Change in Attribution Perspective, Shame, and Academic Identity for freshmen on Probation Enrolled in University Academic Recovery Courses: A Mixed Methods Study

Christine L. Robinson
Western Michigan University, christine.robinson@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dissertations/3549

This Dissertation-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
CHANGE IN ATTRIBUTION PERSPECTIVE, SHAME, AND ACADEMIC IDENTITY FOR FRESHMEN ON PROBATION ENROLLED IN UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC RECOVERY COURSES: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

by

Christine L. Robinson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Western Michigan University

December 2019

Doctoral Committee:

Andrea Beach, Ph.D., Chair
Louann Bierlein Palmer, Ed.D.
Randy Ott, Ph.D.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Ph.D. was not accomplished alone. I had many people who supported me along the way. First, I must acknowledge my family. To my husband, Ray, you always support me in whatever I choose to do - Thank you. To my kids - Emily, Matthew, and Garrett - you are my joy and you reflect what is beautiful in the world. That beauty fuels my hopes and dreams, and so to you three, I am ever grateful. To my sisters, Lori, and Sue, you help keep me grounded. Thank you. To my parents, Vicky, and Richard, thank you for always believing in me. And so to my family, I say “thank you” for all of your support, belief in me, and encouragement.

I am also indebted to my dissertation committee: Dr. Andrea Beach, Dr. Louann Bierlein Palmer, and Dr. Randy Ott. I learned so much from each of you along the way. Thank you for your guidance, correction, praise, and dedication.

This dissertation process has helped me believe in myself, develop mental toughness, and learn about strategy. The aching feeling I had in my gut, which I learned through this process was “shame” has now been resolved. I have developed shame resilience, positive identities, and an awareness of my how my thoughts are the drivers of my feelings and actions. To everyone who participated in this dissertation process, you had a hand in that personal development, and again, I thank you.

Christine L. Robinson
Student retention is critical to the success of the student, the college or university, and society in general. Consequently, institutions of higher education continue to focus efforts on student retention strategies and one such strategy utilizes academic recovery courses to support probationary freshmen. Previous research studies of these courses largely focus on academic outcomes without examining the “why” or “how” behind such outcomes. Some studies also discuss constructs including attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity. However, the relationship between these constructs has not been researched, particularly with regard to any change that may occur for probationary freshmen engaged with an academic recovery course.

This sequential, mixed-methods study, framed by Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006), Attribution Theory (Weiner, 2008), and Academic Identity (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008), researches change in these constructs for probationary freshmen enrolled in an academic recovery course at one mid-sized research university in the Midwest, and explores how students made meaning of their academic recovery process.

A pre- and post-course survey was utilized in the quantitative phase of the study. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between mean shame scores for male and female probationary freshmen indicating that females experienced more shame while on probation than
males. Concerning academic identity, over 50% of probationary freshmen resided in a moratorium academic identity status, while those with an achieved identity status represented 27.7% of the students. Relationships were found between the constructs wherein academic identity was statistically correlated with shame and attribution perspective. As moratorium identity decreased, achieved identity increased; as moratorium identity increased, shame increased; and as moratorium identity increased, attribution perspective decreased. Concerning construct change and racial groups, White students experienced a significant change in shame from pre- to post-course such that their post-course shame score was four points lower than the pre-course shame score. With regard to academic standing, higher attribution perspective scores significantly correlated with retention compared to academic dismissal.

Post-course interviews, utilized in the qualitative phase of the study, revealed several major themes. Probationary freshmen experienced difficulty transitioning from high school to college with regard to insufficient life management skills, underdeveloped academic identity, self-awareness and shame resilience, and hardships that occurred during the semester. Factors contributing to positive growth for the freshmen included the importance of having a champion, improved life management skills, a positive attribution perspective, improved self-awareness and shame resilience, and improved academic identity.

This study is the first to examine change in constructs for probationary freshmen engaged in an academic recovery course, and for which a mixed-methods approach gave voice to the students regarding their experiences. Results reveal how colleges and universities can better support probationary freshmen through the employment of academic recovery courses. The study opens up further research ideas to continue addressing the challenge of retention for this at-risk population.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** .............................................................................................................. ii

**LIST OF TABLES** ......................................................................................................................... xi

**LIST OF FIGURES** ....................................................................................................................... xii

**CHAPTER**

I. **INTRODUCTION** ......................................................................................................................... 1

  Background ................................................................................................................................. 1

  Statement of the Problem .......................................................................................................... 5
  
    Researchable Problem ............................................................................................................. 5
  
    Studies Addressing the Problem .............................................................................................. 6
  
    Deficiency Statement ............................................................................................................ 8
  
    Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................... 9

  Purpose Statement and Research Questions ........................................................................... 10

  Theoretical Framework and Narrative .................................................................................... 11

  Methods Overview .................................................................................................................. 13

  Chapter 1 Summary ................................................................................................................ 13

II. **LITERATURE REVIEW** .......................................................................................................... 15

  Persistence and Retention ......................................................................................................... 15
  
    Shifting Demographics ......................................................................................................... 16
  
    Student Departure and Impacts ............................................................................................. 18
  
    Factors Associated with Retention ...................................................................................... 20
  
    Academic Probation ............................................................................................................. 21
Table of Contents — Continued

CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Retention Programs</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from high school to college</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically dismissed and readmitted</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Recovery Courses</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Outcomes</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Outcomes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal, social, or relational</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution Theory</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame Resilience Theory</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Identity Theory</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Summary</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. METHODOLOGY .................................................. 59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design, Approach, and Rationale</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on My Own Identity</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, Sample, and Site</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents — Continued

CHAPTER

Population…………………………………………………………………………64

Sample, Sample Size, and sampling Strategy………………………………65

Access and Rapport……………………………………………………………65

Instrumentation and Data Collection………………………………………..66

Phase One: Quantitative Instrumentation and Data Collection……….66

  Attribution Perspective: Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ)………………………………………………………………………………69

  Trait Shame: Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A)……………………………………………………………………70

  Academic Identity Status: Academic Identity Measure (AIM)……70

  Piloting………………………………………………………………………..71

Phase Two: Qualitative Methods…………………………………………72

  Student interviews…………………………………………………………72

  Trustworthiness in Collecting Data………………………………………73

Methods of Data Analysis…………………………………………………75

  Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis…………………………………76

  Qualitative Methods of Data Analysis……………………………………79

  Cross-case Synthesis…………………………………………………………81

  Trustworthiness in Data Analysis………………………………………..82

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study……………………………...82

Chapter 3 Summary……………………………………………………………84
### Table of Contents — Continued

#### CHAPTER

**IV. RESULTS** .................................................................................................................................................. 85

- Phase One: Quantitative Strand .................................................................................................................. 86
  - Recruitment and Sample ......................................................................................................................... 86
  - General Demographic Information ......................................................................................................... 87
  - Descriptive Data for Constructs ........................................................................................................... 89
    - Attribution Perspective: Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ) ....................................................... 89
    - Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A) ................................................................. 91
    - Academic Identity Measure (AIM) ........................................................................................................ 91
  - Research Question One ........................................................................................................................... 93
  - Research Question Two ........................................................................................................................... 95
  - Research Question Three ......................................................................................................................... 96
  - Research Question Four ............................................................................................................................ 97
    - Post-course sample retention ................................................................................................................ 101
    - Retention by major ................................................................................................................................. 102
    - Quantitative Phase Summary .............................................................................................................. 103

- Phase Two: Qualitative Strand .................................................................................................................... 104
  - Participant Selection ............................................................................................................................... 104
  - Participant Profiles ................................................................................................................................. 104
    - Lucy ..................................................................................................................................................... 107
    - Jay ....................................................................................................................................................... 110
Table of Contents — Continued

CHAPTER

Ray ................................................................. 112
Rex ............................................................... 115
Anna ............................................................... 119
Josh ............................................................. 122
Karen ............................................................ 125
Kyle ............................................................. 128
Rose ........................................................... 131
Jake ............................................................. 135
Rick ............................................................ 137
Lori ............................................................. 140
Jim ............................................................. 142
Shelly .......................................................... 144

Participant Profile Summary ........................................ 146

Major Themes .......................................................... 146

Theme 1: Difficulty with the Transition from High School to College... 149
Subtheme 1.1: Insufficient life management skills ................. 149
Subtheme 1.2: Significant hardships occurred during semester.. 155
Subtheme 1.3: Underdeveloped academic identity .............. 156
Subtheme 1.4: Underdeveloped self-awareness and shame resilience .................................................. 160

Theme 2: New and emerging positive growth ..................... 161
Table of Contents — Continued

CHAPTER

Subtheme 2.1: Positive attribution perspective ...................... 162
Subtheme 2.2: Improved self-awareness and shame resilience ... 165
Subtheme 2.3: Improved academic identity ......................... 167
Subtheme 2.4: Importance of having a champion ............... 172
Subtheme 2.5: Improved life management skills ................. 176
Subtheme 2.6: Improved self-concept and hope for the future ... 180

Theme 3: Motivated to Succeed Academically .................. 182
Subtheme 3.1: External motivation ................................. 182
Subtheme 3.2: Internal motivation ................................. 184

Theme 4: Participants’ Recommendations ........................ 185
Subtheme 4.1: Improve transition from high school to college ... 185
Subtheme 4.2: Improve academic recovery course .......... 188

Survey One: Probation Question ................................. 191

Qualitative Phase Summary ................................. 194

V. CONCLUSIONS ................................................. 196

Discussion of Key Findings .................................... 196
Shame and Gender ........................................... 197
Shame and Race ............................................. 200
Moratorium Identity .......................................... 202
Relationship Among the Constructs ................................ 204
Table of Contents — Continued

CHAPTER

Attribution Perspective and Academic Standing...........................206
Life Management Skills............................................................207
Overprotective parents............................................................210
Social media and mental health...................................................211
Implications for Practice..........................................................211
Before Students Arrive on Campus.............................................211
In the First Semester...............................................................213
Faculty and Staff Development...................................................215
Recommendations for Academic Recovery Course Improvement......218
Summary of Practice Implications.................................................220
Limitations..................................................................................222
Recommendations for Future Research.........................................223
Conclusion..................................................................................225

REFERENCES..............................................................................226

APPENDICES

A. Recruitment Email to Instructors Explaining Study and Asking them to Participate.248
B. Phase One (Quantitative) Research Script and Informed Consent.................250
C. Phase One (Quantitative) Surveys..............................................254
D. Phase One (Quantitative) Research Tools Permission Emails....................276
E. Phase Two (Qualitative) Interview Questions....................................280
LIST OF TABLES

1: Research Questions and Analysis Tools..............................................................76

2: Demographics and Characteristics of Survey Participants...............................88

3: Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A), and Academic Identity Measure (AIM) Data for Pre-course (N = 83) and Post-course (N =45) .........................................................................................................................92

4: Paired t-test Scores for Post-course Sample (N = 45).........................................93

5: Paired t-test Scores for Post-course Sample by Race and Gender (N = 45).........94

6: Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Shame, Attribution Perspective, and Academic Identity as a Function of Gender or Race (N=83).................................................................97

7: Logistic Regression Results................................................................................100

8: Pre-course Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Dismissed and Retained Students, and Independent t-test Scores..............................................................101

9: Academic Standing Data for Students in the Pre-course Sample, Post-course Sample, and Pre-course-but-not-post-course Sample.........................................................102

10: Retention Rate by Major......................................................................................102

11: Profile Data for the Fourteen Participants in Phase Two...................................106

12: Qualitative Themes from Student Interviews....................................................148

13. Summary Table of Key Findings........................................................................194
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Attribution perspective and associated impacts .................................................38
2. Theoretical framework .........................................................................................54
3. Concurrent triangulation design ...........................................................................74
4. Model of academic recovery course support for probationary freshmen ...............221
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela (2003) said, “Education is the most powerful weapon we have to change the world…” (para. 23). An education can result in an invitation to sit at the table of society where decisions are made to improve the human condition. An individual with an education can use the privilege and position an education provides to change the things he or she disagrees with in society.

What about those who enter institutions of higher education with goals and dreams, but who leave the institution without a degree? That represents opportunity lost – opportunity for those individuals, for the institution, for the individuals’ families, their communities, and the world at large. In order to empower students to realize the opportunities that an education provides, professionals in higher education must support them in their journey to complete their degree. To that end, institutions of higher education must constantly evolve, innovate, and reinvent, as they seek to support every student in pursuit of their goals and dreams in an ever-changing world. This study explores the impact of one such support strategy for freshmen on academic probation.

Background

The United States (U.S.) population is experiencing a rapid demographic shift in which individuals from racial minority groups hold the largest share of U.S. population growth, and this trend is projected to continue (Cohn & Caumont, 2016; Frey, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a, 2011b). Higher education has become more accessible, and institutions are welcoming more students from traditionally marginalized populations, including students from underrepresented, lower socioeconomic and/or minority populations (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Often, a
disproportionate number of students from these populations are considered to be academically at-risk within a higher education setting (Blumenstyk, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, Schudde, & Stampen, 2014; Tate, Fallon, Casquarelli, & Marks, 2014; Zusman, 1999). Therefore, increased access to the opportunities that an education affords is not equating to increased success for all students.

While increased access improves social justice through education, each year in the United States over a million students who begin a post-secondary education leave higher education before completing their degree (Shapiro, Dundar, Yuan, Harrell, Wild, & Ziskin, 2014; Tinto, 2012). This problem is even more prevalent for some groups compared to others. For minority and low-income students, for instance, completion rates are lower compared to students from more privileged groups, i.e., those from the majority population and those who are not low-income (Bowman, 2014; Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Cook, 2015; Engberg & Allen, 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, & Bensimon, 2015; Zusman, 1999).

Non-degree completion has negative consequences for the student, the institution, and for society in general. For the student, consequences include the burden of student loan debt, lower lifetime earnings potential, and reduced opportunities for employer-sponsored health insurance and retirement benefits. In turn, this may reduce an individual’s ability to build assets and wealth through home ownership (Baum & Payea, 2013; Gladieux & Perna, 2005; Hoell, 2006; Smith & Cumpton, 2013). For the institution, the loss of students represents the loss of tuition (Swail, 2004; Tinto, 2004) as well as lowered retention and graduation rates, which may negatively affect an institution’s national rankings, potentially lowering its reputation and impacting future enrollment (Hazelkorn, 2015). For society, low education levels correlate with increased rates of poverty, diminished health and reduced life expectancy, and a weaker national economy overall (John, 2011; Smith & Cumpton, 2013).
With the recognition that retention, persistence, and graduation are critical to the success of the student, the institution, and to society in general, along with an awareness of the increasing diversity in the student population, institutions of higher education have created a diverse offering of student services to support students in their pursuit of personal, academic, and career success (Blumenstyk, 2015; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2014; Hoover, 2014). Support can be offered at different points throughout a student’s academic journey. Support may be offered to students transitioning from high school to college; to students who experience academic difficulty and find themselves on academic probation; and to students readmitted to the institution after academic dismissal.

Many research studies document support designed to help students successfully transition from high school to college (e.g., Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013; Permzadian & Credé, 2016; Young & Hopp, 2014). For example, Permzadian and Credé (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 682 studies on supports designed to help students acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in the first year of college. Focusing on studies that reported outcomes in terms of grade point average (GPA) and retention data, the analysis found that students who engaged in first-year seminar support programs showed increased first-year grades and one-year retention rates compared to students who had not participated in these programs.

Although many supports exist that focus on success for students in their transition to higher education, some students still struggle and are academically dismissed after failing to meet their institution’s policies for good standing. Recent examples of studies on readmission programs include those by Houle (2013), Suchan (2016), and Versalle (2018). Houle explored the experiences of five readmitted undergraduate students in regard to their decisions to reengage with their institution. Suchan’s study focused on the academic resilience of academically suspended college students. Versalle focused on a readmission program whereby the institution-
initiated readmission for dismissed students through an unsolicited invitation back into the university. All three studies reported positive outcomes.

Academic dismissal is an unfortunate outcome that higher education institutions try to help their students avoid. However, despite the best efforts of institutions to support students’ transition to post-secondary education, some freshmen still find themselves on academic probation after a semester of poor academic performance. Such students may have a probationary semester to recover their good standing and avoid academic dismissal, during which they may be supported through an academic recovery course intervention. The literature supports the trend of academic recovery courses as a growing intervention for such students (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops, Yu, Burridge, & Wolters, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss, Brock, Sommo, Rudd, & Turner, 2011). Academic recovery courses are courses designed to increase academic success for students on academic probation in order to avoid academic dismissal. Some courses are mandated by the institution for freshmen on academic probation (Barry, 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2018), while others are optional (Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Shea, 2018). At a minimum, most courses provide instruction and support around developing skills related to topics such as time management and test-taking.

The approach used in academic recovery courses varies within the literature. Most courses have a strong emphasis on study skill improvement (Blaney, 2014; Hoops et al., 2015; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Seto-Friel, 2018). Some courses are more comprehensive and incorporate both study skill acquisition and improvement, as well as advising or counseling components.
(Hendrickson, 2014; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Mellor et al., 2015). Further details regarding the various studies of academic recovery courses are offered in Chapter 2.

Although there exists a wealth of research on student success initiatives, there is a relative dearth of research regarding the efficacy of academic recovery courses for freshmen on academic probation as a mode of delivering support services to this population.

**Statement of the Problem**

**Researchable Problem**

When considering the different types of student success programming, academic recovery courses have been studied at institutions of higher education to assess their effectiveness in addressing retention of students on academic probation (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops et al., 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011). Yet, the body of literature on the effectiveness of academic recovery courses to increase success of students on probation is relatively small.

Within the range of existing studies, most reported end-of-semester GPA and academic standing data as the main measure of success for the academic recovery courses in their study (Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops et al., 2015; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2018; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011).

To better understand what contributes to positive GPA and academic standing outcomes, academic recovery courses must be researched in greater depth and from different perspectives. Gaining insight into students’ experiences within the courses in terms of how students change and grow, and to what they attribute any change and growth, is needed to help give scholars and
practitioners clearer understanding and insight into potential reasons for student growth within the courses.

**Studies Addressing the Problem**

Only a few researchers have evaluated the effects, successes, or influences of academic recovery courses through a lens that looked beyond student GPA and academic standing. These have included Barry (2015), Blaney (2014), Hoops et al. (2015), Hutson (2006), and Mellor et al. (2015).

*Attributional perspectives* (including *locus of control*) were examined in some studies (Barry, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Mellor et al., 2015). Attribution perspective is described by Weiner (1972) as the process by which individuals perceive the causes for their successes and failures. Related to attributional perspective is the concept of locus of control, which references whether students attribute their failure to an internal locus of control, whereby they believe their success or failure is a result of their own effort and hard work, or an external locus of control, whereby they blame outside factors for their successes and failures. Stability dimensions (stable or unstable) are also a factor with attribution. Intelligence, for instance, is considered to be stable, meaning that it does not change, compared to unstable or changeable causal factors, such as effort or hard work. Locus of control influences emotional reactions to failure or success and stability dimensions affect individuals’ future expectations (Kovenklioglu & Greenhaus, 1978). When an outcome such as academic probation is attributed to an internal stable cause, such as low intelligence, the student’s academic performance is not likely to improve in the future. If the same poor performance is attributed to an external unstable factor, such as insufficient study time, the student could believe he or she will improve his or her academic performance by studying more.
Barry (2015) reported that students enrolled in academic recovery courses attributed their poor academic performance to their own academic failure (internal locus of control) and that they did not feel their poor academic performance was stable. Barry also found that students showed improvement in study skills, time management and self-regulation, which positively influenced their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to a student's belief in his or her capacity to influence events that affect his or her life and control over the way these events are experienced, e.g., to regulate and engage in learning behaviors necessary for academic success (Bandura, 1991, 1994). Mellor et al. (2015) and Hutson (2006) also indicated that the academic recovery courses in their studies had a positive effect on perceived academic self-efficacy beliefs. However, Mellor et al. determined the course in their study had no effect on locus of control.

Sense of belonging, or whether students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college in general, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012), was discussed by Blaney (2014). Blaney found that students who were already feeling that they did not belong reported feeling even less of a sense of belonging by being on probation.

A consistent theme around affective outcomes of probation in terms of embarrassment, disappointment and shame also emerged in the literature review. Brown (2008) defines shame as “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed, and therefore unworthy of acceptance or belonging…Shame creates feelings of fear, blame, and disconnect” (p. 29). Barry (2015) reported that participants felt disappointed or upset that they were on probation. Similarly, Blaney (2014) found that students reported that they were ashamed of their failure and that their shame caused them to disengage.
Another related construct is that of student academic identity, defined as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Two studies reported that students indicated a crisis of academic identity as they attempted to understand their identity as students on probation compared to previous academic identities where they saw themselves as being academically successful (Blaney, 2014; Hutson, 2006).

Other academic recovery course outcomes included improved study skills (Blaney, 2014; Hoops et al., 2015; Hutson, 2006) and the positive effect of relationships in regard to family members and instructors (Barry, 2014). The influence of institutional culture was an additional theme that emerged in Blaney’s (2014) study.

**Deficiency Statement**

The literature search uncovered a small number of studies on academic recovery courses that discussed students’ attribution perspective in regard to their probationary status (Barry, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Mellor et al., 2015), and that students reported emotional responses to being on probation which included shame (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014). Research indicates that a self-focused negative emotion of shame is an affective reaction within attribution theory when there is a pessimistic attribution perspective. Individuals with this perspective tend to attribute undesirable events, such as academic failure, to an internal and stable locus of causality, i.e., a lack of intelligence (Gundlach, Douglas, & Martinko, 2002; Weiner, 1982, 1985). Individuals with this perspective lack confidence and are pessimistic about their chances for success. This tendency can also promote depression and a tendency toward learned helplessness (Abramson et al., 1978).

The review of academic recovery course studies also revealed a few studies where students discussed their academic identity in relation to being on academic probation and that
being on academic probation caused these students to question their academic identity (Blaney, 2014; Hutson, 2006). This is noteworthy considering that academic identity and academic success are intertwined (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; White & Lowenthal, 2011).

While attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity are all intertwined with student success, and while these constructs are discussed in studies focused on probationary students in academic recovery courses, the relationship between the three constructs had not been researched, particularly in regard to any change that may occur for students engaged with an academic recovery course. Moreover, despite an extensive literature review, no studies were found that researched change in attribution, shame, or academic identity for freshmen on probation enrolled in an academic recovery course. The paucity of research in this area, therefore, warranted further inquiry.

**Significance of the Study**

Addressing this gap in the study of academic support courses in higher education is important for several reasons. First, exploring the potential of an academic recovery course to help students (a) develop shame resilience, (b) adopt an optimistic attribution explanation for their academic failure, and (c) strengthen their academic identity has the potential to improve the course experience and outcomes for students on academic probation. Second, students on academic probation can experience greater satisfaction and success as they reap the benefits of high-quality probation courses. Therefore, such research could also help administrators and instructors further understand what elements to include within new or existing academic recovery courses to increase their effectiveness for students on probation. Lastly, institutions would be better able to determine whether academic recovery courses are a worthwhile strategy to support enrollment management goals and to understand how the courses may contribute to
the financial health of the institution. Each of these benefits taken individually, or collectively, could translate to higher retention, persistence, and graduation rates for probationary students who take the course. In turn, these outcomes may increase the institution’s tuition revenue and graduation rate, thereby improving institutional standing, reputation, and federal funding (Hoover, 2014).

On a larger scale, such research could inform methods to intercept the underachievement and underrepresentation of marginalized students in higher education through the use of culturally responsive research methodology (Berryman et al., 2013). Empowering at-risk and marginalized students will help them achieve success through education, so they may sit at the table of society with the skills, knowledge, and position needed to improve their own future. In doing so, these students will also improve the future of their families and communities, which ultimately will improve the condition of society.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to (a) describe any change in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity for freshmen on academic probation who are engaged in an academic recovery course, and (b) explore how the course impacted the students’ perceptions of their academic recovery process at one mid-sized, comprehensive, four-year university in the Midwest.

Specific research questions include:

1. Regarding freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?
2. What is the relationship among student-reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?

3. Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major?

4. To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?

5. How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?

Not originally part of the study, the research question #4 was added after the data was collected in response to the realization that uncovering data that might reveal student construct attributes as a predictor or influencer of academic standing would be valuable to the study. Although the study is of a mixed methods design, it strongly emphasizes generating understanding by discovering patterns and themes within the data; therefore, there are no hypotheses (Gerring, 2004).

**Theoretical Framework and Narrative**

The theoretical framework for my mixed methods study provides a blueprint or structure to help guide how I think about and conduct my research (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Three theories relevant to exploring the experiences of students on academic probation in academic recovery
courses are Weiner’s (1972) Attribution Theory, Brown’s (2006) Shame Resilience Theory (SRT), and Student Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008).

Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1972) is discussed to explore how students’ attributional perspectives regarding their state of academic probation, whether optimistic or pessimistic, underpins their academic recovery journey. With an *optimistic attribution perspective*, individuals attribute failure to external and unstable factors and believe they can change their efforts to achieve success. With a *pessimistic attribution perspective*, individuals attribute failure to internal and stable factors and lack belief in their chances for achieving future success (Abramson et al., 1978). Gaining insight into students’ attribution for their probationary status, and how that attribution may change while enrolled in an academic recovery course, will help inform researchers with regard to the importance of that construct for students on probation.

Weiner (1972) purported that shame often accompanies internal and stable dispositional attributions for failure. Therefore, SRT (Brown, 2006), is also key to this study. Insight into the experience of shame as it relates to academic probation for students enrolled in recovery courses will further our understanding of how students’ state of shame may affect their recovery process within an academic recovery course experience.

Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008) is the third theory framing my study. For purposes of this study, academic identity will be conceptualized as the student’s commitment to their education as it relates to the development of their identity in terms of Marcia’s (1966) four identity statuses: foreclosed, diffused, moratorium, and achieved. Academic identity and academic success are intertwined (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; White & Lowenthal, 2011). Knowing how the academic identity for students on academic probation relates to their academic recovery journey within an academic recovery course could help student affairs
professionals conceptualize the challenges involved in helping such students develop their academic identity aid in the design of proactive interventions to support students’ academic recovery.

Chapter 2 provides a more detailed explanation, including a visual depiction that weaves together the theories used to the guide my study and justifies the study of these constructs in relation to academic recovery for students engaged in academic recovery courses.

Methods Overview

Data for this mixed methods study was gathered through a pre- and post-course survey that included administration and analysis of the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Peterson et al., 1982), the Test of Self-conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A; Tangney, Wagner, Gavlas, & Gramzow, 1991), and the Academic Identity Measure (AIM; Was & Isaacson, 2008). Following Creswell’s (2013) recommended steps for qualitative data collection and analysis, end-of-semester student interviews were utilized to explore the students’ perceptions to help inform a more in-depth understanding of the reasons for any measured change detected in shame, academic identity, and/or attribution uncovered through the pre- and post-course surveys. More specifically, students’ perceptions regarding the course were explored to explain changes reflected in the quantitative data analysis on a student-level basis. Incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data results strengthened the validity of my study.

Chapter 1 Summary

Given the importance of student retention, persistence, and graduation, and the potential of an academic recovery course to change the projection of a student on academic probation, this study was conducted to (a) describe any change in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity, for freshmen on academic probation who are engaged in an academic recovery
course, and (b) explore how the course impacted the students’ perceptions of their academic recovery process.

Chapter 1 discussed relevant literature, outlined the problem and research questions, and provided theoretical framework for the study. Next, Chapter 2 further reviews literature relevant to this study and provides a more detailed discussion of the theories and theoretical framework that guided the study.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This mixed methods study explored changes in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity for probationary freshmen enrolled in an academic recovery course. It also explored students’ perspectives regarding the course’s influence on any change in shame, attribution, or academic identity through student interviews conducted post-course. To foster understanding of the concepts most relevant to the study, this chapter reviews the literature on the demographic shift underway in the U.S., the impact of degree non-completion, factors related to student retention, and various types of student success programs, including approaches to supporting students on academic probation. Theories regarding Shame Resilience (Brown, 2006), Attribution (Weiner, 2008), and Academic Identity (Was & Isaacson, 2008) were introduced in Chapter 1. Because this study focused on those attributes as they specifically relate to students on academic probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, the theories are discussed in greater detail in this chapter. Finally, a conceptual framework that guides the study is discussed.

Persistence and Retention

All institutions of higher education have academically at-risk students, some who struggle in and out of the classroom, which may result in their departure from the institution, either voluntarily or through academic dismissal. The issue of students leaving higher education before attaining a degree is critical for the student, the institution from which they depart, and for society overall (John, 2011; Smith & Cumpton, 2013). The National Center for Education Statistics (Hagedorn, 2005) states that persistence, or the percentage of students who return to any institution for their second year, is a student measure, while retention, or the percentage of
students who return to the institution where they started for their second year, is an institutional measure. With attempts to support student success and to increase retention and graduation rates, institutions employ support programs across many touchpoints for students throughout their academic journey (Hoell, 2006). Supporting students to achieve their degree completion goals is a worthy undertaking as success in college translates to success in life in terms of higher income potential and the many associated benefits and advantages. Supporting students to this end is challenging and complex, however. The student population in higher education continues to diversify, necessitating an array of student support programs to address the complex challenges and needs of the diverse student population in terms of race, nationality, religion, age, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. Student support programs abound and students “…are supported by the largest number and variety of support programs…than ever before in the history of education in the U.S.” (Hoell, 2006; p. 18; Tinto, 2012). However, despite the number and variety of such programs, retention for all students, including students from diverse populations, still holds room for improvement.

**Shifting Demographics**

In regard to increasing diversity in our nation, the most recent U.S. Census projected that the nation will become “minority White” by 2045, with racial minorities becoming the “primary demographic engine of the nation’s future…” (Frey, 2018, p. 1). The most recent Census Bureau report indicated that between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population increased by 43%. This translates to an increase of 15.2 million Hispanics in the U.S., with Hispanics moving toward becoming the majority minority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). In the same period, the Black population increased by 12%, and multiracial populations increased by 76%, with the Black and White multi-race population more than doubling (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a).
This demographic shift in the general population is being felt at institutions of post-secondary education. The diversification of the U.S. population, along with the successful implementation of college access programs such as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (or Pell Grant) and the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (or GI Bill) are primary reasons for the changing enrollment patterns in higher education (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). These patterns reflect an increase in students from historically oppressed racial/ethnic groups, as well as students from other traditionally marginalized populations who are considered to be academically at-risk (e.g., students who are first-generation in higher education, those of lower socioeconomic status) (Blumenstyk, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, Schudde, & Stampen, 2014; Tate, Fallon, Casquarelli, & Marks, 2014; Zusman, 1999).

In addition to shifting demographics and increased access, the diversification of the student body in U.S. colleges and universities can also be attributed to the general expansion of enrollment at U.S. institutions of higher education. Between 1958 and 1981, sparked by the post-World War II baby boom, and fueled by the civil rights and women’s rights movements, where education become more available to expanded populations, the U.S. experienced a massification of higher education, and enrollment in colleges and universities grew from approximately 3 million to 13 million (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), college enrollment hovered around 17.5 million in 2013, and is projected to burgeon to 19.6 million by 2024. The shifting enrollment patterns in higher education present both opportunities and challenges for institutions (Cohen, et al., 2014). While encouraging overall, increased access to higher education is not equating to greater success for all students.
Student Departure and Impacts

Data regarding individuals who start college but who drop out prior to earning a degree indicates that of the 2.4 million individuals who attended an institution of post-secondary education in 1993, more than 1.1 million left without earning a degree (Tinto, 2012). Over the past 20 years, more than 31 million students in the U.S. began their post-secondary education but left before earning their degree, with almost one third of those leaving after just one term at their institution (Shapiro, et al., 2014). Of those who do start and graduate, the five-year graduation rate for students attending all types of institutions of higher education, including universities and community colleges, is reported to be approximately 50% (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), while the bachelor’s degree completion rate within 6 years is just over 55% (Suchan, 2016).

For students from marginalized and underrepresented populations, the outlook is bleaker. There continues to be a growing divide in U.S. bachelor’s degree attainment for students from these groups, especially for low-income, first-generation African American and Latino/a, and Native American students, who are notably less likely to complete college compared to their middle-class White counterparts (Bowman, 2014; Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Cook, 2015; Engberg & Allen, 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, & Bensimon, 2015; Zusman, 1999). For Hispanic and Black students who started in four-year public institutions in 2009, the average six-year graduation rate was 45.9% and 55% respectively, compared to 67.2% for White students (Shapiro, et al., 2017). In addition, for students in the lowest income quartile, only 9% complete a bachelor’s degree by age 24 (Cahalan & Perna, 2015).

There are a variety of negative impacts of dropping out of higher education, but the most immediate concern for non-completers is the burden of student loan debt. For the student who leaves without a degree but with student loan debt, the results can be financially devastating,
ranging from having to pay back loans on a salary from a job that does not pay well to defaulting on the loans, which can result in damaged credit and wage garnishment (Hoell, 2006). More than a million students defaulted on their student loans in 2015 (Federal Student Aid, 2016), and default rates are higher for students who drop out compared to borrowers who complete their degree (College Board, 2016; Gladieux & Perna, 2005).

Individuals without a college degree have lower earnings potential. According to a College Board report, individuals with a bachelor's degree increase their annual earnings by $16,100 and have better health insurance and retirement benefits (Baum & Payea, 2013). Cumulatively over an individual’s lifetime, this increased potential in earnings for those with a bachelor’s degree equates to 75% more income compared to those without a college degree (Abbe, 2009; Larson, 2014). A tertiary result from degree non-completion and subsequent lower income can include the individual and their family being more likely to use social services, and having less opportunity to purchase a house, which can result in reduced contribution to a community’s tax base and a decreased ability to pass down wealth to the next generation (Swail, 2004). Therefore, students leaving before degree attainment can negatively impact their family, community, and society in general (John, 2011; Smith & Cumpton, 2013; Swail, 2004).

Finally, students leaving prior to degree attainment negatively impacts the institutions they leave. First-year retention and six-year graduation rates are some of the factors used by U.S. News and World Report in their yearly ranking of top colleges and universities in the United States (Hazelkorn, 2015). If these rates, and the institution’s ranking decline, future potential students may choose a different institution. Students leaving costs the institution in terms of lost revenue from tuition, ancillary revenues (e.g., student housing, bookstore, on-campus restaurants), and federal financial aid, since the federal government uses graduation and loan
default rates as a determinant of funding for institutions; graduation and loan default rates being a direct indicator of student success (Swail, 2004; Tinto, 2004). Students leaving before completing their degrees, therefore, results in a myriad of negative consequences for the fiscal health of the institution.

**Factors Associated with Retention**

Bowles and Brindle (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of the factors associated with student retention. Their database search using the keywords “student retention,” combined with “barriers,” or “facilitating factors” limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1999 and 2015, returned 1,859 articles. Limiting the search further according to their research questions, which focused on factors that improve retention, barriers to retention, the impact of being a member of a minority group on retention, and the impact of gender on retention, as well as focusing on studies with a comprehensive methodology, the list was narrowed to 34 articles. These articles identified factors allocated to one of three categories deemed by previous studies to influence student retention: situational, dispositional, and institutional factors. Situational factors refer to life circumstances, such as employment, physical health, and family responsibilities (Carroll et al., 2009; Jancey & Burns, 2013). Dispositional factors are described as an individual’s characteristics, such as beliefs, self-confidence, and attitudes (Jancey & Burns, 2013). Institutional factors are described as factors over which the educational institution maintains control. These include factors such as policy, financial aid, support programs, and staff responsiveness (Bond & Cason, 2014; Carroll et al., 2009; Jancey & Burns, 2013). Bowles and Brindle further extended their retention categories and identified sub-factors that influence retention including belongingness, gender, and being a member of a minority group.
Findings of Bowles and Brindle’s (2017) meta-analysis indicate factors facilitating student retention include access to financial aid, student motivation, positive teacher-student relationships, and minimized external pressures. Having a sense of belonging was also an important facilitating factor, as it relates to institutional culture, student-teacher relationships, relationships with peers, and campus involvement. Belongingness, or feelings of mattering to others, promotes positive outcomes for students such as engagement, academic achievement, physical and emotional wellbeing, and optimal functioning (Strayhorn, 2012). The intersections of various social identities produce unique experiences of belonging in various contexts, such that not all students experience belonging in the same way or in the same context. Finally, students’ need to belong is a continuous process that changes as contexts change. In regard to barriers, the analysis identified financial difficulties, employment pressures, poor health, and poor time management skills. Being a member of a minority group was also a barrier to retention, and Bowles and Brindle reported that that finding was consistent across multiple studies. Their recommendations included minimizing barriers and increasing facilitating factors for student success. They also encouraged educational institutions to acknowledge situational factors common to successful students and to facilitate those factors for students with fewer resources. Despite the plethora of research on factors related to retention, however, institutions of higher education still struggle with the challenge of student success in terms of retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

**Academic Probation**

At most universities, a student is at risk of being academically dismissed when they are on some type of academic probation, that is, when the student has fallen below the institution’s academic standards for being in good standing based on GPA and thus faces the possibility of
dismissal (Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999). At most institutions, students are placed on academic probation if their GPA falls below a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale (Cruise, 2002). This is also true for students at the large four-year, public, Midwestern university where this study was conducted; students there are placed on probation when their cumulative GPA falls below a 2.0 or C average. During that probationary semester, the student must achieve a semester GPA of 2.0 or else he or she will be academically dismissed from the university (“Academic Standards,” 2018). For these students, the probationary semester is critical and can be a matter of academic life or death. Retaining students before they are dismissed is a worthwhile endeavor for the many reasons previously discussed. It is during the student’s probationary semester when support can make the difference between student retention, and potentially eventual graduation, or non-completion.

**Student Retention Programs**

Within the increasing diversity of the student body coupled with a growing divide in degree attainment lies an underlying challenge of how to respond to the unique needs of a diverse student population, including providing greater opportunities for students at-risk of dropping out or being academically dismissed. These at-risk populations include students from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups who experience disproportionately lower rates of academic success when compared with other groups of students (Blumenstyk, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, Schudde, & Stampen, 2014; Hoover, 2014). To this end, many institutions are placing greater emphasis on programs and initiatives designed to increase retention, persistence, and graduation rates for all students, and particularly for students academically at-risk. As such, different types of support efforts can be seen within the literature including programs that support students as they transition from high school to college to help them avoid academic
difficulty; programs to support students on academic probation; and programs to support students after they have been academically suspended or dismissed from the institution and given a second chance through readmission.

**Transition from high school to college.** First-year seminars designed to help students achieve academic success and avoid academic difficulty as they transition from high school to college are offered at many post-secondary institutions. Typically, these courses focus on academic and orientation-related topics such as available majors and an introduction to campus resources (Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013; Young & Hopp, 2014). A meta-analysis by Permzadian and Credé (2016) provides a strong summary of the many studies that have assessed first-year interventions. Using several keywords in their database search, including “first-year seminar, first-year orientation, freshman seminar, freshman orientation, new student orientation, new student class, orientation class, orientation seminar, transition class, transition seminar, University 101, success course, and college survival seminar” (p. 291), 682 original sources were found. These studies were pared down to 89 samples in order to focus on studies that documented the effect of first-year seminars on the first-year GPA, and 195 samples that examined the effect of first-year seminars on one-year retention rates. Based on these criteria, a total of 284 independent studies were included in their study. Their research concluded that the average first-year seminar has only a small positive effect on first-year GPA and one-year retention rates for students engaged with first-year support programs. They concluded, however, that even small positive gains in retention realized from intervention efforts may justify support for institutional funding based on their return on investment.

**Academically dismissed and readmitted.** Despite successful student support initiatives on the front-end, some students still struggle academically, and may ultimately end up being
dismissed. Three studies (Houle, 2013; Suchan, 2016; Versalle, 2018) investigated the lived experiences of five dismissed and readmitted students at four-year institutions using a phenomenological approach, resulting in data on 15 total dismissed and readmitted students. Versalle (2018) indicated that most institutions readmit students who were academically dismissed. In his literature review, he referenced several institutions from different regions of the U.S. that offer readmission programs, including universities in the Midwest, the South, and the West (California State University Northridge, 2016; Central Michigan University, 2018; Colorado State University, 2015; DePauw University, 2016; Florida State University, 2016; Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne, 2015; Kent State University, 2013). A key element in Versalle’s study is that students were required to take an academic recovery course; however, it was unclear from his study whether the courses were similar across institutions. The feature that is unique to the Reclaim the W program in Versalle’s study is that freshmen with a GPA between 1.00 and 1.99, who are academically dismissed after their first semester at the university, are invited back through a process initiated by the institution (Versalle, 2018). Versalle aimed to understand the impact of that invitation for students as they were readmitted and reengaged with their university studies. Similarly, the purpose of Houle’s (2013) study was to understand students’ decision to return, while Suchan (2016) sought to understand perspective shifts and learning that may have occurred as a result of students’ dismissal and readmission experiences, including how any new frames of reference may have contributed to the students’ subsequent academic resilience upon reinstatement to institution.

Versalle (2018) and Houle (2013) uncovered similar themes. Versalle found that students attributed the leading causes of their dismissal to being un- or under-prepared, experiencing outside influences that hindered their academic success, and having a lack of understanding
regarding probation in the semester prior to their dismissal. Similarly, students in Houle’s study indicated that dealing with personal crises or not putting in enough study time contributed to their academic demise. Shame and embarrassment were reported in both studies as affective reactions to the news of their dismissal. Also, in both studies, students’ dismissal impacted relationships, both positively and negatively, with Houle reporting relational consequences of academic suspension including finding new support through family, colleagues, and friends. In contrast, Versalle indicated that dismissal caused students to consider alternate career paths for their future. Versalle found that students in his study realized benefits from their participation in the Reclaim the W program, including measures of accountability, increased personal connections, and increased skill in using academic planning tools. Houle reported that students returned to their institution with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment precipitated by the realities of working while away from their institution on suspension. The realities of their limited earning power and less-than-ideal job satisfaction were motivators in their decision to return to school.

Results of Suchan’s (2016) study indicated that the experience of being placed on academic suspension rose to the level of the disorienting dilemma based on Transformational Theory. Suchan reported that, through the experience, students built competence, self-confidence, and persistence, and that the experience led to perspective transformation.

**Probation.** Other programs and initiatives seek to support students after they find themselves in academic jeopardy, but before academic dismissal. Typically, this time period represents a probationary period for students. When a student finds themselves on academic probation, they are in danger of being academically dismissed from the institution, and their probationary semester can be a matter of academic life or death. The delivery of information,
support, and remediation of academic knowledge and skill is imparted at some post-secondary institutions through a course for students on academic probation.

**Academic Recovery Courses**

An academic recovery or support course is a course designed to increase academic success for students on academic probation after a semester of poor academic performance at the university, in order to avoid academic dismissal. A collection of articles describe academic recovery courses as a retention initiative for students on probation (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops, Yu, Burridge, & Wolters, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Mellor, Brooks, Gray, & Jordan, 2015; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss, Brock, Sommo, Rudd, & Turner, 2011). Generally, the researchers in these studies indicate positive outcomes for probationary students who engage in academic recovery courses.

Data from quantitative studies showed that students who engage in academic recovery courses do, in most instances, increase their GPA (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2018; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011). For example, Mellor et al., (2015) found an increase in retention, but not GPA, and another (Blaney, 2014) was inconclusive regarding improved GPA. A few studies (Hendrickson, 2014; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Shea, 2018; Weis et al., 2011) reported GPA data alone, and a smaller number of studies (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hoops et al., 2015; Hutson, 2006; Mellor et al., 2015) reported qualitative outcomes, in addition to GPA outcomes. Outcomes for these studies will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
Quantitative Outcomes

All studies that focused solely on GPA outcomes (Hendrickson, 2014; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seito-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weis et al., 2011) centered on the relationship between students’ participation in academic recovery courses and their GPA; the methodology used to evaluated this outcome differed across studies, however.

Two studies that used institutional archival data were those by Shea (2018) and Seital-Friel (2018). Shea conducted a quasi-experimental, between-subjects study to investigate the impact of a one credit, pass/fail, voluntary student success course on first- and second-year students on academic probation at a private university in New York. The study focused on GPA and academic standing outcomes for 68 students (N = 68), comparing archival data of probationary students who participated in the student success course (n = 39) to those who did not (n = 29). Students in both groups experienced higher end-of-semester GPAs with no statistically significant difference between GPAs for students who took the success course and those who did not take the course.

Seito-Friel (2018) also used archival data retrieved from the Office of Institutional Research at a Mid-Atlantic, historically Black university to evaluate the effects of the mandatory learning strategies course on GPA for first-year students on probation. Data from fall 2009 to spring 2012 (N = 1,054) were included in the study. The course focused on time-management, note-taking, and test-taking skills. One noteworthy difference with the Seito-Friel study is that the course was open to any first-year student, not just those on probation. The data were further disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, student athlete status, and commuter/boarder status. Students in the course improved their GPAs. There was no effect of gender or ethnicity, but there was a
significant difference between athletes and non-athletes, with athletes performing better than non-athletes. This effect was attributed to athletes being required to participate in study and tutoring sessions as a component of their athletic participation. Also, those living on campus (boarders) performed better than commuters. Of those who took the course, 34% did not return to the institution. For those who were retained, 57% had a GPA < 2.0 in any semester after taking the course. Overall, students on academic probation who took the course did well in the semester the course was taken, but their academic performance dropped during the semester following course completion. Therefore, the question arises as to how these students would have fared with extended support beyond their probationary semester.

Hendrickson (2014) studied the impact of an academic success course for students on probation at Rochester Institute of Technology, a private, mid-sized university located on the East Coast. The course had a component of academic coaching and focused on organization, time management, and study skills. It was optional for probationary students and was open to any student, freshmen through seniors. Of the 69 probationary students eligible to take the course, 29 chose to do so. Hendrickson measured the effect of the students’ participation in the course by comparing GPA scores of probationary students who opted into the course versus a group of probationary students who did not take the course. Results showed that students who took the course had a term cumulative GPA of 2.33, representing an average GPA increase of 0.67 compared to a 0.56 increase among the control group (those who did not take the course). In addition, of the 30 students who did not take the class, six students left the institution; all 29 students who took the course persisted to the next semester. This study provides another example that participation in academic recovery courses increases both retention rate and GPA of probationary students.
Another recovery course open to probationary students other than just freshmen was the course at the University of North Carolina, a mid-sized, public research university, which was open to first-year and transfer students on probation (Kamphoff et al., 2007). The course utilized an empowerment method model for personal development focused on four key areas: personal responsibility, positive affirmations, goal setting/life planning, and self-management. The study was also unique in its methodological approach compared to other studies in terms of the comparison group they utilized. Pre- and post-course GPA data for students on academic warning, those with a GPA between 1.50 and 1.75, were compared to data for students on probation, those with a GPA below 1.5 (only probation students took the course). Kamphoff et al. did not discuss the effect of the course on the stated key areas but did report an increase in retention of approximately 18% for those who took the course.

Two studies looked beyond semester results to the long-term impact of student success courses using longitudinal data (McGrath & Burd, 2012; Weiss et al., 2011). Weiss et al. (2011) looked longitudinally at a success course at Chaffey College, a community college in California. Students on probation were randomly assigned to the success course or a short workshop. Those who took the course had higher GPAs and improved their academic standing compared to those who attended the workshop. This success was not sustained long-term, however, as most students who took the course did not ultimately earn a college degree. McGrath and Burd examined results of a mandatory success course for freshmen on probation at a large public four-year institution in the Southwest. They compared course participants (N = 154) and nonparticipants (N = 100) on the outcome measures of return to good academic standing, persistence to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years, and graduation rates (within 4 to 5 years). Students who took the course had higher persistence rates, improved performance, and improved
graduation rates compared to those who did not take the course. These two studies, where the students at the four-year institution had better long-term outcomes compared to those at the community college, suggest that community college students may require additional support beyond the probationary semester compared to students at four-year institutions.

**Qualitative Outcomes**

A few academic recovery course studies reported qualitative outcomes in addition to GPA outcomes (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hutson, 2006; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015). All of these studies incorporated student interviews and uncovered several themes. While some themes could arguably be placed into more than one category, for purposes of this discussion, they were organized into cognitive, or thinking-oriented themes; affective or emotion-oriented themes; behavioral themes; and interpersonal, social, or relational themes.

**Cognitive.** Two cognitive or thinking-related themes that emerged from the academic recovery course literature were those of attribution and self-efficacy. Barry (2015) explored the perceptions and learning that occurred in a one-credit mandated academic strategies course during students’ second semester at Florida State University, a large, public, research university. The 14 students who voluntarily interviewed for the study were recruited from 105 total students enrolled in six sections of the course taught by three instructors and were interviewed twice in the semester. The course focused on academic skills, such as time management and study strategies, and self-regulation strategies in an effort to explore how students interpreted their academic failure as well as their failure to allocate adequate time for their college coursework. All 14 students interviewed attributed their poor academic performance to their own academic failure and to their failure to allocate adequate time for their college coursework. Barry stated, “the students felt their poor academic performance was internal, changeable, and controllable.
They did not feel like their failure was enduring or stable. The students acknowledged their lack of academic focus could be changed” (p. 96). Barry did not, however, indicate if this observation was ascertained from the first interview, or if it was an attitude that developed by the end of the semester. Similarly, it was unclear whether that attribution was the result of the influence of the course itself. Barry also reported that, among the 14 students interviewed, 11 increased their second-semester GPA. However, it was unclear whether these second semester GPAs were reflective of just that semester’s work, or if they reflected the students’ cumulative GPAs.

Related to attribution, *self-efficacy* emerged as a theme in Barry’s (2015) study, whereby students showed improvement in study skills, time management, and self-regulation while enrolled in the course, which positively influenced their self-efficacy. Barry referenced Zimmerman (2000) and described self-efficacy as the ability of students to “self-regulate their learning by engaging in appropriate actions, thoughts, and behaviors that allow them to self-monitor and adjust their behaviors” (p. 118).

In another study, Mellor et al. (2015) examined the causes of freshmen ending up on probation in their second semester at a large four-year public university in the Northeast. The course focused on academic skills such as note-taking, study techniques, stress management, goal setting, and creating a four-year academic plan. Students also wrote essays reflecting on the causes of their probationary status. *Locus of control*, which describes perceptions of power people believe they have regarding events in their lives, was measured using the Internal Control Index (Dutteiler, 2002). Students’ academic self-efficacy was measured with an instrument developed by Owen and Froman (1988). Both instruments were administered pre- and post-course to all students randomly assigned to six sections of the course, to students on probation who were not taking the course, and to students who were not on probation. For the
interviews, 16 liberal arts students on probation and 21 students in good standing were interviewed using questions modeled from the Test in Reactions and Adaptation in College (TRAC) survey, which focuses on student factors in relation to retention (Laross & Roy, 1995). Results showed no effect of the course on student locus of control but did show higher scores on academic self-efficacy for students in the intervention course. Additionally, students on probation who took the course did not show an increase in semester GPA compared to those who did not take the course, although probationary students who took the course had a 10% lower attrition rate compared to those who did not.

A third study by Hutson (2006) explored the impact of the University of North Carolina Greensboro’s, a mid-sized, public, research institution, required program on perceived self-efficacy and academic achievement of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors on academic probation. Hutson’s study used a mixed methods approach where quantitative results gathered from a pre- and post-course survey were supported through interview data. He administered the survey on the first and last day of class, collecting data from 279 participants. He also interviewed 23 student volunteers enrolled in the course and reviewed student journals written throughout the semester. The course integrated classroom/workshop work with advising/counseling sessions to develop effective habits, such as time management, and to foster goal setting related to academic and career aspirations. Results indicated that students who participated in the course showed a statistically significant difference between their pre- and post-scores on the survey measuring academic success strategies. Qualitative interviews supported these data and indicated improvement in the areas of social behavior, academic preparedness, interdependence, dedication, self-knowledge, and confidence.
Similarly, a study by Blaney (2014) focused on students’ academic identity within the University of Pennsylvania’s culture. Blaney referenced Trowler (2010) in describing academic identity:

When students are purposefully engaged in the academic and extracurricular life of college, they are happier with their institution and more successful in their classes. Further, engaged students feel confident about their identity as a member of the campus community and have a network of friends, they focus on learning, ask questions in class, feel comfortable contributing to class discussions, and participate in extracurricular campus activities. (p. 30)

Blaney conducted interviews with 15 probationary students who voluntarily took a one semester, no-credit course. The student volunteers were interviewed twice in the semester with a focus on understanding the impact of Penn culture, and the effect of the class on the students’ experiences. Students struggled to reconcile their identity as students on academic probation with their identity as the successful students they previously thought they were. Blaney did not report GPA results for all students, but for those instances where GPA was discussed, she indicated an improved GPA for students who took the course.

Affective. A consistent theme around embarrassment, shame, and disappointment was seen in studies that included student interviews. Blaney (2014) indicated that students felt a negative stigma associated with probation. They reported feeling ashamed and indicated that they felt there was a stigma associated with using campus resources. Students reported isolating themselves as a result. Barry (2015) also indicated that her participants said they felt disappointed or upset that they were on probation in her study of first-year students’ perceptions of being on academic probation and completing a mandated academic strategies course. Huston
(2006) also reported that some students indicated feeling ashamed of having to participate in the support course due to their probationary status.

Another affective theme that emerged was the need to belong. According to Blaney (2014), a lack of sense of belonging was further exacerbated by probationary status for students already experiencing a lack of belonging. Blaney suggested that academic probation can serve to confirm to students on probation that they do not “belong” at the institution.

**Behavioral.** Blaney (2014), Hoops et al. (2015), and Hutson (2006) all reported that students enrolled in an academic recovery course learned new academic behaviors including the acquisition or improvement of study skills, e.g., improved time management skills. Another behavioral outcome was reported by Lipsky and Ender (1990), who studied students who voluntarily took a one-credit voluntary course at a mid-sized university in 1985 and 1986 and compared results to those who did not take the course. Lipsky and Ender reported that students who took the support course registered for more credit hours in subsequent semesters compared to those who did not take the course, resulting in more credits hours earned.

**Interpersonal, social or relational.** Students in Barry’s (2015) study indicated that having positive relationships with family members as well as with the course instructor was integral to their success. However, Blaney (2014) found that longstanding institutional Penn State structures and culture can affect and complicate probationary students’ experiences with their academic difficulty. She suggested that Penn State, being highly selective, puts students “on an unattainable and fictional pedestal” (p. 100). She found that those institutional expectations clashed with the realities for the probationary students, resulting in feelings of unworthiness, and lack of belonging. She further indicated that students in her study gained cultural insight
regarding how they could better fit into and navigate the culture to take advantage of available success resources, as a result of the course.

**Attribution Theory**

*Attribution Theory* is considered to be one of the main theories for the present study, as it provides a framework for the attribution process for success or failure, a perspective integral to the study of academic recovery. Attribution Theory was first proposed by psychologist Fritz Heider (1958). His theory focused on the events ordinary people encounter in their lives and whether people attribute the outcomes of these events to internal or external factors. Not long after, psychologist Julian Rotter (1966) developed the *theory of locus of control* to explain the perceptions of power people believe they have regarding events in their lives. Weiner (1972) built upon the work of Heider and Rotter and applied it to student learning to develop his *Theory of Attribution of Learning* to explain how students try to determine or interpret the causes or attributions for their and others’ successes and failures. Key factors that affect attributions include ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Three causal dimensions are also involved – locus of control, stability, and controllability (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Examples of attributions students may make regarding their success or failure include things like intelligence, illness, instructional bias, and mood (Weiner, 1979).

As stated, locus of control is one of the three causal dimensions within Attribution Theory and explains the amount of control individuals feel they have over their success or failure. An internal locus of control means that the individual believes the ability to affect a success outcome lies within their self. An external locus of control is one where the individual feels the success or failure lies externally, outside of their control. Attribution Theory explains that it is typical for individuals to attribute success within an internal locus of control, so as to take credit for the
success. Personal failure, however, is more likely explained by individuals who tend to use external attributions by blaming situational factors, such as having a bad instructor, rather than taking internal responsibility. Studies show that students on probation tend to blame their academic situation on external factors, such as their lack of readiness for college due to their high school experiences, i.e., poor study and time management skills; poor experiences in college, including their college courses, which they blame on their college instructor (Holland, 2005). In regard to others’ success or failure, individuals tend to attribute the success of someone else to an external cause such as luck. The failure of another individual, conversely, is often attributed to an internal cause such as their personality.

Stability is another causal dimension within Attribution Theory. Stability describes whether or not an individual believes the causes of success or failure can change over time, and this also affects future performance expectations (Weiner, 1979). Per Demetrio (2011), students who believe the cause for prior poor academic performance can change (is unstable) may believe that they can have a different future outcome. If, however, students who believe the cause for a prior outcome cannot change (is stable), they may not believe that improved academic performance is possible.

Controllability, the third causal dimension, describes causes of success or failure which are within the ability of the individual to control. For a student, causes within the student’s control could include development of study skills, compared to causes that are outside of their ability to control, such as task difficulty. In regard to academic motivation and performance, Schunk and Zimmerman (2006) explained that students will persist when they feel they have control over their situation.
A student’s attribution perspective influences their future goal orientation, or their expectations for realizing future goals (Weiner, 1979). Demetrio (2011) provided an example of how this might play out in an academic advising session for a student pursuing post-secondary education. She stated that if a student blames their poor academics on bad luck, the dimension of luck is external, unstable, and uncontrollable. The student may believe that his or her luck could change, which could give him or her hope for better academic performance in the future.

Conversely, if a student on academic probation ascribes poor performance to low ability, the causal attributes would be external, stable, and uncontrollable, resulting in the student having low expectations for future academic success. According to Schunk and Zimmerman (2006), the attribution perspective that is most conducive to academic success is a positive attribution perspective whereby the student’s perspective is internal, stable, and controllable.

In addition to future goal orientation, attributions made by individuals also affect their emotional state. Pride, for instance, may occur when an individual frames their success with a positive perspective that is internal, stable, and controllable. On the other hand, guilt and shame, particularly in regard to locus of control and controllability, can co-occur with failure. Students who attribute academic failure to controllable causes, such as lack of effort, tend to experience guilt, while those who attribute failure to uncontrollable causes, such as lack of intelligence, experience more shame (Van Vliet, 2009; Weiner, 1985). If an individual attributes failure to low ability, for instance, framed by a perception that they are powerless to change their ability, that individual may feel shame and hopelessness (Anderman & Wolters, 2006; Van Vliet, 2009).

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of some associated impacts of positive versus negative attribution perspective including self-conscious feelings of shame and guilt, perception of intelligence and ability, and future goal orientation.
Another component of Attribution Theory is that individuals use situational cues from their social context to form attributions (Weiner, 1990). This is reflected in Weiner’s (2000) Interpersonal Theory of Motivation. This theory examines the attributions and motivations of individuals within a social context. After performance of a task, whether the outcome is success or failure, the individual looks for reactions from others to help them form beliefs regarding the reasons for that success or failure. Observers of the same event or task engage in the same attribution process; however, one observer’s causal factor may be different than another’s causal factor. The participants and observers then ascribe causal dimensions (locus, stability, and controllability) to the factor. In the case of a student and parent or teacher, for instance, the parent or teacher makes an inference about the student, which leads to an emotional response and can include accompanying behavior on behalf of that parent or teacher. For example, in the case
of academic failure, a teacher or parent who sees effort as the causal factor may experience frustration as an emotion and may chide the student who has failed at an academic task.

Using the same example, Weiner’s (2000) Intrapersonal Theory of Motivation explains how a student searches for a causal factor to explain academic failure and, as part of the processing, considers information such as prior experiences of success or failure. How his or her performance compares to that of peers can also influence individual attributions (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Through this process of trying to understand their environment and then making decisions based on that understanding, the student experiences an affective reaction, such as disappointment or shame. Once the factor is elected, the student determines locus, stability, and controllability of the factor, which leads to psychological consequences. The student then makes judgments about expectancy and value. These judgments along with emotional reactions will motivate future behavior (Weiner, 2000).

The literature review on Attribution Theory and college students uncovered a study that examined causal effects for academic success and failure (Perry, Stupnisky, Daniels, & Haynes 2008). This study examined students’ attributional perspective as they transitioned from their familiar high school environment to a new learning environment, e.g., college. At the start of the academic year, five cohorts of students that entered college over an 8-year period rated six common reasons for poor performance (effort, test difficulty, strategy, professor quality, ability, and luck, respectively). The study found that students ascribe complex attributional patterns, meaning that they ascribe different clusters of causes for lower performance as they transition into a new achievement setting. Students who felt they had less control over their outcomes, who had the lowest expectations, and who felt anger, helplessness, guilt, and shame at the start of the academic year, had the worst course grades and overall GPA at the end of the year.
Another study by Haynes Stewart et al. (2011) looked at the potential of Attributional Retraining (AR), a motivational intervention based on Weiner's (1985) Attribution Theory. Attributional Retraining was administered to students in an introductory psychology course whereby they received direct instruction on adopting controllable attributions such as effort and strategy. Students who received the retraining were more likely to pass the course than those who did not. They found that AR enhanced motivation and academic success by helping students to adopt unstable, controllable attributions (e.g., effort, strategy) as explanations for academic failure.

**Shame Resilience Theory**

The literature has shown that shame is an affective reaction within Attribution Theory in regard to failure and that shame can decrease motivation (Turner, 2014; Weiner, 2000). As such, a deeper understanding of shame resilience is key to this study.

Brown’s (2006) (SRT) is described as a grounded theory based on building resilience to shame by connecting with our authentic selves and growing meaningful relationships with other people. Brown (2009) posits that shame is a universal emotion that everyone experiences, and that shame creates feelings of fear, blame, and disconnect. Shame Resilience Theory was originally developed to offer a pathway to coping with shame in order to foster better mental health in clinical settings (Hauser, 2016). Since its original inception, however, the applicability of SRT has expanded, and it can be applied broadly in many contexts (Brown et al., 2011).

Shame, according to Brown (2009), can be experienced differently depending on gender. For women, shame can result when contradictory expectations, based on conflicting roles impossible to live up to, are placed upon them. She conceptualizes this as a “shame web,” where women become tangled up in all of the expectations, roles, and identities they are expected to
manage, within influences of sometimes conflicting messages they receive from religion, the
media, family, friends, etc. A lack of positive relationships, a poor sense belonging, a lack of
community resources, negative school environments, or loss of cultural identity can make the web
even more tangled (Brown, 2006). For men, Brown conceptualizes a “shame box.” When men
receive any message that they are weak due to not being able to live up to the expectations that
they should be strong in all situations without showing any weakness or vulnerability, they may
perceive themselves as boxed in by shame (Brown, 2009). Men and women, although they may
experience shame differently, cope with shame in similar ways.

When an individual who lacks shame resilience experiences shame, they cope with the
negative feelings by using a shame screen. Brown (2008) describes shame screens as defense
mechanisms based on involuntary reactions to danger described as fight, flight, or freeze. There
are three main shame screens. When shame is triggered, people tend to move away (run, hide,
withdraw, stay silent, or keep secrets); move against (try to control people or situations, gain
power, be aggressive); or move toward (try to gain acceptance by pleasing). Understanding and
recognizing shame screens, helps individuals choose an alternate response.

Shame can be experienced contextually, where shame occurs in scenarios, experiences,
and expectations. Brown (2009) identifies 12 categories in which people experience shame: (a)
appearance and body image; (b) sexuality; (c) family; (d) parenting; (e) professional identity and
work; (f) mental and physical health; (g) aging; (h) religion and spirituality; (i) speaking out; (j)
 surviving trauma; (k) finances; and (l) sexuality. In order to move away from shame and the use
of shame screens, individuals must learn to develop shame resilience.

Building shame resilience for when shame occurs involves four steps (Brown, 2015).
First, one must conceptualize shame as a way to categorize feelings of unworthiness. Shame can
be triggered by messages and exchanges. Messages can come from an interaction or exchange with another person, for instance. Shame can also be triggered by expectations. When individuals experience criticism or when they do not meet up to expectations, either their own or those imposed by others, they may experience shame. Developing the ability to identify and recognize what messages and expectations trigger shame defines the first step to building shame resilience.

The second step to building shame resilience is to develop and practice critical awareness in order to reality-check the messages and expectations that tell an individual that being imperfect means being inadequate. This involves recognizing the external factors that contribute to shame, i.e., understanding why something exists in society, the purpose of that existence, and who are the benefactors.

The third and four steps involve positive relationships with others. Practicing vulnerability by telling our story to trusted people to create empathy and connection, is the third step. The fourth step is speaking our shame, i.e., deconstructing shame experiences by using the word shame, talking about how one is feeling, and asking for what one needs rather than keeping experiences in secrecy and silence. Shame Resilience Theory presents shame resilience as a practice that one must continually exercise in the face of shame, rather than something to be achieved or a destination where one has arrived. This ultimately requires courage, compassion, and connection (Brown, 2009).

Shame also elicits physical symptoms, such as a racing heartbeat, tunnel vision, or shortness of breath – physical markers that align with the physiological fight or flight reactions to threats against an individual’s safety (Brown, 2009). Recognizing physical shame symptoms and acknowledging vulnerability is in contrast to experiencing unacknowledged shame, where
individuals are likely to feel overwhelmed and react based on feelings of “confusion, fear, and judgment” (Brown, 2006, p. 48).

Closely related to shame is the feeling of guilt. Tangney and Dearing (2003), provide a comprehensive theoretical and empirical review of shame and guilt literature. They posit that, while shame and guilt both are self-evaluative emotions that arise from failure, and that they are often used interchangeably, there are important distinctions.

Generally, researchers describe guilt as something an individual experiences in relation to a specific behavior, e.g., “I did something bad.” Guilt can be helpful in that it can motivate an individual to change their behaviors to align more closely with who they believe they are as a person through confessing, apologizing, or repairing damage done. Shame, on the other hand, ties to an individual’s beliefs about their self as a person, e.g., “I am bad.” They feel worthless and exposed. Tangney and Dearing (2002) explain that shamed people cope by withdrawing, denying responsibility, and blaming others for their failure. While guilt can have a positive effect, they explain that shame is usually destructive as it undermines an individual’s belief that they can change and do better in the future.

Shame can be the root of other destructive emotions and behaviors. Shame can contribute to future avoidance of experiences, interactions, or situations that may trigger future shame reactions (Weiner, 1985). A student who experiences academic failure, accompanied by shame, for instance, may no longer be willing to put forth future effort toward similar academic tasks, and may avoid future achievement-related activities to protect themselves from future shame (Anderman & Wolters, 2006). Dearing, Stuewig, and Tangney (2005) positively correlated shame with alcohol and drug dependence; this association was not demonstrated with guilt. Shame can also elicit hostility, anger, aggression, and externalizing blame, with aggression being expressed
through “physical aggression, verbal and symbolic aggression, displaced aggression, and ruminative unexpressed anger” (Dearing & Tangney, 2011, p. 6). In a study of college students that examined the relationship between shame and anger, men were prone to anger as an expression of shame in regard to unwanted identities associated with shame (Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000).

Shame is noted to be the most damaging emotion to self-worth or sense of belonging (Dearing & Tangney, 2011) and is associated with depression and suicidal ideation (Kim, Thibodeau, & Jorgensen, 2011; Hastings, Northman, & Tangney, 2000). Shame Resilience Theory provides an alternate pathway that leads to mental wellness rather than an individual having to suffer the negative consequences of shame (Brown, 2008). The outcome of building shame resilience is wholehearted living, which Brown (2017) describes as:

Engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, ‘No matter what gets done how much is left undone, I am enough.’ It’s going to bed at night thinking, ‘Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the truth that I am brave and worthy of love and belonging’ (p. xix).

Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006) has been used in several studies. Some of these include an examination of the process whereby adults bounce back from significant shame experiences (Van Vliet, 2008); a study that examined shame for women in cardio-based exercise classes (Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016); and a study that looked at shame for women in treatment for substance abuse (Hernandez & Mendoza, 2011). This is just a small sample of studies that incorporate SRT.
A few studies were found regarding SRT within the context of education. One study by Mercado (2017) used SRT with first-generation freshmen students taking a course at Fresno State University, a mid-sized, public university in the South. Mercado created a Shame Resilient Wise Intervention (SRWI) — a one-hour panel session where 12 graduate and senior students answered the freshmen’s questions about transitioning to the university. Some of the freshmen engaged in a panel discussion where the panelists incorporated SRT concepts in their discussion. A control group of freshmen engaged in a panel discussion where the panelists did not incorporate SRT concepts. A survey created by Mercado was given to both student groups the beginning of the course and immediately after the panel discussion. Results showed that the SRWI increased sense of belonging, hope, and mindset for students in the treatment group compared to the control group.

In another study, based on the understanding that shame can be contextual, Hauser (2016) constructed and tested a quantitative instrument for measuring shame and shame resilience among graduate students in mental health training. The Shame and Resilience Among Mental Health Trainees Scale (SRMHT), a four-factor, scenario-based instrument that measures shame proneness as well as shame resilience was the result of the study. The SRMHT demonstrated strong internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity, and Hauser proposed that it is a novel tool for training mental health professionals.

**Academic Identity Theory**

*Academic Identity Theory* explains that students develop their academic identity as a subset of general or global identity development (Was & Isaacson, 2008). Student academic identity is defined as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self,
reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community (White & Lowenthal, 2011).

Academic Identity Theory has its roots in Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory (1959, 1968, 1980) in which he describes adolescence as a time of identity crisis. Within his theory, Erikson posited that when an individual experiences a crisis, the crisis can be a catalyst for the examination of values, beliefs, and goals, and the undertaking of work towards clarifying those as identity is developed. This process of value, belief, and goal clarification influences how an individual will cope with future adversity and the types of behaviors they will undertake as they seek to realize their identity in regard to vocation and other categories.

Marcia (1966) expanded the original identity work of Erikson, and focused on identity development in several domains, including college major, politics, religion, and occupation. She purported that, as individuals develop their identity, they may find themselves residing within one of four statuses of academic identity: foreclosed, diffused, moratorium, and achieved. *Identity foreclosure* refers to one adopting goals and values of influential people in their lives, typically their parents, without exploring their own values and beliefs. Individuals in this state have not experienced a crisis. *Identity diffusion* refers to a state where the individual has not made a commitment to an identity and does not have a clear idea of their values, beliefs, and goals, nor have they experienced a crisis. This individual has made no conclusion about their identity and lack direction. *Identity moratorium* refers to a state where the individual is actively exploring personal and occupational values and beliefs. Individuals in this state have experienced a crisis but have not committed to an identity and may struggle to make commitments as they lack belief in their ability to resolve their identity crisis. Individuals in this state of crisis often feel their identity issues are unresolvable. *Identity achievement* occurs when the individual has explored and
critically analyzed values and options in comparison to their self-view and makes choices to pursue certain options within a commitment to a set of values and an identity. In this state, individuals have experienced both crisis and commitment. Erikson’s (1963) concepts of crisis and commitment are relevant to Marcia’s identity statuses. Each of these identity statuses has differing relationships between crisis and commitment, where crisis refers to a state of wrestling with values and beliefs, and commitment correlating to a state where values and beliefs have been identified.

Researchers have studied the relationship between identity development and academic achievement. Lange and Byrd (2002) examined the experiences of first-year college students and determined that academic outcomes are influenced by students’ identity status. They found that students with an achieved identity, also described as an adult identity, exhibited healthy study habits and were more likely to predict their academic success in a course compared to other students. Streitmatter (1989) studied 208 middle school students and found that students with an achieved sense of identity showed better math performance outcomes than students residing in other identity statuses. Similarly, Berger (1988) and Berzonky (1997) also found that students in the achieved academic identity status were more likely to succeed as university students as they had formulated strategies, academic plans, and goals.

The development of an academic identity also involves construction of a self-theory whereby students interpret social and environmental interactions with a view through a lens constructed by long lasting and stable sets of memories. These memories, formed from experiences as far back as birth, determine an individual’s beliefs about themselves. This self-theory determines how the individual approaches problem solving and decision making and also predicts the individual’s cognitive processing orientation (Berzonsky, 1990). Berzonsky
described three cognitive processing strategies that students use to engage with tasks associated with identity development: informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant. Information-oriented students seek out self-relevant information when making identity relevant decisions. In relation to Marcia’s (1966) work, individuals with this processing style reside in the moratorium stage or achieved stage. Students who conform to the expectations of influential others, typically their parents, are thought to have a normative orientation and a foreclosed identity status. Within the diffuse identity status, resides individuals who procrastinate and avoid decision-making. These individuals also tend to resist information that does not align with their current state of identity and are diffuse/avoidant in their orientation. In addition to cognitive processing styles, identity status can also influence the way students adapt to college life. Students with an informational orientation adapt more effectively to college life, compared to students with a diffuse/avoidant orientation (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000).

Building on the previously discussed research — with the understanding that identity determines cognitive processes by which an individual interprets self-relevant information, deals with adversity, and influences cognitive behaviors — Was and Isaacson (2008) expanded the body of research regarding identity in the academic context. They focused on students’ transition from high school to college, in order to better understand how students manage cognitive and emotional processes to develop an academic identity, and whether that identity affects the behavior of the students within their academic lives. As such, they developed a self-report survey, or AIM to measure the identity status of students particular to their self-theory in an academic context. They focused on distinguishing Marcia’s (1966) four identity statuses, as well as incorporating 10 key topics of academic identity decisions that they hypothesized adolescent/young adult students must make.
The 10 key topics of identity decisions start with *choosing a college.* Students must think about whether or not they want to go to college and have clear reasons as to why they are choosing to engage in post-secondary education. Some students do not realize that college work will be much more challenging than high school work and that they must be self-motivated and an independent learner in order to succeed. If a student has not taken that first decision seriously, they are likely to experience academic difficulty. The second decision is *reasons for college.* A student who has not made a clear commitment to wanting to go to college, will likely struggle with setting academic goals and with identifying their personal reasons for why they are in college. *Classroom attention* is the third topic. This topic is related to students’ understanding of why they are in college. In high school, they had to go to school regardless of whether they valued learning. In college, students make their own decisions about attending class. If they have a strong “why” in terms of why they are in college, they are more likely to go to class and to value learning. *Priorities* is the next topic. It can be difficult for students to see the long-term benefit of college when they are in their first semester. Students’ other needs, such as the need for connection and belonging, are often considered to be more important, making academic and life goals lower on the priority list. As students mature, *academic goals* begin to become more important as students realize that learning is tied to their future, and that school is not just about earning a grade. In this sense, they begin to take more *responsibility* for their learning. *Interest and motivation* continue to develop, and students are able to stay engaged in learning as they develop self-regulation around motivation and affect. *Discipline and volition* are highly related with interest and motivation in that academically mature students are better at self-regulation in regard to time management and motivation. *Responding to failure* and *persistence in the face of failure* are the final key concepts. Was and Isaacson (2008) explained that when a student fails,
such as when they end up on academic probation, a mature student can learn from his or her mistakes and can make adjustments in his or her behaviors and study strategies, with persistence, to experience future success. In contrast, a less mature student will have an emotional reaction to failure with results in withdrawal and disengagement. They are likely to continue with the same academic behaviors and strategies and/or may disengage from learning all together. Was and Isaacson developed subscales to capture data regarding these 10 concepts and referenced a student experiencing crisis as being in a state of exploration as opposed to not being in crisis wherein the student has made a commitment to an academic identity.

In regard to the four identity statuses developed by Marcia (1966), Was and Isaacson (2008) theorized that a student’s academic identity would influence how they might address 10 concerns discussed above in the following ways. A student with a *foreclosed academic identity* involves a student’s commitment to academic values and ideals based on the influence of significant others, such as their parents or other family members. A student in this state may go to college and choose a major based on their parents’ beliefs and expectations. A *moratorium academic identity* reflects a time of academic indecision about academic values and goals. This identity would involve proactive academic exploration, as the student attempts to reach conclusions about their academic values and goals and seek to figure out how academics are relevant to them personally. In this state, students remain uncertain about their academic identity. This lack of commitment may lead to fluctuating motivation to complete academic tasks. A *diffused academic identity* would involve a lack of exploration and commitment in relation to pursuing a college education, often accompanied by procrastination. Students in this identity status may not prioritize academics, set clear goals, or worry about their grades. For instance, they may choose to prioritize spending time with friends over studying. *Academic identity achievement*
refers to a state where the student has committed to a set of academic values following a period of exploration. Students in this identity state will prioritize learning above other commitments. As an example, a student with an achieved academic identity will choose to complete their homework versus engaging in social activities.

Was and Isaacson (2008) administered the AIM to undergraduate students in their first or second year of college. They also collected academic performance data in order to assess the final course grade for each student participating in the study. With the results of the study that developed the AIM, Was and Isaacson concluded that academic identity is separate and distinguishable from global identity. They also confirmed that the academic identity status in which a student resides affects their academic strategies and behaviors and is a significant factor in college achievement. They found that students with foreclosed, moratorium, and diffused academic identities received lower grades in the course, and that their status also predicted poor academic standing three semesters beyond matriculation from high school. They found a positive association between achieved academic identity and final course grade, i.e., students residing in the achieved academic identity state had higher grades in the course. They concluded that students with diffused, moratorium, or foreclosed academic identities will need support to achieve academic success, while students with achieved or adult academic identities will thrive in academic settings.

A few other studies that explored the relationship between academic identity status and other constructs include a study by Was, Al-Harthy, Stack-Oden, and Isaacson (2009), which examined academic identity status in relation to goal orientation. Was et al. sought to determine how students’ academic identity statuses relate to different goal orientations. Results supported the notion that academic identity status can explain the types of academic goals that students
adopt. Similarly, in another study, data gathered from administration of the AIM, along with student self-reports of self-handicapping behaviors, were analyzed to determine the relationship between academic identity and self-handicapping behavior (Chorba, Was, & Isaacson, 2012). Chorba et al. described self-handicapping as “the avoidance of academic tasks, with the goal of deflecting the responsibility for successfully completing these tasks” (p. 62). Findings indicated a relationship between academic identity and self-handicapping behavior, wherein young adults with an achieved academic identity were less likely to adopt self-handicapping behavior in academic settings, while those with foreclosed, moratorium, and diffused academic identities, were likely to adopt self-handicapping strategies.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used to guide the present study included Weiner’s (1972) Attribution Theory, Brown’s (2006) RST, and Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008). As demonstrated in the literature review, these theories, as well as studies that utilize them, are well-documented. However, the relationship between the three constructs in the theories has not been researched, particularly in relation to students on academic probation and any change these students may experience in regard to these constructs while engaged in an interventional academic recovery course.

As previously discussed, some students, as they begin their academic career and transition from high school to college, experience academic failure in their first semester for a myriad of reasons and end up on academic probation. Students on academic probation are not a homogenous group. The reasons that contribute to academic probation are many. Bowles and Brindle (2017) categorize the reasons as situational, institutional, and dispositional.
At most institutions of higher education, programs that support retention are offered to students on academic probation (Valentine et al., 2011). At some institutions, freshmen on academic probation are enrolled in an academic recovery course as an intervention to support their retention at the institution (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops, Yu, Burridge, & Wolters, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011). Figure 2 presents a visual depiction of academic recovery courses as an intervention for probationary freshmen.

At the pre-intervention time point, shown as “A1” in Figure 2, probationary freshmen possess an attribution perspective within a range of positive to pessimistic that is accompanied by a self-conscious emotion. For some, the emotion is shame (Weiner, 2008). These students also reside in different statuses of academic identity (Was & Isaacson, 2008).

Applying the concepts of Weiner’s (2008) Attribution Theory, students on academic probation must process their probationary status and make sense of it by making an attribution decision regarding the cause of their probationary status. Students who carry a pessimistic perspective may decide their academic failure is the result of external and stable factors such as believing they are not worthy of the college opportunity, that they do not belong, or that they are not smart enough to be a successful student. Abramson et al. (1978) stated that individuals with this attribution style often are pessimistic regarding their future chances for success.
A1: Pre-Intervention Data Collection Point using ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982), TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991), and AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008) + Demographic Information

A2: Pre-Intervention Data Collection Point using ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982), TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991), and AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008) + Student Interviews

**Figure 2.** Theoretical framework (Robinson, 2019)

Weiner purported that individuals may also experience shame as an affective reaction following failure in regard to a pessimistic attribution perspective and locus of causality that is internal and stable (Gundlach, Douglas, & Martinko, 2002; Weiner, 1985). Brown (2008) states that individuals experiencing shame often lack shame resilience and, as such, utilize one of three shame screens: move away (run, hide, withdraw, stay silent, or keep secrets); move against (try
to control people or situations, gain power, be aggressive); or move toward (try to gain acceptance by pleasing).

Freshmen on probation may experience shame without the resilience to process their shame in a positive manner. Applying the concept of shame screens to students on academic probation, those who move away may withdraw internally and not share their failure with significant individuals who could provide support, such as parents, peers, counseling professionals, tutors, academic advisors, or instructors. They may disengage from school in other ways, e.g., stop attending class, isolate themselves in their room, or drop out. This withdrawal response reflects behaviors that are indicative of a student being uncomfortable sharing their story from a place of vulnerability. When a challenge presents for this student, such as a difficult assignment, negative feedback from an instructor or a peer, or a poor grade, shame may be triggered, further reinforcing shame feelings, accompanied by thoughts of “I don’t belong” or “I’m not smart.” Some students using this shame screen may experience depression and loneliness. The evidence of this perspective may play out in continued poor grades, substance use and substance abuse, etc. As the cycle continues, compounded academic failure could eventually result in the student leaving the institution voluntarily or through academic dismissal.

Students who move against may continue with their current behaviors and habits thinking they can control the situation or other people. This student may not admit the seriousness of the situation in which they find themselves. They may or may not share their status with others, and will likely downplay their academic status, not take others’ advice, and try to exert control by attempting to handle their academic failure on their own. This may play out as the student continuing to engage in the same behaviors that contributed to their probationary status in the first place. They may not change their study habits nor ask for help. While they may still attend class
and engage with peers, etc., their academic performance may not improve. Future academic failures may trigger additional shame and foster a continued controlling mindset with continued controlling behaviors. These students may not engage support resources, such as help from tutors or instructors. Some may act out in aggressive ways, e.g., blaming and arguing with instructors or other significant individuals who try to assist them. Their attempts to maintain power and to control people and situations could escalate to the point where they find themselves in trouble with authorities. Students using this shame screen may also experience anxiety and depression and may use substances to further cope. Their controlling behaviors, resulting in continued academic failure, may result in their leaving the institution, either by choice or through behavioral or academic dismissal.

Students who move toward utilize a people-pleasing shame screen. For some students, this may actually produce positive academic results, as sometimes shame spurs greater academic focus (Turner & Schallert, 2001; Turner & Husman, 2006). At the same time, a people-pleasing shame screen could result in a student being over-involved on campus in co-curricular activities as a way to gain approval, in turn resulting in inadequate academic focus, resulting in academic probation. To cope with their shame, these students may “hustle for their worth” in order to feel worthy (Brown, 2010, p. 9). This process of people-pleasing may result in students continuing to over-extend themselves, leaving little time for studying. When this student encounters a challenge, triggering further shame, they may try to hustle even harder, resulting in even less time spent on academics. Students using this shame screen may also experience anxiety and depression and may use substances to further cope. This student may appear to be happy, engaged, and successful on the surface, but their continued failure may eventually result in their leaving the institution, either by choice or through dismissal.
Freshmen on academic probation are also in a state of academic identity development wherein they reside within one of four statuses of academic identity: diffused, moratorium, foreclosed, or achieved (Marcia, 1966; Was & Isaacson, 2008). Each state has differing relationships between crisis and commitment, where crisis refers to a state of wrestling with values and beliefs, and commitment correlating to a state where values and beliefs have been identified. For students on probation, and particularly for those who have a negative attribution perspective with accompanying shame, being assigned a status of academic probation due to poor academic performance may further compound confusion over development of their academic identity. As such, these students are likely to reside in one of the attribution states other than achieved, as the crisis of academic probation may serve as a catalyst for them to explore their goals and values from a heightened crisis perspective.

In the present study, students enrolled in an academic recovery course after experiencing academic failure in their first semester were given a pre-academic recovery course assessment survey to gather data regarding their attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity status. The survey utilized questions from three research tools: ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982), TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991), and AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008). Demographic Information was also gathered (Figure 2).

The students in this intervention group, depicted at the left of the figure, engaged with an academic recovery course, which was the intervention. The course in which they were enrolled was housed in the college and department corresponding to their chosen major.

At the end of the semester, the same students were given a post-academic recovery course intervention assessment using the same survey. As discussed, previous studies found that academic recovery courses are an effective intervention in terms of positive outcomes, including
student GPA, academic standing, persistence, and increased learning (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops, Yu, Burridge, & Wolters, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011). However, none of these studies used a pre- and post-course research design to measure change in the constructs upon which the present study focused, for students engaged in a course intervention.

The data were analyzed to assess any change in attribution, trait shame, or academic identity that occurred for students between the pre- and post-assessments. Some students were also interviewed post-course to gain their perspectives regarding their experiences in the course, and particularly regarding how they would discuss elements within the course that influenced or affected any measured change they experienced with the three measured constructs (Figure 2). All data from the two time points were analyzed to answer the research questions for this study.

The outlook for freshmen on academic probation, given the above explanation of pessimistic attribution, underdeveloped shame resilience, and academic identity confusion does not inspire hope of academic success. However, if the negative cycle of academic failure, pessimistic attribution with accompanying shame, and academic identity confusion is disrupted by a mandatory intervention such as an academic recovery course, the end of the story could be completely different for students on probation.

**Chapter 2 Summary**

Chapter 2 documented research articles that summarized theories and research relevant to the present study. Data regarding the demographic shift in the U.S., where the percentage of low-income students and students from underrepresented racial groups will continue to grow and the impact of this demographic shift on higher education was discussed. The negative
consequences of degree non-completion in terms of detrimental impacts to students whose ability to repay student loans is reduced compared to degree-completers was discussed. Negative impacts of degree non-completion to the institution in terms of reduced retention and graduation rates, which negatively impact college-rankings, as well as lost tuition and enrollment-related income streams were presented. The literature search also revealed several studies addressing programs and initiatives to support student retention. These included programs that support students in their transition from high school to college, programs that support students who have been academically dismissed and readmitted, and programs that support students on academic probation, including academic recovery courses. Additionally, the three theories integral to the present study, and articles related to those theories were discussed. The theories were Weiner’s (2008) Theory of Attribution, Brown’s (2008) SRT, and Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008). Finally, a conceptual framework that guided the present study was presented (Robinson, 2018).

Methodology for the present study that combined a mixed method approach utilizing pre- and post-course quantitative research tools, as well as the qualitative student interviews can help fill a gap in the literature and is discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to (a) describe any change in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity for freshmen on academic probation who are engaged in an academic recovery course, and (b) explore how the course impacted the students’ perceptions of their academic recovery process at one mid-sized, comprehensive, four-year university in the Midwest.

Specific research questions include:

1. Regarding freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?

2. What is the relationship among student-reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?

3. Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major?

4. To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?

5. How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?
This chapter presents the details of the methods for this sequential explanatory mixed methods study. First, the overall design of the study is described. Next, data collection and analysis procedures are outlined for two separate phases: Phase One (quantitative methods) and Phase Two (qualitative methods). Additional topics are also discussed, including the validity of the research design and reflections on my own identity as a higher education professional. These methods were chosen to relate back and provide meaningful information to help answer the research questions for this study (Yin, 2017).

**Research Design, Approach, and Rationale**

Using a mixed methods approach with this study aimed to unveil changes that could occur with the three constructs assessed and to consider the perceptions of the students regarding the changes within the context of the academic recovery course. Any measurable change in the three constructs could not be accurately captured in interviews alone, and student perceptions regarding any changes they realized within the three constructs and the influence of the course on the changes could not be fully captured in a survey alone. The mixed methods approach took into consideration the quantitative evaluations of change in the constructs and their relationships with students’ GPA, while the interviews considered the lived experiences of the individual students in the study.

Commonly used in behavioral and social science studies (Howell, 2016; Stoller et al., 2009), results gleaned from a mixed methods approach sought to inform practice and foster an in-depth understanding of the academic recovery course approach as a support for freshmen on probation.

Data were collected in two phases. In Phase One, quantitative data was collected in the first and last two weeks of the academic recovery course using a matched survey, wherein
students were given the same survey at both time points. This phase answered the first four research questions from a pre- and post-course perspective. In Phase Two, qualitative data were collected. Phase Two occurred after the second survey was distributed and collected and involved collection of qualitative data through student interviews during the final two weeks of the course. The original plan was that after results of the first survey were analyzed in Phase One, students who self-reported high shame based on the TOSCA-A, or negative attribution perspectives based on the ASQ, or academic identity statuses other than Achieved based on the AIM, would be identified as meeting the criteria for a Phase Two interview. However, due to the timing of when students were leaving the institution for the summer, students were instead interviewed prior to analysis of Phase One data. All Phase Two probationary freshmen participants who agreed to be interviewed during the last two weeks of the semester were interviewed.

The qualitative interview results supplemented, further explained, and aided in interpretation of the findings from the quantitative surveys, providing deeper, wider, and fuller answers to the research questions, as students explained and offered insights into the findings of their surveys. Additionally, students provided insights regarding their perceptions of how their experiences in the academic recovery courses influenced their academic recovery process.

**Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Procedures**

Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach lent itself to a more comprehensive inquiry and leveraged the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions, where the qualitative data provided deeper understanding of the quantitative data (Creswell et al., 2011; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Using quantitative methods in Phase One produced findings regarding any change in the three constructs being
investigated in this study, from a pre- and post-course perspective, as well as provided data to assess relationships among the constructs and student demographic information including academic standing. In Phase Two, interviewing all freshmen who agreed allowed for a well-rounded sample with a combination of students that reflected maximum variation. Having a qualitative component also allowed for exploration of how students described and made meaning of their experiences in the course, particularly as to its influence on any changes with the constructs based on their perspectives, and also in regard to the overall helpfulness of the course in their academic recovery (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The phases of the study reflected the priority between quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013).

Reflections on My Own Identity

When I think about my experiences with the phenomenon I studied, I must relay that I created an academic recovery program, called The Phoenix Program, within the business college of the Midwestern University where the study was conducted. Although I no longer teach this course, I came up with the idea to create a success seminar for students majoring in business who were on academic probation, as one component of the program. This intervention resulted in increased retention for students who took the course compared to those who had not prior to it being offered as an historical control. As a result, I was extremely interested to study this further to see how the university might improve courses for students on probation and to improve my knowledge and skill in delivering such a course. I remained cognizant of any positionality and bias I might have had going into this study, as it was only natural that I would want to find something significant that would advance academic support at the university. It is important that I discuss this in my study, as I reflected on myself being in the environment of the classroom (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I hoped to create a model that would be a useful tool to help
understand the relationship between attribution perspective, shame, and the development of academic identity. I hoped the model would be helpful for instructors of academic recovery courses as they conceptualized, designed, planned, and delivered their courses. I hoped that if I found something significant, I would dream big, and I envisioned publishing a book and/or expanding my conference presentations to help others in higher education transfer what I learned from my study to their programs.

I also needed to be aware of my own perspective and terministic screen. Burke (1965) describes terministic screen in terms of how people view the world around them based on their group memberships in society, including socioeconomic status, religion, gender identification, sexual orientation, etc. Creswell (2017) describes this as how researchers’ writing is positioned based on their cultural, social, gender and class backgrounds. I experienced privilege growing up as a White, middle-class female within a two-parent household. After graduating high school, I attended both private and public colleges and universities. I tried to remember and unpack my perspectives in order to understand and appreciate those of my students.

Population, Sample, and Site

Population, sample, and site were carefully considered in designing the present study.

Population

The population for this study was students on academic probation enrolled in academic recovery courses at an institution of higher education in the Midwest; ideally, all students engaged in an academic recovery course at any institutions of higher education in the Midwest would be studied; however, this was not realistic. The students in the study were on probation due to a failure to meet criteria for good academic standing. At the institution where the study took place, a failure to meet good academic standing was defined as having a cumulative GPA
below 2.0 on a 4.0-point scale. At the end of their probationary semester, the students who did not achieve a semester GPA of at least 2.0 were academically dismissed from the university (“Academic Standards,” 2018).

Sample, Sample Size, and Sampling Strategy

The sample for the study was drawn from separate academic recovery courses created for freshmen on academic probation from different colleges at one predominately White Midwestern, public university in an urban area. The total undergraduate enrollment at the institution was approximately 18,000. Minority and international students made up 30% of the student body. Four-year graduation rates hovered around 22%, with six-year rates being reported at 51% (College Profile, 2018). I utilized voluntary response sampling as the sample size with this study was relatively small, but generated information-rich cases (Patton, 1990). I chose courses with instructors who allowed me access to their courses and their students.

In any given semester at this institution, there can be up to seven sections of academic recovery courses spread across the university in different colleges. The sample was drawn from the overall pool of academic recovery courses within the colleges, determined by which instructors agreed to allow me to recruit students from within their classrooms in order to get a broad representative sample across several majors.

Access and Rapport

Prior to reaching out to potential participants, and following proper protocol, I submitted a detailed proposal to gain approval from the institution’s Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) to ensure the study met the guidelines for the institution and to ensure that each student involved in the study had a clear understanding of what the research involved and how their data would be used (Berg, 2004).
To gain access to the participants, I emailed all academic recovery course instructors in the university using course and contact information obtained from the institution’s website (Appendix A). I explained the purpose of the study and invited the instructors to participate by allowing me to recruit students from their classrooms. Once I had final information for instructors willing to participate in the study, I chose to use all such courses so that the courses in the study came from different colleges in the university.

Enrollment in academic recovery courses at the institution ranged between five and 20 students per course section. In spring semesters, a total of approximately seven sections of academic recovery courses run in four colleges and departments, with their collective enrollment averaging around 60 to 80 students. The total sample size for students within the courses I hoped to include in my study was estimated at approximately 30 to 50 students. The goal was to recruit all students within a given course to participate in the study by having them agree to complete a survey on the first day of class and a second survey during the last two weeks of class and, in the end, the total sample size for the study was 83. At the time of the first survey, students signed a consent form allowing access to their demographic and transcript information and were also asked if they would be willing to be interviewed one time during the last two weeks of the semester. For the qualitative portion of the study, the goal was to recruit and interview at least nine students and, in the end, I actually interviewed fourteen students. Voluntary response sampling was used to identify the specific students who indicated on the study consent form a willingness to be interviewed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The rationale behind this selection process was that it allowed me to maximize the number of students I could interview with an eye to maximum variation. Also, interviewing students from more than one course
allowed me to neutralize variations with the three constructs that cut across the different courses (Patton, 2002).

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The data collection phase of my study involved two phases. Phase One involved disseminating the pre- and post-course student surveys and collecting the survey data. Phase Two involved conducting the interviews. The following sections outline the instrumentation and data collection strategy for each phase and method of research.

**Phase One: Quantitative Instrumentation and Data Collection**

For students in the specific courses being studied, I established rapport by physically going to each academic recovery course on the first day of class, introducing myself, and explaining the purpose of the study. A consent form was provided that explained the purpose, details, and logistics of the study (Appendix B.) This included an explanation that the students’ participation would be used to help improve the course experience for future probationary students, an estimate of how long their participation would take, where the study would take place, what would be required of them, what participation would require, and informed students that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time. For those who wished not to participate, instructions told them to turn to the last page and spend their time completing the provided crossword puzzle so that any students who chose not to take the survey would not be identifiable by other students in the course. I also assured students that the greatest care would be taken to guard their confidentiality and that their answers would be confidential and not be seen by their instructor. The consent form also indicated that by signing the form, participants were allowing me, as the researcher, access to their academic transcripts and university records in order to gather demographic information including race, gender, and
major, and to compare pre- and post-course GPA. This allowed me to create profiles for students in the study and to look for patterns and relationships within the data. Students were also asked if they were willing to be interviewed during the final two weeks of the semester and were asked to provide their preferred email address. The purpose of asking for a preferred email was to increase comfort of the participants. I informed participants that, for participating in the surveys, their names would be entered in a drawing for one of three $25 gift cards (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

A paper survey, titled “Academic Probation Survey” (Appendix C) was used to collect data at two points in time; first, during the first meeting of the class, then a single day during the last two weeks of class. Both the pre- and post-course surveys contained the same items, with the exception that the first survey contained a question where students could write a short answer to describe why they thought they ended up on probation. Also, the second survey asked additional questions regarding students’ end-of-semester perceptions of the helpfulness of the course on their academic recovery. Due to potential confusion regarding how students were asked to answer those additional questions, however, a decision was made to exclude that data gathered from the study.

The survey was compiled by me as the researcher, based on an extensive literature review to identify the best research tools to gather the targeted information. Since I administered the survey during the course to small groups of students, a paper survey was used. The survey was a compilation of sub-sections, including three validated instruments: ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982), TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991), and AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008).

After I collected the first surveys, I created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize consent form data, including the students’ names, whether each student consented to the study,
and their willingness to be interviewed. The spreadsheet was stored on a password-protected computer. I also contacted the Center for Academic Success Programs (CASP) at the institution to obtain their demographic data and GPAs and added that to the spreadsheet. The surveys, consent information, and instrument author permission emails are found in Appendices of this document.

**Attribution Perspective: Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ).** The first instrument used in the survey was the ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982). The ASQ is a 48-item self-report questionnaire that uses three causal dimensions (internal versus external, stable versus unstable, and global versus specific) to explain an individual’s explanatory attribution style for positive versus negative events. The questionnaire uses 12 hypothetical events (half good, half bad). Participants are asked to imagine themselves in that scenario and make an attribution regarding the major cause of the situation if it were to happen to them, and then rate the cause along a seven-point continuum for each of the three causal dimensions. A person with an optimistic explanatory style would characterize a negative event as external, unstable, and specific, and a positive event as internal, stable, and global. A person with a negative explanatory style would characterize them oppositely, e.g., a negative event as internal, stable, and global, and a positive event as external, unstable, and specific. The ASQ has no time limit and takes about 10 minutes to complete.

The ASQ has been used in over 500 studies and 100 universities providing validity for the instrument and has been administered to over 400,000 employees (“Complete dissertation”, n.d.). Peterson et al. (1982) reported a composite Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the three subscales – Locus, Stability, and Globality and a test-retest coefficient was calculated of .64. The
instrument’s author provided permission to use and alter the instrument as needed for the present study (M. Seligman, email communication, October 21, 2018).

**Trait Shame: Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A).** The second section of my survey contained the TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991). The scenario-based inventory was designed to measure guilt proneness, shame proneness, externalization (blaming others or situations), detachment/unconcern, alpha pride (pride in self) and beta pride (pride stemming from evaluation of the behavior) and offers four responses to each of 16 scenarios. Estimates of validity are presented with a Cronbach’s alpha for the shame and guilt subscales at 0.76 and 0.66, respectively. TOSCA-A has no time limit and takes about 10 minutes to complete. The instrument’s author provided permission to use and alter the instrument as needed for this dissertation research (J. Tangney, email communication, November 19, 2018).

**Academic Identity Status: Academic Identity Measure (AIM).** The AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008) comprised the next part of my survey to measure students’ academic identity status. The AIM assesses 10 academic identity topics relevant for college students. These are: choosing a college, reasons for college, classroom attention, priorities, academic goals, interest and motivation, discipline, volition, responding to failure, and persistence in the face of failure. The 10 topics are represented within four subscales, based on Marcia’s (1966) identity states: moratorium (my priorities in school are in transition), foreclosed (I never decided on my own about college), diffused (sometimes I think the reason I’m in college is I have nothing better to do), and achieved (a college education is a high priority for me). Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). Each participant receives an average score in each of the four statuses, with higher scores indicating a greater alignment with the corresponding status.
Internal consistency of the measure is reflected in past studies with undergraduate students. Cronbach’s alpha estimates from the studies are as follows: achievement (0.76); diffusion (0.76); foreclosure (0.77) and moratorium (0.85) (Was & Isaacson, 2008). Confirmatory factor analyses supported the prediction that the measurement items reasonably represent the theoretical subscales (Was & Isaacson). Predictive validity was established through correlations between subscale scores and undergraduate students’ grades in a psychology course. Achievement status scores were positively correlated with final grades. All other statuses scores were negatively correlated with final grades (Was & Isaacson). Discriminant validity was established by correlating the AIM with the Identity Styles Inventory, which measures identity markers, including constructs like political beliefs, religion, and occupation (Berzonsky, 1992). Correlations between the AIM and the Identity Styles Inventory were small to moderate, suggesting that academic identity may be separate and distinguishable from global identity (Was & Isaacson). The AIM was used with written permission from the measure creator, Christopher Was (personal communication, October 21, 2018). The AIM takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Piloting.** The survey was piloted with three students. While the three instruments used in the survey had already been validated, piloting helped estimate the time it took to complete the overall survey and to determine if the survey needed improvement (Creswell, 2013). Because information regarding data from the pilot surveys was not used in the actual study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not needed. The students were asked to write down their feedback and it was determined that no survey improvement was needed.
Phase Two: Qualitative Methods

Qualitative data was collected during the last two weeks of the semester to answer the last research question.

Student interviews. The final research question was answered utilizing student interviews (Appendix E). The method of qualitative data collection was a semi-structured interview protocol. Data gathered from semi-structured student interviews enhanced the quantitative portion by adding another layer of data to provide support in answering the first four research questions and yielded richer data through purposeful conversation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Students who gave consent on the first survey and volunteered to be interviewed were contacted. I gave the students options regarding the meeting location, so they would feel comfortable in the setting while also maintaining confidentiality, and they signed up for a date, time, and location for the face-to-face interviews. I explained the interview would take approximately one hour. My goal was to have at least nine student participants; I ultimately interviewed 14 participants.

Interviews were recorded using a microphone. I asked the interview questions and listened without interrupting or leading the interview and asked follow-up questions when there was a need for clarification or if more detail clarified the student’s perspective and story. The interviews had a basic structure but also allowed for the possibility of the emergence of new ideas, which could have resulted from the students’ perceptions of the interview topics in relation to their lived realities (Kvale, 1996). The interview questions started out broad and moved to more specific questions to clarify earlier statements and to further explore emerging themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The interviews were used to explore how the course impacted their perceptions of their
academic recovery process. In particular, the interview questions sought to engage students in conversations regarding their perceptions of (a) change they experienced in the cause(s) to which they attributed their academic probation from the beginning of the semester compared to the end of the semester (attribution perspective), (b) change in how they felt about themselves from the beginning of the semester compared to the end of the semester (change in shame), and (c) change in thoughts and feelings about being a college student from the beginning to the end of the semester (academic identity), and how those thoughts and beliefs underpinned their behaviors as a college student. Also, the interviews explored the students’ perceptions regarding the influence of the course on their academic recovery process as well as their overall experiences with the course. The interviews also provided students an opportunity to talk about the role of their instructors and the impact of their relationship with their instructor on their success. Students were able to identify specific activities they found helpful within the course and were invited to talk about elements of the course they did not find helpful to their success. Students were invited to comment on whether the outcomes set for their participation in the course aligned with their experiences and were invited to offer comments and suggestions regarding how the course could be improved.

Trustworthiness in Collecting Data

Trustworthiness strategies were employed to confirm or refute evidence and also to reduce my own bias as I gathered data and conducted the research. Creswell (2017) discusses validation or trustworthiness strategies. The trustworthiness strategy I used was concurrent triangulation for mixed methods studies.

Triangulation involves utilizing three or more methods of collecting information. In my study, I collected data through student surveys and student interviews. I also included student
academic standing data. Triangulation does not simply involve collecting data from different sources. Triangulation also seeks to relate the data collected to counteract the threats to validity in each method (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 2009).

![Concurrent Triangulation Design](image)

Abbreviations: QUAN: Quantitative; QUAL: Qualitative

*Figure 3. Concurrent triangulation design*

Employing this strategy to increase trustworthiness gave the study verisimilitude. It was important to demonstrate that my study was credible both in regard to the data collected, as well as the inferences and conclusions drawn from the data. When people read my study, it is important that they feel confident in my results for the conclusions drawn to be useful to them. In this case, my study may be useful to inform administrators and educators regarding the conceptualization, creation, delivery, and analysis of academic or success courses for students on probation. They must have confidence in my results in order to move forward with their goals and plans using my study as a source of information. If my results are valid, my recommendations could be instrumental in increasing retention at the post-secondary level with students on academic probation. Therefore, those heeding my recommendations must have confidence in my results. The validity of my study has ramifications for social justice, student
success, and economic outcomes. If my study reflects accurate results, academic recovery courses may be improved in terms of both instructor and course effectiveness. Student retention could be increased, thereby helping to advance success and social justice for students within marginalized populations. Furthermore, this work could also serve to strengthen post-secondary institutions’ bottom lines as more students persist to graduation.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

I was strategic about my data analysis and employed steps recommended for quantitative and qualitative research by Creswell (2017). My goal was to understand the overarching story of the data and to discuss my findings in an informed way to bring order to a complex study. To analyze the data used to answer my research questions, I used a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics, plus coding, and theme development. The overall data from my study allowed me to create a profile for students who improved their GPA and who showed growth in an ability to apply a positive attribution perspective to events, to develop shame resilience, and to move toward an achieved academic identity, while engaged with the course. It also allowed for creation of a model that considers the interaction of multiple variables, including answers to the research questions as well as other demographic and profile information.

The research paradigm through which data from this study was collected and analyzed aligned with the transformative paradigm. This paradigm made sense for this study, as the study focused on the experiences of marginalized students, and linked findings to actions needed to mitigate disparities for students on academic probation. The study had a focus on human rights and social justice, which is what support programs for first-generation and underrepresented students seek to advance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Table 1 illustrates my research questions and method of analysis.
## Table 1
**Research Questions and Analysis Tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Measures/Variables</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. For freshmen on academic probation enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the beginning to the end of the semester in their reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?</td>
<td>Pre- and post-course survey</td>
<td><strong>Dependent variables:</strong></td>
<td>• Within-subject t-test: to connect each student’s pre-course survey answers with their post-course survey answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attribution perspective</td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trait shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the relationship among students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?</td>
<td>Pre- and post-course survey</td>
<td><strong>Dependent variables:</strong></td>
<td>• Correlation analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in attribution perspective</td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in trait shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in academic identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and major?</td>
<td>Pre- and post-course survey</td>
<td><strong>Independent variables:</strong></td>
<td>• MANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender</td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dependent variables:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in attribution perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in trait shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in academic identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?</td>
<td>Pre- and post-course survey</td>
<td><strong>Independent variables:</strong></td>
<td>• Regression analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attribution perspective</td>
<td>• Independent t-tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trait shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dependent Variable:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic standing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?</td>
<td>Student interviews</td>
<td><strong>Variables:</strong></td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Student’s perception of the influence of the course on change in attribution perspective on:</td>
<td>• Coding and theme development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in shame;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change in academic identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis

The first four research questions were answered using SPSS software, a statistical package used to provide descriptions of the data and advanced statistical analysis. The fifth question was answered using descriptive statistics and interview data through a process of coding and theme development. Prior to analyzing the survey data, students with missing or incomplete data, which would impact the analysis, were removed from analysis.

The variables in my study were race, gender, major, attribution perspective, shame, academic identity, change in attribution perspective, change in shame, change in academic identity, and academic standing (retained or dismissed). Which variables were independent or dependent varied according to the research question.

For Section A of my survey, which measured attributional perspective using the ASQ, participants were asked to rate the cause of an event in 12 scenarios for each of three causal dimensions: internal (versus external), stable (versus unstable), and global (versus specific) causes, along a 7-point continuum. Using a scoring key that accompanies the questionnaire, a composite positive attributional style (CoPos) score minus a composite negative attribution style (CoNeg) score was determined for each participant. The range of the composite positive minus composite negative score (CPCN) is +18 to -18. This score is a reliable and valid predictor of affective outcomes (Peterson et al., 1982).

For Section B of my survey, which measured shame with the TOSCA-A, the test utilized a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (is not likely) to 5 (is very likely). The TOSCA-A uses 15 questions that measure shame and 15 questions that measure guilt. The range for shame is 15 to 75. To determine a student’s level of shame, the number of items a student selects that correspond to shame are totaled. Level of guilt is not a focus of this study, and the guilt response options
provided participants another choice in answering the questions on the test. I used partial
correlations to partition out the guilt from the shame (due to covariance), to provide “guilt-free
shame.”

For Section C of my survey, which measured academic identity using the AIM,
participants responded to each of the items on a five-point Likert scale of 1 (not at all like me) to
5 (very much like me). There are 40 questions in total, comprised of four subscales: diffused,
foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. The four subscales contain 10 items that measure the four
academic stages. To determine a student’s academic status, the number of items a student selects
that correspond to each status was totaled for each student. The subscale with the highest number
of chosen items reflected the student’s academic identity status.

The statistical analysis used to answer research question one (“For freshmen on academic
probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the
beginning to the end of the semester in their reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame,
and (c) academic identity?”) was a series of dependent t-tests. The changes in attribution
perspective, shame, and academic identity were examined separately by comparing the mean
differences between the results from the first survey and the second survey in each construct.

With research question two (“What is the relationship among students’ reported changes
in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and
how does any change in any of constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?”), the
statistical analysis used to answer this question was a correlation analysis using data from the
pre- and post-course survey.

Research question three (“Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b)
trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and major?”) was analyzed using
multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Between-subjects MANOVA was performed on the three dependent variables: attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity. Independent variables were gender, race, and major.

Research question four ("To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?") was analyzed using regression analysis and independent t-tests. The dependent variable for this question was academic standing. The independent variables were attribution perspective, trait shame, academic identity, gender, race, and major.

**Qualitative Methods of Data Analysis**

Qualitative methods were used to answer research question five ("How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery, and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?"). Data for this question was gathered from student interviews. The data analyses used with question five were mainly coding, and theme development.

When students arrived for their interview, they received a $10 gift card and signed a consent form indicating receipt of the $10 compensation. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. A series of semi-structured questions guided the conversation. After the interviews were recorded, I had them transcribed and listened to them for narrative meaning that might be useful in terms of changes in tone, pace, or volume of my participants’ answers. Next, I read through the transcriptions to gain an overall sense of the data. I then emailed the transcribed conversations to the students for member checking, to make sure they agreed with how their
stories were captured and to give them the opportunity to alter any messages to more accurately reflect their stories (Merriam, 2009). Each student was given a code name to protect their confidentiality. Therefore, any student names specified in the present study are not the students’ real or legal names; rather, they are code names.

Once the approved transcripts back from the students, I began the coding process, following a coding methodology that utilized the emergent, intuitive coding process to interpret the data. This was done by using a coding scheme that attached meaning to words and phrases in a way that allowed themes and meanings to continually emerge (Patton, 1987). I looked for main salient points and ideas based on the feedback I received from the interviews and highlighted these points in order to make sense of the data.

After highlighting the salient points, I took the transcripts and cut the actual documents into strips and physically laid the paperwork out on the floor to divide them into significant units of text corresponding to either descriptive (i.e., those that described the experiences), or interpretive (i.e., those that described how participants made meaning of those experiences). I then laid them out with the goal to further cluster the units of text based on themes, categories, settings, and people. I named each cluster with a thematic name, capturing the voice of the participants. I continued to cluster the data into themes that told the story of the participants in order to highlight important messages and findings and to find commonalities and differences in the data.

As I looked for common themes and subthemes, I remained open-minded and took an emergent, intuitive approach, constantly analyzing the themes as they emerged, allowing the data to guide me, rather than approaching it from a standpoint where I had pre-determined the themes and would try to force the information into my pre-determined themes.
I utilized memoing (reflective journaling conducted throughout the process) to record detailed, reflective notes about what I learned throughout my data analysis, including concepts I discovered and the relationships between the different data sets, so I could accurately weave information together in an organized and effective way. Making these memos, or notes, helped guide me as I made meaning and interpreted my findings to answer my research questions (Patton, 1990).

I then triangulated the interview findings with information from pre- and post-course survey data to increase the validity of the findings (Berg, 2004). This increased trustworthiness in the data collection process. Guba and Lincoln (1985) discuss the notion of trustworthiness and dependability and encourage the researcher to create an audit trail by keeping a journal that documents nuances or changes in the interview setting, for instance, that may affect results from one interview to the next. An audit trail accounts for any changes to the proposal that may occur as a result of procedural changes that affect the study. All of the interview participants chose to be interviewed in my office, so there was no variation in the interview setting.

**Cross-case Synthesis**

Baxter and Jack (2008) encouraged within-case analysis and theming to identify themes from students within each course, as well as cross-case analysis to look for themes from students between the various courses. Since my mixed methods study involved separate courses in different colleges, a cross-case synthesis used replication data analysis technique. I examined all the data from the separate interviews following the same patterns with each interview to uncover common themes that emerged across the data to support broad patterns or conclusions regarding my research questions (Yin, 2017). Likewise, I examined the same themes across courses in the separate colleges. I utilized a table to organize and bring order to my data results and to provide
visual organization in terms of being able to see the patterns across the interviews and courses, which helped me analyze the data. The courses were similar enough that within-course analysis results did not differ significantly from across-course analysis.

**Trustworthiness in Data Analysis**

Creswell (2017) discussed validation or trustworthiness strategies for data analysis. Assuring trustworthiness in the analysis portion of the study is important. Cross-checking my interpretations with my peers through peer debriefing and member checking helped me minimize my own bias as I thought about how I interpreted my data to make sure I did not have blind spots causing me to miss important themes or to misinterpret my data.

Peer debriefing involved a process whereby I discussed my study methods, results, and interpretations with others who had knowledge about student success but who were not involved in my study and who were distanced enough to ensure neutrality. Issues around academic probation can be complex and far from clear-cut or obvious. Having someone ask me probing questions, challenge my assumptions and interpretations, and offer alternative explanations, was extremely helpful to challenge my biases and to encourage me to think of alternate explanations and conclusions.

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations provide boundaries and clarify what a research study does and does not study, allowing the researcher to “further define the parameters of the research study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 170). For my study, I narrowed my boundaries to the following parameters: (a) freshmen on academic probation enrolled in a success or recovery course, not including students on probation who are not enrolled in a recovery or support course; (b) freshmen engaged in academic recovery courses at one institution, and not any other institutions of higher education;
(c) analysis confined to the change in just three constructs: attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity; and (d) description of the experience of the participants within the bounded system of the classroom.

This study analyzed how enrollment in an academic recovery course can influence change in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity. It also uncovered insights in regard to academic recovery or success courses for students on probations. However, the study had limitations. Using a pre- and post-course design without a control or comparison group confined the ability to attribute an effect of the course on the outcomes. Without a control group, it was not possible to determine if change data from the surveys or changes in academic standing were due to the course or to other factors, such as students maturing over time, students being motivated by family or friends, or any other factors not attributable to the course. The interviews allowed students to explain their perspective regarding the effects of the course on the observed outcomes, but the pre- and post-course surveys alone were not able to confirm an effect. Without a comparison group, the Hawthorn effect also was a consideration. The Hawthorn effect is a form of reactivity, whereby the students could change their behaviors in response to knowing that they are being studied, and not in response to the intervention course (Creswell, 2013).

Also, the smaller sample size for non-White student populations reduced statistical power and made it more difficult to identify trends in the data collected from these students. The study focused only on students’ experiences in an academic probation course without other data that could be gathered from the students’ experiences in other classes. This study was limited by the number of classrooms and participants selected from one university, thus decreasing the generalization of the findings. However, although generalization of the findings is limited in scope, transferability of results to other institutions remains possible.
Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 described the methods for my study, including a detailed explanation of how I proceeded through the two phases of the research, and why I chose a mixed method approach based on the purposes of this study. The remaining chapters present analyses and results of my research as well as interpretation of these results and implications for professional practice and future research.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter begins with an analysis of the quantitative phase of the study, starting with a description of the pre-and post-course survey process. Demographic and survey data relevant to the first three research questions collected with three research tools—ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982), TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991), and AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008)—are presented. This includes investigation of any change that occurred in the constructs from the beginning to the end of the semester in which probationary freshmen engaged in an academic recovery course; any relationships among the three constructs and the influence of one construct upon another; and any differences in the constructs by gender, race, and/or major. Phase One also reports data regarding a fourth research question that was added to examine any differences in pre-course constructs for retained versus dismissed students. The fourth question was added in response to the realization that uncovering data that could support student construct attributes as a predictor or influencer of academic standing would be valuable to the study.

The second section of this chapter presents the qualitative findings, utilized to explain and develop understanding of the experiences and perspectives of probationary students regarding their academic recovery semester and their engagement with their academic recovery course. This qualitative section includes participant profiles, followed by a summary of major themes that emerged related to participants’ attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity status, how their positions within these constructs influenced their academic recovery experiences, and their perspectives regarding the influence of the course on their academic recovery in general.
Phase One: Quantitative Strand

In the first phase of this study, participants signed a consent form allowing the researcher to gather their demographic data through university records, including GPA, gender, race, and major. Students also consented to completing a pre- and post-course paper survey and to participating in a post-course interview with the researcher. The pre-course survey included three distinct sections: Section A measured attribution perspective, Section B measured shame, and Section C measured academic identity. The first survey also included a question asking students to describe why they ended up on probation after their first semester at the university.

Recruitment and Sample

After the fall 2018 semester, 127 probationary freshmen at the study institution enrolled in one of nine sections of an academic recovery course taught in four unique colleges. The colleges offer majors in education and human development, engineering, arts and sciences, and health and human services. Outside of the colleges, some students enrolled in a section for undeclared majors, including students in the university curriculum program (for students who have not declared a major) and students in the university’s Exploratory Gold program (for conditionally admitted students). The total number of enrolled students dropped to 118 at census, the time point at the institution takes an official enrollment count and when students can no longer drop courses. The difference between 310 freshmen on probation and 118 enrolled in a recovery course is that not all colleges at the university required probationary freshmen to take the course, and some colleges did not offer a recovery course at all. Regarding the courses, participating colleges each offered a section for probationary freshmen in their college so that each section was comprised of students with similar majors, with the exception of the sections for undecided students. Those sections held a mix of majors. The pre-course survey was
distributed during the first week of the semester during the students’ initial course meeting. In that first meeting, 87 of the 118 enrolled freshmen were in attendance. Of those present, two opted not to take the survey. Two additional students were not freshmen and their surveys were excluded from the study, reducing the total sample number to 83.

General Demographic Information

Table 2 summarizes the pre- and post-course sample data. Demographic information for students (N = 83) comprising the pre-course sample—probationary students who took the first survey—was gathered for comparison purposes. That information included gender, race, major, and pre- and post-semester GPA. University records for pre-sample students reflected 50 (60.2%) male and 33 (39.8%) female participants. These data were compared to the university’s 2017 freshmen profile data (the most recent available) (“Institutional Research,” 2019). In 2017, the freshman population was 47.2% male and 52.8% female. Data on race for the pre-sample presented the racial breakdown as White (n = 51; 61.14%), Black or African American (n = 19; 22.9%), American Indian or Alaska Native (n = 4; 4.8%), Asian (n = 4; 4.8%), and Hispanic or Latino (n = 5; 6%), compared to the university’s 2017 student profile data, which reflected freshmen as 71.3% White, 12.9% Black or African American, 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.0% Asian, and 7.2% Hispanic or Latino. Majors for the pre-sample students were reported as Engineering and Applied Sciences (n = 20; 24.1%), Education and Human Development (n = 18; 21.7%), Health and Human Services (n = 12; 8.4%), Arts and Sciences (n = 15; 18.1%), and undeclared (n = 18; 21.7%). GPA for students in the pre-sample ranged from 0.00 to 1.97, with a mean GPA of 1.36.
Table 2
Demographics and Characteristics of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-course Sample n (%)</th>
<th>Post-course Sample n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>83 (100.0)</td>
<td>45 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33 (39.8)</td>
<td>20 (24.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50 (60.2)</td>
<td>25 (30.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>51 (61.4)</td>
<td>25 (55.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>19 (22.9)</td>
<td>13 (29.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4 (4.8)</td>
<td>3 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races/ethnicities</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>4 (4.8)</td>
<td>1 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>5 (6.0)</td>
<td>3 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Applied Science</td>
<td>20 (24.1)</td>
<td>12 (14.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Human Development</td>
<td>18 (21.7)</td>
<td>6 (7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services</td>
<td>12 (14.5)</td>
<td>7 (8.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>15 (18.1)</td>
<td>8 (9.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>18 (21.7)</td>
<td>12 (14.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative grade point average (4.00 scale; mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean cumulative GPA at end of semester for the pre-course sample (N = 83) was 1.77, with a range of 0.00 to 2.92. Mean cumulative GPA at the end of the semester for the post-course sample (N = 45) was 1.88, with a range of 0.64 to 2.83.

Forty-five (N = 45) probationary freshmen who took the pre-course survey also took the post-course survey. Demographic information for this post-course sample reflected 25 (30.1%) males and 20 (24.1%) females. Racial demographics indicated White (n = 25; 55.6%), Black or African American (n = 13; 29%), Asian (n = 3; 6.7%), two or more races/ethnicities (n = 0; 0.0%), American Indian or Alaska Native (n = 1; 2.2%), and Hispanic or Latino
Post-course sample participants’ majors reflected as Engineering and Applied Sciences (n = 12; 14.5%), Education and Human Development (n = 6; 7.2%), Health and Human Services (n = 7; 8.4%), Arts and Sciences (n = 8; 9.6%), and undeclared (n = 12; 14.5%). Cumulative GPAs for students in the post-course sample ranged from 0.23 to 2.83, with a mean GPA of 1.93.

An additional six students took the post-course survey without taking the pre-course survey. Those students did not sign a consent form; therefore, their data were not factored into the demographic summary and are not part of the analysis for the remainder of the study.

**Descriptive Data for Constructs**

To begin the process of answering the quantitative research questions, descriptive statistics were computed, which included composite and mean score data corresponding to each construct for students in the pre-sample (N=83). Pre- and post-course descriptive statistics for students in the post-course sample (N=45) were also computed.

**Attribution Perspective: Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ).** The purpose of the ASQ (Peterson et al., 1982) is to establish where an individual’s current attribution perspective lies within a range between “positive” and “pessimistic.” The scale for the questionnaire ranges from one to seven. The questionnaire has six negative scenarios or vignettes, and six positive scenarios or vignettes. Each vignette has three corresponding items. The negative scenarios measure attribution perspective concerning failure, while the positive scenarios measure attribution perspective concerning success.

Determining attribution perspective involved a series of mathematical calculations (Peterson et al., 1982). First, 18 positive scenario subscale scores were totaled and divided by six for each student to yield individual student CoPos scores. Next, 18 negative scenario subscale
scores for each student were totaled and divided by six to yield individual student CoNeg scores. Higher CoNeg scores (range: 21 to 3; the worst score is 21, the best score is 3) indicate a pessimistic attribution perspective, reflecting internal locus of control, belief that cause is stable and will always be present, belief that the cause influences all situations, and low motivation. Lower CoNeg scores indicate a positive attribution perspective, reflecting external locus of control, belief that the cause is unstable and will not be present again, belief that the cause is specific and influences just that situation, and high motivation.

Conversely, higher CoPos scores (range: 21 to 3; the best score is 21, the worst score is 3) indicate a positive attribution perspective, reflecting internal locus of control, belief that the cause is stable and will always be present, belief that the cause influences all situations, and high motivation. Lower CoPos scores indicate a pessimistic attribution perspective, reflecting external locus of control, belief that the cause is unstable and will not be present again, that the cause is specific and influences just that situation, and low motivation.

The next step in determining individual student attribution perspective is to subtract the CoNeg score from the CoPos score to yield the CPCN (range: +18 to -18; +18 reflects the most positive attribution; -18 reflects the most pessimistic attribution). Peterson et al. (1982) recommends referencing the CPCN score rather than the CoNeg or CoPos score because the CPCN score yields the most valid and reliable overall attribution perspective score.

To calculate the overall pre-course sample (N = 83) scores for the CoPos and CoNeg categories respectively, individual student CoPos and CoNeg scores in each category were summed and divided by the pre-course sample size of 83. Next, the total CoNeg score was subtracted from the total CoPos score to determine the pre-course sample CPCN score.
The post-course sample scores were calculated following the same procedure, except that the overall scores were divided by 45 (the post-course sample size) and the process was repeated to determine post-course sample post-course composite scores in addition to the pre-course composite scores. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the pre and post-course sample composite ASQ scores.

**Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A).** The purpose of utilizing the scenario-based TOSCA-A (Tangney et al., 1991) in this study was to measure the self-conscious emotion of shame. The TOSCA-A utilized a five-point Likert scale from one (is not likely) to five (is very likely) with 15 scenarios, where five scenarios were positive and 10 were negative. The score range for the shame subscale was 15 to 75. To determine a student’s shame score, survey item scores for shame were added together and divided by 15 to yield mean scores. To calculate the pre-course sample composite mean score for shame, individual student shame scores were summed and divided by the total sample size of 83. To calculate the pre-course and post-course sample composite mean scores for shame, individual student shame scores in the post-course sample were summed and divided by the total post-course sample size of 45 with the pre-course and post-course data. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the pre- and post-course sample composite TOSCA-A scores.

**Academic Identity Measure (AIM).** The AIM (Was & Isaacson, 2008) was used to establish students’ primary academic identity status. The AIM contains 40 items with 10 items measuring each of the four identity status areas. Using an average score for each identity status area, students were assigned an identity status based on their highest average score. This procedure was conducted with the pre-course sample student data and the post-course sample student data. With the pre-course sample data (N = 83), results yielded participants in each of the
four categories including foreclosed (n = 2), diffused (n = 4), achieved (n = 23), and moratorium (n = 43). The remaining 11 participants did not have higher scores in only one defined status or had missing data and, therefore, discrete status was not assigned. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the pre- and post-course sample academic identity scores.

Table 3
Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A), and Academic Identity Measure (AIM) Data for Pre-course (N = 83) and Post-course (N = 45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs and valid values</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPCN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample CPCN N = 77</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course CPCN n = 45</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course CPCN n = 44</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample shame N = 83</td>
<td>41.70</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course shame n = 44</td>
<td>40.20</td>
<td>11.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course shame n = 40</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample moratorium identity n = 43</td>
<td>31.94</td>
<td>7.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course moratorium identity n = 17</td>
<td>33.89</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course moratorium identity n = 19</td>
<td>35.17</td>
<td>8.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample achieved identity n = 23</td>
<td>29.34</td>
<td>6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course achieved identity n = 13</td>
<td>35.25</td>
<td>6.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course achieved identity n – 11</td>
<td>35.73</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosed identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample foreclosed identity n = 2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course foreclosed identity n = 2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course foreclosed identity n = 3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffused identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample diffused identity n = 4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample pre-course diffused identity n = 1</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample post-course diffused identity n = 2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviation: CPCN: The range of the composite positive minus composite negative attribution perspective score. * Given the small number and percentage of students in the foreclosed and diffused identity status categories, means and standard deviations were calculated for the moratorium and achieved identity status categories only. Only moratorium and achieved identity status categories were considered in reference to academic identity for the remainder of the analysis.
Research Question One

The first research question was “For freshmen on academic probation enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur from the beginning to the end of the semester in their reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?” To answer this question, a paired within-subjects t-test was used to compare means between pre- and post-course survey scores for probationary students in the post-course sample.

There was no significant difference between pre-course (M = 4.53, SD = 2.14) and post-course (M = 4.23, SD = 2.73) survey ASQ scores concerning attribution perspective (t (43) = 0.79; p = 0.43); between pre-course (M = 40.2, SD = 11.3) and post-course (M = 37.5, SD = 11.67) TOSCA-A survey scores concerning shame (t (38) = 1.26; p = 0.22); between pre-course (M = 33.89, SD = 8.31) and post-course (M = 35.17, SD = 8.55) AIM survey scores concerning moratorium identity (t (39) = -1.58; p = 0.12); or between pre-course (M = 35.25, SD = 6.1) and post-course (M = 35.73, SD = 6.56) AIM survey scores concerning achieved identity (t (39) = -.862; p = 0.39). Table 4 depicts the post-course sample t-test data.

Table 4
Paired t-test Scores for Post-course Sample (N = 45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>*p (two-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPCN</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity</td>
<td>-.862</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p <0.05

Abbreviation: CPCN: The range of the composite positive minus composite negative attribution perspective score.

With no statistically significant results in regard to an overall change in the constructs for students, data were then disaggregated by gender and race to determine if any change occurred for sub-populations of students in the study. With attribution perspective and academic identity,
there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-course means by
gender or race. Concerning shame, no statistically significant change occurred by gender. While
not statistically significant, however, mean shame change for females (3.77) was greater than
mean change for males (0.09). Disaggregating shame by race, however, produced significant
results for White students who experienced a significant change in shame from pre- to post-
course ($p = 0.04$). In fact, the post-shame score was four points lower than the pre-course shame
score for Whites. No statistically significant differences were found for other racial groups.

Table 5 depicts the post-course sample t-test data disaggregated by race and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>*p (two-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPCN by race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN White n = 25</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN Black or African American n = 13</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN Asian n = 3</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN Hispanic or Latino n = 2</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame by race</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame White n = 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame Black or African American n = 12</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame Asian n = 2</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame Hispanic or Latino n = 2</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity by race</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity White n = 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity Black or African American n = 12</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity Asian n = 2</td>
<td>-5.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity Hispanic or Latino n = 2</td>
<td>-4.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity by race</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity White n = 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity Black or African American n = 12</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity Asian n = 2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity Hispanic or Latino n = 2</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN by gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN female n = 20</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN male n = 24</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame by gender</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame female n = 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame male n = 21</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity by gender</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity female n = 18</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity male n = 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity by gender</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity female n = 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity male n = 22</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.05$

Abbreviation: CPCN: The range of the composite positive minus composite negative attribution perspective score
**Research Question Two**

The second research question was “What is the relationship among students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?” To answer this question, a correlation analysis was used to test the degree and strength of the associations among the constructs using Creswell’s (2012) guidelines for interpreting correlation results. Pearson correlations revealed three significant correlations in regard to moratorium identity status. This identity status reflects academic indecision in terms of academic values and goals, which may lead to fluctuating motivation to complete academic tasks (Marcia, 1966).

Results indicated that moratorium identity, achieved identity, shame, and attribution perspective were statistically correlated. The relationship between moratorium identity and achieved identity indicated a moderate correlation. In other words, as moratorium identity decreased, achieved identity increased ($r = -0.32, p = 0.004$). Also, moratorium identity and shame were moderately correlated, in that as moratorium identity increased, shame increased ($r = 0.42, p < .001$). There was a weak correlation between moratorium identity and attribution perspective, in that, as moratorium identity increased, attribution perspective decreased ($r = -0.27, p = 0.02$). Although the other correlations were not significant, results indicated a weak correlation between achieved identity and attribution perspective such that as achieved identity increased, so did attribution perspective ($r = 0.14, p = 0.23$). In other words, as achieved identity increased, so did students’ sense that they had control over their success or failure. Finally, results indicated a weak negative correlation between attribution perspective and shame ($r = -0.21, p = 0.06$). As attribution perspective increased, shame decreased.
Research Question Three

The third research question was, “Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major?” This question was answered through a secondary investigation in regard to the first research question, which found that there was no significant change for students in the post-course sample with respect to the three constructs. However, when the data were disaggregated, a significant change in shame was experienced by White students. As such, the third research question was modified to investigate the relationship between gender, race, and major and the three constructs in the pre-course sample. First, an initial MANOVA was conducted with the three demographic variables as independent variables, and with attribution perspective, shame, achieved identity, and moratorium identity as continuous dependent variables for the 83 students in the pre-course sample to test for main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables as a group. The interactions were not significant. Next, a series of follow-up ANOVAs examined associations between the dependent and independent variables described above. When major was removed, a significant relationship was observed between gender and pre-course shame ($f = 4.42, p = 0.04$ in the tests of between-subjects effects table). The pre-course shame score for females was 5.61 points higher than the score for males. However, the multivariate tests table did not reveal a significant result when looking at the Wilks’ Lambda row. Therefore, the model overall was not significant, thereby disqualifying the results of the influence of gender on shame using MANOVA.

Since the MANOVA analysis showed promise in regard to gender and shame, a series of two-way ANOVAs was then performed to test for any differences in construct scores by gender and race to see if gender (male or female) and/or race (White, African American or Black, Asian,
Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native) influenced any of the dependent variables. The ANOVA utilized composite scores for dependent variables representing attribution perspective, trait shame, achieved identity status, and moratorium identity status and independent variables of gender and race for the 83 students in the pre-sample. No statistically significant interactions were found between the effects of gender and race on any of the constructs. Next, a series of one-way ANOVAs was performed to see if gender or race alone had any influence on any of the constructs. There were no statistically significant differences between group means for any of the constructs by race. Likewise, no statistically significant differences were found between male and female scores in regard to attribution perspective or academic identity. However, results indicated a statistically significant difference between gender regarding shame ($f = 7.35, p = 0.01$). In fact, the mean shame score was 7.03 points higher for females versus males. Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for the third research question.

Table 6  
Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Shame, Attribution Perspective, and Academic Identity as a Function of Gender or Race (N=83)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender or race</th>
<th>Shame M SD</th>
<th>Attribution perspective M SD</th>
<th>Achieved identity M SD</th>
<th>Moratorium identity M SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45.90 11.02</td>
<td>2.30 3.10</td>
<td>29.58 6.82</td>
<td>32.65 7.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38.87 11.26</td>
<td>3.32 2.31</td>
<td>29.17 6.53</td>
<td>31.46 6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>42.39 12.49</td>
<td>2.69 2.50</td>
<td>29.14 6.56</td>
<td>32.14 6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>37.53 8.96</td>
<td>4.64 3.34</td>
<td>31.40 5.64</td>
<td>28.73 8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>45.00 10.66</td>
<td>3.29 2.42</td>
<td>26.50 9.11</td>
<td>35.50 4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>46.40 10.64</td>
<td>3.90 1.40</td>
<td>26.60 4.22</td>
<td>37.20 5.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Four

As data were analyzed, a decision was made to add a fourth quantitative research question, based on academic standing data. The reason for this was that no question existed to
investigate the influence of the constructs on academic standing. Being able to provide a model to predict retention or dismissal based on student characteristics would be a valuable way to use the data gathered in the study. To that end, the question, “To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?” was posed. To answer this question, logistic regression analysis was employed to estimate a model to determine the factors that influence academic standing, where the dependent variable measuring academic standing was dismissal or retention. Demographic factors of gender, race, major, and pre-course composite scores for attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity were the independent variables used in the analysis. The dependent variable was end-of-semester academic standing (dismissal = 0; retention = 1).

A series of analyses was conducted using different blocks of independent variables. First, the influence of attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity on academic standing was analyzed. Demographic variables were then added to determine if social forces play a role in academic standing for probationary freshmen. As variables were determined to have no influence on academic standing, they were removed from the analysis.

The first overall model was created and analyzed to determine the collective influence of attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity on academic standing. The model was nonsignificant \( (p = 0.23) \) level according to the model chi-square statistic. The Cox & Snell \( R^2 \) was 0.07, indicating that very little of the difference in academic standing was explained by the combination of these variables. Attribution perspective was the only significant \( (p = 0.03) \) variable in the model. Similar to the first model, for every one unit increase in attribution perspective, the odds of retention (versus dismissal) increased by 1.25.
Model two added the variable of major to see if having a declared major influenced academic standing versus being undeclared in regard to major. Majors were combined into the categories of declared and undeclared and major was dummy-coded with undeclared as the reference. The model was nonsignificant \( (p = 0.35) \) according to the model chi-square statistic. The Cox & Snell \( R^2 \) was 0.07, indicating that very little of the difference in academic standing was explained by the combination of the constructs with the addition of whether or not a student had declared a major. Again, in this model, attribution perspective was the only significant variable, \( (p = .04) \). Similar to the first model, with this model, for every one unit increase in attribution perspective, the odds of retention (versus dismissal) increased by 1.25.

The third model added demographic variables of race and gender to determine if social forces play a role in academic standing for probationary freshmen. Dummy variables were created for race with Black or African American as the reference. Gender was also dummy-coded with male as the reference. The overall model was nonsignificant \( (p = 0.15) \) according to the model chi-square statistic. The Cox & Snell \( R^2 \) was 0.17 indicating that very little of the difference in academic standing was explained by the combination of these variables. Also, none of the demographic variables were statistically significant according to the Wald test. This model was the least predictive of the three. Attribution perspective, the only variable that showed any influence in the other models, changed from significant to nonsignificant in this third model \( (p = .073) \).

Analysis of the data with logistic regression did not produce a fit model. Results did not indicate any significant relationship between any combinations of student factors or characteristics and academic standing as presented in the three models above. Logistic regression results are presented in Table 7.
Table 7
Logistic Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1 Coefficient</th>
<th>Model 1 P value</th>
<th>Model 2 Coefficient</th>
<th>Model 2 P value</th>
<th>Model 3 Coefficient</th>
<th>Model 3 P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declared major</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Native Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Abbreviation: CPCN: The range of the composite positive minus composite negative attribution perspective score

Based on the results with the regression analysis, analyses shifted to a series of independent t-tests to test for statistically significant differences in pre-course attribution perspective, shame, or academic identity (achieved or moratorium), and post-course academic status (dismissed or retained) for the 83 probationary freshmen in the pre-course sample.

There was no significant difference in the scores for dismissed (M = 42.11, SD = 12.00) and retained (M = 40.93, SD = 11.14) students concerning shame (t(78) = 0.455; p = 0.65), for dismissed (M = 29.20, SD = 6.92) and retained (M = 29.45, SD = 6.34) students concerning achieved identity (t(76) = -0.19; p = 0.85), or for dismissed (M = 32.10, SD = 5.68) and retained (M = 31.70, SD = 7.92) students concerning moratorium identity (t(77) = .22; p = 0.83). Results did indicate, however, statistically significant different mean scores for dismissed (M = 2.48, SD = 2.58) and retained (M = 3.73, SD = 2.53) students in regard to attribution perspective (t(81) = -2.22; p = .03). Pre-course attribution perspective scores were 1.25 points higher for students
retained at the end of the semester compared to students who were academically dismissed.

Table 8 shows mean score differences for each pre-course construct (attribution perspective, shame, academic identity) between dismissed and retained students.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-course Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Dismissed and Retained Students, and Independent t-test Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p <0.05

Abbreviation: CPCN: The range of the composite positive minus composite negative attribution perspective score

Post-course sample retention. This next section compares retention data for students in the pre-course sample to students in the post-course sample (those who took the first and second survey) and to students in the pre-course sample who were not in the post-course sample (those who took the first survey but did not take the second survey). Disaggregating the data for students in these three sub-groups revealed that students in the post-course sample were retained at a higher rate (69%) compared to those in the pre-course sample (55%) and the pre-but-not-post-course sample (39%). Additionally, students retained in good standing compared to those retained on extended probation differed for the three groups. Students in the post-course sample had a good-standing retention rate of 90%, compared to the pre-course sample rate of 74% and the pre-but-not-post-course sample of 53%. The post-course sample group exhibited the higher retention rate and also the highest percentage of students retained in good standing, when compared to the other two groups. The distinguishing feature of students in the post-course sample was that they were in attendance during the last two weeks of the semester in which the
post-course survey was administered. Table 9 presents the dismissed and retained numbers and percentages for students in the three samples.

Table 9

*Academic Standing Data for Students in the Pre-course Sample, Post-course Sample, and Pre-course-but-not-post-course Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dismissed</th>
<th>Retained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall n (%)</td>
<td>Overall n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course sample (N = 83)</td>
<td>37 (44.6)</td>
<td>46 (55.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course sample (N = 45)</td>
<td>14 (31.3)</td>
<td>31 (68.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in pre-course-but-not-post-course sample (N = 38)</td>
<td>23 (60.0)</td>
<td>15 (39.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retention by major.** Comparing retention rates across majors revealed that the two academic recovery courses offered through the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) exhibited the combined highest retention rate (65%). The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (CEAS) also offered two academic recovery courses. Their combined retention rate was 60%.

The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) conducted one section of the course whose students were retained at 45%. For students who were undeclared (two sections of university studies and one Exploratory Gold section), retention rate was 42%. Finally, the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) retained their probationary students enrolled in their section of the course at 39%. Retention data by major is presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Retention Rate by Major*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Retained n (%)</th>
<th>Dismissed n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Applied Sciences (n = 20)</td>
<td>13 (65)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences (n = 15)</td>
<td>9 (60)</td>
<td>6 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Human Development (n = 16)</td>
<td>7 (43.7)</td>
<td>9 (56.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No identified college (undeclared major) (n = 19)</td>
<td>8 (42.1)</td>
<td>11 (57.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services (n = 13)</td>
<td>5 (38.5)</td>
<td>8 (61.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N = 83)</td>
<td>42 (49.86)</td>
<td>41 (50.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Phase Summary

The previous section presents results from the quantitative phase of the study, including descriptive statistics and correlational analysis, and answered the four quantitative research questions. A statistically significant difference was found between male and female students in relation to shame. Female freshmen on probation experienced shame at a higher rate such that the mean shame score was 7.03 points higher for females than for males. Concerning academic identity, over 50% of probationary students enrolled in an academic recovery course had a moratorium academic identity. Those with an achieved identity status represented 27.7% of the students. Academic identity was statistically correlated with shame and attribution perspective. As moratorium identity decreased, achieved identity increased. As moratorium identity increased, shame increased, and as moratorium identity increased, attribution perspective decreased. Results also indicated that, while not significant, achieved identity was positively correlated with attribution perspective; attribution perspective was negatively correlated with shame. Concerning change in the constructs and racial groups, White students experienced a significant change in shame from pre- to post-course such that the post-shame score was four points lower than the pre-course shame score. In regard to academic standing, attribution perspective correlated with academic standing where higher attribution scores significantly correlated with retention compared to dismissal.

Implications of these findings will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. The following section presents the qualitative results and explains the integration of data from Phase One with that of Phase Two.
Phase Two: Qualitative Strand

The following section presents my qualitative results, starting with participant profiles. Following the profiles, a summary of major themes that emerged related to students’ attribution perspective, shame, academic identity, and their experiences with the course during their academic recovery semester are presented.

Participant Selection

To select participants for the qualitative phase, the initial intent was to use purposeful sampling to interview nine students for Phase Two based on their attribution perspective, level of shame, and academic identity status survey results from Phase One. However, due to an unrealistic timeline of analyzing students’ survey results and using those results to invite students to be interviewed before they left the institution for the summer, volunteer sampling was used. At the end of the semester, during the week in which the second survey was administered, students who initially indicated willingness to take part in an interview at the end of the semester were invited to sit for an interview, and a time was arranged between the student and me as the researcher and were sent an e-mail to determine if they were still interested. At the beginning of the semester, a total of 51 students indicated their willingness to take part in an interview at the end of the semester. A total of 14 of the initial 51 probationary freshmen ultimately sat for an interview. The following section explores the results of the interviews conducted during the second, qualitative phase of the study.

Participant Profiles

The aim of the qualitative phase of the research was to uncover themes to help answer the qualitative research question “How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course with regard to its influence on their academic recovery, and on any perceived
changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?” While broad themes emerged from the collective interview data that was gathered from students who shared some similar attributes, including freshmen standing and academic probationary status, it is important to appreciate the uniqueness of each individual student, each with his or her own unique set of circumstances, experiences, perspectives, attributes, and background.

Of the 14 students who participated in this phase of the study, seven identified as female and seven identified as male. In terms of pre-course academic identity status, participants identified as diffused (n = 1), achieved (n = 3), and moratorium (n = 5), with no students in the foreclosed status. Concerning post-course academic identity status, participants identified as diffused (n = 1), achieved (n = 2), and moratorium (n = 7) with one student in the foreclosed status. Five students did not have a pre-course assigned status, and two students did not have a post-course assigned status due to having scores tied across more than one identity status or missing data. The largest share of students who interviewed came from the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. The majority of the students who interviewed identified as White. Pre-course to post-course Attribution perspective increased slightly for the interview participants, as did shame. Table 11 presents profile data for the 14 students who were interviewed in Phase Two.
Table 11
Profile Data for the Fourteen Participants in Phase Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students who Interviewed</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>14 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Applied Science</td>
<td>5 (35.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Human Development</td>
<td>1 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Human Services</td>
<td>1 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>4 (28.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No identified college (undeclared major)</td>
<td>3 (21.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9 (64.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2 (14.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2 (14.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races/ethnicities</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>1 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPCN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course CPCN</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course CPCN</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course shame</td>
<td>43.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course shame</td>
<td>43.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course moratorium academic identity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course moratorium academic identity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course achieved academic identity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course achieved academic identity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosed identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course foreclosed academic identity</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course foreclosed academic identity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffused identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-course diffused academic identity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-course diffused academic identity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No discrete status pre-course</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No discrete status post-course</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic standing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>13 (92.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissed</td>
<td>1 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lucy. Lucy is a White female who is undecided about her major. Her pre-course GPA was 1.69. She was retained at the end of the spring semester in good standing with a post-course GPA of 1.86 and a cumulative GPA of 2.05.

When Lucy found out she was on probation, she said, “I first cried, because it’s a big deal to me to have good grades and be successful, and I know I wasn’t being successful.” She said she has always struggled with school and stated, “I felt a little bit like a failure.” The feelings that came with that for her were “anger, frustration, and sadness.” She said she told her mom about her probation and when describing how that conversation went, she said, “I feel like I disappointed her.”

She also said she was curious as to why she was on probation and wanted to know what she did throughout the semester to put her in that position. Lucy attributed her probation to several factors, including a difficult transition from high school to college. She expressed this by saying “I think the adjustment from going from high school to college is a big deal, and I think I struggled with the first semester. Moving from family, living with a different person, and just being more on my own and more independent.” She stated that the differences in workload and how instructors teach between high school and college were a challenge for her. In terms of why she was on probation, she stated, “I know that was on me, and that I put myself into that position, so I was hard on myself.” That was an early indication of a positive attribution perspective. Per her survey data results, Lucy showed an improvement in her attribution perspective as evidenced by a change from a pre-course 2.67 mean score to a 3.67 post-course mean score. Later in the interview, she talked more about adopting new behaviors tied to academic success.

About 20 minutes into the interview, Lucy opened up more and told me about another contributing factor to her struggling during her first semester; she admitted to being depressed.
She attributed that to a break-up with her high school boyfriend. She stated, “I had a really bad ex-boyfriend, so I feel like that was a big part of it – the toxic relationships and everything.” She admitted not talking to her mom much about her probation or depression. Rather, she relied on her roommate and stated, “I feel like I went through it with her, rather than my mom, and I feel like we are so much closer now.” Lucy’s shame score increased from a 46 to a 54 during the semester. In regard to her depression, she stated that she “…had an emotional course. I feel a lot better, but it’s still hard.”

In terms of the recovery course, Lucy stated that she enjoyed the personalized attention she received from the instructors and liked how they “talked it out [her probationary status].” Expanding on that idea, she added “Definitely the teachers. I have contacted Paul [her instructor] so many times…Just their willingness to help, and they’re always there.” She said the course gave her confidence to talk to her professors, taught her about study habits and resources, and helped her learn about her strengths and weaknesses. With the help of the course she took steps to change her study habits and took responsibility for studying. She said she learned to overcome procrastination and developed time management skills from the course.

Lucy had a post-course academic identity that was labeled as foreclosed. (The section of her pre-course survey measuring academic identity had missing data, so she had no discrete pre-course academic identity.) Students with foreclosed identity are in a stage of discovery where they have adopted the values and beliefs of others, such as parents and friends (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009). This status for her made sense in terms of how she seemed to light up when talking about a sorority that she joined. She seemed to strongly identify with the sorority and was very proud of that fact. In regard to her joining a sorority, she said “They have a lot of study events that I attend. I have a scheduled time to do my homework, and I can ask them for
help if I need to, and there’s one-on-one, so I feel that it’s helping a lot.” At the same time, her academic identity seemed to be emerging in a positive direction as evidenced by the positive behavioral changes she had made in terms of studying, time management, and accessing instructors.

Lucy also gave credit for her academic recovery to her holistics course. She said she learned about the mind, body connection, stating “I feel like the mind is a very powerful thing, and it can translate into a lot of different things, and make you feel a lot of different things.” When talking about ways that she grew in her probationary semester she referenced mindset saying,

I guess there’s a different way to look at things, and instead of all the negativity, just go to somewhere that is more peaceful and relaxing and find ways to take that out of the classroom and applying it to everyday life is helpful. I feel more positive, like, ‘Go to class. Go to this. Do this. Do that.’

Lucy seemed to understand the connection between attribution perspective and accompanying emotions. Her attribution perspective improved, yet her shame score increased, which may indicate she is still working through her depression and relying on outside sources, such as her sorority and roommate, to help her work that out.

When asked about what recommendations she had to improve the course, she said, “I like the one-on-one meetings. I think that was very beneficial, because you grow to know your advisor. I think if they would do that more, that would be helpful. I would just check in every so often.” She also said “It’s [academic recovery] different for everybody, so not everybody has the same difficulties.”
Jay. Jay is a White female with a pre-music education major in the CEHD. Her pre-course GPA was 1.47, and she earned a probationary semester GPA of 1.75. She was retained at the end of the semester in good standing with a cumulative GPA of 2.15.

Jay’s reaction to finding out she was on probation was one of disbelief, disappointment, and sadness. She expressed this by saying “I just could not believe it was happening to me, because I have always been a good student. I was just disappointed. I felt sad. I felt like ‘Great way to start the year!’” Jay said she did not tell her parents. She said, “I don’t want them to think that I can’t do it, when really, I’m the only one in my family that has tried to be out there, instead of a bartender or waitress.” She said she did tell her Resident Assistant (RA), and her RA helped her with her math class during her probationary semester. Jay’s post-course shame score was a 42. Her pre-course shame score was unavailable due to missing data.

Jay attributed her academic failure to a difficult adjustment to college compared to high school, particularly in reference to managing her health challenges. Due to a car accident in high school, she suffers from epileptic seizures and has difficulty remember what she studies. She said in high school, her teachers knew her and were flexible with her assignments, but in college, it is different.

It’s not this way here. Obviously, my professors don’t know anything about me. …some professors don’t know what it is like to have seizure symptoms, and they might just think, ‘Deal with it! Walk to class! It’s not an excuse! If you’re sick, or if you’re having seizure symptoms, get your butt to class!’ You really have to communicate more in college than you did in high school with your teachers.

Jay is registered with Disability Student Services. She does get extra time for test-taking, but she stated, “That’s not going to help me remember the material.” During the interview, she
kept bringing the conversation back to her health and how difficult it was to manage her health in college compared to high school, especially during her first semester of college. She also talked about how she was making positive strides in that area. She started going to counseling and had completed one session at the time of the interview; she was advocating for herself more with her instructors in the spring semester, bringing copies of her doctor’s notes, and had connected with a health instructor. About his reaction to a test grade, she stated, “the professor was so proud of me, and it’s a health class, so he knows all the challenges that I have been facing…he’s probably the most supportive professor that I have had.” Her attribution perspective increased throughout the semester from a pre-course score of 4.17 to a post-course score of 6.17.

The section of Jay’s pre-course survey measuring academic identity also had missing data, so she had no discrete pre-course academic identity. Her post-course academic identity status was “moratorium.” A moratorium identity indicates an identity crisis where the individual is in a period of active searching, exploring personal and occupational values and beliefs. Students with this identity may struggle to make commitments, lacking belief in their ability to resolve their identity crisis and may feel their identity issues are unresolvable. The student may struggle to see how academic life is relevant to him or her personally. Uncertain about their academic identity, students with this status often lack commitment, which may lead to fluctuating motivation to complete academic tasks (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009). Jay seemed to be in a period of exploration with her identity, both personal and academic. She seemed to have a strong sense of purpose in regard to wanting to be the first in her family to graduate from college, and also wanting to write a book, although she was a pre-music major.

Transcending her family’s level of success seemed important to Jay. She said, “…nobody in my family had the skill or the smarts to go to college. And here I am doing it for the first time,
and I was going to make something of myself, which I have always wanted to do.” Her areas of growth centered around learning to manage her health challenges, and part of that involved improving her communication skills, including advocating for herself with her instructors. She said the course helped her realize the importance of taking care of herself:

I just want to get better, so that I don’t have to deal with this. I want to improve not just my college lift, but the rest of my life. When I become an author, I want to have to make a book, and they’re going to have certain deadlines. I’m going to have a certain number of chapters by this date…And if I’m still having these medical issues, I’m not going to be able to do that.

What she learned in the course connected with her personal and career goals. However, Jay did express a disconnection between her and her recovery course instructor. She said, “Every time I try to reach out to her, or try to talk about my issues, she just doesn’t act like she cares, or she has acted like she has given up at this point.”

To better support new students, she recommended having more of a support system in place, making sure students know about resources such as counseling, and for instructors to be flexible with students.

Ray. Ray is an Asian male with a major of pre-aerospace engineering in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Ray was the only student who participated in Phase Two interviews who was academically dismissed at the end of the semester with a cumulative GPA of 1.95, only 0.05 points away from the required 2.00 GPA to be retained. Ray began the probationary semester with a 1.85 GPA and earned a 1.42 GPA during his probationary semester.
Ray’s reaction to probation was one of frustration and disbelief, and at the same time, he seemed to minimize the seriousness of the situation. He stated that “When I first found out about probation, I was actually shocked. Why am I in this position?” He later commented, “I am still in a serious state of mind wondering why I am in there [referring to probation].”

Ray did not tell anyone about his situation, including his parents. He stated, “I don’t want to tell anybody, because if I told my parents, they would get all worried. It was depression, because I was lost, and that doesn’t need attention from people who are not here.” In relation to his depression statement, he expanded and attributed his academic probation partly to going through depression resulting from a difficult transition from high school to college in terms of the social adjustment, as well as homesickness. He explained, “It was a mental struggle for me. And I think that transitioned over to my academics, especially math…This is the first time in my life when I actually gave up on a course because I did not feel like doing it.” I asked him if he told anyone about his depression, and he said, “Nobody knows except for you” [meaning me as the interviewer]. Wondering why I was the one he divulged that information to, I asked him about his relationship with his instructor, to which he replied, “He is not my emotional advisor; he is my academic advisor.”

Ray’s attribution perspective decreased from a 4.17 to a 3.00 mean score from the beginning to the end of the semester. He consistently brought the conversation back to a focus on the differences between himself and other students and his struggle to connect with others as the main cause of his academic struggle. Ray went into more depth about his social struggles in college and how that related to being mistaken as an international student when he is an American from inner city Chicago. He seemed to struggle with finding where he belonged. Part
of his social struggle connected with his perspective that students do not have “street smarts” and he struggled to find people to whom he could relate:

People, especially from [the institution], are from small towns. I have heard them having tractor days. I come from an extremely different background, so making friends here was difficult. They never had those experiences that I had in my life to make them the way I am [referring to being street-smart].

He shared later that the friend group he eventually made was comprised of African American students from Detroit.

While Ray did not use the word “shame” to describe his feelings, his continual reference to how school was not difficult academically with an undertone of “I’m not worried, I got this” aligns with the shame screen move against. Individuals who use this shame screen may continue with their current behaviors and habits thinking they can control the situation or other people, may not admit the seriousness of the situation in which they find themselves, may not share their status with others, and will likely downplay their situation (Brown, 2009). His shame score also increased throughout the semester, from a pre-course score of 35 to a post-course score of 45.

When asked about how he felt about being a college student, he replied, “When I first came here, I didn’t like it, and my heart is still not set here…I chose to come here for that specific major.” He continued to allude that others in easier majors like “travel and tourism” are not as smart as him being an engineering major. It seemed he was trying to figure out his identity as a non-White inner-city, student attending a predominately White university, while also struggling to find his identity as a college student in terms of commitment to the university and his major. His pre-course academic identity was achieved, which changed to moratorium by the end of the semester. Students with an achieved identity status are thought to have experienced a
crisis, and through their own exploration, have committed to their own set of personal academic beliefs, values, and practices, and are more firmly committed to academic life than students in other identity statuses (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009). In contrast, a moratorium identity indicates a stage of identity crisis where one is actively in the process of searching for and constructing his own beliefs and values (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009).

Ray seemed to have experienced growth in the social arena, and he expressed this saying, “I’m not homesick anymore. I have friends.” However, his comments did not reflect academic growth, as he continued the narrative that he was smarter than others and did not need academic help. In terms of the course, he stated:

The only part of the course that was helpful was the fact that my instructor, Kyle, forced us to have meetings, which was the most helpful portion, because I knew that I had somebody there if I needed help. And that impacted me in a positive way. He got to help me with basically everything…and he’s even helping me now in terms of everything.

To improve the experience for others on probation, he recommended “teaching people how to be street-smart, how to maneuver around, or how to study better.” He said he wished the course had more substance to it and suggested increasing the credit hours to three so that it would be “an actual class.”

Rex. Rex is a Native American male majoring in pre-interdisciplinary health services in the College of Health and Human Services. Rex was retained at the institution on extended probation. He started the probationary semester with a 1.08 GPA and earned a post-course semester GPA of 2.33, bringing his cumulative GPA to a 1.47.

Rex’s reaction to finding out he was on probation was one of shock. He stated that he did not find out he was on probation until he returned for the spring semester. Rex has a scholarship
for Native Americans, and he said, “the guy who handles all that stuff told me.” I asked him if he got a letter about being on probation, and he said he did not know. He also told me he lives on his own in Battle Creek, so it could be that the letter went to a different address, such as the address of one of his parents. He said he only sees his father about once a month. When I asked him what his parents thought when he told them he was on probation, he said his father was disappointed but did not say much. Rex revealed that he has a brother who attended the same institution and who dropped out after three semesters because his dad really got on him about it, so he thinks his dad is taking a different approach with Rex. “I want to do better than him [his brother] for sure. He’s not really doing a lot with his life.”

The person that Rex did say was supportive of him was his Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) professor. He said he talked to his professor who “harangued him” and then Rex decided “Okay, I need to start doing better.” A common theme for Rex was how he benefits and does well within structure. In fact, he attributed his academic probation partly to a difficult transition between high school, the army, and college. He explained the structure the army imposes:

Like day one, they teach you how to brush your teeth, how to shower, how to make your bed, and get dressed, and everything like that constantly, and they hold your hand throughout the entire time…and you only do the things they tell you to do. And when you go to college, nobody is telling you to do this. It’s like. “Ah, here are your classes.”

In addition to the rough transition from the structure of the army to the lack of structure in college, Rex also talked about not knowing about academic policies regarding dropping classes. “I didn’t understand dropout dates at all. I waited too long.” He also made decisions not to attend class. Because it was not mandatory, he said, “I was not going to class. That was a big
one. I was like, ‘Oh, attendance is not mandatory. I won’t go. And then you come to class the next time and it’s like, ‘Oh, we have a test today?’”

A third reason that Rex struggled is that he had a personal distraction. “I had a possible baby mama situation…it’s a 50-50 and it’s a lot of arguing through text message…so yeah, that was the big major because that was wrapping my mind all around that all the time.” He later expanded on this, stating that:

   Focusing on school…My mental health is still pretty soft. But focusing on school is a little bit rough, because it’s not something that you think about for 14 minutes and then you’re good the rest of the hour. I think about it constantly. And it was really hard to concentrate.

Rex’s shame score increased from a 39 to a 43 pre- to post-semester.

In addition to still struggling mentally, emotionally, and personally, Rex was also in a state of flux and indecision between his commitment to college and his commitment to the army.

I have to figure out my major, what I want to do in the army, and what I want to do after the army, and a bunch of stuff like that. I’m still deciding on going on active duty as an officer and setting my degree on the back burner, doing some cool active army stuff for a couple of years.

Rex later said that he wants to major in pre-med or physician assistant. He started out with pre-course achieved academic identity. His post-course identity was undetermined as he had missing data on that section of his survey.

Rex’s attribution perspective score increased from 3.67 pre-course score to 6.33 post-course, one of the largest increases for students in Phase Two. Rex seemed to have a major change of attitude and approach to school in terms of self-regulation, learning to set up structure
on his own, rather than relying on the army. He stated, “I think having a routine has helped me a lot.” He decided “I’m going to wake up at this time, go to sleep at this time, eat at this time, and work out at this time. And I think, ‘It’s study time,’ and ‘Oh yeah, this is going to be my party day.’” He later expanded on this statement:

I found out that if I ate certain meals at certain times, I did better. And then I found out that if I went to sleep at this time, I did better. And I found out that if I didn’t drink every night, I did a lot better. And all that tied in. Once I had this built-in schedule, I was like, ‘Oh, okay, why don’t I study for these three hours a night, and then I can do an hour of Xbox.’

Rex’s suggestion for improvement was to ease students into college more slowly. Rather than having them take a full schedule their first semester, he suggested students take one hard class and the rest should be easier. “Go slow. Get a feel for it. Because I jumped in doing 13 credit hours and I was like, ‘This is crazy!’” He also suggested students on probation should have an academic coach. That was the best part of the recovery course for him. “It helped me, just being able to meet with instructors face-to-face.” Regarding his suggestion for coaching, he said:

You messed up, and this is some army mentality stuff, but you already showed that you couldn’t handle it, and now you need some help, so here’s the help. You come to the coach dude and you’re like, ‘Hey, I have this due in two months.’ He’s probably going to say, ‘Start working on it now. Get it done in two weeks.’

He said the focus on mindset was good in the class he took, but that it was too much. He said “Maybe your time could be spent doing something a little bit else.”
Anna. Anna is a Black or African American female majoring in biomedical sciences in the CAS. Anna started her probationary semester with a 1.78 GPA. In her probationary semester, she earned a 2.93 GPA; her cumulative GPA post-course was 1.78, landing her on extended probation.

When Anna found out she was on academic probation, she stated:

It wasn’t a happy feeling, of course. It was eye-opening. I was like, ‘Okay,’ because I know I did bad last semester, and I’m like, ‘I’ve never been on any type of probation before. It was weird. I didn’t really know how to feel…It’s very uneasy.’

Anna talked about how she did not tell anybody about being on probation.

I don’t get a lot of support from my parents as far as emotional stuff. I get it from my sister, but sometimes, when you want support from your parents, it’s hard. So, I dealt with that, and there were days when I was just sad, or just to myself, and I didn’t want to talk to anyone or deal with anything.

This reaction seemed to represent a withdrawal shame response, perhaps accompanied by depression (Brown, 2010; Was & Isaacson, 2008).

Everything Anna told me in her interview was indicative of positive change for her in her probationary semester. She attributed probation to a couple of things with the main attribution being the social transition and finding friends. Anna stated that was her biggest struggle her first semester. She stated, “I would choose social interactions over schoolwork… It was a peer pressure thing, I guess, and everybody would be like, ‘Come on, you can finish it later.’ I’m like, ‘Okay, I can.’ But I would never do that.” She also talked about a death in her family that was difficult for her. She said, “I was just numb, so I didn’t want to do anything, and I stopped going
to certain classes.” Anna’s attribution perspective increased one point from a pre-course score of 6.67 to 7.67 post-course. This change was reflected in her statement:

I am all about positive mindset. I know I am not dumb; I just had a hard time last semester, so I’m like, ‘You know what you are, even though the numbers are saying that. You know you can improve and make them say whatever you want them to say.’ That’s just pretty much the mindset I have.

She also talked about a turning point in her belief in herself that happened within her relationship with her sister. She stated:

My sister will tell me all the time, ‘You know who you are. You know what you can do. You just have to believe it.’ And she would keep saying that. So, at some point, I was just like, ‘Okay, I’m actually going to believe her. I’m going to just believe in myself, and I’m going to do it, because I know I can do it.’

This seemed to represent an improvement in shame resilience. She stated she felt shame in the beginning, and as a result, she didn’t tell anyone, including her parents. When I asked her how she felt at the time of the interview, she stated, “I don’t have a shame feeling; I’m more so like, ‘It happened. I’m going through it, and I’m going to get through it.’” Her shame score decreased from a pre-course value of 50 to a post-course score of 46.

When I asked her how she felt about herself being a college student now, compared to the beginning of the semester, she responded mainly around the topic of social adjustment, stating,

It has changed this semester. Last semester I was more so with one friend group… This semester, I would say that I am branching out more… I don’t feel like I don’t belong anywhere; it’s just that I feel like I need to get out more and test the waters for anything.
She later added, “I was more scared about it [making friends] during the first semester. I didn’t really know how to go about it but when I actually did it this semester…I gained a lot from it.” She also talked about growth in terms of study skills and habits, stating that “Last semester, I think I did a lot of E’s. This semester, I have a B/A, another B/A, an A, and a C/B in biology. I made drastic changes.” She attributed that positive change to “…becoming more self-reliant, making a plan, and just following it. [This semester] I made sure I did everything in a good amount of time, so that I wouldn’t have to cram or stress.”

A motivating factor for Anna was her family. She stated,

I don’t want to disappoint my family by doing even worse than this. I had one failure, and I learned from it, and I just want to change it and not have the same failure again. That was my whole mindset that I don’t want this to happen again, so I’m going to continue to do whatever I can to make sure that doesn’t happen.

Anna stated the course “…helped me to learn the reasons why I was there, to face it, say it, and want to change it.” She talked about how the instructor was helpful, saying, “The instructor would always ask us, ‘Well, what are you guys doing now that’s different?’ And I would be like, ‘Okay, if I wasn’t doing anything, I would make sure that the next time she asked, then I would do something small.’” Later, she added:

my instructor really helped us to figure out what works for us as far as studying, pointing out our problems, and finding ways to fix our problems. I really like that. We started talking about different ways of studying. There were ways that I never really knew. Or just the constant repetition worked too, when it comes to studying.

She also liked the reflection paper assignments, stating, “The papers about reflecting on yourself helped. Each different question just helped me know more about my growth, how I’m
changing, and how this is different from the past, and everything.” Anna really seemed to make progress in regard to her academic identity, both in terms of finding her place socially, and figuring out study skills and approaches that worked for her as a college student. Her pre-course academic identity was a tie between moratorium and achieved, and her post-course academic identity was solidified as achieved.

Anna had several recommendations to improve the recovery experience for probationary freshmen. First, she said, “I would recommend the course because it helped me. I would also just recommend that they talk to someone or see someone about it [probation]. I didn’t talk to anyone as far as my family about it, but I spent a lot of time in my own head.” One suggestion was to have “some type of group that forced you to branch out of your own friend group, because that was my biggest struggle… So, something that forced you to mingle more would help.” She also said, “I think the assigned study hours for points, that’s a good thing. I like the idea of forcing them to try for an hour every week.”

**Josh.** Josh is a White male with an undecided major. He was retained at the institution post-course on extended probation. His beginning GPA was 0.00. His spring GPA was 2.89, making his cumulative GPA 1.35.

Josh’s reaction to being on probation was one of surprise. He stated, “I didn’t know until it was pretty close to the start of this semester. So, I was surprised before that.” He also expressed that “It just felt like a disappointment” and that he “felt horrible.” He stated, “I got here, and I messed up…”

Josh stated that he told his parents, and he explained why he felt so horrible about being on probation. “So, the main reason that I felt so bad was because I am not the one paying for my college; my parents are paying…So just knowing that they paid for all this, and I blew all that
off. It just felt like a disappointment.” He then transitioned to stating that “I worked my ass off for this semester so far.” That was indicative of a motivating factor to improve – to not waste his parents’ money or disappoint them.

When I asked Josh to what he attributed his academic struggle, he replied, “I had no motivation, I didn’t do much, and I didn’t know what I was there for. I didn’t do very much in the way of schoolwork or having motivation to do it.” Josh went on to describe how his lack of motivation affected his behaviors. In particular, he skipped his general education courses, not seeing a purpose to them. He explained.

I would like to say that was because I didn’t have a specific major, and I couldn’t take classes specific for that. …since they were gen-eds, they didn’t feel at all like I was doing anything… I wasn’t motivated in any sense to do good in those classes or go to them… I just didn’t see any reason for it.

Josh also explained that he had a lack of understanding regarding how college classes work. He did not read the syllabi, was afraid to ask questions, and missed the entire online portion of one class. He attributed this lack of understanding to the difference between high school and college. “I thought I had done everything I needed to do, but there was a whole different online assignment that I had completely missed for the first three months of the class…” He went on to say, “I wouldn’t attribute it to not paying attention enough, but more so like not asking enough questions…” Later, he added, “I didn’t know there were online modules until almost the end of the semester.”

Josh also talked about the transition from high school and college concerning time management and self-regulation. “I’m used to high school, where you get syllabi, and you just throw it out right after class because you really didn’t need it.” He also stated that “High school
and college had a difference in schedules, and that came with the freedom thing as well. I am used to waking up at 6:00, go to school to 2:00. And now it’s spread throughout the day… So, the responsibility thing is an issue.” Josh’s attribution perspective was -0.17 with his pre-course survey results. Post-course, his attribution perspective increased to 0.83. The increase in his attribution perspective was reflected in his interview.

After I realized how much of a mistake that was [not doing schoolwork], I could learn from all those things that I didn’t do in the first semester, and take that, and now I know. I can take what I did wrong during the first semester, and I know everything that I did do wrong, and I can move forward, and make sure I do those things right the second time around.

Josh’s shame score decreased from a 41 to a 37 from the beginning to the end of the semester. He talked about how he responds to academic challenges that intimidate or scare him. He stated, “What happens whenever I get intimidated by a class like that, is I stop showing up. That’s what happened last semester. I stopped showing up. I won’t even try to do anything. I would pretty much just give up on it.” This reflects a withdrawal shame screen. Josh seemed to still need more time to work on self-awareness.

When talking about his recommendations for the course, he said, “I think going a lot more in depth about how we ended up having to take that class, and why we’re on probation in the first place, can mean a lot.” Concerning the class, he also stated, “That class was really good for me, and not necessarily just for academic reasons, but it made me realize I wasn’t the only one in that situation…seeing that there are other people in the same situation has definitely helped a lot.” He also talked about a class assignment that forced him to talk to his professors. First semester, he thought, “Really? Do I stop the whole class and ask a question? Do they have
time to talk to me after this? I’m just not going to ask them at all.” He added, “I didn’t think that the professors would appreciate somebody asking questions all the time. So, I was very hesitant to ask questions to professors or ask for help from them. I realized that was bad, and I started doing it more this semester…”

Josh did not experience a change in his academic identity pre- to post-course. His pre- and post-course academic identity statuses were both “diffused.” An individual in a state of identity diffusion has not made a commitment to an identity and does not have a clear idea of their values, beliefs, and goals. Students with this identity experience a lack of exploration and commitment in relation to pursuing a college education, which is often accompanied by procrastination. They may not prioritize their academics, set clear goals, or worry about their grades. Students with this identity tend to need more academic support (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009). This identity was reflected in some of his statements about not knowing why he was in college, his lack of motivation, and being undecided about his major. By the end of the semester, however, he did show signs of growth in the area of his academic identity. He stated, “What I need to do is finally declare a major…I can see myself actually continuing that for the rest of college.”

Karen. Karen is a White female majoring in pre-mechanical engineering in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. She began the probationary semester with a 1.89 cumulative GPA. Her post-course semester GPA was 2.54, making her post-course cumulative GPA 2.19. She therefore met the requirement for retention with good standing.

When Karen found out she was on probation, she told me she was disappointed in herself, and also embarrassed to tell others. “I wasn’t too surprised, because I knew that I did not do too well in my pre-calculus class, and then, I had failed chemistry…but I was a little
disappointed.” Later, she added, “I was embarrassed to tell people about it…” She did, however, share the news with her roommate, as well as with her father, who is also an engineer. She said they were both supportive. In fact, she checked in with her father every week during her probationary semester, reporting her grades to him. He also helped her make a decision about dropping her chemistry course. This course was a retake for her. She failed it her first semester, and indicated she was failing it again.

In terms of attribution perspective, Karen attributed her probation to three main factors – the transition from high school to college, not accessing resources, and struggling with anxiety. She stated “…just the transition from high school to college and living on my own. Also, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder right at the same time, so I was dealing with that also.” She expanded to say,

Just learning to live by myself, get myself to go to class, get myself to do all my homework, and time management, where my parents would help me with that, when I was living at home. It’s just figuring out on my own how to do all that stuff.

For Karen, the anxiety issue surfaced because of her struggle to make friends her first semester. “I was struggling to meet new people, take exams, and I was also having panic attacks.” Due to those factors, her mother took her for an evaluation, and she received the diagnosis. Also, she stated, “I think a big problem last semester was that I waited too long to get help.” Karen’s attribution perspective decreased from a 6.00 to a 3.00 over the course of her probationary semester. This decrease is not reflected in her interview, however, as her statements seemed to reflect growth in that area.
Regarding her academic identity, both her pre- and post-course academic identity were achieved. She seemed fairly confident in her overall career area, although she did change her major from pre-mechanical engineering to data science. She stated:

At the beginning of this semester, like right when I was put into the class, I was doubting myself a little bit. I was like, ‘Can I do it? Is engineering for me?’ But now, I have switched my major and I feel a lot more confident going on from here.

She expanded, “It’s [data science] not too different, but it is a little bit easier, and I have realized… I am more interested in doing that.”

Karen showed a lot of growth in her knowledge about navigating college and applying that knowledge to develop new habits. She attributed that to the support from her parents and also to the academic recovery course. “In the beginning, I wasn’t sure how to dedicate my time, but going through the class…it has just made my grades only improve…” She also stated that using success resources like the Bronco Study Zone helped her. Outside the class, she stated:

I have been a lot more organized. I have been keeping track of my due dates of every assignment, exams, and quizzes. I have been tracking my grades week by week. And that wasn’t part of the class; it was something that I decided to do, and I thought it was really helpful.

Doing that on her own is indicative of an achieved identity. She added, “I’m feeling pretty good. I know that now I have these skills and everything, moving forward in college is going to be a lot better than it was, so I feel pretty optimistic about it.” She also highlighted the helpfulness of meeting with her instructors.
…it helped a lot, meeting with them…we had four meetings, and just talking through my classes, my instructor helped me figure out what I could do to improve my grades in each individual class… I’m pretty quiet, so I don’t like to ask questions as much in class.

She added that the meetings were “a lot more helpful than I thought it was going to be.

In terms of motivation, she did not directly say so, but it appeared that her father had a large influence on her. As an engineer himself, and based on her weekly contact with him, I believe she was motivated, at least in part, by that relationship.

Karen’s shame score decreased from a 37 to a 31 over the course of her probationary semester. This is reflected in her mindset concerning her probation. She stated:

I am a little more open to talking to other people about it, so that way, they don’t make the same mistakes. Whereas before, I was embarrassed to tell people about it, now I’m just like, ‘It is what is, and I’ll help you not make the same mistakes.’

Karen had some recommendations specific to engineering majors. She stated, “I would maybe not keep the engineering students within the cohort for fall welcome.” This, she stated, was a barrier to her making new female friends, which makes sense as the majority of engineering students tend to be male. She also indicated being on anxiety medication helped her to meet new people, and now she has a good group of friends. In summary, she said:

I have noticed how much better I’m feeling about going forward in college after taking the class and doing all that and being able to figure out what I did wrong last semester, and how I can change it for this semester. I definitely thought for sure that it was helpful, and that my mindset has really changed.

Kyle. Kyle is a White male with a major of pre-industrial and entrepreneurial engineering in the College of Engineering and Applied Science. He began the probationary semester with a
1.60 GPA. He was retained at the university with a post-course GPA of 2.32, and a cumulative GPA of 2.37.

When Kyle learned he was on academic probation, he said he was “dumbfounded.” When I asked him how he felt about that news he stated, “Pretty crappy, considering that I know I am smarter than 95% of the people I am in classes with.”

Kyle told his mom and his girlfriend about being on probation, and he said they both said “try harder” but he did not tell his dad. He stated, “My dad still doesn’t know, because he would be really mad.” His relationship with his girlfriend seemed very important to him, and instrumental to his academic recovery. She attends another institution of higher education in Michigan. Kyle drives to see her every weekend and spoke highly of the support she provides.

My girlfriend is an A student, so she makes me work, which is nice. On the weekends, she does her homework, and says she won’t talk to me until I do mine. Also…she works at Jimmy John’s. I just bring my laptop and do my homework there for several hours. She helps me stay on track, and she keeps telling me what I’m working for.

Later, he added she challenges him. Citing an example, he said, “She said to me, ‘Figure out why you can’t do your work.’ She’s going to help me come up with a whole planner…and actually get used to setting that up.”

Kyle attributed his academic challenges to a few different things. The main cause was the transition from high school to college. “In high school, I basically didn’t have to do any work. …I almost never had to do the homework. So, when I got here, it was like, ‘Oh, I have so much free time. I’m just going to sleep, and that’s it.’ And then, last semester happened,” he said. “It’s the tremendous amount of homework.” Another reason, according to Kyle, was that he did not understand academic policies. “I didn’t know about the thing in which you have to get a C or
better…because I did not know about that, I got a D/C, and I was like, ‘Oh, that’s fine. I didn’t fail.’ And then I got an email saying, ‘Yeah, you’re an idiot. You did not know about this.’” Kyle also attributed his struggle to his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and not being on medication. He talked about the realization that he needs to be on medication, but that his mom says, “Ugh! College! Pills! No!” He stated, “I do want to start taking it again, because it really helps me focus and be able to sit down and work for more than 14 seconds at a time.” He talked about his plan to discuss that topic with his mom over the summer. His attribution perspective began at 6.50 and dropped significantly to -50 post-course.

Kyle’s pre- and post-course academic identity status were “moratorium. His statements about his major reflected confidence in his major choice. “I knew for a while that I wanted to be an engineer, because I am pretty innovative, and I’m better at math than most people.” He seemed to rely a lot on his girlfriend for his motivation and structure, compared to a student who may have an achieved identity and can regulate those factors on their own.

Kyle seemed to be struggling with how he felt about himself. He stated, While I am smart, I’m also stupid, because I’m not doing the work, which makes me stupid…because while I could grasp stuff easier than some people…I am also just an idiot…I’m just going to say I’m a big ball of the most self-deprecation you’ll ever hear…

His pre-course shame score was 34. He said learning about probation was an “ah-ha moment” or his “oh crap” moment. That realization seemed to motivate him, and he realized, “I really needed to get my work done, and I have been.” His post-course shame score was undetermined due to missing data. Kyle seemed to be making good progress concerning self-awareness and self-regulation, however, and seemed proud and optimistic about his progress. He also recognized that he still had work to do in those areas. He stated, “I definitely
think that from last semester it has been leaps and bounds. I have made it so many miles from where I was, but obviously, it’s still a work in progress.” He gave the recovery course credit for much of his growth:

…in academic recovery, my instructor said that starting it has been the hardest thing to do. And he told me that at the start of the semester, and that has helped a lot. Starting an assignment has been a lot easier now.

He said, “…for time management in general I have gotten a lot better at getting everything done.” He said he liked the reflection paper assignments:

It really did help a lot, because I am pretty self-aware… But being able to write down how I’m self-aware, the things I know that I need to do, helped a lot, and I could see that during this semester I was getting a lot better with my homework habits and study habits.

Kyle summed up his feelings about the recovery course by stating:

I would say that if you get on probation, it should be almost mandatory. It really does help put it into perspective, and also, it made me panic a lot less about being on probation. But I would say that it is definitely important for people to take. It helped me a lot to put into perspective what I was doing wrong, and how to correct it.

**Rose.** Rose is an Asian female majoring in biomedical sciences in the College of Health and Human Services. Her pre-course GPA was 1.73. She earned a post-course semester GPA of 2.50, which gave her a post-course cumulative GPA of 2.07 and a retained academic standing of good.

When Rose found out she was on academic probation she said, “…I just felt really shameful…because I saw all these other kids that are first-generation college students that are doing amazing…and then here’s me struggling.” Shame and feeling “less than” was a theme that
came up several times throughout her interview. She talked a lot about how she was not a first-
generation student and that fact made probationary status worse for her because she felt pressure
based on her family background and race to achieve. “I think that’s where I slipped very hard,
because I tried to live up to the model minority.” That was also her motivation. She stated, “I
think when it hit me, that was like ‘If you don’t get your grades up, you’re going to get kicked
out. I think that was my biggest fear.’” She listed all of her relatives’ various college degrees, and
then said, “I didn’t want to be that person in my family, and I think it just tore me down because
I was like “Damn, I’m going to be that person in the family.”” In fact, she did not tell her parents
about her situation. She said, “I told my boyfriend because I was scared to tell my family.”

She also talked about having low self-esteem. “I have very bad self-esteem issues, so I
don’t think I deserve anything that comes my way, because I was taught to be humble … And
also, it is because I don’t think I’m smart.” She also said, “I have learned this year that I am my
literal worse enemy. I put myself down more than anybody else.” Her shame score did decrease
throughout the semester from a 43 to 31.

Rose attributed her academic struggles to several issues, all tied to the transition from
high school to college. She said, “I didn’t do my work because that is how I survived in high
school, by doing the bare minimum. And here, even doing the bare minimum was not cutting it,
so I think that was the hardest thing for me.” Time management and the need for structure were
key points for Rose:

I guess the hardest thing is just managing my time. There is so much free time in college.
I’m a person that runs well with structure. I think one of the biggest things in high school
in college was that no one was there to be like, ‘You’ve got to do it! You’d better do it!’
She also talked about a lack of motivation. She said her aunt told her, “You don’t have passion right now. You don’t have motivation.” And Rose said, “Yeah that is kind of true. I think that’s just my barrier right now – I have to find my motivation to push myself…my freshman year of college is just like, ‘Bleh.’” Rose also talked about suffering from insomnia related to stress and wondering if she was depressed. “I have been thinking about that, because during my insomnia… I will just sit there. And that’s where I get where I think I’m depressed sometimes…” She said she had been thinking about going to counseling but had not done so yet. Rose’s attribution perspective remained constant pre-to post-course at 2.50.

In terms of academic identity, Rose stated, “I didn’t want to come to [the university where the study took place]. It was not my first choice, and not my second. It was one of those backup schools that I did apply to.” She later added, “There will be days when it would be interesting, and on other days, I will be like, ‘Oh, I’m so happy I’m here.’ And there are days when I am like, ‘Ugh, it’s so boring! I don’t want to be here!’” She also talked about being unsure of her major. “I spent the majority of my high school career focused on going into the medical field, and now that I’m here, I want to go, but at the same time, I don’t know if I want to go. So, I’m taking all these biology classes and I’m like, ‘I don’t want to do it.’” She talked about procrastinating and cramming for tests in the beginning because she was able to get away with that in high school, but in college she said she was “learning to spread out my studying” and was studying more, stating:

Academically, I feel like I am doing better. When people talk about the angel and the devil on their shoulders, there would be day when I would just be like, ‘Man, you’re on probation. What’s the point?’ And days when I would hear, ‘No, you’re on probation. It’s
not an excuse. You should get your grades up.’ So, there would just be days when I would be fighting myself.

Rose’s academic identity did not change over the course of the semester. Both her pre- and post-course academic identity were moratorium.

Rose talked a lot about the helpfulness of the academic recovery course. She said she did not really want to take it because she thought it would be boring, but she told herself, ‘‘You don’t want to take it but take it. It might be good for you.’’ So, I’m glad I listened to that.” She talked about how, in her first semester, she was afraid to access resources and talk to instructors. She said, “Making me go to the Bronco Study Zone was a good one. I didn’t touch any resources for Western because I didn’t know how… I was scared.” She went on to say, “…the recovery course helped me dip my feet in some of them, so I am at least more comfortable to go now.” She also said the class helped her learn to use a planner.

The main recommendation Rose had to support students focused on teaching students about resources:

I wish they did talk more about the resources and how you can use them. I think this was my most difficult issue… ‘Do I ask for help? How do I ask them? Do I sit here? Do I go up to the counter and then sit down? What do I do?’

She talked about how her family members didn’t need to use resources to be successful. “We didn’t use the resources, and we did all this, so you should be able to.” She also talked about how being in the class took some pressure off expectations to perform due to her race. She said, “One other thing about what was good about the class was I didn’t feel different, just because I was Asian-American, because of the stereotype of us being very smart, and almost never needing help. I didn’t feel that; I just felt like I was another student.”
**Jake.** Jake is a Black or African American male who changed his major from undecided with the CEAS to integrated supply chain in the Haworth College of Business (HCoB). The HCoB did not offer a course for probationary freshmen, and Jake remained in the probationary course for CEAS students. His beginning GPA was 1.72. After his probationary semester in which he earned a 2.86, he was retained at the university in good standing with a cumulative GPA of 2.33.

When Jake found out he was on probation, he said he knew it was going to happen because his grades “started slipping at the end of the first semester.” He said he did tell his parents about his probationary status. “I was scared. Even though I was scared, I was like, ‘I will let them know. Either they’re mad or not. You just have to face them.’” He continued, “So, I was like, ‘I’m sorry, mom and dad. Once again, I did badly. This time, I am on academic probation.’” The “once again” part of his statement unfolded throughout the interview and reflected shame in terms of not being good enough. He explained:

I don’t want my parents to be so stressed over me…my parents used to almost dislike me, especially my mom…out of all the bunch, I have had the most academic struggles out of anybody in my family. And they see my failing grades, and they’re like, ‘What are you doing?’ I say, ‘I don’t know. I wish I could tell you why I’m not doing well. Sometimes I just can’t do it.’

Jake’s shame score did not change pre- to post-course. It remained constant at 57.

Jake attributed his academic failure to a few different factors. He talked about being ill, experiencing grief over the deaths of four people in his life, and dealing with anxiety. Jake struggled with asthma, allergies, and problems with his temporomandibular joint, or “TMJ.” He did seek services at the institution’s health center, he said, but due to problems with
insurance, he was unable to continue going. So, he would email his professors and tell them he was sick and would go hang out at his grandmother’s house instead of going to class. All of this caused anxiety and insomnia for him. “I started having emotional breakdowns in the middle of the night. I couldn’t even sleep.” He said, “I was like, ‘I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to do this.’ I was just popping pills [Ibuprofen] all the time.” That was when he decided to get counseling. He explained that was a difficult decision because, “I think it’s a characteristic of our kind, because we used to have problems just being in society and facing danger…We just had to tough down and be like, ‘Hey, you’ve got to be stronger than your problems.’ But here we are, realizing that the more you suppress these things, the more it’s going to drive you crazy.” So, he went to counseling. He stated, “I didn’t want to tell my parents. They actually don’t know that I went to counseling.” He said he was “…just trying to get my mental back…so I had to go to the counseling office.” He said he worked on … “just taking one day at a time through the grieving process.” His insight into that issue showed growth in the area of self-awareness.

He also exhibited growth in the area of self-awareness and self-regulation when talking about a decision he made to break up with his girlfriend during his probationary semester. Due to infidelity and distance between them, he decided, “I can’t do this anymore, especially now that I’m in college stressing out about classes, whether I’m going to get a job, or a career when I’m older. This is one of the most serious parts of my life.” Jake’s attribution perspective increased from a 2.00 to a 2.17 over the course of his probationary semester.

Jake’s academic identity changed from foreclosed pre-course to moratorium post-course. This growth was reflected in the interview. Jake grew in his ability to navigate the challenges of higher education. He learned new study techniques from the recovery course. He cited the use of Quizlet, using mnemonic techniques, and using acronyms in his notes. He said the, “…academic
recovery course has organized me better than I could have done myself.” His post-course moratorium identity was reflected in his statement that “I realize that whatever I want to do, I will put my best foot forward, and just work hard. I am not sure exactly what I want to do, but I do have something in mind.” That “something” was his new major. He changed his major from pre-engineering to integrated supply chain management. About his new major, he said, “I like it because I like being organized. Integrated supply management still has the concepts of engineering, combined with concepts of business.” When I asked him how he felt about his future he said, “I feel way more positive now. The business enterprise class I’m taking right now, and I’m doing really well with that.” He added, “I would have to say that the second semester was my first academic success of the year.”

Jake recommended that, because “Every kid definitely doesn’t learn the same,” that professors realize that “…there is a small percentage of kids who don’t have maturity to do well…” Jake was making the point that he would like professors to be more patient. Using himself as an example, he said, “I don’t want them to think I’m a slacker. I will work my tail off, and whatever it takes, I will do it.” He also had advice for future probationary students:

You have to put in the time and effort to get off probation at first, until you have to come up with the mentality that, “If I slack, it’s only going to get worse.” Consistency is better than luck. So, it’s all just learning and finding what motivates you to work hard, be happy, and feel good.

**Rick.** Rick is a White male majoring in pre-communication in the College of Arts and Sciences. Rick began the semester with a 1.93 GPA. He earned a 3.60 GPA during his probationary semester, the highest of any student who sat for an interview. His cumulative GPA was 2.60 post-course, earning him retention in good standing.
When he learned he was on probation he said, “I was disappointed in myself, because it was my fault, really.” He said he told a few buddies about his situation. He also told his mom, stating, “I told her it was my fault and that there was nobody else to blame but myself, and she respected that I took ownership for my responsibilities.” He said one main reason for his struggle was that he had a night class, and because of the time and the distance he had to walk, he often skipped it. He also talked about the transition from high school to college, citing his difficulty finding balance between studying and social time. Not having his parents to help him structure his time was difficult for him. He stated that “I realize that I don’t have my parents with me every day to help me or do something that I have to do for myself. It was a lot at first, but it has gotten much easier for me, for sure.” He added that “College is nothing like high school. High school is a lot more laid-back and a lot easier, but when you get to college, there’s a lot more work.” Rick’s attribution perspective decreased slightly from 5.17 to 4.83 over the course of his probationary semester.

In regard to starting the semester on probation, he said, “I was stressed out at the beginning of the semester because I realized that I had to do a lot to get my GPA back up and actually stay here if I want to.” Later, he talked about his motivation to improve:

Just knowing that I need to get my work done, because if not, then I probably won’t be here next semester, which would suck, because I really like coming here. So, it was all the stress at first, but then I got into the swing of things once I was in this recovery class, which helped a lot.

Rick seemed to make some good strides in regard to adapting to the demands of higher education. He talked a lot about how the course helped him develop skills, such as managing his study schedule. “Every Wednesday we would go to the Bronco Study Zone for an hour or so.
The Bronco Study Zone was nice. There was no set schedule, but I would know when I would be studying at least for an hour. Just everyone there was doing their work, and nobody was just distracting anybody else.” He also cited the reflection paper assignment as helpful in that regard.

…having to write an essay about myself, and what I have gone through last semester, was new, different, and unique. Our first essay was a reflection of what went wrong during the first semester, and I realized that I was more focused on the social aspect of college, rather than the academic portion. That was a click in my head that I needed.

He said the class also helped him to study for all his exams by having him keep study logs, and the course helped with “keeping yourself on track.” Rick also decided to change his major from pre-communication to entrepreneurship. He said, “I’m trying to figure out what I want to be, or what I want to do, because I really don’t know right now, but I’m just trying to figure it out step by step.” Rick’s pre-course academic identity was a tie between diffused and moratorium and his post-course identity was moratorium. He stated:

My mom thought I should do this or I should work at this place, because it was going to help me in the future, and I’m like, ‘I just want to figure out what’s best for me. I understand you’re trying to help me out, but that’s not what I want to do.’

Rick offered some recommendations to improve the course. He suggested making it a 2-credit course instead of a one-credit course, saying, “Maybe students will take it more seriously.” He also hoped probationary students could “…have a better relationship with the professor, so they understand that you’re struggling, but maybe you need a little extra help. I guess they could be open and willing to listen to what students are going through.” Rick said that was one strength of the course for him and he spoke highly about his instructor:
…she related to us more [compared to other instructors], and she knew where we were coming from, because she was in our shoes once, she said. So it was nice to have a teacher that understood where we were coming from in that sense. All of her emails were heartfelt, and you could tell when you read it that she cared.

Rick’s shame score also decreased slightly from 36 to 35 over the course of the probationary semester. He did not talk a lot about feelings, but he did state, “I feel very accomplished, and just good about myself in general.” He added, “I’m ready for next fall.”

Lori. Lori is a White female majoring in biology in the CAS. She was retained to the university in good standing with a post-course cumulative GPA of 2.10. Her beginning GPA was 1.57, and her spring semester GPA was 2.56.

When Lori found out she was on academic probation, she experienced self-doubt about herself as a college student. She said, “It made me feel that I wasn’t academically ready yet because I had trouble retaining information.” She also doubted her future as a college student stating that “I thought that I wouldn’t have a chance to get myself into a position I need to pass this year…” She did not tell her parents. She said, “I really didn’t feel like telling my parents because I felt like I didn’t want to hear the disappointment, which was eating at me.” Lori’s shame score increased from 47 to 58 during her probationary semester.

Lori attributed her academic struggles to difficulty with the transition from high school to college around the issues of time management, study skills, and social skills. She made several comments tied to that theme when I asked her to explain what was difficult about the transition. These included, “The studying, and the environment of just having to be in control of yourself, and nobody’s there to keep an eye on you… I almost never had to study in high school, so it’s a big transition.” Concerning balancing social and study time, she said, “My mom would be the
one to usually regulate that, because she was like, ‘Oh yeah, you still have this that you need to study for, and then you can go out.’” Concerning knowing when to go to bed, she said, “I usually stay up pretty late to try and get stuff done…Whereas at home, your parents would be like, ‘It’s time to go to bed.’”

Another contributing factor to her struggles was that she was trying to transition herself off of medication for anxiety and depression. “I definitely had depression because I was starting to wean myself off my medication because I thought that would help.” She was trying to figure this out for herself and wondered if she has ADHD. She said, “I find myself wandering when I shouldn’t be, and every little thing is a distraction, and I feel like I need to get up and move all the time.” She stated she planned to address her concerns with her doctor this summer.

Lori talked about how the class helped her develop the habits and skills she needed, citing helpfulness of learning about resources on campus, learning new study habits, and practicing going to instructors’ office hours. She commented on the helpfulness of the reflection paper assignments, stating that they “…would get you to think about what you need to fix, and how to do that.” She also liked the one-on-one meetings with the instructor. “It was helpful, because I would have personal questions that I needed to ask.” She described her instructor as “laid-back” and “caring.” She also said she was getting better at learning “…time regulation between stuff I want to do and the stuff I actually need to do.” Lori’s attribution perspective score increased from 2.83 to 3.50 over her probationary semester.

Lori’s pre- and post-course academic identity were moratorium. Lori talked about how her current major would prepare her to be a veterinarian because she “loved animals.” She also discussed considering changing her major to French, which was her “favorite subject in high
school.” She definitely made strides on figuring out how to be a college student in terms of some of the skills previously discussed; at the same time, she was still working on what to major in.

Lori’s recommendations to improve the experience for probationary freshmen included focusing more on study skills and time management because “…being on our own is a big transition for many people, and they need to learn how to balance social with academic.”

**Jim.** Jim is a White male majoring in pre-design and technology engineering in CEAS. His pre-course GPA was 1.93. He earned a semester GPA of 2.61 giving him a post-semester cumulative GPA of 2.62. Jim was the only student interviewed who did not take the post-course survey. The reason for that was because he had a time conflict between the recovery course and a course he later added, so he finished out the course by meeting one-on-one with the instructor. Thus, he was not present in the class when the second survey was administered. Jim also had missing data on his first survey in regard to shame and academic identity, so he has no score for those attributes. His pre-course attribution perspective score was 2.17.

When I asked Jim what his reaction was to learning about being on probation, either what he thought or how he felt, he replied, “I don’t know. I just knew I had to get my shit together regardless. I feel like in a way this year has been the biggest academic waste of my time.” Jim focused his discussion on struggling his first semester and first year due to not being interested in the classes he was taking, not liking the instructors’ teaching styles or how the classes were structured, not feeling confident in his major choice, and struggling with anxiety, depression, and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). He talked a lot about the medications he was taking, medications indicated for depression and anxiety as well as for ADD. Jim talked about how it was difficult for him to do well in online learning due to his ADD. He was taking math with an online component, and was frustrated with that, indication that “I go to class to learn, so teach
me when I’m in class!” He added that “If I need help in a class, I’m bad at going out and finding help because I feel like that’s why I have to take the medicine, but I don’t like taking it, so I don’t.” He also talked about having trouble staying motivated in classes in which he was not interested.

I feel like I’m taking all these classes, like computer programming, which I’m never going to do anything with, so why the hell am I taking it? And then it ends up hurting me, so that makes me even more mad. Sometimes I just feel like this whole school thing is not for me, and I’m wasting my time. But my mom just tells me, ‘Keep going. Get that degree.’

The influence of his mom came up a few times during the interview. She also told him, “You just have to sit down and grind it out.” To that, Jim replied, “Yeah, I know, I want to be able to do that. But I don’t want to.” Jim also talked about not understanding university policies about dropping and withdrawing from classes. Regarding his math class, he said, “And I don’t know how to get out of it, so I just basically said, ‘Well, I’m just going to take an E on that one.’”

Another challenge for Jim was the transition from high school to college. He said, “It’s [college] harder because you have more time to get all your stuff done. But then again, there’s a part in which you have to find a lot of your information elsewhere [outside of the classroom]. …You’ve got to learn all the other stuff on your own.” He added, “I think it starts in high school. I think high school prepares you wrong for it, but that’s just how it was for me.”

Jim said the class helped him, and more specifically, his meetings with his instructor. “We have met probably four times now. And then he actually just called me. We talk a lot on the
phone, too.” He added that his instructor was a “really cool dude,” and that “It was good to have someone to talk to.”

In addition to being frustrated about taking classes he was not interested in, Jim talked about not knowing what to major in. “I still haven’t signed up for classes, because I don’t know what major I want, and I don’t know what I want to be. I don’t know what I want to do, so I don’t know what to sign up for.” Jim’s interview was a bit rushed and ended at that point because he had to go meet with his advisor to sign up for classes!

Shelly. Shelly is a White female with an undecided major. She began the semester with a 0.96 GPA. She earned a spring semester GPA of 2.67 and finished out the semester retained to the institution in good standing. Her cumulative GPA at the end of her probationary semester was 2.09.

When Shelly learned she was on probation she said, “At first, I didn’t get it. I was confused.” Later, she further explained, saying “I was disappointed because it was my fault.” Shelly attributed her academic struggles to not going to class. She explained the reason she did not go to class was that she struggles with eczema and managing her eczema on her own without the support of her mother was a barrier to her success. Not wanting to be in public spaces with her eczema, she would isolate herself in her room and skip class. This escalated into depression. “And that’s why I did pretty bad, because I would start skipping class. I got behind. I didn’t try until the end.” Shelly indicated that managing her eczema had gotten easier for her at the time of the interview. She stated “I feel like I got better at what I’m doing. I’m way better now.” She also said that “When I get nervous or sad, I get itchy… But during the second semester, I work now. I feel comfortable, and I have been on top of things compared to first semester.” Shelly’s
Shelly’s attribution perspective score increased from .50 to 4.17 from first to second semester, and her shame score decreased from 52 to 39.

Shelly’s pre- and post-course academic identity were both moratorium status. She talked about changing her major from special education to communication. Her reason for that decision was that she learned she had an opportunity to engage in an internship at Ford where her mother works. She also talked about positive strides she had made in learning how to navigate higher education. She said the class helped her as did her instructor. Shelly was also in the Exploratory Gold program for students conditionally admitted to the institution. Some of the assignments she thought were helpful were hearing from a guest speaker about how to save money and the reflection papers. She also said her instructor would put her mom on speaker phone during their one-on-one meetings and the three of them would talk about her progress, and she thought that was helpful.

Realizing she was in danger of being dismissed seemed to provide motivation for Shelly:

[Her instructor] told us how we have to get 2.0 or we’re going to be dismissed, so that really freaked me out, because I didn’t want to leave. I think that’s what started getting me going. At the beginning of the second semester, I was like, ‘Ok, I need to start getting my grades up. I think that just forced me to get to work, because I want to come back next year.’

She felt like she did make good progress and stated, “I feel like I finally got the hang of it. In the middle of the second semester, I was like, ‘I was in my zone for hours, just doing homework.’”

Shelly had one recommendation to improve the recovery course. She suggested that students be given an assignment at the beginning of the class to help them get to know each other
and to learn more about each other. She said they had to give a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the semester with that objective, and that it would have been better at the beginning.

**Participant Profile Summary**

This second section of Chapter 4 presented interview participant profiles and summarized their interview data. The students’ gender, race, major, pre- and post-course GPA were presented. Their emotional and cognitive reactions to receiving news of their probationary status, including discussion of who they told about their status, and why, were discussed. Their perspectives on the causes for their probationary status were captured, as well as accompanying self-conscious affects. The profiles highlighted key discussion points in terms of students’ academic identity and any changes they experienced reflecting change pre- to post-course in regard to their academic identity, as well as the other two constructs of attribution perspective and shame. Their recommendations to improve the experience for freshmen transitioning from high school to college and their recommendations for improvement of the academic recovery course experience were also discussed. The third section of Chapter 4 explains the major themes that emerged from the Phase Two interviews.

**Major Themes**

The goal of the qualitative phase was to explore the experiences of probationary freshmen engaged in academic recovery courses through semi-structured interviews in order to answer the fifth research question for the study, “How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regards to its influence on their academic recovery, and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?”
At the beginning of each interview, I provided the student with an introduction to explain the purpose of the interview. I thanked them for taking the time to chat with me, gave them the $10 gift card and had them sign the form indicating receipt of the $10 compensation. The flow of the interview was influenced by the questions that I asked, and the order in which I asked them. Based on that, most students first described to me their reaction to finding out they were on academic probation, both from a cognitive and emotional perspective. Most students easily described their initial thoughts and reactions. Identifying their feelings, however, proved to be more of a challenge. As the interview progressed and students became more comfortable and more reflective, most students were able to expand on their discussions regarding their feelings. After describing their reaction to the news of being on probation, most students revealed with whom they processed the news, which typically included a discussion of their parents in some form. Expanding on their reasons for their academic struggles, most revealed a pre-existing challenge of some kind, including struggles with anxiety, depression, a disability, or an interpersonal relationship. From there, students discussed growth they experienced during their probationary semester, both personal and academic, and discussed the influence of the academic recovery course on their growth. Finally, based on their lived experiences, students offered recommendations to improve the academic recovery course for probationary freshmen as well as recommendations to better support the transition from high school to college for all students. The students’ stories were summarized and analyzed to uncover meaning relevant to the research questions. That process revealed four major themes as well as corresponding subthemes.

The following section addresses the major themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews with 14 students. The interviews were coded and statements that related to the constructs of attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity, as well as other themes that
emerged were clustered into buckets of connected meaning which emerged to form the identified themes. The major themes applicable across all participants were: Difficulty with the Transition from High School to College, Factors Contributing to New and Emerging Positive Growth, Motivated to Succeed, and Recommendations for Improved Support Systems.

Related to the major themes, subthemes also emerged. Not all subthemes are representative of the experiences of every participant; however, they emerged as significant topics of consideration in regard to the overall spirit of this study. Table 12 depicts the major themes and associated subthemes that will be presented in this section.

Table 12
Qualitative Themes from Student Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficulty Transitioning from High School to College: Reasons for Probationary Status at the End of First Semester</td>
<td>1.1 Insufficient Life Management Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Significant Hardships Occurred During the Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Underdeveloped Academic Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Underdeveloped Self-Awareness and Shame Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Improved Self-Awareness and Shame Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Improved Academic Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 Importance of Having a Champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 Improved Life Management Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6 Improved Self-Concept and Hope for the Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Motivated to Succeed Academically: Students’ “Why” in Regard to Wanting to Persist</td>
<td>3.1 External Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Internal Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participants’ Recommendations: Students Sharing Perspective Based on their Lived Experiences</td>
<td>4.1 Improving the Transition from High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 School to College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3 Improving the Academic Recovery Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stories the students shared were unique to each student and their experiences were influenced by several factors. Some of these factors were students’ multiple, intersecting
identities which included, but were not limited to, socioeconomics, race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion; their existing support systems, which included varying levels of support from their parents; their past experiences and pre-existing challenges; and varying levels of dispositional strengths and barriers. Possessing intersecting identities, personal challenges, and individualized support systems is not unique to probationary freshmen. Factors such as these contribute to what makes all people unique; yet, they are worth mentioning to provide a context for the discussion. Despite the variations in the individual experiences of the students, however, common themes framed those experiences. The major themes, as well as the associated subthemes are described in more detail below.

**Theme 1: Difficulty with the Transition from High School to College**

Every interview participant discussed the difficulty in transitioning from high school to college as a major contributing factor to their probationary status after their first semester at the institution. Transition is discussed within the context of the point in time in which students step foot on campus their first semester to the end of their first semester when they head home for holiday break. It describes the complex factors related to adapting and adjusting to being a college student living away from home, compared to being a high school student living with parents. While the difficulty in transition was unique to each student, common themes concerning that difficulty emerged.

**Subtheme 1.1: Insufficient life management skills.** As students discussed the challenges that contributed to their academic struggles and probationary status, it became clear that the participants had difficulty managing their daily lives within the context of being college students. This theme presented in various scenarios and situations in which the difficulty of “running one’s own life” became the common thread.
Learning to self-regulate without the support and structure imposed by their parents was a key component within the subtheme of the lack of life management skills. Rose, Lucy, Rex, Karen, Josh, Karen, Rick, Lori, and Shelly all talked about the challenges of self-regulation. Lucy’s comment summarized the overall theme. When I asked them to what they attributed being on probation, Lucy replied, “I think the adjustment from going to high school to college is a big deal. Moving from family, living with a different person, and just being more on my own and more independent.”

The challenge of being away from the support and structure provided by parents came up several times throughout the interviews. Karen stated that “Just learning to live by myself, get myself to go to class, get myself to do all my homework, and time management, where my parents would help me with that, when I was living at home. It’s just figuring out on my own how to do all that stuff.” She added that in college, compared to high school, “I did not have anybody forcing me to go [to class] so if I didn’t want to go, I just didn’t go.” Rick talked about how being on his own was difficult, stating “And I realize that I don’t have my parents with me every day to help me or do something that I have to do for myself. It was a lot at first…” Shelly and Lori explained that their mothers would regulate their schedules. Shelly said, “In high school…I would just like to have things set up for me. But then [in college], you become free to figure that out by yourself.” She said she could call her mom, but also felt, “I have to get used to doing things on my own.” Lori echoed this, stating, “My mom would be the one to usually regulate that, because she was like, ‘Oh yeah, you still have this that you need to study for, and then you can go out.’”

In discussing what was hard about the transition to college, Rose, Shelly and Karen talked about the challenges of being on their own and managing their free time. Rose said, “I
guess the hardest thing is just managing my time. There is so much free time in college. I’m a person that runs well with structure. I think one of the biggest things in high school in college was that no one was there to be like, ‘You’ve got to do it! You’d better do it!’” Shelly said, “The studying, and the environment of just having to be in control of yourself, and nobody’s there to keep an eye on you, so you have to balance that with social attributes that you need in college.” Similarly, Karen said, “…it’s probably just the transition from high school to college and living on my own.”

Freedom and responsibility were identified by Josh and Karen. Karen stated, “When I got here, it was like, ‘Oh, I have so much free time. I’m just going to sleep, and that’s it.” Josh said, “So going into college, and then having all this freedom to do whatever you wanted, in my mind, I was like, ‘Okay, I’ll skip this class, and then that class, and go to this one and then skip that one.’ One of the biggest things was the amount of freedom.” He summed it up with, “If I could say one thing that was the biggest difference between high school and college, it would definitely be responsibility.” Once difference with Rex was that he continually referenced the ROTC rather than his parents. Yet, the theme was the same. Rex said, “…they [the army] teach you how to brush your teeth, how to shower, how to make your bed, and get dressed, and everything like that constantly, and they hold your hand throughout the entire time. And then they’re like, ‘This is exactly how you’re going to do it, so you know exactly how to do it.’ And you only do the things people tell you to do. And when you go to college, nobody is telling you to do this. It’s like, ‘Ah, here are your classes.’ And then you’re like, ‘Nobody is telling me to do this.’ So you just blow it off. And I think that happens a lot…”

Seven of the 14 students expressed difficulty managing health issues, both physical and mental. Several students came to college with pre-existing health challenges while some
developed mental, emotional, or physical problems during their first semester. When they were living with their parents, factors related to managing health issues were supported by their parents or other significant adults in their lives, and students were ill-prepared to manage these challenges on their own.

Shelly discussed the struggles she had with managing her eczema without her mother’s support. She said, “In high school, I would just like to have things set up for me. But then, you become free to figure that out by yourself. I guess I could call my mom, but she’s not going to understand, because she’s not here.” She added that “Just being away from home, just because my mom gets my medicine and stuff. She’s always been on top of me about taking it, but I just got stressed out about doing it on my own. It’s a big change…” Shelly made decisions to isolate herself because of her eczema, which caused depression, further complicating her situation. “During my first semester, I was really depressed….so I will be able to go outside in long sleeves and pants. I don’t want to go out and sweat, so I get irritated. I just sit in my hot room all day, and I was so upset, I just want to go home.”

Shelly was just one of the students who struggled with depression. Jim, Lori, and Karen all discussed struggles with depression, anxiety, and ADD, as well as struggles in trying to figure out their medications. Jim expressed his dislike for having to take medication and that he tried to go off his meds two months prior to the interview. He recognized that they helped him, but he also did not want to be on them. Jim stated that “I don’t like taking the medication, just because I feel like I don’t want to have to need it.” Similarly, Lori said, “…I was starting to wean myself off my medication because I thought that would help.” Karen talked about struggling with meeting new people and with taking exams which resulted in her having panic attacks. She said she has “…the worst cases of ADHD,” and she also had a new diagnosis of anxiety disorder at
the beginning of the semester. When discussing this with her mother, she said her mother’s response to the idea of medication was, “Ugh! College! Pills! No!” Jim also discussed his concerns with his mother, stating “My mom was like, ‘You just have to sit down and grind it out.’ I’m like, ‘Yeah, I know, I want to be able to do that, but I don’t want to [be on medication].’”

Some students tried to deal with their health issues without telling their parents. Ray, for instance, confessed to me that he struggled with depression his first semester and that he had not told anyone except for me. He stated that “I think the first semester was the lowest point in my life emotionally… It was a depression, because I was lost, and that doesn’t need attention from people who are not here.” Anna also expressed how she dealt with her depression on her own, saying that “…I don’t get a lot of support from my parents as far as emotional stuff…But sometimes when you want support from your parents, it’s hard. So, I dealt with that, and there were days when I was just sad, or just to myself, and I didn’t want to talk to anyone or deal with anything.” Neither Ray nor Anna sought counseling support through the institution’s free counseling clinic, or any other provider. Rose also talked about wondering if she was depressed and related that to trouble sleeping, stating “I have been thinking about that, because during my insomnia…I will just sit there. And that’s where I get where I think I’m depressed sometimes…” At the time of the interview, she had not sought out help through counseling, but was contemplating that option.

Jake and Jay both dealt with difficult physical health challenges. Jake struggled to manage his asthma and also experienced dental problems, and Jay struggled managing her epilepsy. Jake talked about not being able to afford the care he needed. When I asked him why he didn’t go the healthcare center, he stated he “was scared to even go there” because he felt he
could not afford it. Rather, he simply retreated to his grandparents’ house and self-medicated with over-the-counter medications. His health took a toll on him mentally and he said, “I started having emotional breakdowns in the middle of the night. I couldn’t even sleep…” The dental pain became so bad that he said “I was like, ‘I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to do this.’ I was just popping pills all the time.” Jay also struggled with managing her health challenges. When she would experience seizure symptoms, she would avoid going to class but did not tell her professors. She also talked about how her doctor appointments would conflict with class times. She said in high school her teachers knew about her medical condition, but in college “…my professors don’t know anything about me.” She seemed to lack the confidence or skills to manage her doctor appointments with the demands of college and to effectively communicate her situation with her instructors.

Rex and Lori both talked about the difficulty of handling new freedoms without previous support structures that they experienced as high school students. For them, this translated to regulating their sleep patterns. Lori said “…at home, your parents would be like, ‘It’s time to go to bed!’” But that in college “I usually stay up pretty late to try and get stuff done, and then I lose track and realize, ‘Oh, its 5:00!’” Rex talked about how the structure provided by his ROTC program is what he needs to do well and that, in his first semester, he was not applying that disciplined approach to his sleep patterns. He said, “I stay up super late and then I don’t want to go [to school] in the morning.”

Several students struggled with self-discipline when it came to studying and prioritizing academics over social activities. Social interaction was important to these students and they struggled to structure their time so that they could have social time and also devote time to their studies. Anna said, “I would choose social interactions over schoolwork. It was a peer pressure
thing, I guess, and everybody would be like, ‘Come on, you can finish it later.’ I’m like, ‘Okay, I can.’ But I would never do that.” Shelly had a similar story, stating “I would just put social first… We [Shelly and her roommate] just messed around. We just fed off each other, and we were slacking off.” Jim also talked about the pull between academics and friends, stating “During the first semester, I was like, ‘Okay, I’m having fun making friends. Going to class, sort of. Doing my work, sort of… I was just trying to fit in.” He added that the “social aspect” was the hardest part about transitioning to college for him. Rick’s comments also aligned with the theme of trying to find a social sense of belonging. He said, “I was more focused on the social aspect of college, rather than the academic portion.”

**Subtheme 1.2: Significant hardships occurred during semester.** Some students experienced a hardship in their personal life outside of college that threw them off track. Jake, Jay, and Anna all experienced a death of a family member or friend in their first semester. Jake said, “Right after Thanksgiving, I found out that my great auntie had passed away. And then, a few weeks later, two other close friends and family had passed away, and I was just trying to get my mental back. …around that time, my family was broken up because I had to go to three funerals within two weeks.” Jay had two family members die in her first semester, and Anna dealt with the “…first ever death in the family.” Anna said, “I was just numb, so I didn’t want to do anything, and I stopped going to certain classes.” The effects of those deaths, combined with the adjustment to college, contributed to probationary status for these students.

Outside of experiencing a death of a loved one, both Lucy and Rex, experienced significant-other relationship issues that interfered with their academic success. Rex stated, “I had a possible baby mama situation which is really hard to explain. Basically, it’s a 50-50, and it’s a lot of arguing through text message… so yeah, that was the big major, because that was
wrapping my mind all around that all the time.” Rex never revealed the outcome of his situation to me but made it clear that he struggled to focus on school, while also dealing with the potential of being a father. Lucy talked about a “toxic relationship” with a boyfriend and how that contributed to the depression she experienced. Both Lucy and Rex struggled to keep their focus on school while dealing with relationship issues.

**Subtheme 1.3: Underdeveloped academic identity.** The subtheme where students struggled due to an underdeveloped academic identity is comprised of several factors related to students’ making the transition to college from high school in relation to academics. Factors within this subtheme include difficulties handling the rigors of college work compared to high school academics, not going to class, learning to navigate higher education culture, persevering through courses they did not find interesting or relative to their goals, not utilizing resources, not being committed to higher education and the institution, and being in a state of exploration in terms of what major to declare. This was evidenced by students not going to class, and not understanding the amount time needed to study. Students also had difficulties navigating higher education culture in terms lack of awareness and understanding of institutional policies and procedures, and a lack of knowledge of institutional resources. Students also did not ask questions of staff and faculty, which in turn impeded their knowledge about resources as well as their academic growth. Finally, not seeing the value in some courses was a challenge for many.

Jim, Lucy, Ray, Josh, Karen, Lori, and Rick, all talked about difficulties they had adjusting to the rigors of college academics versus high school. Jim and Rick talked about how high school did not prepare them for college. Jim said, “I think it starts in high school. I think high school prepares you wrong for it [college]…in high school I basically didn’t have to do any work…Then I got here, didn’t do any homework, did poorly in most classes.” Rick also said,
“…college is nothing like high school. It’s really not that high school really prepares you for what college has to bring. High school is a lot more laid-back and a lot easier, but when you get to college, there’s a lot more work.” Josh, Karen and Lori all expanded that point. Josh said, “I slacked off way too many times during the first semester.” Karen stated, “I almost never had to do the homework…in high school, you were able to get away with just relying on that. But in college, you’re learning to think about the fact that you’re smart, but also, you have to put the work in, and just figure out how to balance that. I just did not do some homework last semester, which was the problem.” Lori said, “I almost never had to study in high school, so it’s a big transition. It [college] was a lot different from the high school that I went to. The workload, teachers in general, and the things they expect of you are different.” Ray and Josh also talked about the differences in terms of study skills. Ray stated, “It’s just knowing what material to go over.” He said in high school he would get study guides but in college “they would throw a book at you and you would have to pick and choose what was the most likely thing that was going to be on the test.” Josh commented on course syllabi, stating, “I’m used to high school, where you get syllabi, and you just throw it out right after class because you really didn’t need it.” Based on those experiences, Josh said he did not read his course syllabi until the end of the semester in his first semester of college which was “an issue” in relation to his struggles in college.

Not going to class was reported as an issue for Rex, Josh, Rick, and Shelly. Rex stated, “I was not going to class. That was a big one. I was like, ‘Oh, attendance isn’t mandatory. Eh, I won’t go’. And then, you come to class the next time, and it’s like, ‘Oh, we have a test today?’ That happened more than once.” Shelly also admitted that she “started skipping class” which caused her to fall behind. The time of their classes influenced Josh and Rick to skip. Josh had a 9 a.m. biology course and Rick had a 7 p.m. course. Josh shared his thought process, “I was like,
‘Oh no, 9 a.m.? I’ll sleep in today.’” And then, the next time I was like, ‘Oh, I’ll skip this time. I’ll sleep in this time.’” Rick said, “I just didn’t go as often as I should have…because it was so late at night.”

Learning to navigate the new culture of higher education proved challenging for many interview participants. Jim and Rex did not understand policies and procedures regarding dropping and withdrawing from courses until it was too late. Concerning his 8 a.m. class, which was taught by a teacher Jim said, “I can’t understand.” He felt he was getting nothing out of the course. He said, “I was like, ‘Well forget this.’ And I didn’t know how to get out of it, so I just basically said, ‘Well, I’m just going to take an E on that one.’” Rex said, “I didn’t understand dropout dates at all. After the first month of this class, I was like, ‘Ah, I just want to drop it.’…I waited until two weeks before finals and then told somebody, ‘Yeah, I’m going to drop this class.’ And they were like, ‘Oh, the date has passed.’ I was like, “Ooh, shoot, that’s not good.’”

Karen did not understand grade policies. She stated, “I didn’t know about the thing in which you have to get a C or better for every class for your major, because I did not know about that, so I got a D/C, and I was like, ‘Oh, that’s fine. I didn’t fail.’ And then, I got an email saying, ‘Yeah, you’re an idiot, you did not know about this.’” For Josh, it was a lack of awareness of online modules in his course. “I didn’t know there were online modules until almost the end of the semester… I thought I had done everything I needed to do, but there was a whole different online assignment that I had completely missed for the first three months of the class.” For these students, their lack of awareness of institutional policies and procedures impacted their academic success.

Being unable to find the value in courses not directly related to the content of their major was an issue for some students. They could not find value or sustain interest in courses they felt
they did not need. Ray said he did fine in his major courses, but that, “I didn’t try so hard on my gen-ed, which was human geography. And then, my friend and I both actually would not go because it was a really dry subject. Both of us actually failed, and both of us are on probation.”

Josh also could not find value in his general education courses. He stated “I mean, I was taking gen-eds…but since they were gen-eds, they didn’t feel at all like I was doing anything to help myself. I wasn’t very motivated in any sense to do good in those classes or go to them. I just didn’t see any reason for it.” Jim did not see value in his math class. He said, “…I am better at math than most people…and it was one of those things in which I didn’t see the value in it, so I didn’t go.” Not being able to do the work needed for courses that were required for graduation, such as general education courses, because students could not see their value, contributed to their probationary status.

In addition to difficulty finding value in some courses, not being good at utilizing resources was another missed opportunity for students. Josh was simply afraid to ask questions, stating that “During the first semester, I didn’t think the professors would appreciate somebody asking questions all the time.” He said, “…you think, ‘Really? Do I stop the whole class and ask a question? Do they have time to talk to me after this? I’m just not going to ask them at all.’” Jim echoed that sentiment, stating, “If I need help in a class, I’m bad at going out and finding help.”

Karen also said, “I think a big problem last semester was that I waited too long to get help.” Jay also talked about not getting timely help. She revealed that she recently sought out counseling, stating, “I got into it late, but I honestly didn’t hear about it until the end of the year.”

Some students were still considering their college major, and some did not have a solid commitment to college and/or their institution. Rick, Rose, Shelly, Jake, and Josh all were in a state of major exploration. Their thought process regarding what college major they would
choose are discussed in the section on academic identity growth later in this dissertation.

Commitment to the institution was a challenge for Rex and Rose. Rex was still exploring the benefits of pursuing an army career compared to staying in higher education, and Rose was not fully committed to the institution, Rose stated, “I didn’t want to come to [name of institution]. It was not my first choice, and not my second. It was one of those backup schools that I did apply to.” She later added, “There will be days when it would be interesting, and on other days, I will be like, ‘Oh, I’m so happy I’m here.’ And there are days when I am like, ‘Ugh, it’s so boring! I don’t want to be here!’

The many instances of students attempting to navigate their new higher education culture with underdeveloped academic identity wherein they lacked knowledge and skill regarding how to succeed academically definitely contributed to their probationary status.

Subtheme 1.4: Underdeveloped self-awareness and shame resilience. Related to academic identity, a lack of self-awareness and shame resilience was another obstacle to student success. The lack of personal awareness of the effects of damaging thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that students held and exhibited that contributed to their academic failure in their first semester became evident as they talked about growth that occurred in those areas during their second semester. As previously discussed, many students talked about how they did not tell significant adults in their lives about their probationary status. Additionally, many students withdrew from their academic lives in various ways, including that they stopped attending classes, and did not reach out for help when they needed it. Withdrawing behaviors such as these are indicative of a lack of shame resilience in response to their academic failure. Brown (2008) described shame screens as defense mechanisms which individuals employ when they experience shame. Withdrawing, keeping secrets, or remaining silent in the face of shame is a maladaptive
response. Building shame resilience involves the ability to practice critical self-awareness. This involves recognizing the factors that contribute to shame, i.e., recognizing the true causes of academic failure versus false causes such as believing one is not worthy of success based on false truths. Brown further explained that shame resilience involves positive relationships with others and the ability to tell one’s story from a place of vulnerability where shame can be talked about in order to ask for help, rather than keeping experiences in secrecy and silence.

The process of reflecting and contemplating the reasons for their academic probation began for most students when they received notice that they were on academic probation after their first semester. That realization, for most, seemed to mark the beginning of growth in the area of building shame resilience for the students I interviewed as an outcome of their desire to improve their academic standing. At the point of the interviews, which took place at the end of their freshmen year, students were able to talk about growth they experienced throughout their first year. Establishing a baseline for their feelings and thoughts when they first learned they were on probation provided a metric and comparison to be able to gain their post-course perspectives on their thoughts and feelings related to recovering their academic standing.

**Theme 2: New and Emerging Positive Growth**

The second major theme that emerged from the interviews was that all students experienced new growth and made positive strides. This growth contributed to all but one interview participant avoiding academic dismissal and being retained at the institution either on extended probation or in good standing. The students had a desire to improve their academic standing and, along with that, their self-image. Growth varied and was individualized for each student; yet, obvious subthemes reflecting growth in the areas of self-awareness and shame resilience, improved academic identity, and improved life management skills, emerged from the
interview data. These subthemes are discussed in detail below, along with the subthemes of interview participants’ uncomfortable feelings and positive attribution perspective connected to being on probation, and the importance of having a champion as a catalyst, facilitator, and supporter of the students’ growth and success.

Subtheme 2.1: Positive attribution perspective. In regard to students’ initial cognitive and emotional responses to news of their probationary status, interview participants reported an array of thoughts and accompanying emotions. The emotional responses included sadness, embarrassment, disappointment, shame, and anger. Yet, a theme that became evident throughout the interview process as students were discussing their uncomfortable feelings was that almost all students paired their unpleasant feelings with statements reflecting a positive attribution perspective. Discerning the underlying causes of the troubling feelings required an examination of the cognitive statements of attribution in concert with the feeling statements. For instance, when describing how she felt upon learning of her probationary status, Karen had difficulty pinpointing an emotion. She said, “It wasn’t a happy feeling, of course. It was eye-opening… It was weird. I didn’t really know how to feel… It’s very uneasy.” She continued, saying “I don’t know. It’s just any adjective related to sad…” Discerning whether this was a shame statement where she felt sad about herself as a person or a statement where he felt sad about her status based on her performance was discernable by considering her follow-up statement where she said, “I know I can be a straight ‘B or better’ student… But I just didn’t put the work in to do that.” Here, Karen’s statements indicate a positive attribution perspective, where her feeling of sadness was coupled with an indication that she felt she could have had a different outcome if she had employed different behaviors. Reflecting on how her positive mindset influenced her
growth in her second semester, she said, “I wouldn’t admit defeat, so I just kept trying to do it, and not accept that I just wasn’t going to do well.”

The emotion that Jim and Rick expressed was disappointment, with both students taking responsibility for their probationary status. Jim said, “I was disappointed in myself because it was my fault. I was being lazy…so I have accepted it as a good thing.” Further taking responsibility, he said, “I feel like if I would take my medication, I would be getting all the stuff done that I don’t like doing…” Rick also said he was disappointed and that being on probation was his fault. Describing what he said to his mother, he stated, “I told her it was my fault, and that there was nobody else to blame but myself, and she respected that I took ownership for my responsibilities.” When asked to describe her initial thoughts about being on probation, Lucy replied, “…it’s a big deal to me to have good grades and be successful, and I know I wasn’t being successful. I know that that was on me, and that I put myself into that position, so I was hard on myself.” Lucy said, “I felt a little bit like a failure, like I could have done better,” and that she cried when she learned she was on probation. She said she felt “Anger, frustration, and sadness.” Jay also said, “I felt sad…I just could not believe it was happening to me because I have always been a good student. I felt like, ‘Great way to start the year!’” Anna described her reaction to this news by saying “It wasn’t a happy feeling, of course. It was eye-opening. I am all about positive mindset…I know I am not dumb…so I’m like, ‘You know what you are, even though the numbers are saying that, you know you can improve and make them [the numbers] say whatever you want them to say.’” Ray also showed positive attribution perspective. Initially, he was “shocked” and “frustrated.” He explained his thought process, saying, “I thought, ‘Throughout my academic career, I have not been afraid of failure, because if you’re afraid of failing, then you can’t ever move forward, and you’re just stuck at that spot. So, I just embraced
it as my step forward.” Later, he added, “It goes back to the point that I obviously didn’t try…That’s why I’m in this position, which I don’t think I should be. But then again, it’s my fault.” Similarly, Anna said “I was upset about it, but then I realized it is my fault, but at the same time, I had too much going on. I was upset about it, but then realized I could overcome it.” Rex stated, “I had regret. I thought, ‘This is not good.’” He went on to say he “wasn’t super messed up or upset about it” because he has the army as a back-up plan. Josh stated that he wasn’t too surprised about being on probation because he was aware that the first semester did not go well. Overall, these students expressed an array of uncomfortable or uneasy feelings about being on probation; yet, their follow-up statements seemed indicative of a positive attribution perspective where they took responsibility for their academic failures and had a mindset of confidence in their abilities to change their status in a positive way.

There were three students whose statements seemed to align more with feelings of shame. In learning about her probation, Rose said, “…I just felt really shameful… because I saw all these other kids that are first-generation college students that are doing amazing…and then here’s me struggling.” The pressure of not wanting to disappoint her family, and to try to live up to expectations of the model minority as an Asian student, was a heavy burden for her. Because of this, she did not tell her parents about her situation. “I told my boyfriend because I was scared to tell my family.” Although Jake did not say that he was a failure directly, he may have seen his failure as a reflection of himself as a person as opposed to failed actions. Jake said he felt “scared” to tell his parents about his probationary status. He said, “My parents used to almost dislike me, especially my mom. …For some reason, out of all the bunch, I have had the most academic struggles out of anybody in my family.” Feeling that the approval of others is based on one’s performance can elicit shame when the performance is not up to a certain standard. Jim
stated, “I’m stupid. I’m just going to say I’m a big ball of the most self-deprecation you’ll ever hear.” In another part of his interview, as previously discussed, Jim took responsibility for his academic failure. Yet, his statements about himself also reflected a level of self-hatred and shame.

**Subtheme 2.2: Improved self-awareness and shame resilience.** With the previous subtheme, the discussion centered on how the uncomfortable feelings associated with being on probation expressed by the interview participants were paired with a positive attribution perspective for most, reflecting belief in their ability to improve their academic status. A key component to their ability to improve was that they showed growth in self-awareness and shame resilience. One prompt that influenced students’ growth in this area was the personal reflection papers that many completed as a requirement in their academic recovery courses. Regarding spending intentional time on self-reflection, Rick commented, “Yeah, it was a new type of experience, because I never really wrote about myself per se… Having to write an essay about myself, and what I have gone through last semester, was new, different, and unique.” Lori also commented, “She [the instructor] had us do writing assignments… It definitely helped, like the questions it asked for the prompt would get you to think about what you need to fix, and how to do that.” Karen added to the theme, stating, “The papers really helped. They were good prompts to help me figure out what I need to work on.” Similarly, Anna said, “The papers about reflecting on yourself helped. It was an insight. Each different question just helped me know more about my growth, how I’m changing, and how this is different from the past, and everything.”

Some of the areas in which students become more self-aware included their study preferences, their strengths and weaknesses, perspectives in healthy relationships, what they wanted to change in their lives, and the power of their minds. Shelly said, “I feel like the mind is
a very powerful thing and it can translate into a lot of different things and make you feel a lot of
different things. If you know how to go about reading what it’s telling you, then you’re pretty
good. There are ways to process that.” Concerning relationships, Jay commented, “I learned to
let certain people into my life, and definitely push away the people that I should not have in my
life so that I can be more successful overall as a student and as a person in general. I learned how
to be more successful overall.”

Specific to studying, Rick said the assignment to log study hours in the Bronco Study
Zone as a requirement of the recovery course “was different” and created awareness about the
type of study environment that works best for him. He said, “Everyone there was doing work so
nobody was really distracting everybody else, which was nice, because our class wouldn’t sit
together but we would just be there and not just cram down stuff as fast as I could, as much as I
could.” Rose also said, “Making me go to the Bronco Study Zone was a good one. I didn’t touch
any resources for [the institution] because I didn’t know how… I was scared.” Similarly, Anna
said, “My instructor really helped us to figure out what works for us as far as studying…”
Pointing out our problems and finding ways to fix our problems. I really like that.” In terms of
awareness of specific strengths and weaknesses, Lucy said that learning she was an “arranger
and a developer” put her “in a better mindset.” It confirmed for her that her organizational skills
and her ability to “look for different ways to do things or finding different ways to solve
problems” were indeed unique strengths of which she was proud.

Jay and Josh made comments reflecting a more universal growth in self-awareness.

About the class, Jay said, “It definitely helped me learn more about myself…it’s nice to look at
my entire life, and see patterns, and find out what I should do to make myself more successful in
all parts of my life, not just academically.” She said she learned, “Just how to conquer my
struggles and find out what I can do to better myself in the future.” Josh said, “It [the class] showed me where I was and why I was there, and more so, it helped me to learn the reasons why I was there, to face it, say it, and want to change it. The instructor would always ask us, ‘Well, what are you guys doing now that’s different?’ And I would be like, ‘Okay, if I wasn’t doing anything, I would make sure that the next time she asked, that I would do something small.’”

This example, as well as testimonies from several students who talked about the benefits of the self-reflection papers, makes that case that being offered the opportunity to tell their stories from a place of vulnerability where they shared their feelings, struggles, and thought processes was powerful to students in helping them develop self-awareness. Developing skill in how to recognize their feelings and reflect on what those feelings meant to their success helped them build shame resilience. Building shame resilience involves four elements: (a) conceptualizing shame – the ability to identify and recognize shame triggers, (b) developing and practicing critical awareness – reality checking the messages and factors that contribute to shame, (c) telling our story to trusted people to create empathy and connection, and (d) speaking our shame – talking about how one is feeling and asking for help (Brown, 2015). Overall, the academic recovery course, and in particular, the self-reflection papers, helped students increase self-awareness and shame resilience – growth that was key to their recovery process.

**Subtheme 2.3: Improved academic identity.** In addition to improved self-awareness, the data also indicated that interview participants experienced improvement in their academic identity. This played out in several ways including improved time management, the acquisition of new study skills, learning to set goals, understanding institutional policies and procedures, settling in on a major, following through with visiting instructors, and the development of more self-confidence as a student in general.
Learning to effectively prioritize and manage study time was a challenge area in which many interviewees improved. Karen stated, “For time management in general, I would say I have gotten a lot better at getting everything done, and just sitting down and doing it instead of waiting until the day before… So I could not have seven assignments I had to do in one day, so that was been helpful.” Jake’s comments added to the theme. He stated, “…In the beginning, I wasn’t sure how to dedicate my time, but going through the class, and just being more focused this semester, it has just made my grades only improve.” Similarly, Anna said, “I take time out to actually do my work, which is something different than what I did last semester.” Anna commented on how the planner assignment in her course, where she had to demonstrate she was using her planner, helped her improve time management skills needed to set and reach goals.

This semester I was more goal-oriented. I set more goals for myself. I had a planner. I set goals for the week or for the day, and then I would accomplish them. And then, afterwards, I would be like, “Okay. I deserve a brownie or something.”

In addition to time management and goal setting, the course also helped students improve and learn additional study skills. Karen said, “I’ve gotten a lot better with my homework habits and study habits.” Anna explained her perspective in more detail:

We started talking about different ways of studying. There were ways that I never really knew. I knew people who rewrote their notes, but I never thought that was a way of studying. I started rewriting my notes…so when I tried it, I was like, ‘Okay, this works for me too!

Rex also talked about the power of using class notes for success:

Going through my notes and Quizlet helped a lot. So then, I was literally at the gym and between repetitions, I would switch through seven or eight flashcards. I did that three
days before the test. And once I was taking the test, I was like “Oh, I know all this stuff!”
It was very cool.

Jake also echoed this technique, stating, “I also started using flashcards again, and using Quizlet, and I go over each card four or five times. And also, I do mnemonic techniques… I also use acronyms in my notes.”

Finally, Josh appreciated learning the importance of reading the syllabi for his second-semester courses. “I am not used to needing a syllabus at all. But this semester especially, I made sure to double-check everything, and also, I made sure I didn’t miss anything.” Becoming aware of new study techniques and trying them effected improved academic outcomes for these students.

Another academic identity-related growth area, in addition to trying new study techniques, was experienced by Lori, Josh, and Jim as they learned the value of talking to professors which also helped in understanding higher education culture. Lori said, “Definitely going to the professors’ office hours helps.” Josh talked about how an assignment in the recovery course forced him to step out of his comfort zone and how that was growth for him in his second semester, compared to his first semester:

I didn’t use any of the options they had for office hours. So [this semester] I went to a couple of her [an instructor’s] office hours, and it definitely helped, because she definitely knows what she’s teaching, but it’s different in class than in office hours, because she’ll explain herself in office hours.

Josh echoed that sentiment, saying, “I realized that was bad [not talking to instructors] and I started doing it more this semester to talk to professors… I can definitely see the benefit…” Talking to his professor helped Josh make a decision to drop a course in his second semester.
This reflected new learning around understanding institutional policies and procedures compared to his first semester where he was too late in dropping a course resulting in him failing the course. The same was true for Rex who said he kept better track of drop dates in his second semester. He said, “I was like, ‘Oh, I’m not going to do very well in these classes.’ And I dropped them early on, and I was able to focus on my other classes, and I did pretty well in those ones so far.” This was growth in terms of understanding and engaging institutional policies and procedures.

In addition to getting the hang of the policies, behaviors, activities, and habits needed to be a successful college student, feeling confident about one’s major and chosen career path provides a key reason to employ the skills and knowledge. This was an area where several students were making progress but were still in a state of exploration. Rick, Shelly, Jake, and Josh all switched their major from first semester to second semester or were leaning towards doing so. Rick said:

I was a communication major. I started with that, and then, this semester, I switched. I’m trying to figure out what I want to be, or what I want to do, because I really don’t know right now, but I’m just trying to figure it out step-by-step. So, I think I’m going to stay with entrepreneurship for right now, because it seems like a better fit for me.

For Shelly, Rex, and Jake, external influencers impacted their decision-making process. For Shelly, an internship at her mother’s company influenced her decision to switch her major. “I changed my major, and I picked most of my new fall classes. I came into special education, but I switched to communication because I got an internship this summer at Ford.” Rex talked about majoring in pre-med. He also referenced his options with the army:
I have to figure out my major, what I want to do in the army, what I want to do after the army, and a bunch of stuff like that…I’m still deciding between going on active duty as an officer and setting my degree on the back burner, doing some cool active army stuff for a couple of years.

Jake decided that engineering was not for him and he was exploring other options. “I am still not sure exactly what I want to do, but I do have something in mind.” He added, “So, since I’m not doing engineering anymore, I thought about integrated supply management…integrated supply management still has the concepts of engineering, combined with concepts of business.” Jake was leaning in this direction because his friend’s parents work in the field and told him about it.

Some students cited other influences on their thought processes regarding changing their major. Josh talked about needing to sign a lease first, and then “…finally declare a major for athletic training.” Lori said she is “Okay with my major right now,” and “I do have a different major in mind if I can’t pass this semester… I want to major in French because that was my favorite subject during high school.” Jim seemed to be the most distraught of the interviewees about his major:

I still haven’t signed up for classes, because I don’t know what major I want, and I don’t know what I want to be. I don’t know what I want to do, so I don’t know what to sign up for. I feel like I’m taking all these classes, like computer programming, which I’m never going to do anything with, so why the hell am I taking it? And then, it ends up hurting me, so that makes me even more made. I don’t know. Sometimes, I just feel like this whole school thing is not for me, and I’m wasting my time. But my mom just tells me, ‘Keep going. Get that degree.’
Rose was still figuring out here major, but at least she had come to the realization that her current major was not right for her. “I spent the majority of my high school career focused on going into the medical field, and now that I’m here, I want to go, but at the same time, I don’t know if I want to go. So, I’m taking all these biology classes and I’m like, ‘I don’t want to do it.’”

Being in a state of confusion about what to major to declare was a strong component of academic identity for these students. While growth was apparent in that some switched their major, or were planning to do so, it was also apparent that this component of academic identity still needed attention for many and was an area with the potential to derail students’ academic plans and goals, particularly for those students still needing to commit to a major.

Subtheme 2.4: Importance of having a champion. A common thread to the growth that students experienced is that their growth mostly happened within the context of positive relationships. Who served as the students’ champion for their success was unique to each student. Some had more than one champion, and the impact of the relationships surfaced in varying ways throughout the interviews.

For most students, the academic recovery course instructor was a significant individual who served as a champion for the students’ success within the larger support system of the overall course. Some indicated that requiring one-on-one meetings with the instructor facilitated a relationship that otherwise would not have happened. Ray said:

My instructor forced us to have meetings, which was the most helpful portion, because I knew that I had somebody there if I needed help...And that impacted me in a positive way. He got to help me with basically everything, and he’s even helping me now in terms of everything.
Karen added to the theme.

It helped a lot, meeting with them [the instructors] at our meetings that we would have. I think we had four meetings, and just talking through my classes, my instructor helped me figure out what I could do to improve my grades and each individual class…I am pretty quiet, so I don’t like to ask questions as much in class…Just him being willing to help and everything just helped me to be able to talk to him about whatever I needed to do.

Jake also met with his instructor four times. He perceived the purpose of the meetings to be, “…so that they [the instructors] can get deep inside what’s on their [the students’] minds, and what they like to do…”

Feeling a personal connection seemed to be a key component to having their instructor as their champion. Rex said, “I like the fact that you meet with the instructor…I had a missing assignment and she brought that up, and I found out what to do on that… It was the best by far.” Rick also talked about the positive relationship he had with his recovery course instructor.

I think I have a better relationship with her than a lot of my other professors or instructors, just because she related to us more, and she knew where we were coming from because she was in our shoes once, she said. So, it was nice to have a teacher than understood where we were coming from… All of her emails she would send to us were heartfelt, and you could tell when you read it, that she cared.

Lori echoed this, stating, “Personality definitely helps, because she was more laid-back, and not so much like, ‘You should do this, or there are going to be repercussions!’” She added, “It was helpful, because I would have personal questions that I needed to ask.” Similarly, Anna stated, “[Her instructor] is really sweet. And when I’m talking to her, she’s really comforting. It’s not like I feel ashamed talking to her…I could just say whatever I felt like to her, and it’s
fine.” Lucy seemed concerned that, because the course was ending, that she would not see her instructor anymore for support. “I’m probably not going to see them again for a while,” she said. “I have contacted [her teacher] so many times…”

One instructor in the Exploratory Gold program bridged the relationship between Shelly’s parents and the support he, as an instructor, provided. Shelly said the instructor would sometimes call her mother so the three of them could discuss challenges Shelly was facing and things she needed to do such as, “holds that I couldn’t figure out…picking my fall classes.” Shelly added, “He helps me with everything in that class.” Jim also talked about the helpfulness of his instructor. “It was good to have someone to talk to, I guess. We have met probably four times now. And then, he actually just called me. We talk a lot on the phone, too.”

There was one student, Jay, who did not have a positive relationship with her academic recovery course. “I had Professor [last name]. She’s not the biggest fan of me…Every time I try to reach out to her, or try to talk to her about my issues, she just doesn’t act like she cares, or she has acted like she has given up at this point.” However, Jay did connect with an instructor in another course. Regarding a grade she got in that course, Jay said, “The professor was so proud of me, and it’s a health class, so he knows all the challenges that I have been facing. He has just been super supportive, and he’s probably the most supportive professor that I have had.” The potential positive impact course instructors can have on their students’ success, and especially students on academic probation, was evident in the interview data.

Besides the course instructor, other significant individuals also served as a champion for some students. These individuals included advisors, employers, sorority peers, and romantic partners. Rex and Lucy found champions for their success within structured organizations of which they were members. Rex spoke positively about the support he received from the ROTC.
In his second semester, he was falling into a pattern of skipping classes. He said, “I talked to one of my ROTC professors, and he harangued me for a minute, and I was like, ‘Okay, I need to start doing better.’ And since then, I have been doing pretty well.” Lucy discussed the benefits of joining a sorority in her second semester. “They have a lot of study events that I attend. I have a scheduled time to do my homework, and I can ask them for help if I need to, and there’s one-on-one, so I feel that it’s helping a lot.” Jim relied on his girlfriend for support:

   My girlfriend is an A student and she makes me work, which is nice…She won’t talk to me until I do mine. She said to me, “Figure out why you can’t do your work.” And she’s also helping me saying, “Screw whatever I was doing. Here’s a new plan.” That’s my life for the summer. She’s going to help me come up with a whole planner and everything, and actually get used to setting that up.

For Jay, a nurse who cared for her when she was in a car accident in high school served as a champion for her success. She said, “If I’m having health issues, her doors are always open, and I’m actually going to be living there over the summer.”

   In terms of parents as champions for the students in their academic recovery process, it was difficult to gage how involved they were in their student’s academic recovery process. Students who did tell their parents about their probationary status tended to tell their mothers. Five students told their mothers, and only one student, Rex, told his father. Rex said, “And he wasn’t super happy about it…I would say he’s [his father] not too supportive; he’s just stepped back.” Karen said, “My dad still doesn’t know, because he would be really mad. My mom was just like, ‘Try harder.”’ Jake said, “I did not want to tell my parents,” Anna said, “I actually didn’t [tell anybody]; and Ray said, “I’m not supposed to be weak. But at the same time, I don’t want to tell anybody, because if I told my parents, they would get all worried.” Similarly, Lori
said, “I really didn’t feel like telling my parents, because I felt like I didn’t want to hear the disappointment, which was eating at me.” Jay said she did not tell her parents; rather, she said, “I told my advisor and my RA.” Having a champion for their success was integral to the interview participants’ growth. For those who did not have a champion for their success outside of the academic recovery course, for various reasons, including the fact that some students did not tell anyone about their probationary status, having the instructor as their success champion during their academic recovery period was important.

**Subtheme 2.5: Improved life management skills.** Not only was the academic recovery course instructor a champion for the students’ success, the course itself also provided a helpful support system for the probationary freshmen, and bridged the support provided by their parents as they learned to improve their own self-management skills. For many, the course provided structure needed to be successful. The interview data revealed that students began to improve their life management skills in varying ways, including managing their time, employing organizational skills, regulating study time, and using institutional resources. Anna talked about the “drastic changes” she made between her first her second semester, improving her grades from E’s to A’s and B’s. When I asked her to what she attributed the change, she replied, “Becoming more self-reliant, making a plan, and just following it. I think that’s what it was…I made sure I did everything in a good amount of time so that I wouldn’t have to cram or stress or anything.” She also said she started to “put schoolwork over social interactions,” and would not go out unless she “did the work for the week…”

The study logs and structured study time in the Bronco Study Zone helped students improve their ability to regulate their study time. Rick, Josh, and Karen all commented on this. Rick stated:
Keeping study logs. We did that every week so it really kept me in line, like, ‘On Mondays this is what I’m going to study, and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, Saturdays, or whatever, this is what I’m doing these days.’ It was a good way to have a set routine...Every Wednesday we would go to the Bronco Study Zone for an hour or so. The Bronco Study Zone was nice. There was no set schedule, but I would know when I would be studying at least for an hour. I know for a fact that it was nice to get that homework done.

Josh commented, “I thought that keeping the study logs was helpful, because then, I could see exactly how much I was putting into stuff, and I could see where I am not putting in as much time, and maybe put aside a little bit more time to do that subject. So, I thought those were helpful.” Karen also talked about the helpfulness of structured study hours. She said she would, “go to the Study Zone, and try to get on top of it before I just dug myself a hole and can’t get myself back out, like last semester.” Lori also grew in her academic confidence. She stated, “It [the class] definitely lived up to my expectations, because I was looking for study habits that I could try to get a hold of so I could maintain getting all the information I need rather than just going at it head-on and just reading and going over notes, that there’s way more than just that.” Shelly also indicated that she was feeling more confident as a student. She stated, “I feel like I finally got the hang of it. In the middle of the second semester, I was like, ‘I was in my zone for hours, just doing homework.’”

In addition to showing growth in their skills to manage their time, some students improved their ability to manage their health and to practice self-care. Proud of her new skills in handling stress, Lucy stated, “I guess there’s a different way to look at things, and instead of all the negativity, just go to somewhere that is more peaceful and relaxing and find ways to take that
out of the classroom, and applying it to everyday life, is helpful.” Also commenting about stress management and taking control of his anxiety, Jake said, “I just decided I would rather just eat well, keep a positive mind, and stay clean.” He added, “It wasn’t until the second semester that I was like, ‘Wow, I could have been doing this the whole time, and that would have been less stress.’” Jim said he recently advocated for his medications with his mother. He said, “I talked to my mom this semester, and I was like, ‘I need it…’ I do need to start taking it again, because it really helps me focus and be able to sit down and work for more than 14 seconds at a time.” Rex also made strides in self-management in the area of health, which also spilled over into academics:

I think having a routine has helped me a lot. I found that if I worked out twice a day instead of once a day, I had better muscles. And I found out that if I ate certain meals at certain times, I did better. And then, I found out that if I went to sleep at this time, I did better. And I found out that if I didn’t drink every night, I did a lot better. And all that tied in. Once I had this built-in schedule, I was like, ‘Oh, okay, why don’t I study for these three hours a night, and then spent those three hours solely on school work.’ And then I can do an hour of Xbox, or something like that.

Lori echoed Rex’s growth when she said, “I figured out the study habits that I need,” and “I figured out time regulation between stuff I want to do, and the stuff I actually need to do.” Self-advocacy in relation to health was a growth area for Jay as well. She said, “Communication is the key. If I had a doctor’s appointment and I had missed class, I definitely send that letter, and show them [instructors] the proof, so that it wasn’t just me lying in bed, avoiding doing anything.” She said the class gave her “the confidence to do so, and the right ways about doing it.” Dealing with her eczema, Shelly said, “I have been taking care of my body like I was at
home. I feel comfortable, and I have been on top of things compared to first semester.” Learning to take the lead on advocating and attending to their health was key to many students’ success.

In addition to all of the indications of how the academic recovery courses helped the students that have been woven throughout the themes and subthemes, several additional comments about the overall helpfulness of the class are worthy of noting “I would say that it [the class] is definitely important for people to take. It helped me a lot to put into perspective what I was doing wrong, and how to correct it.” This statement by Jim was echoed by Lucy who said, “I liked it a lot. I personally liked it, and I would recommend it to people on probation. I think it gives you the time to just know your resources and learn by your resources.” Josh commented on how the class helped him become a better student:

Seeing that there are other people in the same situation has definitely helped a lot. I have taken a lot from what I realized was bad during the first semester, and I improved on that this semester. I have been going to more classes that I thought I would possibly do. I don’t skip very often at all…I have been pretty much on top of making sure any big assignments were turned in on time to the best of my ability.

Rick said that, in his first semester “There was all this stress at first, but then, I got into the swing of things once I was in this recovery class, which helped a lot…It was mainly learning how to keep yourself in line and keeping yourself on track.” He added that the class “Showed me that there was a lot more to college than I thought, really.” Shelly commented, “I thought it was just going to be a class just to make sure we’re here, and that was going to be it… But it did help me a lot. I didn’t expect that much from it, but it did help.” She highlighted some of the benefits:

We do the GPA calculator to make sure we’re on track, and [instructor] would have people come in talking to us about mental health. Then we had someone from the finance
place so he could give us a lesson about saving money. We do simple assignments, like making sure we got on track with doing group work. We would present PowerPoints. I turned in a paper about self-assessment on Thursday.

Karen stated, “It [the class] actually helped me a lot. I learned a lot of stuff in there to help me with time management, or just schedule out study time. I definitely thought for sure it was helpful, and that my mindset has really changed.” Similarly, Jake said, “The class was really good. It was actually better than I thought.” He said the class helped him, “Keep track of our studying, and stay on top of our business, and it actually made me better at organizing my day out than I did the first semester.” Finally, Jake commented, “It helped me manage my day better, and with making out schedules.”

The imposed structure of the academic recovery course seemed integral to helping the students improve and acquire self-regulation and life management skills. The course helped remediate skills for success and provide a bridge over the transition from high school, when their parent(s) controlled aspects of their lives, to college, when they were tasked with managing those areas on their own. The course helped students increase knowledge and awareness, increase and improve skills, and provided opportunities for students to practice application of the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.

**Subtheme 2.6: Improved self-concept and hope for the future.** The interview data revealed that students felt much better about and thought more highly of themselves as college students and in general, as a result of their second-semester academic success and overall improved academic standing. This theme was revealed in the data as students shared their thoughts and feelings in regard to how they thought and felt about themselves at the point of the interviews, compared to when they experienced their academic failure in their semester.
As students talked about how they felt at the end of their second semester, their statements had threads of hope for the future. Rick talked about how he felt about himself in general, reflected on his academic accomplishments, and indicated hope for his future as a college student:

I feel very accomplished, and just good about myself in general… I feel a lot less stressed for sure, because I know I did well this semester, and I know I’m doing well, because I have been studying for all my exams, so I’m preparing myself. I think I’m fine for next semester, for sure. I’m not very stressed out about it. I’m ready for the next step.

Josh also had a positive perspective and was envisioning his future as a college student. “I’m feeling pretty confident in all my grades now… I have really good feelings for next semester, and I can see myself actually continuing that for the rest of college.” Karen was also hopeful for her future and indicated she was willing to help others with what she learned from her probationary experience:

I’m feeling pretty good. I have noticed how much better I’m feeling about going forward in college. I know that now that I have these skills and everything, moving forward in college is going to be a lot better than it was, so I feel pretty optimistic about it. I am a bit more open to talking to other people about it, so that way, they don’t make the same mistakes. Whereas before, I was embarrassed to tell people about it, but now, I’m just like, ‘It is what it is, and I’ll help you not make the same mistakes.

Anna’s comments spoke directly to increased shame resiliency. “I don’t have a shame feeling; I’m more so like, ‘It happened…I’m going to just believe in myself, and I’m going to do it, because I know I can do it.’” Lucy also indicated she was feeling positive about herself and her future. She said, “I feel a little more positive…I think I’m doing pretty well in my classes right
now. I’m excited for finals… I think I’m doing a lot better.” In terms of academic success, Jake indicated he felt happier and had learned from his mistakes. “I would have to say that the second semester was my first academic success of the year… It’s all just learning and finding what motivates you to work hard, be happy, and feel good.” Jake also had a positive perspective, looking back on his probationary experience. “Well, at this point, I realize that whatever I want to do, I will put my best foot forward, and just work hard. You’re going to fail at something, but that’s only going to help you in the future.”

The students’ comments reflected increased confidence and a hope for their futures as college students. Their positive thoughts, feelings, and identities came through as a more positive self-concept overall.

**Theme 3: Motivated to Succeed Academically**

Finding their purpose for wanting to change their academic status in order to avoid academic dismissal and move on toward graduation was a theme that emerged from the interview data. Each student had individualized motivators. Some were motivated by external factors, while others were internally motivated.

**Subtheme 3.1: External motivation.** Jay, Rose, Josh, Anna, Jake, and Rick all cited their families as their motivation for wanting to succeed academically, either not wanting to disappoint them, not wanting to waste their money, or not wanting to be a cause of stress. Jay explained her motivation when describing why she did not tell her parents about her probation:

I didn’t really want to tell my family because I don’t want them to think that I can’t do it, when really, I’m the only one in my family that has tried to be out there, instead of a bartender or waitress. But I didn’t really tell my family, just because I don’t want them to think that I can’t do it, especially during the freshman year in college.
Not wanting to disappoint or stress their parents was motivation for Josh, Rose, Anna, and Jake. Rose did not want to be the only person in her family not succeeding academically, citing accomplishments of her other family members. Additionally, Josh talked about not wanting to waste his parents’ money:

I am not the one paying for my college; my parents are paying. They have always been the ones to make sure that I am set for anything like this. So, just knowing that they paid for all this, and I blew all that off, it just felt like a disappointment…But that being said, I worked my ass off for this semester so far.

Anna was similarly motivated by a desire to avoid disappointing her parents. She talked about having a changed mindset from first semester and described how being on probation was inharmonious with her overall identity:

Being on academic probation is not like me at all, so I don’t want to disappoint my family by doing even worse than this. I had one failure, and I learned from it, and I just want to change it and not have the same failure again. That was my whole mindset, that I don’t want this to happen again, so I’m going to continue to do whatever I can to make sure that doesn’t happen.

Jake added to the theme, saying “I just want to do better, because I don’t want my parents to be so stressed out over me, because I feel like I do this for them, or to myself, but then, I realize that everyone has to go through it eventually. So, I’m going to just have to face it and work as hard as I can.” Rick echoed Jake’s statement and said that he does it [school] for his parents more than for himself. For these students, not wanting to let down their parents was a main motivation to do better.
In addition to family as motivation, the looming threat of academic dismissal was a motivator for Rose, Josh, Karen, Rick, and Shelly. When Rose found out about being on probation, she stated, “I think when it hit me, that was like ‘If you don’t get your grades up, you’re going to get kicked out.’ I think that was my biggest fear.” Josh did not want his education to get “flushed down the drain.” He stated, “On one hand, I am struggling with motivation, but this semester, I’m doing many times better. Part of that is probably because I know that if I don’t do good this semester, then I am really in the drain for the rest of college.” Karen talked about how she would procrastinate in the first semester and was distracted by friends. She had an epiphany and stated, “I was just like, ‘Okay, I’m trying to get my work done.’ And then, obviously, with the probation, I realized I really needed to get my work done, and I have been.” When talking about what motivated him from his first to second semester, Rick said, “Just knowing that I need to get my work done, because if not, then I probably won’t be here next semester, which would suck, because I really like coming here. I really want to keep myself on track and get myself in line.” Shelly also did not want to leave the institution. “[Our instructor] told us how we have to get a 2.0 [GPA] or we’re going to be dismissed, so that really freaked me out, because I didn’t want to leave. I think that’s what started getting me going. It just forced me to get to work, because I want to come back next year.”

**Subtheme 3.2: Internal motivation.** Jay, Rex, Jake, and Rick also made statements that aligned with a sense of internal motivation. Jay was able to see the purpose of college for her overall quality of life, and said, “I want to improve not just my college life, but the rest of my life.” Rex was motivated by wanting to do better than his brother who dropped out of college, and also to do well for himself: “I want to do better than him [his brother] for sure. I am not getting compared to him, because he doesn’t do a lot with his life. And so, I will stick with it just
so I can come out on top and do all these things.” In addition to not wanting to stress his parents as previously indicated, Jake also added, “Whether I’m going to get a job, or a career when I’m older…This is one of the most serious parts of my life.” When talking about pressure he gets from his mother to stay in college, Rick commented, “I just want to figure out what’s best for me.”

The interview participants cited both external and internal motivators for wanting to succeed academically, and some indicated a combination of motivators. Finding their “why,” or their purpose for earning their degree is important to help them persist when facing challenges that have the potential to derail their goals and dreams.

Theme 4: Participants’ Recommendations

If you want to know what students need, ask them. The student voice is important when designing programming to meet their needs. As such, the interview participants were asked to offer suggestions to improve the college experience for students coming after them, based on their perspectives as individuals who experienced academic difficulty in their transition from high school to college, and who participated in an academic recovery course for probationary freshmen.

Subtheme 4.1: Improve transition from high school to college. All students have multiple experiences with professors in college. As previously discussed, students appreciated and valued having connected, caring instructors. Jay, Jake, Rick, and Shelly focused again on this topic when offering suggestions for improving students’ experiences. Jay shared there would be value in instructors being more flexible with students. “People have lives. They [instructors] definitely need to be more flexible with schedules, because a lot of people work. I work, but I can get there [to class] because I live on campus, and it’s more accessible to me, and I don’t have
a regular job schedule. Yeah, it [college] needs to be more flexible.” Jake offered advice to professors along the same line:

I would say that some professors just need to realize that every kid is not the same. Every kid definitely doesn’t learn the same…You try to rush through information, and students are trying to actually learn from this, but when they ask them to go back, you have a certain temper. Some teachers get agitated when students are like, ‘Yeah, could you go back to that second page? I’m sorry, you went by too fast.’ Students are new! They’re trying to learn. They really want to learn. And there is a small percentage of kids who don’t have maturity to do well, and that’s the point…It’s like a mutual relationship…I don’t want them to think I’m like a slacker or anything, because I am not a slacker. I will work my tail off, and whatever it takes, I will do it.

Similarly, Rick focused on a mutual relationship between students and professors, stating “Maybe have a better relationship with the professor, so they understand where you’re coming from, and that you’re struggling, but maybe you need a little extra help. I guess they could be open and willing to listen to what students are going through. Just have an open mind and an open ear.” Shelly also suggested that professors facilitate relationship-building between the students. She talked about a class project where students did a PowerPoint aimed to help the others in the class get to know them. “I’ll start talking towards the end [of the course] because we each did a part about ourselves…So we will have known about each other now. But I think we should have that in the beginning so we would all talk more.” Having instructors as a champion was important to student interview participants, as was discussed in a previous section, and students shared that theme again in their recommendations.
Ray, coming from Chicago, talked about how many students he met in his first year did not have “street smarts” compared to him. He felt that skill was important and brain-stormed ways to apply the concept to acclimating to and thriving in higher education. About his recommendation, he said, “…It’s not academic, like something about life, you are not supposed to teach people how to be street-smart, because it’s just something you pick up from other people. But maybe that, or maybe how to maneuver around, or how to study better.” So, rather than waiting for students to pick up how to maneuver around in college, his suggestion was to teach it. Another suggestion from Ray was to change the way students are tested:

Honestly, if you just bubble in points on a sheet, what the hell does that teach you?

People can memorize the whole practice exam…If you get tested on what you learn, it doesn’t have to be a bubble test, because honestly, I think those are the dumbest ways to learn. But I think maybe an oral test or something, or just writing points on a piece of paper on what you have learned, or what you retain.

For Rex, taking less credits right of high school was his suggestion. He provided an army example to make his point:

 Soldiers are given broomsticks to practice shooting a gun, are shown how to hold the gun, where to put their chin, where to put their hand, position their feet, and breathe. And then, you give them an N16, and then, you slowly build them up until they are near expert marksmen…So, if I could choose… Something like keeping to eight college credit classes. Get a feel for it. Go slow. Because when I jumped in there doing 13 credit hours, I was like, ‘This is crazy!’ I was just coming out of high school…I don’t think any freshmen should try to take the full-time college credit… Throwing them into all that is just causing failures to happen…Build them up. Crawl, walk, and run. I think I had six or
seven friends in college who came out of the National Guard and everything, and I think only one of them is still in, and everybody else quit.

Rex also suggested that professors teach students about the “insane” amount of resources at the institution, including telling students where they can go to find tutoring help. Rose echoed that suggestion, stating “I wish they did talk more about the resources and how you can use them. I think this was my most difficult issue… Do I ask for help? How do I ask them? Do I sit here? Do I go up to the counter and then sit down? What do I do?” For Rose, she indicated there was shame associated with having to ask for help, based on her Asian background, which deterred her from reaching out to learn about resources.

Subtheme 4.2: Improve academic recovery course. In addition to having several suggestions for improving the transition for students from high school to college, the interview participants also suggested improvements for the academic recovery course for students who find themselves on academic probation. The suggestions for improvement fell into the focus areas of teaching study skills and habits, self-reflection, time management, and leveraging the course for more support overall through small groups or coaching.

Ray offered a suggestion to have different levels of the course based on student need that would be determined by a screening tool of some sort. His idea was to give students an initial fake test and based on the results of how they studied for it, put them into a one credit, two credit, or three credit academic recovery course. He explained, “There are different sides to the spectrum, but we are all shoved into one class. Maybe if we could have different levels based on your GPA… For example, you could simulate a real test, and whoever failed, you could ask them, ‘Why did you fail?’ And with that, you would increase their credit hours.” Along similar lines, Rick suggested increasing the course from one to two credits. Lori also spoke about study
habits. She said, “I know from high school, I know many people who did not study whatsoever. Some of them passed, and some of them didn’t, so it would be a good class for people to take to improve studying habits.” Anna had similar thoughts. She said, “As far as the course, I think the assigned study hours for points, that’s a good thing. I like the idea of forcing them to try for an hour every week.”

Related to study skills, time management was the focus for Rex and Lori. When asked what she would suggest for students on probation, Lori combined time management with helping students with life skill management. She replied, “Time management, because I also think that being on your own is a big transition for many people, and they need to learn how to balance social with academic.” Rex took a more practical stance, stating, “I think time management should take precedence over growth and fixed mindset for sure.”

Placing value more on introspection compared to Rex, Josh valued more self-reflection and group discussion. He stated, “I think going a lot more in depth about how we ended up on having to take that class, and why we’re on probation in the first place, can mean a lot. I think they should definitely talk a little bit more about how we got there in the first place and do more activities.” Along the theme of the course as a support system, Lucy suggested, “…A little group to go do homework with one day, or something like that. I feel like we didn’t have any of that.” Similarly, Jay said, “Definitely having more of a support system.” Anna also talked about grouping students for support:

Maybe some type of group that forced you to branch out of your own friend group, because that was my biggest struggle. I did not even want to be friends with any of those people besides those I was already friends with, that I knew from the summer going in. So, something that forced you to mingle more, or just get out there more, would help.
Rex branched out and talked about academic coaching. Again, he used his army experience as an example to make his point:

I would say academic coaching for sure. That is a really cool idea. You messed up, and this is some army mentality stuff, but you already show that you couldn’t handle it, and now, you need some help, so here’s the help. Maybe something like, ‘If you’re on academic probation, every Friday, you’re going to meet with somebody. That’s one of the little rules.’ I could get on that for sure. I just would need somebody to check in with you, making sure you’re doing the right thing, because that’s a more responsible thing. You had to take more responsibility then, because now you have the weekly update, which is what I’m working on. You came to that coach dude, and you’re like, ‘Hey, I have this due two months from now.’ He’s probably going to say, ‘Start working on it now. Get it done in two weeks.’ So then, I think it would be a really smart move.

Lastly, Anna said:

I would recommend the course because it helped me. I would also just recommend that they talk to someone or see someone about it. I didn’t talk to anyone as far as my family about it, but I spent a lot of time in my own head, but not in a negative way. So, something that just keeps giving them positivity.

Based on their lived experiences as probationary freshmen who struggled in the transition from high school to college, the student interview participants talked freely about their ideas to improve the transition and to improve the academic recovery course experience for freshmen on academic probation.
Survey One: Probation Question

The last question on the first survey asked students to “Briefly describe the reason(s) you ended up on academic probation after your first semester.” Completed by 83 students, the aim of this question was to give all students in the pre-course sample the opportunity to explain, from their perspective (even though they only had a few lines to enter text), the reasons why they were on probation. The answers were coded and themed. Several students simply stated factual reasons without any evidence of their processing underlying causes for the factual reasons. Some of these answers included, “I failed a class;” “Because I failed math;” “I failed both math and English which landed me on probation;” “I failed two courses and got a D in another;” “I did awfully my first semester.” Beyond stating factual reasons for their academic probation in terms of them not passing courses, other themes that emerged from this data coincided with the themes that emerged from the interviews. It was difficult to decipher and determine how to code the full meaning of some statements from just a few sentences. For instance, the answer, “Doing poorly and made excuses,” could represent positive or pessimistic attribution perspective, or shame, or a lack of academic identity. Without context for the statement that could have been determined through longer, more in-depth discourse, it was hard to put that statement into one theme. That being said, the themes that emerged from the survey question are discussed below.

Regarding the difficulty of transitioning from high school to college, one student stated, “There was a lot of adjustment and change. When I transitioned to college it overwhelmed me.” Another student stated, “I had a tough time adjusting to the rigors of college.” Some students talked about the difficulty of balancing the demands of work, family, friends, and school. This theme tied into corresponding mental health issues. For instance, one student stated, “A lot of things fell apart in my life and my depression got so bad that I had no motivation to do
anything.” Another student said, “I have severe anxiety/depression so when I’m stressed about everything I have to do, I don’t do any of it.” Yet another student said, “Depression really put me in a hole that’s hard to climb out of.”

Some students also talked about physical health challenges. One student simply answered the question as, “Mono,” presumably referencing mononucleosis. Another student said, “I was hospitalized three times and wasn’t able to finish my classes.” Still another responded, “Went through a lot of health issues that caused a lot of studying issues.” Some students cited personal hardships for the reason they were on probation, including family medical problems, deaths in the family, personal issues, and family “incidences.” One student stated that he “had to move out and find my own apartment because family didn’t accept me after coming out.” Another student talked about an unfortunate situation with his roommate. He stated, “The roommate I was matched with was a drug dealer and extremely inconsiderate so when I needed to sleep so I could be to class on time, I couldn’t. I went to administration with this issue and they (after 2 months) told me to either move out or call 911.”

Developing or underdeveloped academic identity was another major theme that emerged. For some, it came out as not being committed to being a college student. One student stated, “Was unsure if I actually wanted to attend college.” Another said, “College isn’t for me,” and another stated, “I decided to jump into something I really didn’t want.” Other students struggled to understand the policies, mores, and expectations found within higher education culture. “Didn’t know the grading system,” said one student. Another stated, “I didn’t know what I was doing at times. I had no guidance.” Still others commented on a lack of skills and habits needed for success. Comments in relation to this subtheme of academic identity included several comments about a lack of time management. One student said, “I was horrible on study habits
and completing homework, often passing it off last minute, or not doing it at all.” Another simply said, “I have terrible time management skills.” Other students commented on study skills. One student summed it up by stating, “I didn’t know how to study, didn’t seek help.”

Another major theme that emerged from the survey question related to attribution perspective. Many comments indicated that students felt they had control over their success and attributed their probation to behavioral choices. Comments included, “I did not put as much time into school as I should have;” “Lack of effort;” “Didn’t give my best effort;” “I failed my night class because lack of effort;” and “I fucked up, could have done better if I tried hard. It’s not going to happen again.”

Other comments possibly indicated feelings of shame; however, it was difficult to sort out given the brevity of the comments. For instance, the comments, “…didn’t seek help,” and “stopped attending class” could be interpreted as a shame withdrawal coping behaviors, but without additional information, those statements cannot be attributed to shame with full confidence.

The themes that emerged from survey one, where students voiced their perspectives on why they were on academic probation, supported the major themes gleaned from the interviews. These included difficulty in transitioning from high school to college in terms of insufficient life management skills, hardships that occurred during the semester, and underdeveloped academic identity. Also, many comments were indicative of a positive attribution perspective and an emerging academic identity where students were beginning to work through the crisis of their academic failure to unravel and uncover changes needed to move towards an achieved academic identity.
Qualitative Phase Summary

The previous section presents results from the qualitative phase of the study to answer the qualitative research question. Student interview participants provided insight based on their overall experiences transitioning from high school to college, and as probationary freshmen engaged in an academic recovery course. Major themes emerged from these personal experiences and provided insight into the challenges faced by freshmen who ultimately end up on academic probation after their first semester in college. Insufficient life skills, underdeveloped academic identity, underdeveloped self-awareness, and hardships that occurred during the semester, were subthemes that emerged as barriers for student success in the first semester. Interview data revealed that growth experienced in the second semester could be attributed to improvement in the areas of life skill acquisition, self-awareness, and academic identity. In addition, a positive attribution perspective was characteristic of students who participated in the interview phase of the study. Students expressed different motivations for wanting to persist at the institution, including family-related reasons such as not wanting to disappoint parents. The threat of academic dismissal motivated some students, and other unique internal motivations added to the mix of motivators. Finally, students offered suggestions to better support future freshmen in their transition to the institution. Additionally, Phase Two participants offered ideas to improve the academic recovery course experience for those who end up on academic probation at the end of their first year in college.

Several key findings emerged from the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study. Data for these key areas was presented in Chapter 4. Table 13 provides a summary table of the overall findings. In Chapter 5, these key findings will provide the basis for discussion to interpret the results, provide conclusions, and make suggestions for future research.
Table 13
Summary Table of Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1. Regarding freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?</td>
<td>• White students experienced a significant change in shame from pre- to post-course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2. What is the relationship among student reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?</td>
<td>• Moratorium identity, achieved identity, shame, and attribution perspective were statistically correlated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As moratorium identity decreased, achieved identity increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As moratorium identity increased, shame increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As moratorium identity increased, attribution perspective decreased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As achieved identity increased, attribution perspective increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major?</td>
<td>• A statistically significant difference was found between gender regarding shame indicating higher shame was experienced by females compared to males.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4. To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?</td>
<td>• Statistically significant different mean scores for dismissed and retained students in regard to attribution perspective was found where pre-course attribution perspective scores were higher for students retained at the end of the semester compared to students who were academically dismissed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5. How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?</td>
<td>• Theme 1: Difficulty with Transition from High School to College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 1.1: Insufficient life management skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 1.2: Significant hardships occurred during semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 1.3: Underdeveloped academic identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 1.4: Underdeveloped self-awareness and shame resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theme 2: New and Emerging Positive Growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.1: Positive attribution perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.2: Improved self-awareness and shame resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.3: Improved academic identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.4: Importance of having a champion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.5: Improved life management skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 2.6: Improved self-concept and hope for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theme 3: Motivated to Succeed Academically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 3.1: External motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 3.2: Internal motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theme 4: Participants’ Recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 4.1: Improve transition from high school to college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subtheme 4.2: Improve academic recovery course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of Key Findings

Understanding the impact of an academic recovery course on the academic recovery process for probationary freshmen is a complex endeavor that is best explored using a mixed methods approach to gain from both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as insight provided by determining any relationship among these data. The purposes of this mixed methods study were to describe any change in attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity for freshmen on academic probation who were engaged in an academic recovery course as determined through the quantitative phase, and to explore how the course impacted the students’ perceptions of their academic recovery process utilizing data gathered in the qualitative phase. The quantitative and qualitative results were integrated to form a more complete picture of the students’ experiences in the academic recovery course.

The study utilized a mixed methods sequential explanatory approach (Creswell, 2013; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) and was conducted in two phases. In Phase One, a pre- and post-course survey was utilized to answer the four quantitative research questions:

1) Regarding freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in an academic recovery course, what changes occur, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in their reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity?

2) What is the relationship among students’ reported (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs?
3) Do students’ reported changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major?

4) To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity, influence students’ post-course academic standing?

Phase One resulted in 45 matched surveys. In Phase Two, student interviews with 14 participants produced qualitative data to answer the question: How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery, and on any perceived changes in (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, (c) academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?

Data from these two phases of the study produced several key findings which are discussed in this chapter. First, an integrated overview of the findings, including quantitative results and findings extracted from the major themes that emerged from the interview process, is presented. It integrates literature on previous research findings presented in Chapter Two including theories that comprise the theoretical framework used to guide this study: Weiner’s (2008) Theory of Attribution, Brown’s (2008) SRT, and Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008). Next, professional practice implications for supporting the success of incoming freshmen and for probationary freshmen engaged in an academic recovery course are discussed. Finally, the chapter and dissertation conclude by addressing limitations to the study and offering suggestions for future research.

Shame and Gender

The first and third research questions, and their respective results, connected the construct of shame to gender. The quantitative inquiry that produced data for the first research question
revealed a statistically significant effect of gender on shame \((f = 7.35, p = 0.01)\), wherein the mean shame score for females was 7.03 points higher than that for males. The probationary female students experienced more shame associated with their probationary status compared to the male students.

One female student, Rose, when she found out she was on academic probation said, “I felt really shameful… because I saw all these other kids that are first-generation college students that are doing amazing… and then here’s me struggling.” Lori, when speaking about her instructor, said, “It’s not like I feel ashamed talking to her… I could just say whatever I felt like to her, and it’s fine.” Her ability to use the word “shame” in this context indicates that shame is a feeling of which she is cognizant and also that, in referencing a lack of shame when talking with her academic recovery course instructor, she may feel shame when talking to other instructors with whom she does not have the same level of connection.

Literature supports the higher incidence of shame associated with failure for females, compared to males (Brown, 2009; Simpson & Maltese, 2017). According to Brown (2006, 2009), shame is a psycho-social-cultural construct where contradictory role expectations, unwanted identities within social and cultural contexts, and conflicting messages from religion, media, family, and friends, can trigger shame for females. Barriers to shame resilience include a lack of positive relationships, a poor sense belonging, a lack of community resources, negative school environments, or loss of cultural identity (Brown, 2006). While Brown does not refer specifically to failure in higher education when referencing these barriers, the parallel implications are clear. For female freshmen, the transition from high school to college, with a need to establish new relationships, figure out where they fit in, navigate a new environment while negotiating existing
and new identities, provides ample opportunity to experience shame amidst the expectations and messages which Brown references.

In regard to gender and failure, in an article about Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, Simpson and Maltese (2017) indicated that failure, when accompanied by negative emotions, may be more detrimental for females compared to males. They discussed the casual attributions for failure in academic settings for males; in contrast to females, who are more likely to attribute failure to internal, stable factors, such as ability (negative attribution perspective), males attribute failure to internal, unstable factors, such as effort (positive attribution perspective). While this does not speak directly to shame, the experience of negative self-conscious emotions, such as shame, is an affective reaction that often follows failure when failure is perceived through a lens of pessimistic attribution (Gundlach, Douglas, & Martinko, 2002; Weiner, 1985, 2008). Internalized shame, when paired with a pessimistic attribution perspective, can influence a student’s approach to challenges and responses to failure, resulting in negative consequences for academic success and future performance goal orientation. Increasing shame resilience, then, should have a positive impact for all students, and, per the quantitative results related to research question number one, this is particularly relevant to female students on probation.

In regard to female students pursuing STEM majors, with two females pursuing STEM majors in this study (Karen and Rose), the role stereotypes play for females, i.e., girls are not good at science, likely intensified feelings of shame around failure for these students (Nosek et al., 2007). The academic recovery course provided a platform from which to relay this message to probationary females, which prompted inquiry into whether students’ reported changes in
attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity differ by gender, race, and/or major (the third research question for the study).

In regard to shame and females, while not statistically significant, the decreased mean shame change for females (3.77), reflecting an increase in shame resilience was greater than that for males (0.09). This trend in increased shame resilience for females emerged in the interview data for female Phase Two participants. As indicated in the previous section, Anna’s pre-course shame score was a 50, and her post-course shame score was 46. Her interview data indicated an increase in her shame resilience as well. Discussing her post-course feelings, Anna said, “I don’t have a shame feeling; I’m more so like, ‘It happened…I’m going to just believe in myself, and I’m going to do it, because I know I can do it.’” Karen’s shame score also decreased from a 37 to a 31. This is reflected in her mindset concerning her probation. She stated:

I am a little more open to talking to other people about it, so that way, they don’t make the same mistakes. Whereas before, I was embarrassed to tell people about it, now I’m just like, ‘It is what is, and I’ll help you not make the same mistakes.’

Brown (2009) talks about being able to “speak” shame to others as an empowering action to build shame resilience and this is what Karen felt empowered to do as a result of her growth in this area. The research tool used to measure shame was scenario-based and was not focused on a particular population, which may have limited the ability to produce significant findings in this specific population of freshmen on academic probation.

Shame and Race

Regarding race, results indicated a significant change for White students from pre- to post-course ($p = 0.04$). White students experienced a decrease in shame, representing an increase in shame resilience during their academic recovery semester in which they engaged the recovery
course. In fact, the post-shame score for White students was four points lower than the pre-course shame score.

Black or African American students did not experience a significant change in shame pre-course to post-course. One barrier that existed in regard to being able to discuss the implications of this finding is a lack of literature on the topic of African Americans and shame. A brief literature review did not uncover research on this topic, including how African Americans experience shame, as well as how culture and unwanted identities based on stereotypes and expectations placed on African Americans by society might trigger shame. Also, no articles were found on the experiences of African Americans with shame within the context of education. The question remains, then, as to why Black or African American probationary freshmen in the present study did not experience an increase in shame resilience compared to their White counterparts. With much of the growth in new student enrollment projected to come from students of color in the next decade (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014), this quantitative outcome should cause concern for higher education professionals. Furthermore, this finding warrants additional investigation regarding how Black and African American probationary students could be better supported to increase shame resilience.

One clue may be considered from the work of Schreiner, Louis, and Nelson (2012) on student “thriving,” which focused on developing malleable qualities within students and placed responsibility on the institution for reducing barriers to student success. This work indicated that, in terms of faculty/student interactions, Black and African American students benefit the most from interacting with faculty when the students are validated and challenged.

Also, students from minority racial groups may not initiate help-seeking behaviors. For instance, a study by Mortenson et al. (2006) indicated that American students were more likely
to seek support in response to academic failure than their Chinese counterparts. This was seen by Rose, the Asian female who interviewed in the study. She indicated that she was ashamed of being on probation, and that was exasperated by cultural pressure to achieve. “I think that’s where I slipped very hard, because I tried to live up to the model minority.” She also discussed how asking for help is not something that is encouraged in her family based on her race. “…I think this was my most difficult issue… ‘Do I ask for help? How do I ask them? Do I sit here? Do I go up to the counter and then sit down? What do I do?’” She talked about how her family members didn’t need to use resources to be successful. “We didn’t use the resources, and we did all this, so you should be able to [succeed without using resources].” Focusing on helping faculty interact in ways that are positive, relevant, and helpful to Asian American, African American, and other non-White student populations could help foster growth in the area of shame resilience for students in these groups.

For other races in the study, their numbers in the post-course sample used to determine change in the constructs were too small to draw any reliable conclusions. A larger sample size with Latino/a, and American Indian or Alaska Native students would be able to produce data with which reliable conclusions could be drawn regarding any significant shame change results for these other racial groups.

Moratorium Identity

Over 50% of probationary freshmen enrolled in an academic recovery course in the present study had a moratorium academic identity. Among students who were interviewed, nine out of 14 students claimed this identity. A moratorium identity indicates an identity crisis where the individual is in a period of active searching, exploring personal and occupational values and beliefs. A student with this identity may struggle to make commitments, lacking belief in their
ability to resolve their identity crisis and may feel their identity issues are unresolvable. The student may struggle to see how academic life is relevant to him or her personally. Uncertain about their academic identity, students with this status often lack commitment, which may lead to fluctuating motivation to complete academic tasks (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009). Only 27.7% of the 83 probationary freshmen enrolled in an academic recovery course, and three of the 14 students interviewed, had an achieved identity. Students with an achieved identity status are thought to have experienced a crisis, and through their own exploration, have committed to their own set of personal academic beliefs, values, and practices, and are more firmly committed to academic life than students in other identity statuses (Was & Isaacson, 2008; Was et al., 2009).

The student interviews provided insight into the statistical results in this area. Many of the students who interviewed had changed majors, were in the process of changing majors at the time of the interview or were considering changing majors. Exploring major options was a common theme in terms of academic identity for these students. They seemed to be experiencing uneasy emotions around pressure to declare a major. Students who were not committed to a major expressed emotion of shame, anxiety, anger and frustration.

For example, Rick, Shelly, Jake, and Josh all switched their major from first semester to second semester or were leaning towards doing so. Rose was still figuring out her major. She talked about always wanting to go into the medical field, and about how, now that she was taking biology classes, she was in a crisis of academic identity, realizing she did not like what she was learning. Jim was very concerned about his major to the point that he felt his first year in college had been a waste of time. He had not yet signed up for fall classes because he did not have a major and did not know what to sign up for.
The fact that over 50% of the students in the study were in a status of moratorium identity actually represents a better scenario than if there were higher percentages of students in diffused or foreclosed statuses. Students in diffused academic identity statuses are in states of low exploration and low commitment to academia. Students in foreclosed statuses are also in a state of low exploration, but high commitment based on the values and beliefs of someone outside themselves (most likely their parents). Having a moratorium identity status means, based on their own exploration as they work to resolve their identity crisis, students are moving towards a commitment to the institution, practices, and ideals of higher education found within an achieved identity.

**Relationship Among the Constructs**

It is important to consider interactions and relationships between the three constructs utilized in this study and to tease apart how the constructs influence each other. The second research question asked: What is the relationship among students’ reported attribution perspective, trait shame, and academic identity, pre- and post-course; and how does any change in any of these constructs affect the relationship among the constructs? Results indicated that moratorium identity, achieved identity, shame, and attribution perspective were statistically correlated.

The relationship between moratorium identity and achieved identity indicated a moderate correlation such that as moratorium identity decreased, achieved identity increased ($r = -0.32, p = 0.004$). This is an encouraging finding. Students in a moratorium status reflect a state of exploration where they likely have obtained, or are in the process of obtaining, knowledge and resources to help them commit to the ideals, culture, and systems of higher education, including declaring a major. Students in this status are motivated and should eventually reach an achieved
status. Students who moved from moratorium to achieved, which reflects a state of high commitment to academia, during their probationary semester exhibited higher self-esteem, critical thinking skills, and self-awareness. The correlation between these two statuses for students engaged in the academic recovery courses indicated academic identity growth among these students.

Also, moderately correlated were moratorium identity and shame. As moratorium identity increased, shame increased \((r = 0.42, p < 0.001)\). This makes sense, as shame and moratorium identity are both associated with roles. During a moratorium identity status, students are figuring out “what they want to be when they grow up,” as well as the roles they will occupy within their academic and occupational careers (Marcia, 1966, Was & Isaacson, 2008). Shame for both men and women involves conflicting demands and expectations within roles that they choose, and those assigned by society, whether wanted or not (Brown, 2006). In other words, as students move towards achieved academic identity status, their shame will decrease.

Also concerning the construct of shame, although not significant, results indicated a weak negative correlation between attribution perspective and shame \((r = -0.21, p = 0.06)\). As attribution perspective increased, shame decreased. This makes sense and is encouraging. Students with a positive attribution perspective tend to experience guilt over shame in relation to academic failure, while students with a more pessimistic attribution perspective tend to experience shame in association with failure (Gundlach, Douglas, & Martinko, 2002; Weiner, 1982, 1985). This correlation between shame and attribution perspective indicates that students who move toward a positive outlook experience are more likely to experience positive versus negative self-conscious emotions such as shame.
Between moratorium identity and attribution perspective, a weak correlation was indicated where, as moratorium identity increased, attribution perspective decreased ($r = -0.27, p = 0.02$). Having a stronger attribution perspective, where one feels in control of their success outcomes, aligns with an achieved identity. In other words, the more students feel in control over their successes and failures as they develop a more positive attribution perspective, the closer they move toward an achieved identity. This is corroborated with the correlation between achieved identity and attribution perspective ($r = .14, p = .23$). This positive correlation is indicative of positive growth for students engaged in a recovery course in this study.

**Attribution Perspective and Academic Standing**

The fourth research question for the study was: To what extent do any combination of student factors, or set of student characteristics, including pre-course (a) attribution perspective, (b) trait shame, and (c) academic identity influence students’ post-course academic standing? Results indicated significantly different mean scores for attribution perspective between dismissed ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 2.58$) and retained ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 2.53$) students ($t = -2.22; p = 0.03$). Pre-course attribution perspective scores were 1.25 points higher for students retained at the end of the semester compared to students who were academically dismissed.

Individuals with a positive attribution tend to attribute failures to controllable, unstable causes and feel they can change their academic outcomes through increased effort. Students with a more positive attribution perspective respond to their academic failure by employing success strategies within a growth mindset wherein they believe they can learn from their mistakes (Clifford, Kim, & McDonald, 1988; Mortenson, 2006; Smiley, Buttitta, Chung, Dubon, & Chang, 2016). In contrast, students with a negative attribution perspective, tend to attribute their academic failures to uncontrollable causes and cope by complaining, avoidance, and withdrawal.
behaviors (Mortenson, 2006; Smiley et al., 2016; Lou & Noels, 2017). Relating shame to attribution perspective, Brown (2008) suggested that withdrawing is a maladaptive coping strategy for shame, or a shame screen. Withdrawal behaviors do not contribute to the academic well-being of probationary students.

The correlation between attribution perspective and academic standing suggests that attribution perspective effects retention for probation freshmen. Specifically, results suggest that when students have a more positive attribution perspective, and when they take responsibility for their academic success or failure, they are more likely to be retained to the institution versus being academic dismissed at the end of their probationary semester. Students who participated in the course throughout the semester (as indicated by their being in attendance during the last course in which the second survey was administered) had the highest retention rates. Consistent attendance was an indicator of students taking responsibility for their success and showing a commitment to behaviors that coincide with a positive attribution perspective. Additionally, students who interviewed were among those who attended the last course. Data gathered from the students who interviewed was also consistent with a positive attribution perspective, as previously discussed. Focusing on activities to improve attribution perspective for probationary students, therefore, is a worthy cause.

**Life Management Skills**

The fifth research question for this study was: How do students describe and make meaning of their experiences in the course in regard to its influence on their academic recovery, and on any perceived changes in attribution perspective, trait shame, academic identity, and on the helpfulness of the course to their academic recovery?
Consistent with previous work, students described the academic recovery course as being helpful to move the needle on their academic success in a plethora of ways, including time management, study strategies, and goal setting. (Barry, 2015; Blaney, 2014; Hendrickson, 2014; Hoops, Yu, Burridge, & Wolters, 2015; Hutson, 2006; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007; Lipsky & Ender, 1990; Mellor et al., 2015; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Seto-Friel, 2016; Shea, 2018; Weiss et al., 2011). In addition to the expected benefits of the course based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2, a major theme that emerged in this study was that students struggled in the area of life management as they transitioned away from their parents to live on their own as college students. Students discussed how having a lack of structure in college as compared to high school was a barrier to their successful transition. The imposed structure of the academic recovery course seemed integral to helping the interview participants improve and acquire self-regulation and life management skills. The structure helped bridge their abilities from their time in high school when their parents held control over aspects of their lives to when, in college, they were tasked with managing those areas on their own, without the level of knowledge, skill, and practice needed to be successful.

In addition to the structure that the course provided, the importance of a champion emerged as a key finding. They discussed the need for a support person to help keep them on track and guide their progress, as well as helping them to manage health-related challenges away from the structure and support of their parents. While this is not a novel finding, intersecting this with the need for life skill development and structure adds a different perspective to the importance of having a champion. Students need a champion to impart knowledge, encourage behaviors, hold them accountable, and monitor systems of structure in which this growth can happen.
Champions can be a parent, another student, a staff member, or an instructor. Knowing that not all students will come to college with a champion outside the institution, we must provide this structure at some level for all students. Students talked about how their academic recovery course instructor was an important source of support. Bain (2011) discussed what the best college teachers do, which includes developing an appreciation of the strengths and assets that students bring to the environment, treating students with respect, and trusting that they are capable of learning. Aligned with this approach, instructors could help students reframe failure as a temporary setback and an opportunity for growth.

Based on the findings that reflect the importance of students having a champion for their success, and their perspectives on characteristics that influence a positive student/instructor connection and experience, I offer a CLEAR model to help guide individuals hoping to serve as a success champion for students:

- **C** – Connect
- **L** – Love
- **E** – Engage and Empower
- **A** – Accelerate
- **R** – Release

When a student has a champion for their success, one who can Connect with them, Love or care for them in a way where the student receives and believes that they are cared for and that they belong, then that student’s champion can Engage and Empower their growth and learning. The student will then take that growth and Accelerate by applying their new and improved perspectives, identities, and understandings to other areas of their lives, eventually move forward from a place of empowered autonomy. This Release, whereby the student no longer needs the mentor, means the work has been successful.
Managing health-related issues was a strong theme in this study. While mental health challenges for college students is not new, there has been a sharp rise in mental health concerns for students in the last decade. A 2017 survey by the American College Health Association found that 39% of college students reported experiencing depression to the level where they were having trouble functioning, and 6% said that they had experienced overwhelming anxiety in the previous 12 months (American College, 2018).

One distinguishing factor about the present versus previous studies is the timing, wherein students in the present study are part of Generation Z (Gen Z; born between 1996 and 2011), who are also parented by people from Millennial Generation Y. Students on the early side of the Gen Z cohort have just started entering college. According to Mintz (2019), these students are associated with having overprotective parents and being immersed in social media.

**Overprotective parents.** Mintz (2019) suggests that Gen Z students have been raised by “intense, overly protective parents” who have attempted to shield their children from risk, have paid close attention to their emotional well-being, and have sought to prevent them from boredom. The parents of Gen Z students lived through the recession and, as a result, they want their children to earn a degree in four years and get a well-paying job. As such, these parents are involved in their children’s’ lives in order to give them an upper-hand and make them competitive in the working world (Segran, 2016). Raising their children during times of economic and social uncertainty may explain, in part, these parents’ tendencies to protect their children. This contextual understanding of incoming freshmen helps explain why they have not developed life management and soft skills. Protected from opportunities to take risks and to experience and learn from failure equates to students not learning skills and behaviors they would have developed, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and resilience.
**Social media and mental health.** In addition to being over-protected, Gen Z students do much of their socializing online rather than spending time with their peers face-to-face. Twenge (2107) describes the effects of the launch of the iPhone in 2007. After its launch, a sharp decline was seen in dating and hanging out with friends, and Gen Z students are experiencing sharp increases in the need for mental health care. Many are growing up anxious and depressed. Over the past decade, the number of American children and teenagers admitted to children’s hospitals for reporting suicidal thoughts related to anxiety and depression has more than doubled. The suicide rate for 15-to-19-year-olds increased between 2007 and 2015 by 30% for boys and more than 50% for girls.

Overprotection by parents, combined with the introduction of the smart phone and the influences of social media, has contributed to challenges faced by institutions of higher education in terms of meeting the needs of Generation Z. The task for institutions is to strategize how best to respond and meet the needs of these students.

**Implications for Practice**

The previous discussion provided broad information to inform the complex issues of student success and retention, particularly for probationary freshmen in a state of academic crisis. The following section offers some suggestions for practice based on the results of the present study.

**Before Students Arrive on Campus**

Support for students can begin as early as at the time of admission to the institution. In high school, the task of teachers is to prepare students academically. Sometimes, however, a focus on academic preparation alone comes at the expense of life skills development. To help students successfully transition from high school to college, institutions of higher education
could expand their communication with parents, beginning the summer before their students arrives on campus. Communication campaigns could aim to help students develop soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to effectively communicate face-to-face with others, as well as the resiliency required to successfully transition from their home environment to college. Messaging in the form of videos, online modules, emails, and even on-campus workshops could encourage parents to start transitioning their student before they leave for college. For instance, parents of students who receive physical or mental health care, e.g., prescriptions for diagnosis such as ADHD, could be supported by institutions encouraging them to talk to their students before they get to campus to emphasize how important it is to continue care in college, and to help them understand that the first semester in college is not the time to go off their medications. Institutions could educate parents and students about support resources and the logistics of accessing such services, such as how many times per semester a student can see an on-campus therapist versus a therapist not affiliated with the institution, as well as disseminating information about factors such as the cost of services and types of insurance accepted.

As most students do not receive education in high school on the importance of sleep for overall health, informing parents on this topic and encouraging them to talk to their students about sleep, could allow students opportunities to practice self-regulation and develop resiliency skills. For instance, letting their student regulate their bedtime and sleep patterns while still in high school would provide learning opportunities to have meaningful discussions about the importance of setting up a sleep schedule. Related to establishing healthy sleep habits, parents could talk to students honestly about other health-related topics, such as drinking and using other substances, like marijuana or electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes). Being realistic about total
abstinence from using alcohol and other substances, institutions could point parents to articles to help them talk to their students about how marijuana use reduces the ability to focus and to remember what they learn. This could be explained within the context of conversations around harm reduction to help students decide before they get to college what their boundaries regarding potentially harmful behaviors will be. Institutions could also help parents open discussions to let their students know that stress in relation to preparing for exams and making new friends, for instance, is normal. Having these types of honest and vulnerable discussions can help make it normal for students to check in with parents or other professionals about emotions, physical health, and emotional wellness.

In terms of soft skills and other basic life skills, parents could help students by encouraging intentional practice with tasks, such as making phone calls. For instance, parents could support students in setting up a first counseling appointment before they get to campus to help bridge their care. Parents could help students manage a budget and make decisions about how they will spend their money, as well as basic skill such as how to buy a stamp, fold a letter, pay a bill, ask someone for information or directions, learn how to use public transportation, etc.

**In the First Semester**

Understanding that students are coming to campus without the necessary skills to manage their own lives, institutions of higher education need to provide structure in their first semester to help remediate the lack of skills in this area. Focusing on the challenges and problems that students have in their transition from high school to college based on their lack of skills, discipline, knowledge, self-regulation, etc., which is framed from deficit thinking, is not the best frame. Rather, flipping and reframing the problem to view it as an opportunity for the institution to help bridge these gaps for students opens the door to creative thinking and positive discussions...
geared toward productive action and outcomes. Changing the culture from seeing the student as “at-risk” to seeing the student as “at-promise” when supported, changes the rules of the game, putting the ball in the court of the institution.

To support students in their first semester, many institutions offer first-year experience courses. Within these courses, instructors could employ weekly check-ins to help students review their prior week and plan their upcoming week. Students could be supported to use a planner, set goals, and follow through on new activities, like going to meet with a professor face-to-face. Helping students develop life-management skills (time management, face-to-face communication, study management, balancing social life and school, etc.) by incorporating these life management lessons into courses for first-semester success could help bridge the gap between high school (when parents managed many of these facets of the students’ lives) and college (when students effectively take the lead on managing these areas of their lives themselves).

In addition to helping students develop skills needed for success, allowing students time to decide on a major is important. Providing an identity for undecided or exploring students that is not affiliated with shame or prefixes of “un” (as in “undecided”) or “ex” (as in “exploring”) is important to the development of belonging and the understanding that it is okay to be vulnerable in not having everything figured out right away. Institutions that do not have a distinct college for students who are in a state of major exploration, which can feel like a crisis, could benefit from structuring the student experience so that there is a positive identity associated with being undecided or exploring. Guiding students through a dedicated system where specific support can be offered to exploring students would help bridge the gap between moratorium and achieved academic identity and reduce shame for those who aren’t affiliated with specific major.
Faculty and Staff Development

The design of the curricula, how the lessons are delivered, and the attitudes and skills of instructors in first-year seminars, academic recovery courses, and all the other topic courses offered throughout the institution, are likely to have large effects on the student experience in the classroom. Equipping instructors with information and skills to help them engage students holistically, including students of color, students with mental and physical health issues, and students who show signs of struggle, as evidenced by low grades, missing assignments or poor attendance, is key to student academic success. Teachers in the kindergarten through twelve grade school (K-12) system received instruction during their college career on classroom design, pedagogical methods, and theories of student development and learning. Instructors in higher education, while wonderful experts in their content area, typically have not benefited from similar learning opportunities. Adapting the instruction that teachers in the K-12 system receive to instructors in higher education can help them create learning environments that assist students in the development of dispositions and skills needed to persevere in the face of challenge and failure.

College and university students experience higher education through lenses framed by their intersecting identities, the institutional environment, and other dispositional and external factors (Carter, 2005). Engaging students within this complex system of internal and external factors begins with instructors’ ability to connect with their students, especially those who are different from themselves (Hernandez, 2015). Connection and positive student-faculty interactions requires a level of understanding about the students (Schreiner, Louis, & Nelson, 2012). Providing information to instructors on topics such as student identity development and the nuances of intersecting identities, for instance, could help create inclusive learning
environments where all students, especially students within the growing non-White populations, could find a sense of belonging. For instance, Cammarota (2006) discussed the influence of racism on the experiences of Latino students in education and how the history of racism in our country influences how instructors perceive students, and in turn, how students of color perceive themselves. Taking this further, Cammarota suggested that this ideological aspect regarding instructors’ perceptions of minority students’ abilities may cause instructors to negatively perceive or even ignore their students’ intellectual potential. For instance, in a study by Harber et al. (2012), feedback on writing assignments given to students of color compared to White students was shown to be representative of low expectations. Schreiner (2017), in her article discussing the privilege of grit, explains that faculty express shock when they learn about these topics and operate from a place of privilege with their lack of awareness that such bias could work against students from certain populations because they, themselves, did not experience similar bias when they were in college.

Helping students feel cared for and valued is also important for the classroom experience. Delivering information on critical care theory to instructors and highlighting the importance of caring when working with all students, including ethnic minorities, is important to develop caring dispositions (Albers & Frederick, 2013; Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Rolon-Dow, 2005). This need was expressed by multiple students interviewed in the present study, who talked about the importance of having a caring connection with their instructors. The ultimate show of caring is for instructors and staff to learn the individual stories of their students. Sometimes, however, it is impossible for instructors teaching large classes to learn the individual story of each student in their class. However, if students see evidence of caring, such as an attempt to learn students’ names, taking the time to talk to students before and after class, or reaching out to students who
are absent, showing signs of being distressed, or turning in poor quality work, then students are more likely to feel they are cared for and that they matter.

When connection and caring are established, setting up a classroom environment that has a positive climate for using failure as opportunity for learning will influence students’ development of positive attribution, shame resilience, and academic identity through positive failure-reaction exercises (Henry, Shorter, Charkoudian, Heemstra, & Corwin, 2019). Instructors can help students practice reframing failure from something that produces shame to something that provides an opportunity for growth by setting students up for “productive failure” (Kapur, 2010, 2016). The idea is to engage students in tasks that are slightly beyond their skill level that they are likely to fail. Exercises in productive failure can help students develop more positive attribution perspectives through attribution retraining (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014) and to learn that, by trying again, it is possible to succeed at something they previously failed (Kapur & Bielaczyc, 2012). For example, allowing students extra time to process challenges and failures can help students develop these and other abilities (Corwin et al., 2018). Studies show that mindset-retraining interventions have a beneficial effect for student academic achievement and retention, particularly for disadvantaged students (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002; Paunesku et al., 2015; Fink, Cahill, McDaniel, Hoffman, & Frey, 2018). Helping students develop a mastery of goal orientation through development of a positive attribution perspective will support their academic success (Was, 2009; Weiner, 1979). Another way to foster performance goal orientation is through the use of group work. Helping instructors learn the importance of group work is another opportunity for faculty development. When students are able to work in pairs or groups, they are more likely to care about the outcome based on a collective effort through a
group sense of belonging and are more performance goal-oriented regardless of positive or pessimistic attribution perspective (Grant & Dweck, 2003).

**Recommendations for Academic Recovery Course Improvement**

Academic recovery courses are comprised of students with varying needs. Therefore, the intervention cannot be viewed as a “magic bullet” or “one size fits all” solution to probationary student success. The improvement of academic recovery courses must consider all of the points previously discussed. In terms of curriculum design, including lessons and experiences in the course that foster growth in the areas of building positive attribution perspectives, shame resilience, and a focus on overcoming academic failure in order to help students move toward an achieved identity status is key. Requiring reflection papers to help students process their academic failure in regard to being on probation, and after the employment of productive-failure assignments, could help students practice vulnerability and also help them become aware of any shame feelings they may have experienced in the process. As Brown (2008) suggested, a key component in the development of shame resilience, in which shame loses its power, is to talk about or “speak” shame.

For STEM instructors, being cognizant of the additional challenges encountered by female students in STEM majors and employing assignments that specifically address gender bias can benefit the females who live within the web of conflicting roles and expectations exasperated by the stereotype of women not being good at science and math. Such stereotype threat and low belonging for women in STEM fields can be mitigated when instructors help females focus on their individual ability to achieve in their field (Darnon & Aelenei, 2018). Additionally, focused dialogues on the subject can help raise awareness for the males in STEM
majors who can then become allies for helping their female counterparts who are likely to experience significant challenges in the pursuit of their degrees.

Having the skill to deliver these lessons effectively and to help students in academic crisis unpack what they learn from them requires skill in creating lessons that are relevant and that connect with students’ lived experiences. Hernandez (2015) provided methods to help instructors create meaningful alternate lessons that connect the content of the course material to what matters to students in order to engage their learning in relevant ways. He also talks about the importance of instructors’ abilities to connect with students who are different from themselves in terms of race, nationality, religion, socioeconomic level, and other forms of diversity overall. Students can then experience a sense of community and belonging in which they feel comfortable sharing struggles with their similarly-situated peers and a sympathetic instructor. These situational cues from the social context of the course could help students form positive attributions, which corresponds to Weiner’s (2000) interpersonal and intrapersonal theories of motivation. Within a safe environment where students are encouraged to share their stories, and to listen to other students’ stories, an interrelationship of resilience between students in the course could result (Brown, 2007, 2009, 2012).

Providing students opportunities for growth and self-awareness, such as requiring they meet with a career counselor, helping them discover their personality strengths, and exposing them to campus resources could help develop their academic identity as they focus their major and career interests, and engage with the campus and their peers outside of the classroom, i.e., by joining a student organization or otherwise getting involved in campus life. Developing this sense of community is a key component to students thriving in higher education (Schreiner, Louis, & Nelson, 2012). As they grow in these areas, obstacles that would formerly be triggers of more
shame, now become obstacles to overcome that can be approached with more positive perspectives, beliefs, identities, and actions. The result can be that a student, who eventually would have left the university, either on their own decision, or as a result of being academically dismissed, now is empowered and redirected to a path of success that leads to graduation. Brown (2017) talks about how wholehearted living is “engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness” (p. xix). Helping probationary students feel worthy and worth the extra effort required to help them succeed is a moral imperative for institutions committed to the success of their students.

**Summary of Practice Implications**

Referring back to the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 and depicted visually in Figure 2, the findings from the present study align well with the original theoretical framework. Helping probationary freshmen recovery their academic status can be well-served by incorporating methods, assignments, and activities to retrain students’ attribution perspective, help them develop shame resilience, and empower them to work through the crisis of their academic failure and move toward an achieved academic identity. Helping students recognize their uneasy feelings, by providing a safe space in which they can reflect upon, critically think about, and share their feelings in relation to their failure opens the door to opportunity to help them understand the power of attribution perspective. Teaching students about mindset, the intentional act of reframing, and the power of checking distorted thinking against reality in terms of their abilities to influence their success and failure gives students the opportunity to develop positive identities, including academic identity. Supporting them in the process of developing healthy and productive academic success behaviors and habits and helping them explore major and career choices while normalizing that exploration is part of the college experience is another critical element to academic recovery.
Figure 4: Model of academic recovery course support for probationary freshmen (Robinson, 2019)
Based on the outcomes of this study, two new elements are critical to add to the original theoretical framework. The first is the importance of the context in which new learning can best occur in terms of an instructor who is a well-trained champion for student success, versed in pedagogies designed for student and instructor connection, engagement, and caring, as well as being versed in theories related to student development and diversity and inclusion. The second is the importance of imposed structure in the form of mandatory study hours, meetings with faculty and staff such as the academic recovery course instructor and the student’s academic advisor. Figure 4 depicts the revised and improved model for probationary student success.

Limitations

This study had several limitations that are important to consider. Without a control group in the study, cause cannot be inferred with complete certainty and any claims of students change or growth in any of the constructs could not be attributed to their participation in the academic recovery course where the course affected the change; rather, statements could only be made that changes occurred for students while they were engaged in the course. Having a randomized control group comprised of probationary freshmen who navigated their probation without being enrolled in the course would have allowed for a comparison. However, there are ethical issues involved in such an approach, and as such, a control group was not employed in this study.

There may also have been researcher effect or unconscious bias that was influenced by differences in race or ethnicity, gender, age, or positional power between the students and me (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Seidman, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In Hernandez’s (2015) book, I noticed many of the students interviewed used swear words when describing their experiences; however, with my interviews, the students were courteous and polite and did not swear. This may have been a result of researcher effect in terms of my gender, race, age, or position as a PhD
student, which could have limited the conversations in terms of students’ honesty and vulnerability.

The data used in this study were collected from students at one four-year research institution in the Midwest. Because of the specific population used in this study, the results may not be generalizable to other institutions. Still, the findings may prove useful to other institutions who may be interested in improving existing or developing new academic recovery courses or conducting similar research on probationary freshmen at their institutions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The population for this study was probationary freshmen in the semester before potential academic dismissal. The aim was to understand their experiences with an academic recovery course and to examine change within the constructs of attribution perspective, shame, and academic identity. A recommendation for future research that stems from this original study in terms of the timing of the study is to replicate the study with students who have been academically dismissed and readmitted to their institution. In the current study, many students did not tell their parents or other significant individuals about their academic probation. An interesting component to the timing of that study would be to understand if being academically dismissed from their institution of higher education would result in higher shame outcomes resulting from public knowledge of students’ academic failure.

In addition to changing the timing of the study, examining change in constructs with a larger sample, to increase the statistical power of the survey, particularly with regard to students of color who are on probation, could yield helpful data for supporting students from non-White populations. This could also confirm whether significant results observed among White students would also be found for non-White students within a larger sample.
There are many theories that could be used to address the challenges of retention and probationary freshmen. This study provides just one approach. In addition to studying the same constructs with a larger sample, studying constructs other than those used in this study, from a quantitative or mixed method approach, would be interesting. Based on themes that emerged from this study, particularly in relation to this current generation of students, examining change in college life management skills for students engaged in a recovery course would be interesting, particularly if the academic recovery course had an emphasis on providing structure and teaching life management skills.

Another suggestion for future research is to survey students in their first semester to gain an overall picture of dispositional characteristics, particularly in regard to the constructs being studied, for all incoming freshmen. This would allow for examination of potential correlation between dispositional characteristics and academic probation in the second semester. These data could potentially provide predictive information that could be used to support students at risk of going on academic probation after their first semester.

The qualitative phase of the current study involved interviewing students who completed the academic recovery course. One obvious group to study would be students who stopped attending the course and were academically dismissed. Why did they stop coming to class? What were the reasons, from their perspective, for their academic dismissal? Do they plan to apply for readmission? How could the course have helped them in different or better ways?

Another study would be to replicate the current study after a revision of the course curricula based on the outcomes of the study. Adding attribution retraining and other interventions aimed at helping students respond to failures where all courses had consistent content could be helpful to see if revised curricula would produce different results. This could
also be approached after course instructors underwent professional development to see if instructional change could improve academic outcomes for freshmen on probation.

Another possible study would be to analyze the probationary students’ reflection papers to look for common themes and to see how data from this analysis would interact with data from the quantitative surveys and the qualitative interviews. This could be helpful to move from a correlation between academic standing and attribution perspective, to make the case for predictability of academic success based on attribution perspective.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of probationary freshmen engaged in academic recovery courses with the aim of providing data to help inform higher education professionals seeking to improve the success of this population. Prior to the study an in-depth literature review was conducted (Chapter 2), which detailed the theories upon which the theoretical framework for the study was based: Weiner’s (2008) Theory of Attribution, Brown’s (2008) SRT, and Academic Identity Theory (Marcia, 1963; Was & Isaacson, 2008). The literature also included data pertaining to the demographic shift currently underway in the U.S. and on college campuses, the impact of degree non-completion, and student success and retention programs at other institutions of higher education. Chapter 3 presented the mixed methods methodology. Chapter 4 presented the Phase One quantitative and Phase Two qualitative results. A summary and discussion of the results were presented in Chapter 5, along with implications for professional practice, and recommendations for future research. Findings of the study can inform higher education professionals who aim to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates for all students, and to support probationary students in their time of academic struggle.
REFERENCES


Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you're supposed to be and embrace who you are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing.


California State University Northridge. (2016). *Readmission of previously disqualified students (undergraduate)*. Retrieved from csun.edu:

http://www.csun.edu/catalog/policies/readmission-of-previously-disqualified-students-undergraduate/


https://www.cmich.edu/ess/academic_advising_assistance/Academic_Assistance/Pages/Academic_Policies.aspx.


Engberg, M. E., & Allen, D. J. (2011). Uncontrolled destinies: Improving opportunity for low-


Review, 98(2), 341-354.


Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne. (2015). *Readmission*. Retrieved from Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne:

https://www.ipfw.edu/offices/mac/readmission.html.


Noel-Levitz. (2014). *Changes in freshman attitudes following a semester of classes and*


Mind-set interventions are a scalable treatment for academic underachievement.

*Psychological Science, 26*(6), 784–793.

Permzadian, V., & Credé, M. (2016). Do first-year seminars improve college grades and


Rogers, K. A., & Ebbeck, V. (2016). Experiences among women with shame and self-compassion in cardio-based exercise classes. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 8*(1), 21-44.


college, no degree: A national view of students with some college enrollment, but no
completion (Signature Report No. 7). National Student Clearinghouse. Retrieved from

student success course (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations &
Theses Global. (Order No. 10814932).

Simpson, A., & Maltese, A. (2017). Failure is a major component of learning anything: The
role of failure in the development of STEM professionals. Journal of Science Education
and Technology, 26(2), 223–237.

models of implicit theories and achievement goals predict planning and withdrawal after


Stake, R. E. (2010). Qualitative research: Studying how things work. New York, NY:
Guilford Publications.


Stoller, E. P., Webster, N. J., Bli xen, C. E., McCormick, R. A., Hund, A. J., Perzynski, A. T., ...
& Dawson, N. V. (2009). Alcohol consumption decisions among nonabusing drinkers


Valentine, J. C., Hirschy, A. S., Bremer, C. D., Novillo, W., Castellano, M., & Banister, A.


Weiss, M., Brock, T., Sommo, C., Rudd, T., & Turner, M. C. (2011). Serving community
college students on probation: Four-year findings from chaffey college's opening doors program. New York, NY: MDRC.


Appendix A

Recruitment Email to Instructors Explaining Study and Asking them to Participate
Hi [Instructors’ names],

Some of you have heard me talk about my Ph.D. dissertation study that I will be conducting this spring. My study will be examining any change freshmen on academic probation experience in Attribution Perspective, Trait Shame, and Academic Identity while enrolled in academic recovery or support courses, with an aim to provide information that will help us all work more effectively to support success for this population of our students. My chair is Dr. Andrea Beach, with Dr. Louann Bierlein Palmer and Dr. Randy Ott also serving on my committee.

I’m hoping you will help me by allowing me to administer a survey to students enrolled in your course(s) in your respective colleges on the first day of the course this spring semester, 2019.

I’m reaching out to see if I could meet briefly with each of you to learn more about your plans for your spring academic recovery or support course(s), including whether it will be mandatory or voluntary for students, who will be teaching it for your college, etc. I would also like to explain more about my study.

If you are willing, please reply with a few dates and times where we could chat! We could do that face-to-face, or by phone. Whatever works best for you. Thanks in advance for your help!

Chris Robinson, Director
Undergraduate Admissions and Advising | College of Education and Human Development (CEHD)
Appendix B

Phase One (Quantitative) Research Script and Informed Consent
Researcher Script for the First Day of the Study:

Hello, my name is Chris Robinson and I am here to tell you about a research project I am working on as one of my requirements to complete my Ph.D. in Higher Education, and to invite you to participate in the study. I am conducting a study to learn more about the experiences of freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in academic recovery courses like this one. The goal of my study is to gain your perceptions regarding your experiences as a probationary student in a support course in order to inform future improvements in how the university can support students on probation.

I have a consent form I would like to pass out that explains the study in more detail and invites you to consent to participate in the study. I would like you to take a few moments to read over the consent form. Once you have read and signed the form, you can continue on to the survey. If you have any questions at any point, feel free to raise your hand and I will come to you to answer your question.

Thank you so much for taking the time to help me earn my Ph.D.!
Student Participant Consent Form

[Name of Institution]
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Investigators: Dr. Andrea Beach (Principal) and Chris Robinson (Student)

Introduction: You are invited to participate in this research project for Chris Robinson’s Educational Leadership PhD dissertation. This consent document explains the purpose of this project, time commitments, procedures, and risks and benefits of participating. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of freshmen on academic probation who are engaged in an academic recovery course with the aim of informing future strategies to improve the experience for probationary students.

Who can participate in this study?
Freshmen on academic probation enrolled in an academic recovery course can participate.

What will you be asked to do, where will the study take place, and what is the time commitment?
You will be asked to take two surveys – one today, and one during the last two weeks of the semester. The surveys will be administered in this classroom and will take approximately 30 minutes. At the end of the course, you also may be asked to be interviewed. Interviews will take place on the main campus and will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You will receive a copy of the interview transcript with an invitation to review and clarify anything, which may take 10 to 30 minutes, if you decide to add to the interview transcript. Your total time commitment to the study will be approximately three hours.

We are also seeking your permission to obtain your student academic and university records to gather your GPA, major, race, and gender. (In compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA] of 1974).

What information is being measured during the study?
The surveys will measure any change in your perspective, from the beginning to the end of the semester, in how you think and feel about yourself as a freshman on academic probation. The interviews will be about your experiences with academic probation and the academic recovery course.

What are the costs, compensations, risks and benefits of participating in this study?
There are no costs or risks of participating in this study. Students who complete the surveys will be entered into a drawing with a chance to win one of three $25 MasterCard gift cards. Students who also complete the interview will receive a $10 gas/gift card.
Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

The information you provide will be treated as highly confidential; no one will see your answers to questions other than the principle and student investigator. Your name will never be connected to any of the data that is reported.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Dr. Andrea Beach, at [researcher phone number] or [researcher email]. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at [IRB phone number] or the Vice President for Research at [VP of Research phone number] if questions arise during the course of the study.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

____________________________________________________________________________

Please print your name

____________________________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature Date

Do you agree to be interviewed at the end of the semester? If yes, initial here: _____________

If yes, what is your preferred email? ________________________________________________

PLEASE NOTE: Not all participants will be contacted for an interview. Thank you in advance for your assistance!

If you do not agree to participate in this research project, please print and sign your name above, and then flip to the last page of the survey. There you will find a crossword puzzle to work on while other classmates complete the survey.
Appendix C
Phase One (Quantitative) Surveys
Survey One: Academic Probation Survey

If after beginning the survey, you decide that you do not wish to continue, you may stop at any time and work on the crossword puzzle found in the back of the survey. You may choose to not answer any question for any reason.

Section A: Read each situation and vividly imagine it happening to you.
1) Decide what you believe to be the one major cause of the situation if it happened to you.
2) Write this cause in the blank provided.
3) Answer the three questions about the cause by circling one number per question.
   Do not circle the words.

1. YOU MEET A FRIEND WHO COMPLIMENTS YOU ON YOUR APPEARANCE.

1.1) Write down the one major cause: ________________________________

1.2) Is the cause of your friend’s compliment due to something about you or something about the other person or circumstance?  
| Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

1.3) In the future when you are with your friends, will this cause again be present?  
| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

1.4) Is the cause something that just affects interacting with friends or does it also influence other areas of your life?  
| Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

2. YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME.

2.1) Write down the one major cause: ________________________________

2.2) Is the cause of your unsuccessful job search due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?  
| Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

2.3) In the future when looking for a job, will this cause again be present?  
| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

2.4) Is the cause something that just influences looking for a job or does it also influence other areas of your life?  
| Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

3. YOU BECOME VERY RICH.

3.1) Write down the one major cause: ________________________________

3.2) Is the cause of your becoming rich due to something about you or  
<p>| Totally due to the other | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.3) In your financial future, will this cause again be present?</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4) Is the cause something that just affects obtaining money or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Influences all situations in my life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. A FRIEND COMES TO YOU WITH A PROBLEM AND YOU DON’T TRY TO HELP THEM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2) Is the cause of your not helping your friend due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3) In the future when a friend comes to you with a problem, will this cause again be present?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4) Is this cause something that just affects what happens when a friend comes to you with a problem or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. YOU GIVE AN IMPORTANT TALK IN FRONT OF A GROUP AND THE AUDIENCE REACTS NEGATIVELY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1) Write down the one major cause: __________________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2) Is the cause of the audience reacting negatively due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3) In the future when giving talks, will this cause again be present?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4) Is the cause something that just influences giving talks or does it also influence the other areas of your life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. YOU DO A PROJECT WHICH IS HIGHLY PRaised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.1) Write down the one major cause: __________________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2) Is the cause of being praised due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

256
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.3) In the future when doing a project, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4) Is the cause something that just influences doing projects or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**7. YOU MEET A FRIEND WHO ACTS HOSTILELY TOWARDS YOU.**

7.1) Write down the *one* major cause: ________________________________________________

7.2) Is the cause of your friend acting hostile due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? | Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

7.3) In the future when interacting with friends, will this cause again be present? | Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

7.4) Is the cause something that just influences interacting with friends or does it also influence other areas of your life? | Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

**8. YOU CAN'T GET ALL THE WORK DONE THAT OTHERS EXPECT OF YOU.**

8.1) Write down the *one* major cause: ________________________________________________

8.2) Is the cause of your not getting the work done due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? | Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

8.3) In the future when doing the work that others expect, will this cause again be present? | Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

8.4) Is the cause something that just affects doing work that others expect of you or does it also influence other areas of your life? | Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

**9. YOUR SPOUSE (BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND) HAS BEEN TREATING YOU MORE LOVINGLY.**

9.1) Write down the *one* major cause: ________________________________________________

9.2) Is the cause of your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treating you more lovingly due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? | Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |
9.3) In future interactions with your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend), will this cause again be present?

| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

9.4) Is this cause something that just affects how your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treats you or does it also influence other areas of your life?

| Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

10. YOU APPLY FOR A POSITION THAT YOU WANT VERY BADLY (e.g., IMPORTANT JOB, GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSION, etc.) AND YOU GET IT.

10.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

| Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

10.2) Is the cause of your getting the position due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

10.3) In the future when applying for a position, will this cause again be present?

| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

10.4) Is this cause something that just influences applying for a position or does it also influence other areas of your life?

| Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

11. YOU GO OUT ON A DATE AND IT GOES BADLY.

11.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

| Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

11.2) Is the cause of the date going badly due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

11.3) In the future when dating, will this cause again be present?

| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |

11.4) Is this cause something that just influences dating or does it also influence other areas of your life?

| Influences just this particular situation | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

12. YOU GET A RAISE.

12.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

| Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Totally due to me |

12.2) Is the cause of your getting a raise due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

12.3) In the future on your job, will this cause again be present?

| Will never again be present | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Will always be present |
12.4) Is this cause something that just affects getting a raise or does it also influence other areas of your life?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences just this particular situation</th>
<th>Influences all situations in my life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section B: Indicate how likely it is that the statements below would be true for you, with “5” meaning that you are very likely to think or feel that way, and “1” meaning that you are not at all likely to think or feel that way.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. You trip in the cafeteria and spill your friend’s drink.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would be thinking that everyone is watching me and laughing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would feel very sorry. I should have watched where I was going.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. For several days you put off talking to a teacher about a missed assignment. At the last minute you talk to the teacher about it, and all goes well.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would regret that I put it off.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would feel like a coward.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. While playing around, you throw a ball and it hits your friend in the face.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would feel stupid that I can’t even throw a ball.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would apologize and make sure my friend feels better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. You and a group of classmates worked very hard on a project. Your teacher singles you out for a better grade than anyone else.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would feel alone and apart from my classmates.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would tell the teacher that everyone should get the same grade.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. You break something at a friend’s house and then hide it.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would think: “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or replace it.”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would avoid seeing that friend for a while.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. At school, you wait until the last minute to plan a project, and it turns out badly.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would feel useless and incompetent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would feel that I deserve a bad grade.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. You wake up one morning and remember it’s your mother’s birthday. You forgot to get her something.

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would think: After everything she’s done for me, how could I forget her birthday?”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would feel irresponsible and thoughtless.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. You walk out of a test thinking you did extremely well. Then you find out you did poorly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I would feel that I should have done better. I should have studied more.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I would feel stupid.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 21. You make a mistake at school and find out a classmate is blamed for the error. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would keep quiet and avoid the classmate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 22. You were talking in class, and your friend got blamed. You go to the teacher and tell him the truth. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would feel like I always get people in trouble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would think: “I'm the one who should get in trouble. I shouldn’t have been talking in the first place.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 23. You and your friend are talking in class, and you get in trouble. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would think: “I should know better. I deserve to get in trouble.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would feel like everyone in the class was looking at me and were about to laugh. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 24. You make plans to meet a friend. Later you realize you stood your friend up. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would think: “I’m inconsiderate.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would try to make it up to my friend as soon as possible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 25. You volunteer to help raise money for a good cause. Later you want to quit, but you know your help is important. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would feel selfish, and I’d think I am basically lazy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would think: “I should be more concerned about doing whatever I can to help.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 26. Your report card isn’t as good as you wanted. You show it to your parents when you get home. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) Now that I got a bad report card, I would feel worthless. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would think: “I should listen to everything the teacher says and study harder.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 27. You have recently moved to a new school, and everyone has been very helpful. A few times you had to ask some big favors, but you returned the favors as soon as you could. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) I would feel like a failure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) I would be especially nice to the people who had helped me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Good grades have always been important for me because I like to make my parents proud.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I’m not sure what occupation I want after college and I’m not really concerned about it yet.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. A college education is a high priority for me and I’m willing to make the sacrifices.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I’ve considered a number of college majors and have decided which one is best for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I always knew my college major mainly from the guidance I received from my family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I want a college education but sometimes I’m not sure I can make the commitment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I don’t worry about grades very often and rarely set academic goals for myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. How I do in school is important to me because others are counting on me to do well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I’ve never decided on my own about college. I just did what friends and family expected of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My priorities for school come from my early experiences. I usually just accept what is expected of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. My view of grades and studying fluctuates; sometimes I am conscientious, other times I’m lazy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. If I had to pay for my own education, I probably wouldn’t be in school even if I had the money.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Sometimes I feel responsible for my learning but other times I feel it is out of my hands.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. In class my mind often wanders and I often wish I were someplace else.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

261
### Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all like me</th>
<th>Very much like me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>An important reason I chose to go to college was my family wanted me to go.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>If a class is important I can concentrate even if the teacher or topic is boring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>I feel comfortable being responsible for my education and learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Of all the reasons to be in college one of my most important reasons is social and friendships.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I feel I have to attend every college class, otherwise my parents would be upset.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Some days I am enthusiastic about learning but other days I don’t really care.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I try to write down everything the professors say but I seldom think about applications.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>If a class is very difficult I will usually give up and blow it off.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>My priorities in school are in transition. Some days I am serious, other days I have other priorities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>When I do poorly on a test I think of what I did wrong and try to solve the problem.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I don’t have clear priorities for school and life. I usually just go with the flow.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>I want to complete my school work but I often look back and realize I didn’t set aside the time.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>I find most class topics at least somewhat interesting – I’m seldom bored in class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>If a class is very difficult I buckle down and study more so I don’t disappoint other people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Although I have many priorities, learning in school is always one of my most important goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Sometimes I feel confident I know what I want from my education but other days I’m not so sure.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all like me</th>
<th>Very much like me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58. I know why I am in college and have clear goals I want to achieve.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. When I do poorly on a test I get upset and worry what friends and</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family think of me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Sometimes I get upset when I do poorly on a test and other times I</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just let it slide.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Finding time to study often takes a back seat to social and recreational activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. When a course is demanding my first reaction is to work harder, but</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes I give up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Sometime I am interested in what is being discussed in class but other days I am bored.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. When school is challenging I find a way to learn even if I have to try new ways to study.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Most of the materials I am asked to learn in classes is boring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Finding time to study be difficult so I set aside time to complete my school work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67. Briefly describe the reason(s) you ended up on academic probation after your first semester:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking this survey; your opinions are important to this study on how to improve success courses for students on academic probation.
ACROSS
5 The instructor who is buried in Sangren
6 The number of colleges at Western
8 Coaches WMU basketball
9 A popular business major
10 The center where you can work out on campus
11 Where Flossie's is located

DOWN
1 The new dining hall
2 Western's mascot
3 Western's President
4 The office who creates the finals schedule
7 Initials for the place to get free tutoring
Researcher Script for the Second Survey:

Hello. My name is Chris Robinson, and if you remember, I was here on the first day of class to tell you about a research project I am working on as one of my requirements to complete my Ph.D. in Higher Education, and to invite you to participate in the study. As a reminder, I am conducting a study to learn more about the experiences of freshmen on academic probation who are enrolled in academic recovery courses like this one. The goal of my study is to gain your perceptions regarding your experiences as a probationary student in a support course in order to inform future improvements in how the university can support students on probation.

Today, I am back to invite you to complete the second and final survey. I will pass out the survey. If you have any questions at any point, feel free to raise your hand and I will come to you to answer your question.

Thank you so much for taking the time to help me earn my Ph.D.!
Survey Two: Academic Probation Survey

Please read the following paragraph before you begin the survey.

If you did not consent to participate in this research project the first day of class, or if you did consent and how have changed your mind, please flip to the last page of the survey. There you will find a crossword puzzle to work on while other classmates complete the survey. If after beginning the survey, you decide that you do not wish to continue, you may stop at any time and work on the crossword puzzle. You may choose to not answer any question for any reason.

**Section A: Read each situation and vividly imagine it happening to you.**
1) Decide what you believe to be the one major cause of the situation if it happened to you.
2) Write this cause in the blank provided.
3) Answer the three questions about the cause by circling one number per question.
   Do not circle the words.

**1. YOU MEET A FRIEND WHO COMPLIMENTS YOU ON YOUR APPEARANCE.**

1.2) Write down the *one* major cause: __________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
<th>Option 4</th>
<th>Option 5</th>
<th>Option 6</th>
<th>Option 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2) Is the cause of your friend’s compliment due to something about you or something about the other person or circumstance?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3) In the future when you are with your friends, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4) Is the cause something that just affects interacting with friends or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2. YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME.**

2.1) Write down the *one* major cause: __________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
<th>Option 4</th>
<th>Option 5</th>
<th>Option 6</th>
<th>Option 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2) Is the cause of your unsuccessful job search due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3) In the future when looking for a job, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4) Is the cause something that just influences looking for a job or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. YOU BECOME VERY RICH.**

---

266
3.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

3.2) Is the cause of your becoming rich due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3) In your financial future, will this cause again be present?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4) Is the cause something that just affects obtaining money or does it also influence other areas of your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Influences just this particular situation</th>
<th>Influences all situations in my life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. A FRIEND COMES TO YOU WITH A PROBLEM AND YOU DON'T TRY TO HELP THEM.

4.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

4.2) Is the cause of your not helping your friend due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3) In the future when a friend comes to you with a problem, will this cause again be present?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4) Is this cause something that just affects what happens when a friend comes to you with a problem or does it also influence other areas of your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Influences just this particular situation</th>
<th>Influences all situations in my life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. YOU GIVE AN IMPORTANT TALK IN FRONT OF A GROUP AND THE AUDIENCE REACTS NEGATIVELY.

5.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________

5.2) Is the cause of the audience reacting negatively due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3) In the future when giving talks, will this cause again be present?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>totally due to the other person or circumstances</th>
<th>Will never again be present</th>
<th>Will always be present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4) Is the cause something that just influences giving talks or does it also influence the other areas of your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Influences just this particular situation</th>
<th>Influences all situations in my life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. YOU DO A PROJECT WHICH IS HIGHLY PRaised.

6.1) Write down the one major cause: ____________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Total Due to Other Person or Circumstances</th>
<th>Total Due to Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2) Is the cause of being praised due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>totally due to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3) In the future when doing a project, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Will always be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4) Is the cause something that just influences doing projects or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Influences all situations in my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. YOU MEET A FRIEND WHO ACTS HOSTILELY TOWARDS YOU.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1) Write down the one major cause:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2) Is the cause of your friend acting hostile due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
<td>Totally due to other person or circumstances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>totally due to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3) In the future when interacting with friends, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Will always be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4) Is the cause something that just influences interacting with friends or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Influences all situations in my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. YOU CAN'T GET ALL THE WORK DONE THAT OTHERS EXPECT OF YOU.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1) Write down the one major cause:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2) Is the cause of your not getting the work done due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?</td>
<td>Totally due to other person or circumstances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>totally due to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3) In the future when doing the work that others expect, will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Will always be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4) Is the cause something that just affects doing work that others expect of you or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Influences all situations in my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. YOUR SPOUSE (BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND) HAS BEEN TREATING YOU MORE LOVINGLY.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1) Write down the one major cause:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2) Is the cause of your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treating you more lovingly due to something about you or</td>
<td>Totally due to other person or circumstances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>totally due to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Will never again be present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3) In future interactions with your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend), will this cause again be present?</td>
<td>Will never again be present</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4) Is this cause something that just affects how your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treats you or does it also influence other areas of your life?</td>
<td>Influences just this particular situation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**10. YOU APPLY FOR A POSITION THAT YOU WANT VERY BADLY (e.g., IMPORTANT JOB, GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSION, etc.) AND YOU GET IT.**

10.1) Write down the *one* major cause: __________________________________________________

10.2) Is the cause of your getting the position due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Totally due to me |

10.3) In the future when applying for a position, will this cause again be present? Will never again be present | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Will always be present |

10.4) Is this cause something that just influences applying for a position or does it also influence other areas of your life? Influences just this particular situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

**11. YOU GO OUT ON A DATE AND IT GOES BADLY.**

11.1) Write down the *one* major cause: __________________________________________________

11.2) Is the cause of the date going badly due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Totally due to me |

11.3) In the future when dating, will this cause again be present? Will never again be present | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Will always be present |

11.4) Is this cause something that just influences dating or does it also influence other areas of your life? Influences just this particular situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Influences all situations in my life |

**12. YOU GET A RAISE.**

12.1) Write down the *one* major cause: __________________________________________________

12.2) Is the cause of your getting a raise due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances? Totally due to the other person or circumstances | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Totally due to me |
Section B: Indicate how likely the statements below would be true for you, with “5” meaning you are very likely to think or feel that way, and “1” meaning you are not at all likely to think or feel that way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. You trip in the cafeteria and spill your friend’s drink.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would be thinking that everyone is watching me and laughing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would feel very sorry. I should have watched where I was going.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. For several days you put off talking to a teacher about a missed assignment. At the last minute you talk to the teacher about it, and all goes well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would regret that I put it off.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would feel like a coward.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. While playing around, you throw a ball and it hits your friend in the face.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would feel stupid that I can’t even throw a ball.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would apologize and make sure my friend feels better.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. You and a group of classmates worked very hard on a project. Your teacher singles you out for a better grade than anyone else.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would feel alone and apart from my classmates.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would tell the teacher that everyone should get the same grade.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. You break something at a friend’s house and then hide it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would think: “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or replace it.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would avoid seeing that friend for a while.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. At school, you wait until the last minute to plan a project, and it turns out badly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would feel useless and incompetent</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would feel that I deserve a bad grade.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. You wake up one morning and remember it’s your mother’s birthday. You forgot to get her something.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I would think: After everything she’s done for me, how could I forget her birthday?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I would feel irresponsible and thoughtless.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

270
### Section B: Indicate how likely the statements below would be true for you, with “5” meaning you are very likely to think or feel that way, and “1” meaning you are not at all likely to think or feel that way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. You walk out of a test thinking you did extremely well. Then you find out you did poorly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would feel that I should have done better. I should have studied more.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would feel stupid.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. You make a mistake at school and find out a classmate is blamed for the error.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would keep quiet and avoid the classmates.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. You were talking in class, and your friend got blamed. You go to the teacher and tell him the truth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would feel like I always get people in trouble.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would think: “I’m the one who should get in trouble. I shouldn’t have been talking in the first place.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. You and your friend are talking in class, and you get in trouble.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would think: “I should know better. I deserve to get in trouble.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would feel like everyone in the class was looking at me and were about to laugh.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. You make plans to meet a friend. Later you realize you stood your friend up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would think: “I’m inconsiderate.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would try to make it up to my friend as soon as possible.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. You volunteer to help raise money for a good cause. Later you want to quit, but you know your help is important.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would feel selfish, and I’d think I am basically lazy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would think: “I should be more concerned about doing whatever I can to help.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Your report card isn’t as good as you wanted. You show it to your parents when you get home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Now that I got a bad report card, I would feel worthless.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would think: “I should listen to everything the teacher says and study harder.”</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. You have recently moved to a new school, and everyone has been very helpful. A few times you had to ask some big favors, but you returned the favors as soon as you could.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) I would feel like a failure.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) I would be especially nice to the people who had helped me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”</td>
<td>Not at all like me</td>
<td>Very much like me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Good grades have always been important for me because I like to make my parents proud.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Sometimes I think the reason I’m in college is I have nothing better to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I’m not sure what occupation I want after college and I’m not really concerned about it yet.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. A college education is a high priority for me and I’m willing to make the sacrifices.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I’ve considered a number of college majors and have decided which one is best for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I always knew my college major mainly from the guidance I received from my family.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I want a college education but sometimes I’m not sure I can make the commitment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I don’t worry about grades very often and rarely set academic goals for myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. How I do in school is important to me because others are counting on me to do well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I’ve never decided on my own about college. I just did what friends and family expected of me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. My priorities for school come from my early experiences. I usually just accept what is expected of me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. My view of grades and studying fluctuates; sometimes I am conscientious, other times I’m lazy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. If I had to pay for my own education, I probably wouldn’t be in school even if I had the money.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Sometimes I feel responsible for my learning but other times I feel it is out of my hands.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. In class my mind often wanders and I often wish I were somewhere else.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not at all like me</th>
<th>Very much like me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42. An important reason I chose to go to college was my family wanted me to go.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. If a class is important I can concentrate even if the teacher or topic is boring.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I feel comfortable being responsible for my education and learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Of all the reasons to be in college one of my most important reasons is social and friendships.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I feel I have to attend every college class, otherwise my parents would be upset.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Some days I am enthusiastic about learning but other days I don’t really care.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I try to write down everything the professors say but I seldom think about applications.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. If a class is very difficult I will usually give up and blow it off.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. My priorities in school are in transition. Some days I am serious, other days I have other priorities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. When I do poorly on a test I think of what I did wrong and try to solve the problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I don’t have clear priorities for school and life. I usually just go with the flow.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. I want to complete my school work but I often look back and realize I didn’t set aside the time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I find most class topics at least somewhat interesting – I’m seldom bored in class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. If a class is very difficult I buckle down and study more so I don’t disappoint other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Although I have many priorities, learning in school is always one of my most important goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Sometimes I feel confident I know what I want from my education but other days I’m not so sure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. I know why I am in college and have clear goals I want to achieve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. When I do poorly on a test I get upset and worry what friends and family might think of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section C: With the questions below, indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, how much the statements are like you, with “1” being “Not at all like me” and “5” being “Very much like me”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60. Sometimes I get upset when I do poorly on a test and other times I just let it slide.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Finding time to study often takes a back seat to social and recreational activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. When a course is demanding my first reaction is to work harder, but sometimes I give up.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Sometime I am interested in what is being discussed in class but other days I am bored.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. When school is challenging I find a way to learn even if I have to try new ways to study.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Most of the materials I am asked to learn in classes is boring.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Finding time to study be difficult so I set aside time to complete my school work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Overall, the academic recovery course helped me become a better student.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. My relationship with the instructor for the course was an important part of my success this semester.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. The instructor helped me achieve my goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. The course helped me feel better about myself personally.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. The course helped me gain more control over my future as a college student.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. The course helped me realize that I can take more responsibility for my future successes and failures.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. I would recommend this course to future freshmen on academic probation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking this survey; your opinions are important to this study on how to improve success courses for students on academic probation.
WMU Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS
5 The instructor who is buried in Sangren
6 The number of colleges at Western
8 Coaches WMU basketball
9 A popular business major
10 The center where you can work out on campus
11 Where Flossie's is located

DOWN
1 The new dining hall
2 Western's mascot
3 Western's President
4 The office who creates the finals schedule
7 Initials for the place to get free tutoring
Appendix D

Phase One (Quantitative) Research Tools Permission Emails
Permission to use the ASQ:

From: Schulman, Peter E [mailto:schulman@psych.upenn.edu]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2018 12:44 PM
To: Chris Robinson <christine.robinson@wmich.edu>
Subject: Attributional Style Questionnaire

Hi Christine,

See this page for info:

https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/optimism-assessment

Best,
Peter
Permission to use the TOSCA-A:

Greetings,

I apologize for the delay in responding to you. Your email somehow escaped my attention. You are more than welcome to use our measures. In answer to your question, I would recommend the TOSCA-3 for your sample of interest. I am attaching the TOSCA-3 (our most recent measure of shame and guilt proneness for adults) along with scoring information. If you need another version (for children or adolescents), please let us know. You can also find information on the reliability and validity of the TOSCA-3, and a summary of our research in:


Please do keep in touch and let us know how your research develops. I would be grateful for a summary of the results whenever they become available.

Best of luck on your proposal,

June T.

June Tangney, Ph.D.
University Professor
and Professor of Psychology

George Mason University
Department of Psychology
MSN 3F5
Fairfax VA 22030
703 993 1365 (Office)
703 993 1335 (Fax)
jtangney@gmu.edu
Permission to use the AIM:

From: WAS, CHRISTOPHER [mailto:cwas@kent.edu]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2018 2:57 PM
To: Chris Robinson <christine.robinson@wmich.edu>
Subject: RE: AIM Request

Hi Chris,
I am happy to share our measures. You will find manuscripts attached that describe the use of the questionnaire and some of our previous work. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Dr. Isaacson has retired, but I have his permission as collaborator to share our work.

Chris Was, PhD
Department of Psychological Sciences
Kent State University
Appendix E

Phase Two (Qualitative) Interview Questions
Phase Two: Qualitative Interview Protocol

Project: An Examination of Change in Shame, Attribution Perspective, and Academic Identity for Freshmen on Probation Enrolled in Academic Recovery Courses

Start Time of Interview: ____________________________________________________________

End Time of Interview: ____________________________________________________________

Date of Interview: ________________________________________________________________

Location: _______________________________________________________________________

Interviewer: _____________________________________________________________________

Participant: _____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. This interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

Lead-in: Today, we are going to explore your experiences in your academic recovery course. I would like to gain your perspective on any change you experienced in how you felt about being on academic probation, what you attributed the cause of your probationary status to, and how you feel about being a college student. I would also like to gain your perspective on the course itself to learn what you felt was helpful in your academic recovery process and any suggestions you have to improve the course experience for future students.

1. When you first learned that you were on academic probation – what where your thoughts about being on probation?
2. What did you attribute the cause of being on probation to?
3. How did knowing you were on probation make you feel?
4. How did you feel about being a college student, and your future at the university?
5. Who did you talk to about being on probation?
6. What was the response of those you shared your news with?
7. How did that/those discussion(s) make you feel?
8. What changes did you consider making the next semester?
9. When you first started the course, what were your expectations of yourself?
10. Can you describe your experiences with the academic recovery support class?
11. What were the most valuable aspects of the academic recovery course?
12. What elements of the course were not helpful to you?
13. How did your thoughts about the cause of your probationary status change during the class?
14. How do you feel about yourself now, compared to when you first found out that you were on probation?
15. What do you think about yourself as a college student now, compared to the beginning of the semester?
16. What did you do differently this semester compared to last semester?
17. What made you decide to make those changes?
18. Can you describe the most important academic success you had during the semester?
19. How did you feel when that happened?
20. What aspect of the course was most helpful to you?
21. How did your relationship with your instructor impact your experience?
22. Now, tell me about one academic or personal challenge you faced during that semester?
23. How did you deal with that challenge?
24. What could the university do differently to help others recover from academic probation?
25. Given that the semester is over, where do you see yourself going from here?
26. What do you wish I would have asked you about your academic recovery experience that I didn’t?
27. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences with the course?

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in our study. The information you shared is valuable and will be treated with complete confidentiality. The next step will be for the recording to be transcribed by me. Once the recording of your interview is transcribed, I will contact you so you may review the transcript to ensure that it is accurate and reflects what you said. When you receive the transcript, it will have only your code name, and any information that identifies you will be redacted.

Your review of the transcript is completely voluntary. If you choose to review and edit where you see fit, it will help me validate the research and make it more credible and reliable. It may take me a week or so to get the transcript of your interview back to you and it could take about 30 minutes for you to read it and respond.

Specifically, I will ask you to:
1. Read for accuracy. The transcription will be verbatim, but you may want to elaborate upon, correct, or add to one or more areas of your responses.
2. Reflect on how well the transcript tells your story. Feel free to fill in any gaps.
3. Be sure that the transcript accurately captures both how you experienced things and how you make sense of your experiences. Again, feel free to fill in the gaps.

I will send you these same prompts when I send you the transcript. You will receive it as a Word attachment to an email. So please provide me with a private email address, if you wish me to send it there rather than to your school account. I suggest you download the electronic Word file of your interview transcript and use “Track Changes” (if you are comfortable with process) to make your edits and revisions. If you would rather use a different process to highlight any changes or additions you make to the transcript, just let me know at the time, so I am clear on how I will get your feedback.

Do you have any questions?
Again, thank you for giving your time and voice to this study.

Chris Robinson

Gift card ______________________ Received____________________________
Appendix F

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: December 20, 2018

To: Andrea Beach, Principal Investigator
   Christine Robinson, Student Investigator for dissertation
   Jennifer Nitzel, Student Investigator

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-12-26

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “An Examination of Change in Attribution Perspective, Shame, and Academy Identity for Freshmen on Probation Enrolled in University Academic Recovery Courses: A Mixed Method Study” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., you must request a post-approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 19, 2019

Office of the Vice President for Research
Research Compliance Office
1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
Phone: (269) 387-2239 Fax: (269) 387-8270
Website: wmu.edu/research/compliance/irb

Campus Site: Room 251 W. Walhalla Hall