students and teachers agree teaching D.A.R.E. in 5th grade is not enough.

**Infographic videos.** Researchers at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan conducted these surveys under a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2018). Multiple infographic representations from NIDA were viewed and evaluated. The 2018 findings indicated that students in grades 8-12 reported using vaping devices at an alarming rate compared to past years. Research suggested that student marijuana usage remained mostly steady over the last 10 years, student binge drinking and traditional cigarette smoking had declined, and student prescription/over-the-counter or illicit drug plunged to all time low levels. The purpose of these artifacts was to convey the ongoing percentage of American high school students that continue to experiment with drugs and alcohol.

By assessing the infographic videos, one confirmation that aligned between the student survey and infographic data was the low use of prescription or illicit drug use. The 2018 infographic specified that student prescription/over-the-counter or illicit drug use plunged to all time low levels. This data validated the student survey, which found that in the past 12 months, only nine survey participants, or 5.6% of the survey population, reported using an alternate method other than alcohol or marijuana.

**Data Analysis**

As data were collected, I applied discourse analysis methods to draw on results and the literature review to progress toward specific conclusions. Discourse analysis allowed me to analyze the structure of texts, nonverbal cues, and verbal utterances. Conclusions from the inquiry process will be discussed in connection with the sociocultural theoretical framework and
the Positive Youth Development conceptual framework in Chapter 5. All data sources were gathered and coded throughout the research process with language analysis methods in mind.

To start the analysis process, student survey answers were examined to establish early data codes to build upon. Initially, raw data were examined to determine if there was relevance based on related findings within the literature review. Pieces of collected information were marked as significant based on repetition across instances and unexpected responses within the reported information. Based on student surveys, some of the examples of raw data selected for coding included: Forty-five of 161 high school seniors reported smoking marijuana. Sixty-three of 161 high school seniors reported drinking more than a few sips of alcohol in the last 12 months. 5.6% of 161 students strongly agreed that D.A.R.E. taken in elementary helped with secondary school prevention. This data aligned with literature review findings concerned with high levels of illicit drug use among American teenagers (Council on School Health and Committee on Substance Abuse, 2007).

After student and teacher focus groups were completed, raw data continued to be marked looking for specific connections to student surveys and literature reviews. Language used by both focus groups correlated to prior findings from the student surveys in numerous ways. Carryover themes included issues with adolescent drug and alcohol usage and D.A.R.E. prevention timing. A sampling of the statements students used includes, “D.A.R.E. could be a success maybe in middle school. Elementary is too young. I don’t think you understand what they are talking about then.” “They reach you in 5th grade, but they lose track of you in high school.” Students also suggested, “It’s not difficult at all to get alcohol when you’re underage.” The teacher focus group echoed these opinions. Of 10 teachers interviewed, eight stated they “do no believe D.A.R.E. is offered at an age appropriate time.” Ten of 10 (100%) teachers
interviewed agreed, “The D.A.R.E. program should be offered as an ongoing curriculum.” Teachers considered it imperative to spiral the curriculum throughout secondary school years and did not see a difference concerning drug and alcohol use when comparing students that participated in D.A.R.E. and those that did not.

The teacher focus group added additional insight to teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. program. Teachers listed an overview of positive aspects of the D.A.R.E. program. Examples of raw data marked included, “The program is beneficial due to the relationships built with law enforcement.” Teachers agreed that the relationships built through the program could be more impactful if the lessons were ongoing. “Law officers are the appropriate professionals to deliver prevention programs.” “Someone other than law enforcement should deliver the program.” Connections were made from the literature review to correlate with these statements. From the literature review, the general educator perception of the D.A.R.E. program is that there are benefits on certain levels. According to Lucas (2008), one component of D.A.R.E. that is appreciated by parents and educators are the relationships that develop between students and the police service.

Raw data from artifacts were selected based on connections to student focus groups, teacher focus groups, and the literature review in several aspects. Key findings were pulled from the artifacts section resulting in correlations that included aspects of student and teacher opinions. Numerous confirmations materialized during the raw data selection process for artifacts. For example, according to repeated occurrences in student survey answers, student focus group discussions, and newspaper artifacts, high school students do not remember much about their D.A.R.E. experience. Across all three data sources, a majority of high school students also reported they did not believe lessons they learn in early grades impact choices
made in secondary education. The utterance “5th grade” was a common theme noticed across all data sources as well. The sample group of student surveys, student focus group discussions, and teacher focus group dialogues suggested 5th grade was too early for drug prevention programs based on the lack of life experience. Artifact data quoted high school students stating, “Students in 5th grade do not see alcohol and drug use happening. They see in happening in middle and high school.” One aspect of a newspaper article was found to be both a confirmation and a contradiction. The narrative stated, “Teachers and school leaders perceive students to leave the program with more knowledge about the impact of drugs and a positive connection with law enforcement.” Teachers interviewed in the focus group also stated they believed positive connections are established with law enforcement throughout the D.A.R.E program. However, teachers in the focus group did not believe students had more knowledge after completing the program.

As raw data were selected and gathered, it was reviewed to identify similarities and create tentative labels using open coding. The open coding process allowed the creation of labels based on connections of relevance. Table 4.4 indicates two sets of open coding based on raw data findings. The first set of data discusses secondary student drug and alcohol usage. The second data set pertains to student perceptions of prevention programs offered in elementary school. Table 4.5 specifies two sets of open coding acquired through raw data analysis. The first grouping lists teacher perceptions of positive aspects of prevention programs offered in elementary school, and the second grouping points to negative teacher perceptions of prevention programs.

Once similarities were noted and labels assigned, axial coding occurred to identify relationships among the identified open codes. The final stage of data analysis, selective coding,
required analyzing the central concepts to determine the core perceptions that included all categories and codes. Based on the coding process, both teachers and students believe that prevention programs are needed in upper grade levels to promote retention and prevention. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show examples of the coding process for each research question. Table 4.4 focused on research question one: What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse? Table 4.5 focused on research question two: What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their students’ elementary school years as reflected in discourse? A small sample of each type of coding is provided for both research questions. Each table visually represents a progression of thought processes and analyses for different types of language, texts, and graphics to create connections, find relationships, and determine what students and teachers perceive.
Table 4.4
Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question One: What are secondary school student perceptions of the DARE or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Axial Coding</th>
<th>Selective Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Newspaper artifact research from 2018 suggested that student marijuana usage remained the steady over the last 10 years.”</td>
<td>Secondary student drug and alcohol use</td>
<td>Students continue to experiment with drugs and alcohol in later grades</td>
<td>Students suggest prevention programs are needed in upper grade bands to promote retention and prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In 5th grade, I didn’t see it happening. Now do I see it happening? Yeah.”</td>
<td>Lack of exposure to drugs and alcohol in elementary</td>
<td>High rates of continued experimentation in high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Forty-five of 161 high school seniors reported smoking marijuana in the last 12 months.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sixty-three of 161 high school seniors reported drinking more that a few sips of alcohol in the last 12 months.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s not difficult at all to get alcohol when you’re underage.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An 11th grader said he remembers the main message - “Just say no to drugs” - but nothing else.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They reach you in 5th grade, but they lose track of you in high school.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Research suggested high school students do not believe lessons they learn in early grades impact choices made in secondary education.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“D.A.R.E. could be a success maybe in middle school. Elementary is too young. I don’t think you understand what they are talking about then.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“5.6% of 161 students strongly agreed that D.A.R.E. taken in elementary helped with secondary school prevention.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5
Data Sorted in Levels of Coding for Research Question Two: What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the DARE or drug prevention programs offered during their students' elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Axial Coding</th>
<th>Selective Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Teachers and school leaders perceive students to leave the program with more knowledge about the impact of drugs and a positive connection with law enforcement.&quot;</td>
<td>Relationships built through prevention programs</td>
<td>Positive relationships built through delivery of curriculum</td>
<td>Teachers suggest prevention programs are needed in upper grade bands to promote retention and prevention and to continue positive relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;One teacher interviewed suggested the program is beneficial due to the relationships built with law enforcement.&quot;</td>
<td>Impact of law enforcement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Teachers agreed that the relationships built through the program could be more impactful if the lessons were ongoing.&quot;</td>
<td>Delivery of curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Law enforcement are the appropriate professionals to deliver prevention programs.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;someone other than law enforcement should deliver the program.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Of 10 teachers interviewed, eight stated they do not believe D.A.R.E. is offered at an age appropriate time.&quot;</td>
<td>Low retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ten of 10 (100%) teachers interviewed agreed the D.A.R.E. program should be offered as an ongoing curriculum.&quot;</td>
<td>Lack of follow-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is imperative to spiral the curriculum throughout secondary school years.&quot;</td>
<td>Prevention programs taught too early</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Teachers do not see a difference concerning drug and alcohol use when comparing students that participated in D.A.R.E. and those that did not.&quot;</td>
<td>Spiral curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The significance of this chapter was to present the research findings for a qualitative study concerning secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through discourse analysis. Reporting findings required revisiting the two research questions, research process, data types, and data sources. The focal point of Chapter 4 was to share findings from the student surveys, student focus group meeting, teacher focus group interviews, and artifact analysis used for data synthesis. The primary finding from the focus groups, surveys, and artifacts specified that an ongoing drug prevention curriculum would be beneficial for students in later grades. The synthesis process included coding of all data to determine the fundamental theory aimed at answering each of the research questions posed in this study.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter one presented the issue of drug and alcohol use among secondary students and the role that student and teacher perceptions play in drug prevention programs. Chapter two gave readers pertinent introductory literature related to the study, which helped facilitate readers with a greater understanding of secondary student participation in drugs and alcohol, a summary of the D.A.R.E. program, and an overview of sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development framework (Hinson et al., 2016). Chapter three gave insight to the research methodology for this qualitative study concerning the depiction of secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through discourse analysis. The research plan, including methodology, research approach, sample, setting of study, data collection, and ethical considerations are additional key components of chapter three. The focus of chapter four was the research process and the data that were obtained during the study. In chapter four, different data sources were discussed in-depth including surveys, interviews with focus group findings, and artifacts. Each data source was analyzed and phenomena were coded accordingly.

The main emphasis of Chapter 5 focuses on an in depth discussion of findings, implications, and limitations of the study. Suggestions for future research and recommendations are included.

Research Design

This study was designed to determine how secondary students and teachers depict their perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs that were only taught in elementary schools. A qualitative approach was used for this study, which included discourse analysis of
student surveys, student and teacher focus group meetings, and related artifacts. Two questions guided the discourse analysis:

1. What are secondary school student perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their elementary school years as reflected in discourse?
2. What are secondary school teacher perceptions of the D.A.R.E. or drug prevention programs offered during their students’ elementary school years as reflected in discourse?

A high school in Middle Tennessee was used for this study. A Tennessee school district was selected for several reasons. I am an administrator at a local high school where I encounter occurrences of adolescent drinking and drug usage. The continued trends of teen drinking, teen drug abuse, and the national opioid crisis are cause for concern and warrant research to better understand student thinking and actions. While this study only analyzed data from Tennessee, other states that implement drug prevention courses such as D.A.R.E. could use this study to support their decisions on which programs best suit their students. To determine validity for implementation outside of the rural south, it is imperative for states to look at programs from all facets including specific student and community needs. With prescription drug and opioid abuse escalating among adolescents in the United States, school districts and/or states could use findings from this study to support their curriculum decisions.

Discussion of Findings

From considering all raw data and each coding selection, three main findings emerged. In rural Tennessee, high percentages of secondary students continue to consume alcohol and participate in illicit drug usage. Both teachers and students suggest prevention programs are needed in upper grade bands to promote retention of information obtained though prevention programs and to spiral communication skills needed to avoid drug and alcohol use in teens.
Teachers consider student relationships built with law enforcement a positive aspect of prevention programs offered in schools.

**Secondary student drug and alcohol knowledge and usage.** According to prior research conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2007), substance abuse remains a major issue among American youth. One of the main topics highlighted throughout this research process was the high rate of continued drug and alcohol usage and substance related situations at the high school level. The secondary student participants reported experimenting with substances after attending drug prevention programs in elementary school. This was a focal point of both student survey and focus group answers. The reoccurring participant focus and lack of elementary exposure to drugs, as compared to high school experience and usage, demonstrates an absence of drug and alcohol awareness when it is needed most. When considering this problematic finding, both Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework serve as a lens for understanding.

**Sociocultural theory.** Sociocultural theory, when applied to student and teacher perceptions of adolescent drug and alcohol consumption and prevention, helps to inform each research question by seeking to understand actions and behaviors based on cultural, institutional, individual, and societal factors. Survey data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013) reported high school students spend a majority of their time with peers in school or in social settings, either in person or through technology. The way teenagers spend their time strongly influences their choices. If spent engaged in positive experiences, this time can advance healthy academic, emotional, social, and physical development (Office of Adolescent Health, 2017).

**Positive Youth Development.** The PYD framework suggests molding the competencies, skills, and abilities needed to address fundamental developments as adolescents mature. The
focus of PYD is to build positive and powerful relationships between youth and their peer
groups, schools, neighborhoods, societies, and cultures. Ramirez, Hinman, Sterling, Weisner,
and Campbell (2012) reported adolescents with fewer drug-using friends were more likely to
abstain from using themselves than those with four or more using friends. Study participants
confirmed social and cultural influences impact student drug and alcohol consumption. Teachers
and students stated it would be beneficial to have opportunities to develop impactful
relationships through positive interactions and experiences within the school building. These
features are essential components of PYD and should be incorporated in drug and alcohol
prevention programs during middle and high school years stating.

**Elementary awareness in isolation is not enough.** All study participants and artifacts
suggested delivering drug prevention programs only to 5th grade students is ineffective schooling
for substance deterrence. The trend of all data participants and findings indicates bringing drug
and alcohol awareness to elementary students only is not enough to combat the continual
temptations that students face. Sociocultural theory and Positive Youth Development both
suggest that student development is based on social, cultural, institutional, and individual
interactions that take place during school age years. Teenage years, ages 13 to 18, bring many
mental and social changes. During these years, adolescents progress at different rates and may
have different views of the world (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2019). The peak range of initiated
drinking is between ages 13 and 14. Within that age range, more than 50 percent of students
report having consumed alcohol in their lifetime (Kosterman, Hawkins, Guo, Catalano, and
Abbott, 2000). Based on the reported statistics of alcohol use in youth, most school-based
programs have been developed for and delivered in early years to get ahead of the issue (Stigler,
Neusel, and Perry, 2011). However, developmentally students continue to grow and progress
well beyond their elementary school days. Applying sociocultural theory and PYD concepts to drug prevention delivery demonstrates an absence of drug and alcohol awareness when it is needed most.

**Sociocultural theory.** Based on this theoretical perspective, behavior and thinking are determined by the dynamic and continual interaction of peer social and environmental factors (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). For this study, sociocultural theory frameworks were used to research, study, and gain an understanding of secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs through the use of discourse. The questions, studies, and designs used within the sociocultural lens support an understanding and appreciation of the complex factors that guide human activity as students progress from participants in elementary drug prevention programs to graduating high school seniors.

**Positive Youth Development.** Students need more programs during secondary school years because they depend on peers and relationships for direction and example. By participating in PYD programs, adolescents gain abilities to help integrate feelings, thinking, and actions to achieve specific social and interpersonal goals. PYD emphasizes a range of skills used to communicate and interact with others including higher-order thinking skills, increasing self-control, and self-efficacy. PYD utilized in secondary schools creates an environment where prosocial norms, expectations, and perceptions are valued is vital for healthy adolescent social and cultural development.

**Relationships.** In this study, teachers and students had a mutual perception of D.A.R.E. as an ineffective program to prevent drug and alcohol use in secondary students. However, teachers agreed the D.A.R.E. program serves as a reliable tool for students to build relationships with law enforcement officers. Based on sociocultural theory and the PYD framework,
relationships are an essential component that should be considered when questioning the efficacy of school-level programs. According to SAMHSA (2019), the two largest factors that impact drug prevention in teens are positive adult involvement and education.

**Sociocultural theory.** As relationships and curriculum are studied, one must consider the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD and scaffolding are considered the most common aspect of educational sociocultural theory. This sociocultural concept refers to the difference between what a student can do without help and what he or she can achieve with targeted assistance. The notion of instructional scaffolding is aligned to the idea of ZPD by using a set of tools or actions that help a learner successfully complete a task over a period of time (Polly, Allman, Casto, and Norwood, 2018). When applied to teacher participant perceptions, using the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding within prevention programs will assist with maintaining the positive relationships that are developed while continuing to implement strategies needed to help students make wise, informed decisions.

**Positive youth development.** A key aspect of the Positive Youth Development framework emphasizes relationships. The focus of PYD is to build positive and powerful relationships between youth and their peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, societies, and cultures. Each connection established strives to support healthy growth and enrich knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities (Hinson et al., 2016). Teachers also recommended having a spiraled curriculum and reoccurring officer visits throughout the secondary school span.

**Implications**

In theory, adolescent social interactions and cultural surroundings influence and impact choices and decisions across time that mold students developmentally. Based on data obtained from focus groups, surveys, and artifacts, there are implications that continuing a drug
prevention program in secondary schools could be beneficial for students. For the implied programs to be beneficial, they must be deeply rooted in sociocultural theory principles focused on positively impacting student outcomes as related to prevention programs in later years of secondary education. Using sociocultural theory as a guiding force, findings from this study imply that the PYD framework be used to inform applications of positive social interactions and influence when working with youth.

**Sociocultural theory.** Sociocultural theory provides a lens for analysis that questions how society and culture impact student mental processes, behaviors, and outcomes. When exploring secondary student and teacher perceptions of the efficacy of drug prevention programs as reflected through discourse, sociocultural applications should be studied to understand external forces such as society, family, peers, school, and community on prevention programs. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory states as individuals develop, social and cultural surroundings shape and form to enhance knowledge and life skills.

**Positive youth development.** Adolescents move through several critical phases as they progress through different developmental stages. These periods of time involve rapid social, emotional, and physical changes. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework used to nurture one’s ability to grow and succeed throughout life. The emphasis of PYD is to build positive and powerful relationships between youth and their peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, societies, and cultures. As students grow, these outside sociocultural factors considerably influence developmental stages. Using this information, it is important to consider that when working with students in a group environment, things they say should be measured according with external factors present. PYD is relevant and should be researched in connection with school aged drug and alcohol prevention programs. Moving forward, applying PYD
methodology to studies can impact research or policy decisions as they relate to drug and alcohol prevention programs. This study can also impact schools at the district level by having drug prevention policies revisited to include prevention program continuation in later grade bands.

**Limitations of the Research**

The target population for this research was high school students and teachers from a high school in a Middle Tennessee school district. The population was chosen due to the accessibility of the participants. A limitation of the study was researcher bias. Whether conscious of bias or not, researchers must plan for personal positions and prejudice to be present during research.

When proofing the study, I was especially critical in reviewing how the problem was stated, how the data were selected, what components of the study may have been omitted, how people, places, or things were represented, and the connotation, positive or negative, that was used with possible wording during each of the focus groups.

Limitations for this study include self-reported data, time, and funding. According to the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research (2018), the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on Substance Abuse with adolescents recommends the CRAFFT 2.0 as a behavioral health-screening tool for use with children ages 12-18. (2018). By using the CRAFFT health-screening tool, survey results were limited to self-reported data that could not be independently verified. Four factors of this limitation could have included selective memory, enhancement, untruthfulness, and exaggeration. Time was also limited based on deadlines for research. Additionally, external funding placed limitations on programs that could be purchased for data collection. The results of the study were limited to the population of high school students and educators in a rural Middle Tennessee school system that is predominantly a low-to-middle socioeconomic area. The study focused specifically on teachers’ and educators’ beliefs for
determining the necessity of developing and modifying drug prevention programs in schools. These limitations are in line with research conducted by Kumar et al. (2013), which focused on a descriptive report of the prevention programs that exist in schools.

A noted weakness of my study is the sample size. Sampling only took place in a rural high school located in middle Tennessee. It would be beneficial to this study and future studies if the sample size were broadened to reach a larger geographical area and more students. Another weakness from the study could have been lack of honesty. Although students were told that their anonymity was protected during this process, some thought that I would be able to view their answers. Strengths of the study included the selected focus group of at-risk students that was determined by previous teachers and counselors. The individualized attention that was given during the selection process was beneficial to the outcome of the data. Student D.A.R.E. participation during elementary years is another strength identified. Of the students surveyed, 88.8% participated in the D.A.R.E. program in 5th grade. Having the majority of students with a prior knowledge base allows for an accurate representation of what students remember and take away from the program.

**Future Research**

For future research efforts to benefit secondary students with drug prevention programs, it would be valuable to navigate through program availability. It was reported by the Ad Council (2018) that 68 percent of Americans that were exposed to the “Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk” campaign have attempted to avert a peer from drinking and driving. The U.S. Department of Transportation (2018) found that in 1998 there was a record-low number of alcohol-related accidents since statistical analysis of such events have occurred. Research has
found such advertisements to be useful; however, in today’s society, ads alone cannot limit alcohol and drug abuse.

Another area that should continue to be explored through future research is adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). SAMHSA (2018) found that each adverse childhood experience increases the probability for students to use alcohol and drugs and for prevention efforts to be negated. These adverse childhood experiences are issues that prevention programs often face. To ensure the validity and reliability of prevention programs, it is necessary to continue research on ACEs and determine how we can educate parents on the concerns that could lead to substance abuse.

Although there is not a vast amount of research on the topic, I would consider it imperative to expand future research on the impact of drug prevention programs in elementary schools verses secondary schools. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports that youth consumption of alcohol peeks between ages 13 and 14; this is between 8th and 9th grade. It is crucial for the future of our youth to determine the appropriate age for prevention programs.

One additional area that I would consider beneficial to explore would be to survey and form a focus group with past and present D.A.R.E. officers. It would be interesting to gather data on their perception of the D.A.R.E. program and the benefits or lack thereof that they think the program brings to the community.

**Recommendations**

After reviewing and analyzing the data obtained from this research study, it is my recommendation that the D.A.R.E. program be revisited with the local sheriff’s department and the school district to make knowledgeable and responsible decisions that will assist with the
school/community needs for drug prevention education. A suggestion for the district and the sheriff’s department is that if the D.A.R.E. program is going to begin in 5th grade, it should be spiraled into secondary years. A good time to revisit the program is in 7th grade during health class and in 9th grade during wellness. The prevention program would fit into the curriculum for both subjects and it would be a refresher course for the students. Further research is recommended to determine the efficacy of drug and alcohol prevention programs that are offered in schools. It would be beneficial to conduct research in other school districts and states.

Traditionally, when discussing the D.A.R.E. program, the school and educators are not involved in the delivery of the curriculum. It could be valuable to the officers and the students to have more than one person providing information. Not all students respond to information in the same way. Students may respond differently to diversity in content delivery. It would be noteworthy to consider having an educator in the room when the D.A.R.E. program is taught. This process will allow conversations to continue throughout the year with educators in the building after the official 16-week time period for D.A.R.E. instruction has expired.

Incorporating school personnel as a key component of drug prevention programs would allow teachers to take action against substance abuse or addiction problems. A component of Positive Youth Development is to build positive and powerful relationships between students and teachers. Utilizing this aspect of the conceptual framework would allow students to build relationships with adults they interact with on a daily basis.

Another proposal to consider is that parents can aid in the combat against drug and alcohol use by being active participants in the fight against substance abuse. NIDA (2015) suggests that positive parenting prevents drug abuse. NIDA offers five parenting skill guidelines that are imperative in avoiding the drug and alcohol issues that may arise among youth. The five
recommendations address communication, encouragement, negotiation, setting limits, and supervision. The child and family center at the University of Oregon created a series of informational videos and suggestions to assist parents with implementation of the five recommendations to assist parents with practicing meaningful discussions with their youth about drugs and alcohol. This could be offered as supplementary materials from the sheriff’s department and school district to assist in closing prevention effort gap between home and school. A unified effort that includes all entities including parents, stakeholders, and schools must take place.

**Final Thoughts**

This dissertation developed through my time as an assistant principal at a local high school. My primary student responsibility is working with seniors and graduation rate. Over the course of my tenure at the high school, I have spoken with many at-risk senior students to determine the obstacles that stand in their way of a high school diploma. These senior students are surprisingly honest when discussing drug and alcohol related issues that they have faced. During these encounters, my thoughts often centered on what can we as a school and community do to deter these students from a life of addiction. After talking with my director of schools, he graciously granted me permission to explore this topic by giving surveys to senior students and having conversations with a focus group of students and teachers. After reviewing the research questions and the data obtained from the focus groups, survey, and artifacts, it is apparent from students and teachers that they believe that our youth would benefit from continued or spiraled prevention programs in later secondary school years instead of teaching in isolation to 5th grade students.
It is our job as educators and stakeholders in the communities in which reside to unite in the fight against drugs and alcohol for our youth. Speaking up and being vocal about the lack of prevention programs in secondary education is a sure way to bring awareness to the issue at hand. According to our teens, having prevention programs isolated to elementary grade levels is not an effective way to combat the issue. If students could be involved in drug prevention programs in high school, they would see the harm of drug and alcohol participation and the benefits of refraining from temptations and peer pressure.

This experience has prompted me to initiate conversations with the local sheriff’s department and the director of schools to discuss the results and further implementation of prevention programs that would assist in meeting the needs of our students.
References


Applied Research, 3(7), 749-752. Retrieved from


https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/teen-
prescription-drug-misuse-abuse

Press. (Original work published 1962).

http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/1/e13

Retrieved from https://www.onhealth.com/content/1/teen_drug_abuse

C., *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of*
sociohistorical psychology (1st ed., pp. 111-126). Cambridge, United Kingdom:
Cambridge University Press

Studies, 8(4), 399-403. Retrieved from https://0-search-ebscohost-
com.library.acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsglr&AN=edsgcl.537983017&site
=eds-live

Learning Environments. doi 10.1007/978-1-4419-6321-5_2

and Practice in Language Studies, 6(1), 194-198. Retrieved from
https://0-search-ebscohost-
com.library.acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgr&AN=edsgcl.446412720&site
=eds-live