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Trajectories, Transformations, and Transitions: A Phenomenological Study of College Students in Recovery Finding Success

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A Phenomenological Study of College Students in Recovery

Finding Success

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP, AND COUNSELING OF THE

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ST.PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Scott C. Washburn

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

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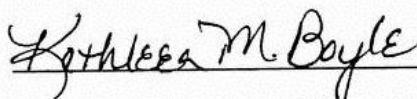March 2016

UMIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

Trajectories, Transformations, and Transitions:

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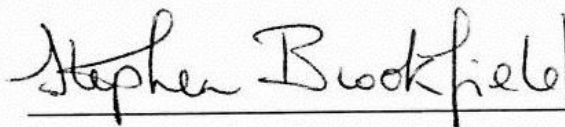
Finding Success

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

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April 5, 2016
Final Approval Date

Abstract

The research on college students in recovery from substance abuse issues and on campus programs designed to support them is a relatively new field of inquiry. The primary question this study addresses is how students in recovery from alcohol and dru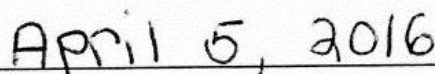g addiction find success in the recovery-unfriendly environment of contemporary college and university culture. The participants for this study are comprised of 21 alumni from two post-secondary higher education institutions who were members of Collegiate Recovery Programs at their respective institutions. This study approached this question by examining three dimensions of these participants' experiences, namely, their respective trajectories through college, their experiences with transformation, and, their experiences with the transition to post-college life. A Qualitative, Phenomenological Inquiry comprises the essential research framework for this study. Data gathering consisted of a convenience sampling method for recruiting participants all of whom took part in semi-structured, in-depth, audio-recorded interviews. Data analysis entailed Phenomenological research methods of thematic investigation by reviewing transcripts and identifying salient themes. Analysis also employed coding the data in *Dedoose* and conducting qualitative code co-occurrence features. Theoretical validation involved innovative application of Chaos and Complexity Theory, Constructive Developmentalism, and Transformative Learning Theory to the data findings. The basic findings revealed that successful trajectories employed effective use of a myriad of supports and learning sufficient internal self-control. Transformation occurred as a synergistic dynamic of individual recovery commitment combined with connection to positively-influencing peers. Successful transitional experiences entailed finding new life balance as well as reconfigured recovery support in post-college life.

Keywords: Addiction, addiction recovery, chaos and complexity, college students, college

student success, collegiate recovery communities, collegiate recovery programs, constructive

developmentalism, phenomenological inquiry, recovery support services, substance use disorder,

and transformative learning theory.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to all the amazing students I have been fortunate to work with who have found recovery from their substance addiction and ways to lead successful and meaningful lives in college and beyond. I also dedicate this study to the participants whom I was privileged to be their "student" as they generously and candidly shared their stories, struggles, and successes with me during the interviews. Finally, I dedicate this study to honor the memory of those who paid the ultimate price for their addiction to find ultimate healing from this ravenous disorder. May their remembrance provide impetus and avenue of recovery for those who still struggle.

Acknowledgements

The participants in this study were phenomenal teachers as they candidly and generously shared their stories, struggles and successes with me. Their stories and the life lessons they shared provided vital data and insights without which I could have never conducted this study to its level of depth and breadth. Their contributions were invaluable.

I am indebted to the support, feedback, and insights from my colleagues in the substance addiction counseling profession who patiently listened to my ideas and provided feedback on preliminary ideas and drafts of my study. The late Dr. Megan Shroat and Tim Brustad are particularly noteworthy. I am also very grateful to my doctoral cohort members who did the same especially during critical phases of writing my data findings and analysis. In particular, special thanks to Dr. Deb Kohland for challenging me on clarity of question and design. I would not have traversed that hurdle in a timely fashion without her feedback and support.

I am also immensely grateful to my Committee Chair, Dr. Kathleen Boyle, for her consistent support, encouragement, and feedback as I embarked on what at first seemed a very murky process of qualitative research. She helped me get over the "Quantitative Hangover" and begin to experience the beauty and luminosity of qualitative inquiry. I believe I have now become a legitimate researcher with her wise guidance and support.

Finally, I am very appreciative to my other Dissertation Committee Members. Dr. Tom Fish was particularly helpful in stimulating a clear design and lens for my study, particularly from Moustakis' framework, as well as meticulous editing feedback. Dr. Stephen Brookfield's guidance was critical in helping me bolster the finished product with more robust mining from Transformative Learning Theory. I take full responsibility for the finished product, but the quality I reached was in large part due to their sage feedback and guidance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CHARTS AND FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH TOPIC

The primary question this study addresses is what helps students in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction achieve success in the recovery-unfriendly environment of contemporary college culture. Public media and social researchers have given substantial attention to the recalcitrant phenomenon of excessive alcohol and other drug (AOD) use on college and university campuses. Practitioners and researchers alike have developed, implemented, and examined numerous prevention and early intervention approaches to this issue as well (Cronce & Larimer, 2012; Saltz, 2012). However, investigators have given comparatively less attention to college students who are in recovery from problematic AOD use while still attending college in a risk-laden environment for their recovery. A growing but relatively small number of colleges and universities have developed support services for these students resulting in the emergence of Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) and Collegiate Recovery Communities (CRCs) with notable outcomes of success. Key researchers in this area have described these programs as a form of tertiary prevention on college campuses by virtue of providing specialized support to students in recovery from AOD dependence (Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Smock, Baker, Harris & D'Sauza, 2010).

The critical context for the primary question of this study consists of the emerging trend of programs emerging designed to support this population of students. The pioneering programs for supporting students in recovery began over thirty years ago and various configurations of CRPs have emerged over the past decade.   No two programs are exactly alike. Each reflects its own context and the various programs have evolved into their own constellation of support services while trying to meet the needs of their respective students (Laitman & Stewart, 2012; Harris, Baker, & Cleveland, 2010). This raises questions regarding what factors and processes

are most helpful to these students in these varied configurations helping them succeed in their recovery and educational pursuits in the contemporary college environment as well as their transition to productive and meaningful post-college adult lives.

Reflexive Statement and Preliminary Assumptions

Several factors formed the foundation for my interest in this topic area. The first is my chosen career and current professional role. I have worked in the field of chemical and mental health counseling as an addictions counselor and therapist for over 25 years specializing in adolescent and emerging adult populations. My professional work has spanned settings across the continuum of care in this field with positions ranging from prevention to early intervention and diversion, to treatment and now to recovery maintenance in a higher education setting. Since 2008 my primary professional role has been as the Assistant Director of a Collegiate Recovery Program at Augsburg College (StepUP). This program is recognized nationally as a pioneering leader in the CRP movement. This role provided strong impetus for me to pursue my doctoral studies and focus my dissertation research on this topic primarily because I saw the need for us as a program to better identify and measure our program outcomes as well as the factors and processes which help our students succeed.

A second factor contributing to my interest in this topic is personal and my own sense of "vocation" with my profession. As an adolescent and young adult I struggled with heavy alcohol and drug use and engaged in those activities with reckless abandon until significant consequences awakened me to a need for a life change trajectory. Consequently, on several levels I can identify with the students I work with as they navigate their own early recovery as emerging adults. Furthermore, my own family has tragically suffered from the costs of addiction given that two of my siblings met premature deaths from chronic alcohol and drug dependence.

As a result, I take my work with my students very seriously and recognize the potential for ultimate, irreparable consequences if they do not succeed as well as the amazing possibilities if they do. Consequently, I also have a deep sense of connection to my chosen profession. I gain great satisfaction and gratitude for the opportunity to help emerging adults in recovery succeed in pursuing their own potentials as members of a recovery community on a college campus.

At this stage of my career as a practitioner-scholar, I recognize several assumptions which I bring to this area of practice and study. First, in the brief time I have worked in collegiate recovery I have seen a significant proliferation of new programs across the country which I will review in the literature review section of this paper. I do hold the bias that not all CRP programs should have the same configuration nor can they. Each program needs to be unique and different in some ways given the various needs and opportunities present in their respective contexts. Consequently, no one program configuration is inherently better than another. However, there is a need for research to identify what elements are essential and salient across configurations to ensure beneficial outcomes for students. Second, I also believe that each program possesses its own relative strengths and weaknesses in addition to potential for benefit as well as dysfunction as a socially dynamic community. I have observed this within our own CRP and believe more research is needed to identify those factors which facilitate healthy functioning and perhaps limit the dysfunction. Third, I believe that many students greatly benefit from CRPs but not all of them. Some students perhaps do not need this level of support or are not an appropriate fit for this kind of community. Furthermore, some students seem to experience failure even despite the support a CRP offers. This is another area in need of further research. Fourth, although I have seen CRCs manifest both healthy support and at times even destructive and harmful dysfunction towards its members, I am intrigued how students still seem

to benefit and gravitate towards these communities while also at times distance themselves because of the unfriendly social drama. Despite these unpleasant dynamics, students still seem to benefit to varying degrees. Central to all of these issues as perhaps an interwoven dynamic thread is the question regarding what helps these students find success in their respective contexts.

Statement of the Problem

The central focus of this study is college students in recovery who are participants in Collegiate Recovery Programs on college campuses. The primary question this study addresses is, "How do students in recovery as members of CRPs find success in college?" The question of "success" entails several dimensions. The first pertains to how they successfully sustain their recovery from alcohol and drug dependence while living in a recovery-risky environment, namely college. This is assumed to be foundational for the second dimension which relates to how they find academic success leading to graduation from college. This implies dynamics of persistence through various challenges to the actual completion of their degree and beyond into successful post-college living. Hence, the basic question of how recovering students in CRPs find success in college quickly embarks into a more complex purview involving not just recovery and academics while in school, but also the longer temporal view of preparation for a successful transition to post-college living.

Consequently, the question for this study actually expands into a more comprehensive frame as, "How do students in recovery as members of CRPs successfully sustain recovery and academic achievement towards the completion of their degree and preparation for successful transition to post-college living?" The post-college living dimension is important because of the distinctive needs and transformations needed for this population of students to even attempt to

engage education in a college environment while remaining sober. What value would there be to their CRP experience if they were simply successful in college but afterwards returned post-graduation to active substance addiction leading to repeated life failure and tragedy? Hence, arose my interest in also investigating how they felt they were prepared or ill-prepared for a successful transition to post-college life. Thus, the question for this study actually involved investigating three dimensions of their experiences in order to gain a deep purview into the depth, breadth, and essence of their experiences with facing challenge resulting in varied trajectories, experiencing transformation, and transition to post-college living.

The prospect of students in recovery from alcohol and drug dependence attending college and finding success both in recovery and academics is no small accomplishment given the "recovery-unfriendly" environment of the contemporary college environment. The challenges they face are distinct in many ways from the rest of the college population who do not struggle with addiction. Kegan (1994) drew an instructive analogy of the demands of contemporary culture as akin to a "school" and the expectations of modern life as the "curriculum" of that school (p. 3). The question for educators then becomes whether there is a fit between the capacities of students and the demands which our culture and society places upon them ultimately leading to successful outcomes for students. In terms of the focus of this study on college students in recovery and the distinct "curriculum" they encounter, Kegan made a critical observation regarding the heart of the issue by stating,

> The mismatch between external epistemological demand and internal epistemological capacity is characteristic of some portion of every person's adolescence…people grow best where they continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge; the rest is commentary. Environments that are weighted too heavily in the direction of challenge without adequate support are toxic…Those weighted too heavily toward support without adequate challenge are ultimately boring…the balance of support and challenge leads to vital engagement (pp. 41-42).

Finding that appropriate balance and equally important the match between the adequate supports in light of the distinctive challenges of students in recovery is critical. Hence, I was very interested in exploring with participants their experiences with challenge as students in recovery as well as the supports they found valuable in helping them succeed in the context of a recovery-unfriendly environment.

The challenges these students face and their successes become even more poignant considering the context in which they occur. The history and culture of excessive alcohol and drug use in the contemporary college environment is long-standing. I will review the significance of this study's question within the historical context of the alcohol and drug (AOD) epidemic on college campuses as well as the efforts of prevention to address these problems.

Problem Significance and Historical Context

Several factors underscore the significance of this topic. Students in recovery finding success as well as the emergence of CRPs in the context of contemporary college and university culture are historically and culturally significant phenomena in the context of higher education. Two major variables highlight the significance of CRPs and students who participate in them. They are the contemporary culture of epidemic excessive use of alcohol and drugs on college campuses as well as the recent emergence of CRPs as a grass-root movement. These elements position students in recovery and the CRPs to which they belong as counter-culture communities to the current trends of alcohol and drug (AOD) abuse on college and university campuses in the U.S. These features also show promise as a potential form of prevention for AOD problems for post-secondary educational institutions as well as an important opportunity to provide support for an important population of students.

The Collegiate AOD Epidemic and Prevention Context

First, college students consuming alcohol to excess with resulting negative consequences and administrations attempting to deal with that behavior, is not a new phenomenon on American college and university campuses. This "hearty drinking tradition," as Rorabaugh (1979) described it, has a history reaching as far back as the early post-Revolutionary times (p. 125). Furthermore, most experts agree that risky alcohol use on college campuses has been at epidemic proportions for decades. Based on the results of the Harvard School of Public Health's *College Alcohol Study*, which consisted of an on-going survey of over 50,000 students at 140 four-year colleges in forty states from 1993 to 2001, Wechsler and Wuethrich (2002) concluded that the culture of American colleges and universities is essentially the promotion of alcohol-consumption. Risky alcohol and drug use remains the greatest health threat to college students today (Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012). In stark contrast to these trends are college students in recovery and CRP communities. Culturally, these communities of students are attempting experience college in a markedly different manner, one in which they can remember, and doing so in an environment that is at best unfriendly to their recovery.

Second, this stage of late adolescence and emerging adulthood is developmentally vulnerable to the prevalence of excessive AOD use. Epidemiological studies have shown college students manifest unique alcohol use patterns and face different challenges and risk factors related to problematic drinking than the general population (Ham & Hope, 2003; Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012). The rates of college student alcohol use have consistently been about five to six percentage points higher than their same aged peers not enrolled in college with binge drinking rates hovering around 40% (Schulenberg & Patrick, 2012). This underscores how

students in recovery may be attempting something particularly developmentally challenging highlighting even more the need for specialized support for their endeavor.

A third salient factor consists of how college and university efforts towards prevention of problematic AOD use positions CRPs as a unique opportunity for dealing with this recalcitrant college public health issue. Colleges and universities have historically addressed the problematic culture of excessive alcohol use by means of primary and secondary prevention efforts with some notable success and identification of promising practices. Communities of students in recovery present post-secondary institutions with an opportunity to support them and their success either as a part of their alcohol and drug prevention programming or student affairs support strategy potentially impacting the fabric of their respective college student culture in positive ways.

The Emerging Trend of Collegiate Recovery Support

The emergence of CRPs on college and university campuses began not as strategic initiatives by university administrations but rather as grass roots movements by practitioners and students with vested interests in this endeavor. The history of organized recovery support on college campuses in the U.S. followed the emergence of the movement of recovery schools in general which began at the secondary level (White & Finch, 2009). The first organized programs started in the early 1980s through the mid-1990s. The brief history of these pioneering programs has shown that they began with individual support for students and evolved into communities of recovery support with various differences and distinctions from campus to campus (Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Smock, Baker, Harris & D'Sauza, 2010). Current estimates point to the existence of at least 59 collegiate recovery programs in 27 different states (Association for Recovery in Higher Education, 2016).

There has also been a recent development of Federal support for such programs on college and university campuses. Experts had been advocating for campus-based services to support students in recovery for almost a decade with little response on the federal level until recently (Bell, et al., 2009; Botzet, Winters, & Fahnhorst, 2007; Cleveland, Harris, Baker, Herbert, & Dean 2007). In 2010 the U.S. Department of Education published a Consultative Sessions Report on supporting recovery and preventing relapse in school settings with youth suffering from alcohol and drug use disorders (Dickard, Downs, & Cavanaugh, 2011). The 2015 National Drug Control Policy mandated that recovery schools be included as an integral part of the expansion of community-based recovery support systems (ONDCP, 2015, p. 37). This report mentioned support for both recovery high schools and collegiate recovery support programs.

In summary, institutions of higher education have grappled with trends of student problematic alcohol and other drug (AOD) use for decades. Prevention efforts have had limited impact with national binge drinking rates by college students having remained at relatively similar levels for the past several decades. Yet, numerous institutions have supported communities that are safe for recovering students by virtue of being free from problematic AOD use. These select institutions with CRC programs have accomplished in part what other institutions through their prevention programs have failed to do – the cessation of problematic AOD among student communities and support for their success.

Need for This Study

This recent emergent phenomenon of CRPs has presented a unique opportunity for colleges and universities to address the issue of AOD use on their respective campuses in a more comprehensive and creative manner. Rather than being a problem prevention-focused approach, this opportunity could potentially be part of a solution-focused effort to create positive and

thriving student communities helping an emergent population of recovering students succeed. As various CRPs have proliferated across the nation, there has been the emergence of different configurations of these programs within various institutional contexts and environments. This current state of affairs has created a new area for research as well as several important questions for this research to explore.

As the next chapter of my dissertation will demonstrate, this population of students has been rather invisible on college campuses as well as among researchers studying AOD issues in the college and university context. Several areas are in need of research. One area needing further study is how these students avail themselves of support from CRPs thereby helping them to find success. Researchers have only recently begun investigating CRCs and the students who participate in them. There is an initial wealth of information on student demographics and the role which community support might play in aiding their recovery and success in school. However, there appears to be minimal if any research on how students navigate their challenges and their various trajectories as well as potential disadvantages which may come from participating in a CRP. Most of the outcome studies to date focus on the benefits of participation in CRPs and few if any examine the other side of student experiences within these communities.

A second area in need of examination is how these students experience transformation as an avenue of finding their success. Their prior experiences and failed attempts at college underscore the need for some levels of transformation and change. A third area in which there is little if any research to date is how these CRPs may or may not help prepare students for the transition to post-college life. This provides the temporal completion of the purview of this study and points to the lasting value which students may have gained from CRPs and other supports they accessed while in college. Overall, further research in this area would help

illumine how colleges and universities could provide valuable support to this population of students thereby helping retention as well as student success efforts.

Summary

The majority of the research on alcohol-related issues in the context of higher education has focused on the prevalence and negative impacts of the trends of excessive alcohol and drug use by students. Those students who do find ways to recover from their alcohol and drug issues and return to college have been a relatively invisible population on college campuses having received little attention from the research community as well as higher education administrations. The emergence of systems to support these students have been mainly grass roots based coming from staff or faculty with specific interest in serving this population of students. The phenomenon of Collegiate Recovery Programs designed to support students in recovery on college and university campuses presents a unique opportunity for post-secondary educational institutions. This opportunity entails a new and innovative approach to address the long-standing and recalcitrant trends of excessive alcohol and drug use on college and university campuses as well as the prospect of helping a newly coalesced community of students in recovery find success. Hence, there is a need for more research on how these students find success along their journeys both during and after college to become productive adults living meaningful lives.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation provides an in depth examination and analysis of the experiences of CRP students in recovery reaching towards success in both their recovery and academics in the recovery-unfriendly environment of the college or university context. As a foundation for this study this dissertation reviews the research to-date on this topic, explains the methodology I

followed for data gathering as well as the examination and analysis techniques I used to reach the conclusions I came to at the completion of this inquiry.

Chapter One presents an overview of the context and historical significance of this topic for study as well as my reflexive statement and initial assumptions. I also present a summative review the historical emergence of CRPs on college and university campuses as well as the unique opportunity these trends presents to post-secondary institutions. This chapter also provides a reflective discussion of the problem statement as well as the rationale for the need for this study.

Chapter Two presents a critical review of the literature on the topic of college students in recovery and collegiate recovery programs. I note the contributions of studies to date and discuss the gaps and tensions relevant to the focus of inquiry of my study. This chapter also reviews the theoretical models researchers have used to examine this topic noting their contributions and limitations. I then present some additional theoretical models as lenses to innovatively examine college students in recovery and the collegiate programs designed to support them.

Chapter Three consists of the description of the Methodology I used for my study. This chapter describes the particulars of conducting a Qualitative Phenomenological study for this topic and discuss some of the philosophical assumptions I brought to this inquiry. I also discuss how I used *Dedoose* as an aid in analyzing my data findings. Furthermore, this chapter documents the interview questions I asked participants and the rationale behind them. It also describes the participant demographics and the selection process I used to obtain participants for this study. This section also present strategies I used to protect data security, validity, ethical treatment of participants, and confidentiality.

Chapter Four reviews my data findings for the first thematic area of my study, Trajectories. These findings are based on the in-depth interviews I conducted with 21 participants who had been students in recovery participating in CRPs from two different institutions. This chapter reviews the themes participant responses generated from a Phenomenological framework. This chapter also inquiries about the major challenges participants faced as students in recovery, the supports they found most helpful, and how they experienced community within their respective CRPs. I also investigated what participants experienced regarding both their best and worst experiences as participants in their CRPs.

Chapter Five reviews my data findings on the second thematic realm of my study, Transformations, based on the 21 in-depth interviews with participants. In this chapter I present my findings regarding how participants learned from their challenging experiences and what processes seemed to facilitate their own personal transformation in needed areas for success. In particular, it presents my findings concerning how participants experienced transformation on assumptive levels and the role identity shifts played in their finding success as college students in recovery.

Chapter Six comprises my third data findings set on the topic of Transition to post-college living based on the 21 in-depth interviews with participants. I review what participants reported from a Phenomenological thematic framework regarding their greatest challenges in post-college living and how their experiences in their CRP helped prepare or not prepare them for that experience. It ends with a summation of their reports for recommendations for improvements for their respective CRPs to better prepare students for that inevitable transition.

In Chapter Seven I present my analysis of the data findings found in chapters Four, Five, and Six. It compares the thematic findings from various sections using both a thematic rubric

analysis technique as well as a thematic co-occurrence frequency based on *Dedoose* analysis of the data findings. This chapter also uses various theoretical lenses innovatively to conduct further inquiry into the meaning and implications of the data findings. Specifically, I use Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 2005) Bioecological Model of Development, Chaos and Complexity Theory (Butz, 1996; Lewin, 1999; Waldrop, 1992), Kegan's (1982, 1994) model of Constructive Developmentalism, and Meizirow's (2000) Transformative Learning Theory.

Chapter Eight consists of the Conclusions and Implications I derived based on my data findings and analysis. It specifically addresses how the findings and analysis lead to important thematic insights and conclusions regarding the 21 participants' experiences as students in recovery finding success. I also discuss the implications these conclusions have for practice in this field as well as limitations inherent within this study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The aim of this chapter is to review the relevant research concerning the issue of college students in recovery and how they find success in the contemporary college and university culture of excessive AOD use. Several important matters pertain to this topic. The first is this historical context of the culture of excessive AOD use on college campuses as a public health threat and post-secondary institutional efforts to reduce or prevent those trends. The second consists of the history of the emergence of programs designed to support students in recovery (CRPs) on college and university campuses as well as the various configurations these programs now comprise. The third important matter is the review of the research literature itself and the appraisal of the current status of the research.

In terms of the research literature review I examine the specific areas this body of research has addressed as well as how investigators have methodologically explored this topic. I also examine what theoretical lenses investigators have used to examine Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) and the students who participate in them and note the limitations within these frameworks. I then note the gaps and tensions in the research literature and how my study addresses some of those gaps. I also propose innovative applications of several theoretical frameworks to this topic of study as a means to further illumine the experiences of students in recovery as they venture towards success and otherwise.

The Historical Context and Significance of the Problem

Several factors highlight the significance of students in recovery finding success and collegiate recovery support in the context higher education as salient phenomena for the public health issue of excessive AOD use. The first is the culture of alcohol promotion and excessive and risky alcohol consumption on college campuses which has led to disastrous consequences

despite decades of strategic prevention efforts. The second is the unique pattern of alcohol use which college students manifest in contrast to their non-college peers which makes students in recovery even more distinctive among their college cohorts. The third is the unique challenges and opportunities which these conditions present for recovering students as well as for post-secondary educational institutions to offer specialized support for this population.

The Historical Traditions

College students consuming alcohol to excess with resulting negative consequences and administrations attempting to deal with that behavior, is not a new phenomenon on American college and university campuses. This "hearty drinking tradition," as Rorabaugh (1979) described it, has a history reaching as far back as the early post-Revolutionary times (p. 125). Rorabaugh argued that the generation of college students who came of age about 1800, "indulged in unprecedented lusty drinking" (p. 139). One student attending Dartmouth at the time informed the college president, "the least quantity he could put up with…was from two to three pints (of liquor) daily". According to Rorabaugh, this state of affairs worsened by the consequential atmosphere of students mixing their daily intoxication forays with "swearing, gaming, licentiousness, and rioting" (p. 139). Some colleges at the time warned students to drink hard liquor with moderation and most colleges after 1800 actually banned hard alcohol altogether. In the contemporary context, students excessively using alcohol combined with other intoxicating substances (drugs), has continued to challenge college and university staff and administrations as a seemingly recalcitrant cultural problem with no easy solution at hand.

The Current AOD Epidemic on College Campuses

Most experts agree that risky alcohol use on college campuses has been at epidemic proportions for decades. Based on the results of the Harvard School of Public Health's *College*

Alcohol Study, which consisted of an on-going survey of over 50,000 students at 140 four-year

colleges in forty states from 1993 to 2001, Wechsler and Wuethrich (2002) concluded that the

culture of American colleges and universities is essentially the promotion of alcohol-

consumption. They observed,

> On college campuses across America, alcohol-related culture takes many forms, from
> revered campus traditions to fraternity initiations, football tailgating parties, twenty-first
> birthday 'bar crawls' where the celebrant 'drinks his age' with twenty-one shots, and
> more. Over many decades a culture of alcohol has become entwined in school customs,
> social lives, and institutions. Winked at for decades, this culture has its darker side (pp.
> 3-4).

Others have claimed that the college years are one of the riskiest periods of development for

emerging adults and risky alcohol use presents the greatest health threat to college students today

(Ham & Hope, 2003; Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012; Saltz, 2004; Wechsler & Wuethrich,

2002).

The Developmental Variable

Several factors underscore the alcohol-use related risks of this developmental period with

its inherent vulnerabilities. First, college students manifest unique alcohol use patterns and face

different challenges and risk factors related to problematic drinking than the general population

(Ham & Hope, 2003; Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012). The rates of college student alcohol use

have consistently been about five to six percentage points higher than their same aged peers not

enrolled in college with binge drinking rates hovering around 40% (Schulenberg & Patrick,

2012). Second, approximately, 1,825 college students die from alcohol-related unintentional

injuries and accidents and another 599,000 suffer accidental injuries annually due to excessive

alcohol consumption. Furthermore, about one-quarter of college students reported missing class,

falling behind, doing poorly on exams and papers, and receiving lower grades overall due to their

drinking (National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse [NIAAA], 2013; Saltz, 2004).

Finally, as a result nearly one-third of college students meet DSM criteria for alcohol abuse and six percent for alcohol dependence (NIAAA, 2005) but only a small percentage of students who need substance abuse treatment actually receive it. In 2009 there was approximately 374,000 substance abuse treatment admissions among 18 to 24 year olds across the U.S. and only 12,000 of those admissions were college or other post-secondary school students (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] (2012). A portion of these students are returning to college and attempting to complete their education in a recovery-unfriendly environment.

AOD Prevention Efforts on College Campuses

Colleges and universities have historically addressed the problematic culture of excessive alcohol use by means of primary and secondary prevention efforts with some notable success and identification of promising practices. After decades of investigation, development, and practice many researchers agree that multiple prevention interventions are necessary including environmental approaches to produce long-term effects on college student drinking (Cronce & Larimer, 2012; Ham & Hope, 2003; Saltz, 2012). However, gaps in prevention efforts across institutions remain. One is the lack of consistent accessibility, comprehensiveness, enforcement and clarity across institutions in their overall prevention strategies (Hirschfield, Edwardson, & McGovern, 2005). A second is the absence of comprehensive strategy implementation across the domains of policy, enforcement, education, screening, and intervention/treatment among U.S. higher education institutions (Toomey, Nelson, Winters, Miazga, Lenk & Erickson, 2013).

What is largely missing from the reviews of research on prevention and intervention efforts on college campuses are strategies focused on supporting students in recovery. Researchers agree that approaches need to be systemic and comprehensive but explicit

recommendations for post-treatment recovery support are noticeably absent. Only recently did a publication focused on college student drinking appear which included an entire chapter on students in recovery as a salient component (Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012). These conditions have created both a gap and an opportunity for the emergence and development of recovery support for college students. Some colleges and universities have addressed this gap by creating a new type of tertiary prevention in the form of CRPs.

These circumstances have presented both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is for college students who do access treatment or extricate themselves from a destructive substance abuse lifestyle by other means and return to a college environment that is both culturally recovery-unfriendly and lacking structural support for their recovery. The opportunity is for post-secondary institutions to support these students and their success either as a part of their alcohol and drug prevention programming or student affairs support strategy. Some colleges and universities have seized this opportunity as a means of tertiary prevention which I will review in the following section.

The Emerging Trend of Collegiate **Recovery Support**

The history of organized recovery support on college campuses in the U.S. follows the emergence of the movement of recovery schools in general which began at the secondary level. White and Finch (2009) argued that this movement arose when the need reached a tipping point resulting in the coalescence of new structures of recovery support. The history of the collegiate recovery support movement began in the mid-1970s and has proliferated nationally in the 2000s.

Pioneering programs. The first documented collegiate recovery support program within a university was at Brown University in Providence, RI which began in 1977 (White & Finch, 2006). Bruce Donovan, then a professor in Classics Literature, founded this program at the

direction of the university president and located it within Academic Affairs to reduce stigma and add prestige (Donovan, 2007). This early program focused on helping students with substance abuse issues and consisted of individual counseling support, group meetings, referral and networking to local Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings in addition to weekly discussion meetings to help students reluctant to attend off campus self-help groups.

The second collegiate recovery support program began in 1983 at Rutgers University in New Jersey (Harris, Baker & Cleveland, 2010). This program provided a broad array of services designed to meet the needs of students across the continuum of care from prevention to recovery support across the entire campus community (Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Laitman & Stewart, 2012). This program provided counseling services for mental health issues to its students and was the first to offer a small residential component for select students in anonymous recovery housing on campus (Laitman & Stewart, 2012).

Texas Tech University (TTU) in Lubbock, Texas was the third institution to develop programmatic recovery support for students. The Center for Substance Abuse and Recovery (CSAR) program began in 1986 as a curriculum to train chemical dependency counselors and quickly attracted a large number of recovering students who formed a peer support network. The collegiate recovery community (CRC) model at TTU evolved into providing five major components of support to students: recovery support, academic and educational support, peer support, family support, and opportunities for community service in addition to weekly on campus 12-Step support meetings (Harris, Baker, Kimball, & Shumway, 2007). Furthermore, this program was the first to obtain a federal grant to develop a standardized curriculum for a

CRC program that could be adapted and exported to other colleges and universities (Baker, 2010; Cleveland, Baker & Dean, 2010).

The fourth institution to develop a CRP was Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The StepUP Program at Augsburg College began in 1997 initially as an adjunct component to academic support services for students in recovery. This program as a part of Student Affairs evolved to include recovery housing, weekly individual counseling sessions with StepUP staff, a weekly community meeting, and adherence to specified standards of behavior for students. This program has been distinctive with its recovery housing for all its students and a student leadership governance structure to help oversee the community (Harris, et al., 2010). Furthermore, this program has provided a holistic support focus to its students with individual counseling for recovery maintenance as well as general life skills, spiritual support, and sober recreational activities (Botzet, Winters, & Farnhorst, 2007).

The brief history of these pioneering CRPs on college campuses has shown how they began with individual support for students and evolved into communities of recovery support with various differences and distinctions from campus to campus. One of the primary differences between CRC programs is whether they have a supervised residential model and support to find safe off-campus housing (Harris, et al., 2007). Table 2.1 illustrates the early history timeline and the developmental course of basic primary program focus and components of each of these pioneering programs:

Table 2.1: Historical Timeline of CRP Pioneers

Institution	1977	1983	1986	1997
College	Brown University	Rutgers University	Texas Tech University	Augsburg College
Department	Academic	Health/Counseling	Academic	Student Affairs
Support Components	Lay-professional Peer support	Professional Peer support Recovery housing	Professional Curriculum Peer/community support Partial recovery housing	Professional Peer/community support Recovery housing

Historically, each program initially emerged independently of each other and evolved into its own distinct form of recovery support for its students. The above table illustrates how these programs began with different institutional departments and evolved into varying forms of professional, peer, and community support. Major differences between programs are whether and how the programs developed recovery-focused substance-free housing for their respective students or grew as student organizations with a specialized focus of peer recovery support. Other differences include the levels and kinds of support offered to students whether in the forms of lay/academic support, professional counseling, and community-based peer support.

The emergence of a national collegiate recovery effort. The beginning of a national movement for recovery school support, particularly on college campuses and collegiate recovery research began in the early 2000s. Several factors have contributed to these recent phenomena. One factor was the founding of the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS) in 2002 which was the first official networking effort of recovery schools both on the secondary and post-secondary levels. The ARS website displays 30 recovery high schools in 16 states and 18 collegiate

recovery programs in 14 states across the U.S. as members or ARS (Association of Recovery Schools). A second factor was TTU having been the first recipient among CRCs to receive federal funding to replicate other programs across the U.S. in 2007. As a result TTU assisted the founding of almost 30 new CRCs across the U.S. from 2007 to 2011 (Smock, Baker, Harris & D'Sauza, 2010).

The support for collegiate recovery replication and research increased in the latter 2000s due to several additional factors. One factor was the founding of the Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE) in 2009 which is in part a spin-off of ARS and is the first collaborative coalition of collegiate recovery programs across the U.S. The ARHE website identifies 59 collegiate recovery programs in 27 different states as members of the association (Association for Recovery in Higher Education). A second factor influencing the recent emergence of research on this student population and these kinds of programs is TTU having organized a system for program support and multi-site data collection through ARHE for the first multi-site national research project on collegiate recovery (Smock, et al., 2010). This research is mostly quantitative in focus comparing student demographics, outcome trends, and standardized survey responses. A third factor contributing to the recent growth of programs across the U.S. is young adults seeking recovery earlier increasing the need for CRCs and colleges and universities recognizing that these students are actually assets to a campus because of their sobriety and academic progress (Recovery Campus, 2013).

Federal support for a national agenda. Experts have been advocating for campus-based services to support students in recovery for almost a decade with little response on the federal level until recently (Bell, et al., 2009; Botzet, Winters, & Fahnhorst, 2007; Cleveland, Harris, Baker, Herbert, & Dean 2007). In 2010 the U.S. Department of Education noted that "the

education system's role as a part of the nation's recovery and relapse prevention support system is still emerging" (quoted by Laudet, Harris, Kimball, Winters, & Moberg, 2015, p. 38). However, in recent years Federal agencies have called for the expansion of community-based recovery support services to include schools and colleges. In 2010 the U.S. Department of Education published a Consultative Sessions Report on supporting recovery and preventing relapse in school settings with youth suffering from alcohol and drug use disorders (Dickard, Downs, & Cavanaugh, 2011). This report specified, "For those students attempting to remain sober, recovery programs and supports are critical to preventing relapse into addiction or alcohol and drug abuse, as well as supporting student success in education" (p. 5). The 2015 National Drug Control Policy has indicated that recovery schools be included as an integral part of the expansion of community-based recovery support systems (ONDCP, 2015, p. 37). This report mentioned support for both recovery high schools and collegiate recovery support programs.

The current landscape of CRPs. The current status of collegiate recovery programs reflects at least three configurations. The first and perhaps the most common are the programs on college and university campuses that function similar to student organizations but which focus on recovery and other forms of relevant support for students. The second configuration consists of programs such as the early pioneering ones which offer a recovery residential option combined with professional counseling or recovery coaching support. The third consists of sober house residences independent of college and university campuses but located nearby which offer specialized recovery housing and support to college students. Hazelden's Tribeca Twelve residence in New York City is an example of this kind of program (Hazelden-Betty Ford Foundation) in addition to several others which have emerged in the past five years (The Haven; Sober College; and, Jaywalker U).

In summary, institutions of higher education have grappled with trends of student problematic alcohol and other drug (AOD) use for decades. Prevention efforts have had limited impact with national binge drinking rates by college students having remained at relatively similar levels for the past several decades. Yet, several institutions have created communities that are safe for recovering students by virtue of being free from problematic AOD use. The programs have largely been the result of grass root efforts rather than strategic initiatives by their respective administrations. These select institutions with CRC programs have accomplished in part what other institutions through their prevention programs have failed to do – the cessation of problematic AOD use among entire student communities and support for their success. Granted, the goal of most AOD prevention programs is harm reduction with promotion of responsible alcohol use and not necessarily abstinence. However, CRPs have emerged as communities with a specialized focus on former problematic AOD users but also with a broader focus on encouraging success and optimal functioning through community-based recovery support.

History and Analysis of the Literature

I begin this review by first clarifying how I determined what research to include in my review and then briefly tracing the history of the research in this area. I followed specific criteria for inclusion in my search for research literature on this topic. The criteria consisted of a primary focus on college students recovering from alcohol/drug abuse and dependence disorders as well as programs in higher education institutions designed to support them. My literature search included primarily peer-reviewed research journal articles. I began the initial search with a general inquiry with Summon as well as ERIC in the University of St. Thomas Library search query. The terms I used were "college students (and) recovery (and) alcohol and drugs" as well as, "collegiate (and) recovery (and) programs." I then focused my search through PsycINFO

with the following search queries: "recovery community" (and) "college or university"; "college students" (and) addiction recovery"; "college students" (and) "substance abuse recovery". The results of my queries identified a total of 33 peer-reviewed studies directly related to my topic of interest.

Although institutional support for students in recovery on college campuses began as early as 1977, the published research literature on this topic did not emerge until the early 2000s. White (2001) authored one of the first published descriptions of collegiate recovery programs in which he described the history of the Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery (CSAR) at Texas Tech University (TTU) which began in 1986. In this article he cited the impressive grade point averages (GPAs) earned by the students in the CSAR program and the low relapse rates. White and Finch (2006) published the first article tracing the recent history of the recovery school movement in the United States at both the high school and collegiate levels.

Collections of literature in this area emerged by the mid-2000s. The first major collection appeared in 2007 with Finch (2007) being the guest editor. This volume was a special edition of the *Journal of Groups in Addiction and Recovery* and consisted of 16 articles by various authors reviewing and examining support services for recovering students both in secondary (high school) and post-secondary settings. The overall purpose of this volume was to highlight the need and rationale for including recovery support as a part of educational agendas in various educational settings for adolescents and young adults.

Several key authors subsequently published research on collegiate recovery programs in various journals and the first compendium of these studies, *Substance Abuse Recovery in College: Community Supported Abstinence* was published in 2010 with Cleveland, Harris, and Wiebe as chief editors. This volume consists of nine chapters, many previously published

journal articles, explaining collegiate recovery communities, the services they provide, and their respective role(s) in the context of greater campus community. Texas Tech University's CSAR program was a primary focus in this volume. That same year Smock, Baker, Harris, and D'Sauza (2010) published what they claimed to be the first literature review in this area of study. In addition to citing the impressive GPAs of CSAR students and low relapse rates, they recounted how the program at TTU became the first to receive federal funding to document and replicate their program on other campuses. These efforts resulted in the planning and emergence of an additional 20 CRCs on college and university campuses across the U.S. (Smock, et al., 2010).

In the past couple of years several new studies have emerged including a few literature reviews on this topic. Key researchers in this field have published the first national study on the characteristics of students participating in CRPs. They surveyed 486 students from 29 different CRPs located in 19 U.S. states (Laudet, Harris, Kimball, Winters, and Moberg, 2015). Other studies have examined how on campus recovery residences may impact their host institution (Watson, 2014), reasons why students join CRPs ((Laudet, Harris, Kimball, Winters, and Moberg, 2016), as well as suggestions for organizational and institutional strategies for starting CRPs (Yi and Edmonds, 2014).

This brief overview of the literature shows that research focused on college programs supporting students in recovery is a relatively new area of inquiry having emerged within the past fifteen years. However, this research also appears to be a subset of other larger investigational endeavors on several fronts. The first is focused on adolescent and young adult substance abuse treatment outcomes and alternative treatment modalities and support (Passetti & White, 2007; Russell, 2007). One could argue that the second area this research has emerged

from is the literature on college alcohol and drug use prevention by viewing CRCs as a form or "tertiary prevention" (Smock, et al., 2010). Support for this claim is present in a recent volume on college drinking and drug use which includes an entire chapter on campus recovery programs (Raskin-White & Rabiner, 2012). In the next section I will present the major themes I found in the scholarly investigation on the topic of collegiate recovery. I will conclude this section by identifying and explaining the major tensions and gaps I found in the research literature.

Themes in the Literature and Analysis

As a means towards organizing the major themes in the research on this topic I identified an emergent rubric of classification based on the collection of studies. I configured the topics around three different classifications. The first classification was a focus on particular collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) with identified institutions. The second consisted of a primary focus on either program component descriptions or an investigation of student experiences and outcomes. The third classification related to research methodology whether the study was primarily descriptive, quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical. This classification rubric formed the organizational framework for my review and analysis of the literature.

Table 2.2 illustrates how I classified the studies by study type whether they were descriptive, quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical. The second level of distribution is whether the studies focused on describing or analyzing CRC programs. The majority (19) of the studies had a program focus and the remaining 14 focused on students with a predominant emphasis upon demographic and outcome description.

Table 2.2: Distribution of Study Types

	Descriptive	Quantitative	Qualitative	Theoretical
Program Focus	Baker (2010) Donovan (2007) Harris, et al. (2007) Harris, et al. (2010) Harkins & Roth (2007) Laitman & Lederman (2007) Laitman & Stewart (2012) Smock, et al. (2010) Wiebe, et al. (2010) White & Finch (2006) Finch (2007a) White (2001) Perron, et al. (2010) Yi & Edmonds (2014) Watson (2014) Laudet, et al. (2014)	Cleveland, et al. (2010b) Casiraghi & Muslow (2010)	Finch (2007b) Casiraghi & Muslow (2010)	Harkins & Roth (2007) Russell (2010)
Student Focus	Russell (2010)	Botzet, et al. (2007) Cleveland, et al. (2010a) Cleveland & Gronendyk (2010) Cleveland & Harris (2010) Wiebe, et al. (2010) Laudet, et al. (2015) Laudet, et al. (2016)	Bell, et al. (2009a) Bell, et al. (2009b) Terrion (2012) Laudet, et al. (2016)	

Table 2.3 illustrates the distribution of studies by their respective focus on particular

institutionally-affiliated CRPs. The leading institution in these studies is the CSAR program at

TTU (11) followed by Rutgers (2) and then Augsburg (1) and Brown (1), respectively.

Researchers have considered each of these programs to be pioneers in this field (Botzet, Winters,

& Fahnhorst, 2007; Laitman & Stewart, 2012). Furthermore, researchers have focused the

majority of studies on TTU and the CSAR students (Smock, et al., 2010).

Table 2.3: Institutional Focus Distribution

Augsburg	Brown	Texas Tech	Rutgers
Botzet, et al. (2007)	Donovan (2007)	Baker (2010)	Laitmen & Lederman (2007)
		Bell, et al. (2009a)	Laitman & Stuart (2012)
		Bell, et al. (2009b)	
		Casiraghi & Muslow (2010)	
		Cleveland & Gronendyk (2010)	
		Cleveland, et al. (2010b)	
		Harris, et al. (2007)	
		Harris, et al. (2010)	
		Russell (2010)	
		Wiebe, et al. (2010)	
		White (2001)	

Descriptive studies of program types and distinctions. A key classification of the

research consists of studies focused on describing various CRCs and the distinctions between

them. Sixteen of the studies fit this classification (Table 2). Several of them traced the history of

the collegiate recovery support movement and how it evolved to its current status. I have already

summarized the history of CRPs so in this section I will focus on the various program

distinctions among the pioneering programs which researchers have highlighted.

The following distinctions stand out among the four pioneering collegiate recovery

programs. Brown University was the first post-secondary institution in the U.S. to initiate a

formal support program for students in recovery (White & Finch, 2006) and provided non-

professional lay counseling support services to students in addition to peer support (Donovan,

2007).   Rutgers University was the second institution to develop a CRP designed their program as a part of the continuum of support services addressing AOD issues on their entire campus as a part of a comprehensive AOD program framework (Harris, Baker & Cleveland, 2010; Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Laitman & Stewart, 2012). Furthermore, Rutgers was the first institution to offer a recovery-focused residential component (Laitman & Stewart, 2012). TTU is distinct in several ways. Their Seminar in Recovery curriculum stands in lieu of regular individual therapy for students although students may be referred to additional therapeutic resources (Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010). TTU has been the leader in helping replicate CRPs across the U.S. in large part due to a federal grant to standardize and replicate their curriculum (Baker, 2010; Cleveland, Baker & Dean, 2010). They have also been the leader in establishing a consortium of CRCs for program support and data collection to aid in a multi-site data collection research project on collegiate in recovery which would be largest study to date on these programs (Smock, et al., 2010). Finally, the StepUP Program at Augsburg College is distinct by virtue of having the largest recovery residential population on a college campus combined with high levels of professional counseling support for its students (Botzet, Winters & Farnhorst, 2007).

The early history of CRCs on college campuses reveals how they began with individual support for students and evolved into communities of recovery support with various differences and distinctions from campus to campus. Two major distinguishing features consist of whether these programs offer recovery housing and professional or lay counseling support staff. Furthermore, only one of the programs appears to systemically be a part of the comprehensive AOD programming of its institution (Rutgers). What is missing in the literature is how these pioneering programs are integrated into the overall AOD prevention framework of their respective institutions. Only one program, Rutgers, explicitly places itself as a part of the

institution's overall continuum of addressing student AOD concerns from intervention to recovery (Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Laitman & Stewart, 2012). However, the evolution and eventual collaboration of these programs has led to the beginning of the development of numerous new programs across the U.S. The research on their respective program components and outcomes appears to be in an early stage of development as a specialized area of study.

Quantitative studies of CRPs. In this next section I review the literature with a focus on the research methodologies and summative results of the various studies. Among the 33 studies found in my search eight were primarily quantitative in focus and approach (Botzet, et al., 2007; Cleveland, et al., 2010a; Cleveland, et al., 2010b; Cleveland & Gronendyk, 2010; Cleveland & Harris; Wiebe, et al., 2010; Laudet, et al., 2015) and two consisted of a mixed design of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010; Laudet, et al., 2016). These studies examined three major topics: student demographics and characteristics, program and student outcomes, student living and coping strategies, and reasons for joining a CRP. I will briefly summarize the findings in each of these areas.

Student demographics and characteristics. Botzet, et al. (2007) provided one of the first major studies of this kind and examined the student population in the StepUP Program at Augsburg College. The methodology of this study involved 83 student participants (46 current and 37 alumni) taking a modified version of the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) survey which assesses drug use, mental health, and other life-functioning domains. A significant finding from this study showed a prevalence of mental health conditions such as Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and PTSD among this student population.

Cleveland, Baker, and Dean (2010) conducted a second major study of this kind by investigating the demographic characteristics of the student population in the CSAR program at

TTU. The dataset for description consisted of information from 82 CRC members. The results showed a preponderance of males in the program (62% male versus 32% female) as well as an ethnically homogeneous population with 95% of the students being non-Hispanic white. The authors also noted how CRC members are different from other substance users by citing the large number of poly-substance users in contrast to the small number of alcohol-only users. This led them to surmise that these CRC members may not be representative of young substance abusers due to the lack of ethnic, racial and socioeconomic diversity. Furthermore, the majority of them came from families with sufficient resources to send them to treatment for their substance disorder.

Laudet, Harris, Kimball, Winters, and Moberg (2015) have published the first national-based study of students participating in CRPs on college campuses. They surveyed 486 students representing 29 CRPs from 19 different states in the U.S. Their findings were consistent with previous smaller scale demographic studies of CRP students finding a predominance of male students (57%) as compared to females (43%), predominantly Caucasian (93.3%), and high rates of having completed treatment for their substance use disorder as well as participation in 12-Step/AA groups as an important element of their recovery support.

Student and program outcomes. A second focus area of the quantitative studies has been the outcomes on both the student and aggregated student/program levels. A majority of this research has come from the CSAR program at TTU. One of the earliest studies showed that these students had an aggregate GPA of 3.37 and a relapse rate below 5% (White, 2001). Subsequent studies showed that relapse rates among these students ranged from 4.4 to 8 % and GPAs ranged from 3.18 to 3.25 showing a strong commitment by the students to their education.

Graduation rates averaged approximately 70% (Harris, et al., 2007; Cleveland, Baker, & Dean, 2010).

Botzet, et al. (2007) examined the students in the StepUP program at Augsburg College. These authors found that only 11% of these students had used alcohol or illicit drugs in the prior six months of the study and only 2% met criteria for a current substance use disorder. These students also reported high levels of personal assets and strengths (an average of 7 out of 10 assets identified) as well as favorable GPA rates ranging from 2.86 to 3.05. Clearly, these studies show that students in these CRCs were finding successful abstinence and academic achievement in their respective supportive environments.

Student living and coping. A third area of the quantitative research focused on the daily living and coping strategies of students participating in a CRP. Again, the majority of this research came from TTU students in the CSAR program. One study showed that CRP students relied on the helping relationships of their peers as opposed to medication as a means to cope. These students felt most stressed when experiencing a negative affective state presumably from the challenges to their coping strategies (Wiebe, Cleveland & Dean, 2010). In a second study investigators examined the degree of "abstinence safety" within the CRP community and found that respondents reported greater abstinence support than relapse risk showing the averages for abstinent support nearly twice as large as risk indicators. The authors concluded that the CRC provided a "protective milieu" for recovering students by providing social networks of abstinence support (Cleveland, Wiebe & Wiersma, 2010, p. 108).

Cleveland and Gronendyk (2010) in a third quantitative study provided supportive data to the previous studies by examining the daily lives of social contact of these students. These authors uncovered that the CRC members had high frequency, close personal relationships with

each other. Other researchers examined how students utilized social support in the form of talking with others as a means to support alcohol and drug abstinence (Cleveland & Harris, 2010). Investigators conducting a study of mixed design examined student feedback on their experiences in the Seminar on Recovery at TTU. These students weighted the social support in emotional and companionship domains as the most salient components of these seminars (Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010).

The overarching theme from all these studies is the value of the peer social support students receive as members of a CRC. Researchers have agreed that social support is one of the most important mechanisms of support for these students (Smock, et al., 2010; Harris, et al., 2007; Harris, et al., 2010). The presence of a recovery center on the college campus is not necessarily the most salient factor. Rather, these centers provide the opportunity for students to create the necessary sense of belonging, support and community to enhance both academic and recovery success (Cleveland & Harris, 2010).

Qualitative Studies of CRCs. My literature search revealed five major qualitative studies in this area (Bell et al., 2009a; Bell, et al., 2009b; Finch, 2007b; Terrion, 2012) with two being a mixed design study (Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010; Laudet, et al., 2016). The authors of these studies examined four major areas relevant to student experiences in CRCs. Those areas were the common challenges these students face, their process of identity development and change, their perspective on the most helpful components of CRC support and, the reasons why they chose to join a CRP.

Common challenges. In a recent study Terrion (2012) examined students in recovery attending a university without the benefit of a CRP. This investigator discovered that one of the most significant challenges these students faced in school was making new friends. She found

that positive and supportive relationships with school peers, family, professors, and members of recovery support groups were central for these students and their success. She also uncovered that support and feedback from professors seemed to help increase self-efficacy. A final very interesting finding was that these students did not utilize the available college counseling and support resources. She speculated that this may reflect either the students being unaware of available services or the lack of services with specialized training to support this population.

Numerous authors cited the alcohol and drug using culture of college campuses as one of the greatest challenges which recovering students face (Bell, Kantikar, Kersiek, et al., 2009; Harris, et al., 2007; Perron, Grahovac, Uppal, GRanillo, Shuter & Porter, 2011; Wiebe, Cleveland & Harris, 2010). Finch (2007b) found that students reported returning to their previous school with their former drug-using peers would have quickly led to relapse. Others identified learning to balance academic responsibilities with one's recovery responsibilities and finding social interaction opportunities outside of the CRC were common challenges as well (Bell, Kantikar, Kersiek, et al., 2009). Harris, et al. (2007) concluded, "The primary benefit of collegiate recovery communities is establishing a system of support within the students' new environment that can enable them to continue their recovery and access mechanisms of social support that enhance their quality of life" (p. 225).

Identity development and change. In addition to the college environment the normal developmental processes of adolescence and emerging adulthood can present particular hurdles to college students in recovery (Wiebe, Cleveland, & Harris, 2010). Several researchers examined the identity development processes of these students (Bell, et al., 2009b; Russell, 2010). One team identified two recovery identities, exploratory and stability-based, which they deemed equally viable for recovery maintenance. These authors found that in general, these

students saw themselves as more mature having gone through significant life experiences with their addiction and recovery (Bell, et al., 2009b). Russell (2010) explored how the various components of TTU's CRP community in which abstinence and recovery are the norms helped to facilitate the development of pro-social identities encouraging achievement, autonomy, and intimacy. Other researchers uncovered examples of these positive identities with how students reported seeing themselves in new roles as potential helpers to former drug-using friends wanting to get sober and learning to be successful students (Bell, et al., 2009b; Finch, 2007b). Terrion (2012) aptly described the new identity and life direction of these students when she observed, "Although these students have faced myriad challenges in the past, their life trajectory seems to have been radically altered, firstly by their commitment to recovery and, secondly, by their admission into and pursuit of post-secondary education" (p. 20).

  Most helpful CRC support components.   A third area which researchers examined qualitatively was student perspectives on the most helpful support components from their CRC program. The most common components which students cited as helpful were the social support of sober peers providing a sense of belonging and support; the safety of a substance-free recovery housing environment; the counseling and advocacy support of CRC staff; the availability of on-campus 12-Step meetings; academic skills support; financial assistance; and, the opportunity to be of service to others (Bell, Kanitkar, Kerksiek, et al. 2009; Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010; Finch, 2007b). Terrion (2012) noted in her study with students without an available CRCP on campus that positive and supportive relationships with school peers, family, professors, and members of recovery support groups were central for these students and their success as well.

Reasons for joining a CRP. The fourth area researchers have examined coming from a mixed quantitative- qualitative study, are the motivational reasons behind students' decisions to join a CRP on a college campus (Laudet, et al., 2016). The authors gathered this data from their large national survey (N = 486) of students in recovery based on both survey and open-ended inquiry data. Their findings revealed that students joined their CRP because of wanting a same age peer recovery community as well as wanting "to do college sober" reflecting the recognition of the potential threat the college environment could pose to their recovery (p. 2).

The data from these qualitative and mixed methods studies highlight that these students in recovery had distinctive needs and challenges as they tried to remain sober and achieve academic success in a recovery unfriendly environment in college. Developmentally the student participants in these studies seemed to undergo an identity change towards a pro-social and academically successful identity. These students also reported that the most helpful components of the CRC for them were the supportive environment, peers and staff, as well as the opportunities this system availed them.

Theoretical studies. Among the 33 studies identified in the search on this topic only two were explicitly theoretical in nature and approach (Harkins & Roth, 2007; Russell, 2010). However, authors of only 11 of the other remaining studies provided any explicit reference to a theoretical background or orientation for their own research (Baker, 2010; Bell, et al., 2009; Cleveland, Baker, & Dean, 2010; Russell, 2007; Finch, 2007; Harris, Baker & Cleveland, 2010; Laitman & Lederman, 2007; Terrion, 2012; Wiebe, Cleveland, & Dean, 2010; White & Finch, 2006). The most common theoretical orientations related to social capital (Terrion, 2012) and social identity theory (Russell, 2010) which would seem consistent with the findings of the primacy of social support as a salient component in CRCs. I will summarize the theoretical

orientations and approaches in the relevant literature on this topic in the theoretical frameworks section.

Theoretical Orientations in the Literature

I identified four major overarching theoretical orientations in this literature review which authors used in their research on collegiate recovery. These orientations are as follows: Tavistock Group Relations Theory, Social and Recovery Capital, Identity Development Theory, and Stages of Change Theory. Several of these orientations included subsets of related theories which I will cover in my analysis. I will examine each of these orientations and summarize their chief contributions and limitations.

Tavistock Group Relations Theory

One team of authors used a psychoanalytically-based theory to examine the phenomenon of recovery schools in general. Harkins and Roth (2007), although not specifically focused on collegiate recovery programs, provided an interesting perspective on schools as addictive systems characterized by denial, splitting, and projection. These authors presented a perspective based on psychoanalytic, Tavistock Group Relations theory as an organizational lens.

Two significant insights regarding recovery schools arise from examining schools from this perspective. The first is that this theoretical lens views recovery schools and by implication CRCs as "adhocracies" consisting of a flexible problem-solving team of professionals providing a "benevolent holding environment" for learners who require individualized approaches to learning (Harkins & Roth, p. 61). The second insight is that drug-using students in a traditional school system become ostracized due to institutional disciplinary action. However, once in recovery and in a new recovery school environment, these same students become valued

members within a supportive community thereby transforming both their role and value as students in contrast to their previous setting.

Social and Recovery Capital Theory

A second and more common theoretical perspective among researchers in this area has been social capital and recovery capital theory. A majority of the studies cited the challenge of recovering students finding supportive peers in the college environment as paramount. The CRC fulfills this essential role by providing social capital which brings a sense of belonging and important social experiences for healthy development (Harris, et al., 2010; Smock, et al., 2010; Wiebe, Cleveland, & Harris, 2010). Terrion (2012) and Laudet and White (2008) described this as "recovery capital" serving as a framework for the supportive relationships that enabled student success. This social support also serves as a kind of buffer against the drinking culture of the college environment (Cleveland & Groenendyk, 2010).

Several authors (Wiebe, Cleveland, & Dean, 2010) described this social capital theory as occurring in three different dimensions. One dimension is in terms of the value of social and helping relationships such as Carl Rogers described in his work (Rogers, 1961). More specifically, the social support serves as helping relationships providing a buffer against stressful events (Wiebe, Cleveland, & Dean, 2010). A second framework examines the structural (quantity) and functional (quality) dimensions of support. These authors presented a brief literature review on research showing how a major part of a safe context for continued abstinence is the number of "abstinent safe vs. abstinent risky" individuals in the social networks of people in recovery (Wiebe, Cleveland, & Dean, 2010, p. 97). They concluded that CRCs provide a "protective milieu" for students in recovery by creating social networks for abstinence-

specific support (p. 108). They also stated that these findings are consistent with Social Identity Theory.

A third major dimensional description of social support in the literature pertained to the five domains of social support which Salzer (2002) developed but as applied to CRCs. These domains are delineated specifically as informational, emotional, validation, instrumental, and companionship. Several researchers explained, described and evaluated the peer–based social support through this framework (Baker, 2010; Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010; Harris, et al., 2010). This perspective provides insight into the functional aspects of social support within a CRC.

Identity Development Theory

A third theoretical orientation which researchers have brought to this area of study is Identity Development Theory particularly within the tradition of Erik Erikson (1980). Finch (2007b) examined how students in recovery shift from a trajectory of failure to one of success as they avail themselves of opportunities to be college students. Russell (2010) and Wiebe, Cleveland, and Harris (2010) applied Erickson's theory of Identity Development (Erikson, 1959) to this population by analyzing how adolescents with problematic substance use issues forfeit opportunities to engage and learn from social experiences that would otherwise have contributed to healthy identity development. Russell (2010) further discussed how the support and positive norms of the CRC provided students with the necessary social experiences to develop pro-social identities in this context. He also postulated how this theoretical lens dovetails with social identity theory which claims that individuals within groups identify with the predominant attitudes and behaviors of the group. Bell, Kanitkar, Kerksiek, et al. (2009) drew from the recovery identity theories of Biernacki and Hecksher identifying the two equally viable recovery identities of exploratory and maintenance as orientations to the journey of recovery.

Stages of Change Theory

A fourth theoretical realm which researchers have drawn from is the Stages of Change

Theory that Prochaska and DiClemente developed (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992).

Wiebe, Cleveland, and Dean (2010) investigated the strategies that CRC students used to manage

situations challenging their sobriety. They also used these data to identify each stage of change

these students appeared to be in according to Prochaska and DiClemente's model (Prochaska,

Diclemente, & Norcross, 1992). Furthermore, these authors cited the conceptual assumption of

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) that recovery is an on-going process as opposed to a completed

event. They concluded from their data that these students identified more with the Action stage

as opposed to the Maintenance stage as this pattern appeared more pronounced with those having

more recovery time. The study results indicated these students viewed themselves more as

"recovering" as opposed to "recovered" (p. 72).

The constellation of these theoretical orientations provides important contributions to the

understanding of collegiate recovery programs and the impact upon the lives of students. Table

2.4 highlights some of the most salient contributions based on the respective focus of each

orientation.

Table 2.4: Theoretical Model Contributions

Theory	Focus	Contribution
Tavistock Group Relations	Social relations and environment	Positive role and value of students
Social/Recovery Capital	Social support	Dimensions, role and value of community
Identity Development Theory	Individual student development	Pro-social identity and group culture influence
Stages of Change Theory	Individual student change	Recovery as a process

The theoretical orientations which researchers have used in this area are primarily focused on student development and outcomes specifically related to the dynamics of supportive benefits from participation in the CRC. This makes sense given the important role of social support in the context of the CRC. The quantitative and qualitative studies seem to reflect researchers' preference for standardized outcomes which are commonly understood as "evidence-based". These outcome studies appear necessary for demonstrating the value and efficacy of CRCs for this student population. However, they may be insufficient for revealing the depth and breadth of student experiences and the greater institutional context in which these programs reside.

Limitations of Current Orientations

There are several limitations which appear in the current state of affairs of theoretical orientations used for examining collegiate recovery. The first limitation exists in the directional perspective which these orientations represent. The majority of the studies examined the impact that CRPs had on their respective recovering student populations by examining recovery and educational outcomes. This represents a centripetal-like perspective looking inward from program to student in terms of impact and outcome. What is missing is a centrifugal-like perspective examining how students and the CRP as a collective may influence the greater campus and culture in their respective setting. This perspective is important given that authors present these programs as an innovative form of tertiary prevention (Smock, et al., 2010).

A second limitation is that none of these orientations have provided a contextually inclusive and integrative framework for examining CRPs holistically as a campus phenomenon. The orientations have examined the collective social relations and support as well as a few select factors of student development (Table 3). However, researchers have not utilized an orientation

which would allow examination of both the individual and collective dynamics as a whole within their respective contexts. This type of framework would hold promise for examining the dynamics from both a centripetal and centrifugal-like perspective identifying the impacts and benefits for students in recovery as well as the campus overall.

The fact that none of the major theoretical orientations has identified the processes of engagement whereby students in recovery experience the positive changes leading to achievement and success on a deeper level beyond the community peer support constitutes a third limitation. Researchers have mentioned some supports that students identified as helpful within the college and CRP context. However, a deep exploration of the processes of engagement as a part of college student development from both the perspectives of valuable external resources and internal transformative change is absent.

The theoretical orientations which researchers have used to examine the dynamics of the recovery community give preference to the "social capital" or positive side of the equation which presents a fourth limitation in the frameworks and perspectives. Two things are missing from this approach. First, there is no mention of the potential risks and liabilities which may exist within these recovery communities. Second, there is little or no examination of what keeps these communities healthy fostering a positive and affirming culture. There appears to be a paradigmatic assumption among the authors that the community comprised of students in recovery implies that community will always be supportive of a recovery culture with minimal problems and dysfunctional social dynamics that could present risk to the health and well-being of students.

Gaps and Limitations in the Literature

Several gaps and limitations exist in the overall research literature on CRPs and college students in recovery. In part this reflects the newness of this specialty of inquiry. Although many of the gaps and tensions are beyond the scope of this study, I will delineate several that do exist relevant to the focus of my study.

One gap is the need for more qualitative research on the experiences of students in recovery participating in CRPs. Experts have called for more research on effective practices of CRPs which are "evidence-based". This presents both a gap and a limitation. Harris, et al. (2007) noted how the research community has given little attention to the post-treatment concerns of recovering students and the challenges and risks they face in a college environment. White and Finch (2007) stated that more research is needed on existing CRP models so as to identify best practices and provide evidence for funding. Smock, et al. (2010) argued that these studies of longitudinal outcomes and best practice identification need to follow the paradigm of "evidence-based practice" (EBP). This EBP paradigm comes from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) definition of "evidence-based practice" which is based on empirically measurable and replicable practices and results (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2007). This highlights both a need for further research but also a limitation because of the implicit preference given to quantitative research approaches over qualitative ones in this area. Strong qualitative studies could also provide meaningful data on the "effective practices" of CRPs based on students' experiences. Hence, this study has deeply examined participant reports on the supports they found most valuable to help them find success as students in recovery.

A second limitation within the literature is the one-sided focus on the benefits and positive outcomes of CRPs by virtue of the rates of sustained recovery, positive grade-point-averages, and graduation rates students in these programs achieve (Botzet, et al., 2007; Harris, et al., 2007; Cleveland, Baker, & Dean, 2010). This positive focus is understandable given the need to promote and validate the efficacy of these programs. However, what remains missing is examination of student experiences who struggle and perhaps even experience failure despite support from these programs. Hence, a salient focus of this study has been the different trajectories students experienced and some of the factors and dynamics behind their struggles and setbacks. Furthermore, there is the need to examine the potential challenges or downsides that may exist within CRPs to gain a more realistic perspective of this system of support.

A third gap this study addresses is the focus of participant experiences from a temporal view of their college experience exclusively. The majority of studies have focused exclusively on recovering students' experiences while attending college. No major studies have examined CRP alumni and their experiences with the transition to post-college life and its inherent challenges. This study aims to address this gap with a purview of participant experiences on how their CRP helped prepare or not prepare them for this important and inevitable transition. This data would bring important heuristic value to the configuration of services within CRPs to aid their students for post-college life preparation.

A fourth gap in the literature pertains to the examination of students' experiences with transformation. A few studies have investigated student experiences with identity change and development (Bell, et al., 2009b; Finch, 2007b; Russell, 2010). However, few if any studies have examined deeply how students experience that transformation and specifically, on assumptive levels. I found no studies to date investigating the assumptions students brought with

them and needed to change regarding recovery and academic challenges. Hence, this was a major focus in the transformation section of my study.

Innovative Theoretical Frameworks

In light of the summary of the theoretical orientations and approaches researchers investigating collegiate recovery have used to examine this topic and their inherent limitations, I offer several innovative applications of other theoretical frameworks. These applications bring methodological implications for the study design as well. These applications help to both broaden and deepen understanding of collegiate recovery programs and the contributions they make both to their student participants and potentially to their respective campuses as well.

The frameworks I propose will address four major areas. The first is the need for a contextually inclusive and integrative framework for examining benefits and impacts of CRPs for their respective student participants but within a larger contextual perspective. This helps to identify the roles various components may play within an overall system of support. The second area addresses the need for examining the processes of challenge and struggle of students in CRPs but both from the individual perspective of student experiences as well as the collective phenomena within the CRP. The third is a framework for identifying both the dynamics and factors that facilitate transformation of students and the fostering of a healthy, supportive recovery culture within a CRP as well as the needed change on individual assumptive levels. Finally, a framework is needed to help illumine the processes operative within participants helping them to prepare for the successful transition from their CRP to post-college living.

A Contextually-Inclusive Framework – Nested Contexts of Support

The first theoretical framework I propose using is Brofenbrenner's (1977, 2005) *Bioecological Model of Development* which provides a detailed framework for examining the

different levels of contextual-environmental influence and impact. Bronfebrenner examined the

interacting systems in human development with his model. He investigated how various systems

interact reciprocally and influence individual human development. The underlying premise of

this approach is that,

> Human beings create the environments that shape the course of human development.
> Their actions influence the multiple physical and cultural tiers of the ecology that shapes
> them, and this agency makes humans for better or for worse – active producers of their
> own development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. xviii).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) was explicit that the scientifically relevant features of any environmental

context for human development must include both the objective properties but also the subjective

experiences of those properties by its participants. This again points to the importance of

allowing for both empirical (quantitative) and phenomenological (qualitative) approaches to

studying the development dynamics of students in CRPs.

A major element of Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 2005) approach providing clear relevance to

the study of CRPs is his concept of the various nested contexts of development. I will delineate

these with application to this review. The first context is the *micro-system* which he defined as

the structures and processes in the immediate setting of the participant. The second context is

the *meso-system* which refers to the connections and processes between two or more settings and

constitutes a system of micro-systems. The third system is the *exo-system* which includes the

external systems, connections and processes not normally including the developing person but

that influences processes within the immediate setting. I will examine my data findings through

this lens of these "nested contexts" of support to further analyze how participants provided value

to various levels of support both within and outside of the CRP.

Chaos and Complexity Theory

A second innovative application of theoretical frameworks to this study is the use of

Chaos and Complexity Theory as a lens whereby to examine the experiences of students in

recovery as well as the CRPs designed to support them. This theoretical orientation began with

Complexity Theory based on the research conducted at the Sante Fe Institute, a think tank

founded in the mid-1980s. The researchers who convened there believed they were creating the

first rigorous alternative for the 21st century to the traditional, reductionist paradigm that has

dominated science since the time of Newton to address the problems of the modern world

(Waldrop, 1992). This orientation departed from the 300 year old notion of linear systems and

wholes being equal to the sum of their parts for a perspective based on "nonlinear dynamics"

which views systemic wholes as greater than the sum of their parts. According to Waldrop, this

perspective underscored the limitations of the Newtonian world view that, "the everyday world

as a fundamentally tidy and predictable place obeying well-understood laws" (p. 66). Lewin

(1999) noted the historical significance of this orientation when he stated,

> Complexity science offers a way of going beyond the limits of reductionism, because it
> understands that much of the world is not machine-like and comprehensible through a
> cataloguing of its parts; but consists instead mostly of organic and holistic systems that
> are difficult to comprehend by traditional scientific analysis (p.x).

For example, researchers have applied this approach to economics among other scientific

disciplines and consequently generated models that are psychologically realistic viewing

economies as organic, evolving, and "dynamic, ever-changing systems poised at the edge of

chaos" instead of theories based on mathematically convenient assumptions and economies as

Newtonian machines (Waldrop, p. 252).

Several key concepts are central to Complexity Theory. The first is the dynamic of self-

organization. This orientation views systems as complex in that the interactions between various

agents within the system facilitate a spontaneous dynamic of self-organization of the system as a whole towards greater levels of self-organization and development (Karpiak, 2006; Waldrop, 1992). A second is the emergent properties of systems. According to Lewin (1999), this is the central concept of Complexity Science which shows that the lives of species are transformed by belonging to a larger entity which they themselves helped to create. A third central concept is that complex adaptive systems fluctuate between three states – static/frozen, chaotic, and the edge of chaos depending upon the environment and its response to that environment (Lewin). Sensitivity to initial conditions showing how even slight changes within a part of system can result in great effects and unpredictability in the system as a whole is a fourth key concept (Karpiak; Waldrop).

Critical states and the edge of chaos constitute a fifth central feature of this framework. The phenomena of emergence and evolution seem to occur in between the static/frozen and chaotic states and can lead to higher developmental levels or collapse and disintegration (Lewin; Waldrop). A state of disequilibrium appears critical for transformation and development to occur. A sixth central feature of this approach is how systems create novel forms and transformation bringing order out of apparent chaos (Karpiak). Computer simulated models of ecosystems have shown how different levels of connectedness between species in a system has great influence over the impact of these perturbations within the system (Lewin).

Developmental theorists have applied this framework to aid understanding of the dynamics of human development. Theorists and researchers alike recognize that human development is not a linear and smooth process. Wilber (2000) commented, "…individual development through the various waves of consciousness is a very fluid and flowing affair…Overall, development is a very messy affair!" (p. 7). Gordon (2003) commenting from

the perspective of a therapist, observed, "Real transformative change is simultaneous with crisis" (p. 102). Chaos and Complexity Theory has much to offer in elucidating the processes of human development. Kegan (1982) described development as an "evolutionary activity" of movement towards greater coherence of one's meaning-making of life experiences and of one's self (p. 41). The relevance of these topics to this study is particularly salient when considering the role of critical support which CRPs provide for their students.

Therefore, the application of this framework to the study of students in collegiate recovery communities has great potential for deepening the understanding of their experiences both while in their CRP and afterwards in post-college life. This approach provides a valuable lens whereby to investigate students' experiences of change and transformation particularly during times of disequilibrium and apparent "chaos" in their lives. This framework also fits well with the other following theoretical lenses I will use to analyze my data.

Transformative Processes

There are several theoretical orientations I use to help analyze participants' experiences with transformation. The first comes from Kegan's Constructive Developmentalism and the second from Meizirow's Transformative Learning Theory. I use these frameworks to help illumine many of the processes and dynamics inherent within the participants' personal transformative experiences helping them find success.

Constructive developmentalism. A third innovative approach to applying theoretical lenses to this topic of study is Kegan's (1982, 1994) Constructive Developmentalism. Kegan (1982) asserted that the primary activity of being human is the act of making meaning. His model of development addressed how humans construct meaning from their experiences through various stages of stability and change. In fact, the meaning-making system is the very activity

which gives rise to the self. The "constructive" descriptor for this theory implies that human beings actually "construct" their own reality based on their experiences. The "developmentalism" descriptor refers to the evolutionary stage-like processes organisms go through as they construct their meaning through various phases (p. 8).

I use Kegan's model in several ways to help elucidate the meaning of participants' experiences. First, I examine how participants experienced transformative change by means of deriving meaning from their own experiences particularly as they experienced challenges and struggles through their trajectories towards success. Second, I also use this framework to examine how the relational context of the CRP influenced participants' experiences with evolutionary personal development on various levels. Third, I also use this theoretical orientation to examine how experiences with stability, instability, and change reflect dynamics within the Chaos and Complexity theoretical lens.

Transformative learning theory. A fourth theoretical orientation I used in this study is Transformative Learning Theory. I chose this approach to analyze the processes underlying the transformative experiences participants underwent along their respective journeys seeking success. This approach helped to explicate many of the transformations participants experienced on several levels. First, this framework is particularly relevant to the transformations participants experienced on assumptive levels. Second, it applies to the stage-like phases of developmental growth participants underwent as well. Third, it carries great relevance to the CRP as a supportive community context or transformative learning.

As a theoretical framework, Transformative Learning Theory is a trans-theoretical approach. Meizirow (1991) as a major developer of this model within education, asserted that his approach incorporated ideas from a wide range of disciplines including philosophy,

psychology, sociology, neurobiology, linguistics, religion, and education. Cranton and Taylor (2012) claimed that Transformative Learning Theory is now in its "second wave" of theoretical development moving towards a more integrated model inclusive of the various factions and approaches within this framework (p. 5).

Philosophically, this framework has foundations in Constructivism, Humanistic, and Critical Social Theory (Cranton and Taylor, 2012). The Constructivist foundation consists of the assertion that individuals interpret experiences in their own way resulting in the consequential perception of the world based on those individual interpretations. The Humanistic base comprises the assumption that people not only define their own reality but also make their own choices and have potential for growth and development. The Critical Social Theory footing asserts that humans as members of their respective society and culture, "uncritically assimilate values, beliefs, and assumptions from…family, community, and culture" (Cranton and Taylor, p. 7). The dominant perspectives within this approach reflect multiple dimensions of the human experience. Cranton and Taylor noted, "Transformative learning is described as cognitive and rational, as imaginative and intuitive, as spiritual, as related to individuation, as relational, and as related to social change" (p. 7). As such they conclude, these various conceptualizations may simply reflect the investigation of different aspects of the same process related to fundamental human change.

Meizirow (1991, 2000, 2012) has remained central to much of the theoretical research on Transformative Learning to date even despite the exponential proliferation of research and theoretical development within this arena particularly within adult education (Cranton and Taylor, 2012; Dirkx, 1998). Mezirow (2000) asserted that a key condition of being human is the need to understand and create order and meaning from one's experiences so as to avoid chaos.

In his foundational work (1991) he stated, "Our need to understand our experiences is perhaps our most distinctively human attribute. We have to understand them in order to know how to act effectively" (p. 10). Meizirow made several important distinctions regarding meaning within perspective. First, there is a *meaning perspective* (1991) or *habit of mind* (2012) which reflects one's broad, generalized personal orientations and assumptions acting as filters for meaning and interpretation of experiences. Second, is *meaning schemes* (1991) or *points of view* (2012) which consist of clusters of habitual expectations in the forms of beliefs, values, and feelings creating immediate expectations and specific interpretations of experiences. Third, there are also several sub-types of meaning perspectives consisting of epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological factors and influences (Meizirow, 1991).

A key process within Meizirow's framework is reflective learning as a central part of the transformative process. Meizirow (1991) asserted that reflective learning entails the examination of assumptions and becomes transformative only when assumptions are discovered to be invalid due to how they distort the ways one perceives, knows, and interacts with the world. Brookfield (2012) described assumptions as, "instinctive…guides to truth embedded in our mental outlooks" (pp. 7-8). He emphasized the importance of three common assumptions for critical reflection. They are as follows: (1) paradigmatic assumptions that structure one's world into fundamental categories; (2) prescriptive assumptions that constitute what one thinks ought to be occurring in any specific situation; and, (3) causal assumptions about how the world operates and how it may be changed. Learning then, within this framework, entails reinterpreting experiences from a new set of assumptions or expectations thereby providing new meaning and perspective to experiences (Meizirow, 1991). These levels of assumptions and re-interpretive learning

processes are particularly relevant for this study given the focus of how participants may have assumed their presumptive pathways to success as students in recovery.

An important factor integral to this transformative process within this approach and highly relevant to this study is the social context and its role in transformative learning. Meizirow (2012) recognized the critical role of the social context in human development. He stated, "Our identity is formed in the webs of affiliation within a shared life world. Human reality is intersubjective; our life histories and language are bound up with those of others" (p. 90). He (1991) viewed these social interactions as functioning as a "boundary maintenance system" within individuals' worlds of everyday life (p. 71). Other researchers have noted the important role various group contexts can have with transformative learning by influencing different forms of dialogue within them (Schapiro, Wasserman, and Gallegos, 2012). Hence, learning occurs as an activity within the context of social interaction. This will become particularly salient in the analysis of the role of peer support and interactions within the CRP as a part of the transformative experience.

The application of Transformative Learning Theory and the process of critical reflection of assumptions bring several methodological implications to researching recovering college students in a CRC setting. First, this approach supports the use of a phenomenological inquiry method to inquire how students in recovery make meaning of their experiences in a collegiate setting but also in the various settings and configurations of different CRPs. Second, the examination of participant assumptions is a helpful framework whereby to explore how students' assumptions of what success in recovery and academic achievement requires has changed over time. Third, given the importance of a supportive environment and supportive relationships to

facilitate this process, this framework is also helpful to identify from students' experiences what contextual factors seemed to promote or inhibit this trajectory of transformation.

The innovative application of these approaches address the need for a contextually-inclusive framework for investigating the experiential processes and dynamics of students participating in CRPs. These frameworks allow for an in depth examination of participant experiences both on the individual-intrapersonal and collective-interpersonal levels. The result of this analysis provides a rich and deep explication of participant experiences and how they found ways to be successful as students in recovery. Furthermore, these frameworks tie together into a preliminary theoretical construct for examining CRPs and student experiences within them. The application of these approaches coalesce into an overall construct allowing for the examination of the student experiences and overall context with its various levels of influence. The following figure illustrates this possible construct.

Figure 2.1: Theoretical Construct for CRPs and Student Experiences
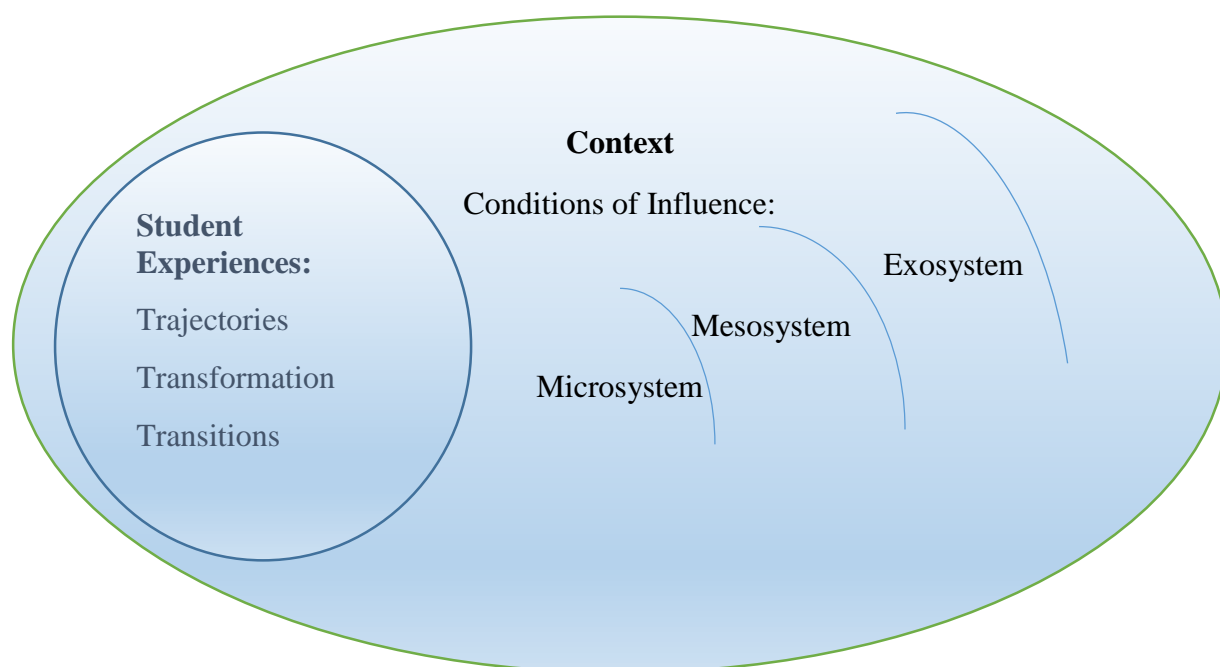
Summary

The emergence and recent proliferation of CRPs on college and university campuses has provided post-secondary educational institutions with several opportunities. The first is to provide valuable support to this distinctive student population. The second is to address the AOD use collegiate culture in positive and solution-focused ways as a part of a comprehensive campus-wide prevention approach. Researchers have found the support from CRPs effective in helping CRC students succeed academically and sustain their recovery. However, the research in this area is still in its early stages.

Researchers have already begun addressing the question of what helps recovering students succeed in their recovery and college experience through the support of a CRP. However, several areas are in need of further investigation. The first is more in depth examination on how these students do find success within their CRP but with a broader focus on their struggles and even setbacks and failures at times as a trajectory or path. This would provide a more complete view of their trajectories as they progress through their respective college experiences. A second need is for more research on students' experiences with transformation and change particularly on assumptive levels regarding what they assume is needed for a successful trajectory for both recovery and academics. A third area consists of a focus on the transition to post-college living and the challenges students in recovery face with that transition. This would provide valuable data for informing CRPs on how to better configure their support services for their students.

Thus, these three thematic realms constitute the focus of my study – trajectories, transformations, and transitions. Research in these areas will contribute to furthering the knowledge of what helps students in recovery find success both in college and afterwards. In the

next chapter I delineate the methodology I planned, followed, and adjusted due to unforeseen

occurrences for participant selection, data gathering, and data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study has been to investigate the experiences of college students in recovery as members of Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) to answer the question, "What helps these students find success in the recovery-unfriendly environment of contemporary college culture?" The aim of this chapter is to describe the design and methodology of my study. To that end this chapter describes the primary theoretical framework and its philosophical underpinnings I used to research this topic as well as the approach I used to gather my data with semi-structured interviews. It also describes how I selected participants and their respective demographic profiles in addition to my methods of data collection and analysis. This chapter concludes by addressing the validity and generalization issues of this study as well as measures I took to maintain an ethical approach to this inquiry as well as protect the anonymity of participants.

Thematic Realms of Investigation

As a means to research this phenomenon I decided to investigate students' experiences from three vantage points. The first was the Trajectories they traveled as college students in recovery; the second was the processes of Transformation they underwent as they sought to find success; and, the third was the Transition they experienced to post-college living as an initial culmination of that journey. Each of these realms proved to be fruitful areas of study helping to further answer the question of how recovering students find success in their collegiate and recovery experience. Furthermore, this approach is distinct from previous studies on this topic given the scope of exploring this question.

The first realm of Trajectories seemed important to me because it helped to provide focus on their experiences with challenges and key supports within their *trajectory* through college as

members of a recovery community on their respective college campus. This also helped to

identify different nuances of trajectories participants experienced. The second area,

Transformations, served as an investigative window into how participants experienced the

necessary changes for success and found resilience in the face of challenge and difficult. This

realm also helped with exploring how they experienced change on assumptive levels resulting in

successful functioning. The third realm, Transitions, seemed important to gain a purview

regarding possible lasting benefits from their participation in their respective CRPs and how they

felt prepared or ill-prepared for successful, post-college living. Hence, I structured my

investigation with participants around these three major themes.

Phenomenological Inquiry: Primary Theoretical Framework

The underlying framework approach for this study is a Qualitative Phenomenological

Inquiry based largely on the work of Moustakas (1994). The rationale for designing my study in

this way arises from the fact that I am interested in examining the students' experiences around

this question of finding success and through the dimensions of trajectories, transformations, and

transitions. This investigation would entail much more than simply quantitative frequencies and

Likert-scale responses to pre-set survey questions while also not questioning the value of that

kind quantitative data.

Moustakas (1994) aptly described this framework as an "empirical phenomenological

approach" given its basis in participant experience and comprehensiveness. He stated,

> The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to
> obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural
> analysis that portrays the essences of the experience…the aim is to determine what an
> experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a
> comprehensive description of it (p. 13).

As such this approach seeks to ascertain the meaning of experiences "in the context of a

particular situation" as the primary target of its investigation (Moustakas, p. 14). Several aspects

set this approach apart as distinct from other investigative approaches to inquiry. The first is the intentional effort of the researcher to set aside or at least acknowledge her/his prejudgments regarding the phenomenon under investigation. A second distinction is its emphasis on the more creative and transcendental inquiry strategies including intuition, imagination, and universal structures in deciphering the underlying dynamics of experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A third distinction is the emphasis of this approach on describing the "common meaning" of participants in terms of their "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Finally, this method of inquiry aims to understand "…the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience…" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25).

As a research strategy Phenomenology entails several steps in its method of inquiry. I attempted to remain true to these steps and strategies throughout my analysis. The first step involves the *Epoche*. The term, *Epoche*, is derived from the Greek word denoting a refrain from judgment or the ordinary way of perceiving things (Moustakas, 1994). I accomplished this in my introductory chapter under "Preliminary Assumptions." Hence, I intentionally approached my investigation with acknowledgement of my preconceptions and delved into trying to perceive and understand these experiences from the participants' perspectives. The second step is "Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction" which means considering each experience within its own context, on its own merit, and in its totality (Moustakas, p. 34). The third step entails deriving a "textural description" of the meanings and essences of participant experiences leading to an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon under study. The fourth step involves "Imaginative Variation" attempting to derive a structural description of the dynamics and processes underlying those experiences as well as other conditions that connect with it

(Moustakas, p. 35). In the analysis section of this chapter I explain in more detail how I utilized these methods in my analysis.

Philosophical Assumptions

Several key assumptions underlie my approach to researching this topic. First, as an epistemological foundation, I do believe in the value of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to inquiry. Each brings its own distinctive data to the table of understanding thereby fulfilling their own respective purposes. I believe human experience is both exterior/objective (empirically-based) and interior/subjective (experientially-based) each requiring their own appropriate methods of inquiry to understanding their respective phenomena (Wilber, 2000). Rather than viewing these realms as an "awkward dualism," as Wilber (2000) described, belonging to different and non-overlapping realms, they actually reflect complementary perspectives of a larger whole encompassing these realms in the totality of human experience. As such, qualitative approaches to research, such as Phenomenological Inquiry, are valid avenues for understanding human experience. J. S. Mill aptly commented, "In all intellectual debates, both sides tend to be correct in what they affirm, and wrong in what they deny" (quoted by Wilber, 2000, p. 108).

A second assumption I bring to this study, logically arising from the first, is the rejection of the hegemony of purely objective, quantitative approaches to understanding human behavior. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology as a transcendental science,

> …emerged out of a growing discontent with a philosophy of science based exclusively on studies of material things, a science that failed to take into account the experiencing person and the connections between human consciousness and the objects that exist in the material world (p. 43).

In order to fully understand the nuances and comprehensiveness of human experience, a qualitative approach is needed and phenomenological inquiry stands as an excellent strategy for identifying and deciphering the essence of those experiences.

A third assumption I bring to this study is the constructive nature of human experience. Although experiences do have basis in objective, verifiable reality, which I do believe exists, their meaning is "constructed" by participants in those experiences. This does not necessarily imply a Cartesian Dualism assuming objective reality only exists through mental representation (Moustakas, 1994). However, the constructions of those meanings are also deeply influenced by assumptions, values, beliefs, and prior experiences which participants bring to those experiences. Hence, the same experience can have different meaning for various participants within that experience. As such one goal of my study is to identify both the commonalities of meaning of experiences for participants as well as their individual distinctive meanings with a phenomenological framework.

Reflective process in consciousness as an avenue to deeper illumination of experiences comprises a fourth assumption I bring to this study. This assumption reveals itself on two fronts. The first occurs on the level of participants in this study. I assume that reflective discourse with various participants on past experiences as students in recovery would be a helpful means to uncover salient experiences. The second occurs on the level of the researcher. I also assume that reflecting on and being imaginative with the obtained data about those experiences is also a fruitful approach to uncovering meanings, making connections, and ascertaining perhaps a comprehensive understanding of those experiences.

A final assumption I bring to this study is the value of intersubjective corroboration as evidence of validity. While discussing Husserl's emphasis on "monadology" as a basis for truth

from an individual perspective, Moustakas (1994) argued that intersubjective knowledge is necessary as a means to verify experiences. This has support in the foundations of scientific inquiry being comprised of at least three steps according to Wilber (2000). The first consists of a practical injunction to engage in some level of experimentation or data gathering. The second consists of the "apprehension or illumination" of an experience. The third is the "communal checking (either rejection or confirmation)" or corroboration of that experience (Wilber, 2000, p. 75). These three steps constitute the foundation of any valid scientific inquiry.

Hence, with my own study I sought the perspectives of multiple participants regarding the phenomena under study as a means to both identify various themes reflecting the "essence" of participants' experiences as well as corroborative support for the validity of these various themes reflecting the collective experience of this sample of participants. In order to gain the perspective of the participants, I did approach this study with preset open-ended questions. I describe these in next section.

Interview Questions

I designed my primary data collection method to be semi-structured interviews with individual participants. I developed a set of open-ended questions related to each of the three major thematic areas of investigation in preparation for this study (see Appendix A). I intentionally designed the questions as open-ended so as to allow for exploration and reflection within each area of discussion on both the parts of participants and myself as a researcher. I also asked the same set of questions of each participant so as to protect a level of uniformity with the interviews allowing for valid comparison between them afterwards with my coding, presentation of data findings, and data analysis.

In terms of Trajectories, I asked participants regarding their experiences with challenges and most valuable supports, how they experienced community within their CRP, and their best and worst experiences as participants within their respective CRP. In reference to Transformations, I asked participants questions regarding their experiences with learning from their challenges, assumptions they in retrospect saw needing to change to help them be successful, and ways they found resilience through difficult challenges. In terms of the Transition to post-college life, I explored with participants their experiences with major challenges faced during that time, how their CRP helped prepare or not prepare them for that transition, and recommendations they would have for CRPs to better prepare students for a successful transition to post-college life.

Participants

The participants I sought for this study were all college alumni who had been members of a CRP at their respective post-secondary institution and had completed their degrees. I recruited potential participants from two institutions similar in study body size, roughly 2,000 to 3,000 students, through contact with CRP directors. I also obtained IRB-approval from both institutions prior to any recruitment efforts.

Selection Procedures and Rationale

My sampling procedure consisted of a non-probability, purposive and convenience design. I chose a purposive selection method because I hoped to access participants who could provide the most relevant information pertinent to my study for in depth analysis. This method of selection is deemed most appropriate for "information-rich cases" (Merriam, p. 77). In this case, student alumni from at least two distinct programs seemed most appropriate. The criterion-based selection procedure I followed consisted of the following: (1) Alumni who participated in

a CRP for at least one school year (2 semesters); (2) Alumni who completed their undergraduate studies and graduated from the institution hosting the CRP; (3) Alumni who had been in post-college life for a minimum of 1 year and no more than 5 years. The rationale for selecting student alumni consisted of the fact that they would have had the experience of trajectory and transformations to the point of successful completion of their degree and would have experienced the transition to living in post-college adult life.

The recruitment process incorporated a convenience sampling technique. I requested contact information of potential participants through CRP directors and then followed up with contacts the directors passed on to me by means of email. I also asked participants for further potential candidates for the study resulting in a snowballing technique of recruitment. I reached out to a total of 27 potential participants and 21 agreed to participate in this study. The two CRPs I recruited from both had residential components as a primary component of their configured support although one also included a strong presence on its campus as a student organization. All of the participants participated in their respective CRPs as members living in the recovery residence for the majority of their time at their respective school.

Participant Demographics

As a part of the initial data gathering process I asked participants to complete responses on a questionnaire regarding their basic demographic profile (see Appendix B). I summarize the distribution of the participant demographic profiles in the following table.

Table 3.1: Participant Demographic Profiles

Measure	Frequency	Percentage
Age Range		
21-23 years	2	10%
24-26 years	11	52%
27-29 years	6	28%
30 + years	2	10%
Race Caucasian	21	100%
Years since Graduation		
1 to less than 2 years	8	38%
2 to less than 3 years	4	19%
3 to less than 4 years	2	10%
4 to less than 5 years	6	28%
5 to less than 6 years	1	5%
Employment Status		
Full-time	15	71%
Part-time	4	19%
Not employed	2	10%

The above table illustrates several factors about the participants in my study. First, slightly more males agreed to participate than females with a representation of over 50% in this sample. Second, a little over half of the participants were in the mid-twenties age range with another 28% in their late twenties. Third, all the participants were Caucasian thereby representing a homogeneous sample in terms of race. Fourth, in terms of years since graduation from college there was a distribution across all the segments of one to five years with a slightly higher (38%) representation in the one to two years segment. Fifth, the vast majority of the participants were employed (90%) with the greater representation in the "full-time" employment category (71%). Based on these demographic profile distributions I felt confident that this sample could provide

me with a valid collection of multiple perspectives of life as a college student in recovery as well as the challenges faced after college.

My initial proposal for this study entailed researching participant experiences from two different CRPs and institutions to conduct a comparative examination of two different CRPs and participant involvements within them. However, during my recruitment process I was able to successfully recruit only three participants from one institution. The other 18 participants came from a second institution. Therefore, I shifted my focus away from a comparative case study to more of an in depth analysis of participants' experiences within the three major thematic realms of interest, Trajectories, Transformations, and Transitions. Furthermore, after having interviewed the 21 participants I felt confident I had reached data saturation with the topics investigated.

Data Collection

The goal of completing interviews with participants was to gather sufficient information so as to reach data saturation with my topic under investigation. Once a participant agreed to take part in the study, I asked each one via email to read and sign a Consent Agreement before the interview (see Appendix C). The interviews took place at locations of each participant's choosing. I was able to conduct 18 of the interviews in person and three were done over the phone. I audio recorded each interview with a digital recorder with each participant's consent. The interviews ranged from the shortest comprised of 35 minutes to over 90 minutes in a few cases. These in depth interviews allowed for a full exploration of the topics and participants' stories as well as their context including participant's responses to the entire process itself.

A approached my interviews as a semi-structured process. I followed the open-ended questions which I had constructed in my Proposal for this study (see Appendix A) but then

allowed for more free form exploration within the topic of each question. This allowed for deeper exploration of the nuances and richness of the experiences and phenomena under study. I trusted that the participants provided candid responses to these questions. I also remained sensitive to potentially difficult personal disclosures such as episodes of return to use and assured participants they did not have to answer questions they were not comfortable with at the time. I found the contributors to this study to be very forthcoming and candid in the vast majority of the cases.

I transcribed all of the interviews myself and chose not to hire a professional transcriber. Although this process seemed like an insatiably demanding time-sponge more characterized by long beginnings with little end in sight, I found completing my own transcription brought more benefits than liabilities to my own research process. I believe this part of the process enabled me to develop an intimacy with my data I could not gain otherwise. I frequently found thematic construct connections between interviews as I listened to participant responses and stories while transcribing away. In the end the process was worth the temporal, mental, and physical toll.

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Data Analysis

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I used several strategies for my the analysis of my data The primary strategies I employed included coding from a Phenomenological Inquiry framework, comparing thematic constructs in a cross-tab analysis like structure, and conducting a code co-occurrence frequency analysis through my coded data in *Dedoose*. I then used several theoretical lenses applying them in innovative ways to further illumine salient themes and nuances within my data. I explain the rationale and methodology behind each of these strategies in the following section.

Coding Raw Data

After transcribing my data I utilized the Phenomenological approach to identify themes and emergent subthemes within each of the areas I explored with participants. I did this by applying the "horizontalizing" technique by noting significant statements within the interviews relevant to the topic at hand and then listed "meaning units" which seemed to emerge from the common experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). I then listed these as "subthemes" within my coded data. As a step towards comparing these various subthemes I then identified them with a larger, inclusive thematic domain and subdomain to allow for a cross theme analysis of the various "meaning units" or subthemes.

I also structured the analysis of my data findings on two levels. First, I analyzed my data based on all the participant data as a collective. This was important as a means to gain a perspective of the salient themes and relationships between themes from this group of participants as a whole to provide an overall context for the deeper analysis. The second level consisted of analyzing the data findings based on the various subgroups of participants who manifested distinct trajectories and other similar patterns in their experiences. This helped to identify specific challenges, needs, and valued supports that these subgroups of participants reported, revealing a more individualized analysis of the findings but in a grouped, organized fashion.

Dedoose **Coding and Subtheme Analysis**

A second step in my analysis process was to utilize *Dedoose*, a mixed methods research data analysis platform. I created my Code Trees in *Dedoose* following the previously identified codes and their subtheme structures. I then uploaded my transcribed interviews and re-coded my data in *Dedoose*. I then ran the Qualitative Code Co-Occurrence feature of *Dedoose* with my

coded data relating to each of the interview major themes and subthemes. The co-occurrence themes were the subthemes identified in the data findings for each section of the interviews. The frequency reflects how many times participants cited this theme in the interviews. I then displayed the coded data in Co-Occurrence frequency tables to illustrate the analysis findings.

The value of this analysis was several-fold. First, identifying the co-occurrence frequency helped to reveal the predominance of the various subthemes emerging in the discussions. Second, this analysis approach also facilitated the identification of the nuanced relationships between the various themes and subthemes as I will demonstrate in the discussion of the various sections. Third, these nuanced themes provided a further the basis for a "textural and structural description" of the participant experiences with these salient themes and some of their underlying contexts accounting for emergence of the phenomena within a Phenomenological construct (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96, 99).

Combining Quantitative Nuances within Qualitative Research

Employing thematic frequency distributions and noting their co-occurrence within a qualitative study might seem questionable to some researchers. However, there is a sound methodological basis for doing so as long as one is clear about the parameters of its contribution to a study. Bazeley (2013) affirmed that incorporating numbers in a qualitative study is a legitimate approach for analysis. She asserted,

> Counting recognizes that all data inherently combine quantitative and qualitative features. Numbers, as much as words, are the result of an interpretive process that depends…on how questions are framed, how participants respond to those questions, and how the researcher interprets those responses and the patterning of responses" (p. 381).

Bazeley (2013) presented several arguments to support the validity of the use of this kind of analysis technique. First, counting communicates more effectively and reliably than do vague terms such as "most" or "some". Second, one can use counts as reflecting the importance of

various "emergent themes" within qualitative data. Third, utilizing counts can help to summarize patterns within data and provide for comparison of relations between data revealing more easily identifiable interrelationships for further investigation. This is what I attempted to do within my analysis section of the data as the analysis chapters will reveal.

Theoretical Validation

The final step in my analysis was examining my findings within the frameworks of several theoretical lenses in innovative ways. My goal was to employ this method to provide validation to the findings as well as to further illumine the dynamics and processes emergent within my analyzed findings. I used four major theoretical constructs to validate and analyze my findings within each of the major thematic sections. In the first section analyzing Trajectories, I employed Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development to analyze the various dimensions of support participants cited as valuable. I also used Chaos and Complexity Theory to examine the dynamics of the CRP as a community as well as participants' reported best and worst experiences. In the second section analyzing Transformations, I utilized Kegan's Constructive Developmentalism model as well as Meizirow's Transformative Learning Theory to illumine the participants' processes of change particularly on assumptive levels. Finally, in the Transitions section, I applied Kegan's model of Self-Authorship as a developmental schema to further examine participant experiences with preparation of readiness to launch from their respective CRPs and move into post-college life.

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Validity and Generalization Considerations

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The issue of validity in qualitative research regarding its importance, definition, and procedures for establishing it brings many perspectives among researchers. Validation in

qualitative research is not necessarily equivalent to the quantitative conceptualization of it.

Creswell (2013) presented his own stance on this issue by stating,

> I consider "validation" in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the "accuracy" of the finding, as best described by the researcher and the participants. This view also suggests that any report of research is a representation by the author (pp. 249-250).

As such he used the term *validation* to emphasize a process rather than a *verification.* Thus, validation in qualitative research is supported by an investigator following accepted strategies to support the precision of their studies.

I did employ several methods of triangulation to support the validity or accuracy of my data findings. First, I submitted a draft of the data findings to one of the study participants for review. Second, I also did the same with a colleague with whom I work for a level of peer review. Both responded with feedback that the findings seemed credible and true to their respective experiences. Third, I also clarified my own "researcher bias" at the beginning of the study by delineating my own preliminary assumptions (see Chapter One). Fourth, I submitted a complete draft of all my data findings chapters to a graduated cohort peer for review and feedback. This proved immensely helpful for the tightening of conceptualizations for this study. Finally, I also submitted and reviewed each chapter thoroughly with the Chair of my committee and edited per her recommendations and feedback. Creswell (2013) recommended that researchers employ at least two of a total of eight strategies he listed in any given study.

A second issue closely related to validity is the generalizability of the findings. In experimental survey research, Bazeley (2013) described generalizability as follows, "The idea was that precise sampling procedures made it possible to make statements about a larger population based on what was learned from a sample drawn from that population" (p. 410). However, in the context of qualitative research without using precise representative sampling

techniques, the concept of generalization in the experimental survey research paradigm would not apply. However, in lieu of generalization, there is the concept of "transferability" stands as an alternative referring to the case-by-case transfer of knowledge with theoretical and analytical generalization beyond the immediate context (Bazeley, p. 410).

Within the confines of this qualitative study, I felt confident I had reached data saturation in the exploration of participant experiences as similar themes continued to arise throughout most of the interviews. No new thematic constructs seemed likely to arise. Furthermore, I felt confident that I had reached the point in my research to where, "all the concepts are well defined and explained" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 145).

In regards to the findings of my study I do believe there is generalizability or transferability in that sense. Many of the identified dynamics with challenge, struggle, and even success would likely be found in similar contexts of students in recovery participating in CRPs. Furthermore, the implications for practice would also hold applicability across various contexts of systems supporting students in recovery. Finally, generalizability with the innovative theoretical applications would also be a heuristic approach to examining other domains of college student challenge and growth.

Ethical and Anonymity Considerations

No major ethical concerns emerged within my study. All of the participants had graduated from their respective institutions and were no longer active student members in their CRPs. Furthermore, they were all consenting adults capable of making a reasonable decision to participate. In order to protect their anonymity, I assigned pseudonyms at random to each participant as well as to their post-secondary institutions. I agreed to not mention any of their true names or institutions in any of the public written documentation of this project. I was also

careful to alter the naming some of the locales participants mentioned in their stories so as to protect their anonymity. This way there were no risks of tying any one participant or their story to any particular institution. This agreement extended to all documentation and presentations related to this research in perpetuity.

My data for this project resided on my home computer with a back-up hard drive of files both of which are password protected. I also used a network-based firewall to further protect the data from hacking. I will delete audio recordings of all my interviews 30 days after final approval of my dissertation. However, I plan to keep the interview transcripts and other analysis Excel.doc, Word.doc and related documentation files for further research. I will delete or amend any files with any personal identifying information of participants within 30 days of final acceptance of my dissertation.

Only the participants in my study and my dissertation chair had access to seeing raw data in the collection, analysis, and composition of my research study. Although participants had knowledge of their institution's identity, they remained unknown to each other as individual participants because I used coded alpha-numeric identifiers for each participant in my early drafts. All participants signed a Consent Agreement signifying understanding of the protections for anonymity (see Appendix B).

Study Limitations

There are several limitations worth noting in this study. First, this was a relatively small sample size of 21 participants who had graduated from two different institutions, so the results should not be construed as generalizable to the greater population of students in recovery from all kinds of CRPs from a vast array of institutions. Each CRP and its host institution will bring its own culture and challenges.

Second, the participants in this study were ethnically and racially homogeneous consisting of a Caucasian demographic. There was no representation of students of color in this study thereby, limiting the purview of experiences from an ethnically and racially diverse perspective. Unfortunately, this may reflect an unfortunate historical status of CRP support and the kinds of students who can access that support.

Third, the participants in this study were also members of only one configuration of CRPs – primarily, residential-based in which they lived together with other peers in recovery. There were no participants who represented experiences from different configurations of CRPs such as a non-residential, student organization-based CRP. I had initially hoped to do a comparative study of student experiences from these different configurations but participant availability prohibited this approach. However, the limitation provided opportunity for me to delve even deeper into their experiences on various levels.

Finally, I recognize my study is also limited in its scope. I experienced the variables of time, finances, energy, and depth as well as breadth of analysis as increasingly limited the further I delved into my research. This is most likely true of any dissertation project. However, I do find the findings and analysis of this study as a good foundation for further research in this important area of college students in recovery and their development and growth towards success.

Summary

As I initially approached this study with my Proposal almost two years ago, I was unaware at the time where this process would take me as a researcher. I did begin with some general questions I was interested in answering as well as some fairly clear procedures to follow for data collection and early analysis. Creswell (2013) aptly stated, "…students and beginning

qualitative researchers need choices that fit their research problems and that suit their own interests in conducting research" (p. 2). However, if I were to rewrite my proposal today it would look quite different from the one I composed two years ago. I finished my proposal confident in the salience of my three major themes for investigation – Transitions, Transformations, and Transitions – but with subtle reservations over how to connect all three. As I dove into my research, there were many times of excitement from discovery, exhaustion from incessant inextricable mental work, and at times even panic from sensing the shifting sands of my design and even initial questions.

As I reflect upon my experience with both my design and methodology for this project I now see that the process was both organized and creatively intuitive in taxing but also rewarding ways. My initial hope was to conduct a comparative study entailing gathering even much more data and conducting more interviews. However, the inability to access sufficient participants from both sites made this unfeasible. In retrospect this was fortuitous. It forced me to focus my project more precisely and morph it into a more achievable endeavor. I also found analyzing my data to be more creative than I initially anticipated. Furthermore, after writing a draft of my data findings chapters, what became clear was a lack of clarity regarding my initial research question. My chair and I deliberated over this a few times. However, during a brief episode of almost panic-stricken despair over this issue, I had an eventual luminescent realization regarding the question I had been trying to answer all along through my interviews and data exploration without consciously realizing it. I had been on a journey of inquiry which at times felt akin to Odysseus' travailing journey from Troy to Ithaca, searching for undiscovered realities of what helps students in recovery find success. This question then seemed to tie together the three major themes I had been so curious about all along. Hence, came the discovery of the

interweaving thread of inquiry connecting the thematic constructs of Trajectories,

Transformations, and Transitions.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRAJECTORIES DATA FINDINGS

In the following several chapters I present the data findings from 21 semi-structured interviews with student alumni from two different Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) at two separate institutions, St. Alexandra College and Laudet College. These are both institutional pseudonyms designed to protect the anonymity of participants. I organized my interview findings according to the following three dimensional investigational themes: *trajectories*, *transformations*, and *transitions*. I chose to deal with each of these individually for both review of the data findings and analysis purposes. As I explored with participants their experiences leading to success and otherwise as students in recovery, the theme of Trajectories seemed to logical place to begin.

However, this does not imply that the three thematic dimensions are individually separate phenomena. Each of these dimensions form indispensable parts of a greater whole which mutually influence each other. For example, the phenomenon of trajectory does not occur in only one part of this study. Trajectory occurs throughout each of the three dimensions and changes and is changed by the factors in the other dimensions as well. However, for investigation purposes, I choose to begin presenting my interview findings with the phenomenon of trajectory as a logical starting point for elucidating these student alumni experiences.

The aim of this chapter is to review the findings from the participant interviews regarding their experiences with their respective trajectories through college. I explored with them experiences with their greatest challenges, most valued supports, living in community, and their best and worst experiences. I have presented these findings in the order of the topical flow of the semi-structured interviews with main subject headings representing the interview question focus.

The subheadings represent the most significant themes which emerged from the discourse with participants.

Previous College Experiences

A majority of participants (16) in this study had prior experience in college before coming to their CRP. This experiences were characterized by heavy alcohol and drug use leading to significant negative academic and life consequences. These prior experiences also formed the basis for many of the challenges they faced in early recovery as new members of their CRP as well as for the loss of hope of ever being able to attend college sober. One participant noted,

> When I was in treatment and my halfway house I did not think that college was an option at all because I thought for sure I would drink. You know, for sure, college campus, can't do it. That was where my life went out of control and then here I was, not drinking and being a college student. Like I didn't think that was possible (Hannah).

The entry into not only recovery but also their CRP represents a marked change in trajectory from their previous college experiences.

A few participants described several rationale for why they used alcohol and drugs the way they did in their previous college contexts. One was simply that this seemed to be the expected norm of college culture particularly when students are away from home the first time. Brian observed, "I know that is a typical behavior especially if someone's not living you know, at home with their parents, you know that's what people start to do." Another reason participants cited was more personal and justified drug use as a primary means of being successful in school. "For me a lot of my use was justified by my school- work and my drug-of-choice was prescription amphetamines" (Logan).

The majority of participants who mentioned their previous college experiences did so in the context of describing the negative impacts on academic performance and sometimes even

life-threatening consequences of their alcohol and drug use. The consequences delineated included not attending classes, failing classes, being placed on academic probation, and eventually withdrawing from school completely. One participant reflected, "So, previously I failed, yeah, I guess I'd pretty much failed and I was on academic probation at least at all three of my colleges before here… due to my use" (Chloe). Another participant poignantly highlighted the seriousness of his alcohol use by stating, "And I had a pretty good stint of sobriety going on in recovery but then I started college and it all stopped and I all but killed myself before I transferred up here … through Port Rehab" (Landon).

The other factor the data from these interviews underscored is the risky nature of the college environment for a student in recovery trying to remain abstinent from alcohol and drugs. The previous quote illustrates how this individual's "stint of sobriety" was interrupted once he entered the college environment. Furthermore, the perception of college not being an option for a student early in recovery as Hannah mentioned earlier, highlights the significant change in trajectory for these students as well as the distinctive opportunity which CRPs offer these students.

Challenges

The first area I explored with participants is the initial challenges they faced as students in recovery attending college and being members of their CRP. Although each participant clearly had their own individual, distinct experiences, there were many common themes among their collective experiences as well. I summarize these findings according to the thematic categories that emerged from these data.

Fear of Relapse in the College Environment

One of the first themes to emerge was the expressed fear of being able to remain sober in a college environment. Many of the participants were early in their recovery (six months to a year sober) when they entered their respective programs and several verbalized the very real concern about their ability to continue to remain abstinent from alcohol and drugs in the college context. In fact four of the participants relapsed while attending college and living or being active in their CRP (Jack, Addison, Carter, and Landon). One participant noted, "The biggest challenge for me was learning how to do school without using." (Logan). Another participant reflected,

> my biggest challenge as a student in recovery…I would say…when I first got here I was nervous, …Well, the reason why I came here was because I was nervous that I was going to start drinking or doing drugs…while I was in college because I know that is a typical behavior especially if someone's not living you know, at home with their parents, you know that's what people start to do. So I was like kind of nervous about that… (Brian).

This fear seems embedded in the past experiences of alcohol and drug use as an expected, typical behavior of college students which presents a potential trigger for students who are trying to remain sober.

Lacking Confidence and Fears of Failure

A second major theme to emerge from the data was the explicit lack of confidence towards succeeding in college usually based on past experiences. This seemed particularly true for those students who had attended college prior to their recovery from alcohol and drug dependence. Over three-quarters (16) of the participants in this study had attended college to entering their CRP and almost half of these (9) explicitly mentioned how their past poor academic performance and failures presented a very real concern. Furthermore, four of the participants reported having failed classes early on in their CRP experience (Brian, Anne, Beth, and Jamie). One commented, "I guess like my biggest challenge was I was just very nervous

about how college would go this time around and I just wanted to do something differently and guess that I had a huge fear of failure when I first got here" (Emma). Another stated, "God, I just had such a deficit in terms of confidence that…yeah, that was the biggest thing. And maybe some of that was healthy but I don't think it was all healthy." (Luke).

Other factors contributing to the lack of confidence and fear of failure which a few participants expressed was more of a sense of personal inadequacy and lack of awareness of their own true potential. One noted, "…you know it wasn't that I had a hard time finding friends before too long or anything like that, but there was still at least at first that feeling I had of just insecurity – a deep level of inadequate fear and insecurity," (Carter). Another stated,

> Well, I was a high school dropout coming in. I had never been successful academically. I had failed out of high school. I had failed out of community college. And so I really didn't know what my capabilities were in terms of school. So when I came in I was intimidated with the idea of going back to college because I had never done well and so it was kind of scary (Caleb).

So for some of these students, the prospect of attending college and actually achieving success seemed to be an "intimidating" prospect.

Feeling Unprepared and Needing to Learn Responsibility

A third theme which emerged from the data is a sense of feeling unprepared for the challenges of being a college student combined with a very real need to learn how to be responsible in order to succeed. Some students expressed this process as one of "re-acclimation" if they had been to college previously. Clark observed, "I think getting re-acclimated to college life having been in college and going to treatment and then coming back to college getting re-acclimated to going to class and being a student and going to the library and doing homework." Others noted when they first arrived to their CRP how immature and very irresponsible they were at that time. One commented, "So my immaturity and my lack of responsibility was hard

and I was still very impulsive so it was really one of the hardest things when I first came in…"

(Anne). Another t noted how he seemed to have never learned the necessary foundational skills

for success in college because of his drug use as an adolescent. He stated,

> …you know college obviously requires a lot more self-direction and time management skills which were things I never developed as a youth because I was always getting loaded and then in treatment my time was managed for me. And so having to relearn all of those skills with kind of your feet to the fire I guess academically, that was sort of a struggle for me (Mark).

This participant in retrospect seemed to understand the necessity of self-direction and time

management for an academically successful trajectory in college.

Participants cited other factors as well related to this sense of unpreparedness. A few

who were entering college for the first time as members of their CRP noted how although they

had been good students in high school, they still found the demands of college to be more

challenging than anticipated. One stated, "And another challenge was you know college course

work because I'd never been to college before, um, and I was a good student," (Chloe). Another

noted how he struggled with procrastination. "I would go to class, I would frequently

procrastinate assignments and papers and studying for tests so badly that I would have to like

throw myself on the mercy of the professor." (Jack).

Adjusting to New Freedoms and Restrictions

A fourth theme emerging from the data is a dynamic of struggling to handle the new

freedoms in a college environment for some and for others resenting the restrictions arising from

some of the rules and expectations in the CRP. A few participants discussed how they found the

new freedoms in the college context even within their CRP to be a bit daunting particularly given

their previous controlled treatment and halfway house environments. The lack of a highly

structured environment was particularly difficult for one as she reflected in the following,

>And then my other really big challenge was I didn't know how to handle freedom because I had been in treatment for four months and then I was living under my mother's roof, going to meetings every single day, meeting with my sponsor three times a week and working, and then I came here, I didn't have a job and a ton of free time, and my mom wasn't anywhere to be seen, and I got a sponsor but it wasn't really somebody who I really bonded with – I felt pretty detached from it without any grounding. So that was really hard for me I think (Anne).

Another participant commented on the challenge of this new freedom requiring more self-discipline by stating, "And once I got here there was a little bit more freedom I guess and you know I didn't have to go to class, but to be successful I had to. But I think one of the biggest challenges was just having a new sense of freedom…" (Clark).

Closely related to these difficulties handling freedom are some sentiments which a few participants expressed about having difficulty managing impulsivity and feeling very much like needing to learn to be an adult when they first arrived at their CRP. Two of the participants reported having been exited from their CRP due to behavioral infractions of their CRP student agreement (Anne and Logan). Logan noted how he viewed his recovery as not only remaining abstinent from alcohol and drugs but also as learning to be mature. He stated, "I have to learn not only how to stay sober but also how to be an adult at the same time. And how do I have that accountability and show up and be consistent and be honest and not do imbecilic things…". Another reflected, "I mean in terms of challenges, you know my challenges were less with the program and more with my own kind of behaviors. You know I got in some trouble when I got there because I was impulsive and always being mischievous you know..." (Caleb).

Others experienced an interesting different reaction and found the rules and structure of the CRP to be too restrictive. This was particularly true for Mark who had been living independently prior to coming to the CRP. He stated,

>I had been living independently six, eight months or something around (that)… and so coming here I would say the biggest challenges were some of the restrictions on my

freedom of movement… And when I came here I felt like I had taken a step backwards in terms of my autonomy.

Cassie, who was younger and just coming from high school, found the environment to clash with her expectations of what she thought college should be. She commented,

I think the hardest thing for me…was just all the new rules… and so when I came here it was like, I felt like there were all these rules and I felt like college was supposed to be freedom. Now, I'm finally out of my parent's house and I'm finally 18 and I'm going to college and I should be able to do what I want.

Thus, different members of the CRP had different reactions to the environment in terms of its freedoms and rules and expectations.

Setting Priorities and Finding Balance

A fifth theme which emerged is the challenge of setting appropriate priorities to as to maintain a healthy balance between one's recovery, academic responsibilities, and social life. Almost a third of the participants made direct reference to these challenges. Alex noted how her social life and search for instant gratification became the priority early on. She stated,

so it was really one of the hardest things when I first came in – not trying to get that instant gratification and focusing on what was most important and my priorities were really wacked out and I believe that yes, recovery was important, and yes, school was important but for me at that time my social life and figuring out who I was in the wrong kinds of ways was felt like the most important.

Beth had a similar experience and noted how her struggle was trying to find a balance between what she wanted to do and what she knew she need to do. She commented,

I think just learning to live with a bunch of other people and the responsibilities of going to class and going to meetings and just trying to balance life and what was supposed to be a priority…and in how to make friends and how to make girlfriends and how to find or finding that balance was hard.

A few other participants took their academics very seriously right away. One commented on how being an older student and having been in college prior, he seemed to take his studies more

seriously than his younger peers. However, the imbalance he created by focusing more on his

academics than his recovery led to some undesirable consequences as well. He reflected,

> I took the class and the education part a little more seriously than everyone else. Just because that was my highest priority and because that was my highest priority, it kicked my…ass a few times during my experience in the CRP program. I wasn't making my recovery my highest priority. I was making my education my highest priority. And so it took, I was …in the CRP program for three years and I graduated sober and I graduated from the CRP Program sober but I was not sober the entire time (Luke).

Consequently, finding the right balance and priorities seemed to carry great significance in the

experiences of these participants.

Social Relationships and the "New Kid Fear"

Over half of the participants (12) referenced the dynamic of adjusting socially to their

new community in recovery and managing relationships both inside and outside of their CRP as

challenges forming a sixth theme in the data. One subtheme that emerged is the desire to fit in

and having the, "the new kid fear." Emma stated, "I guess learning how to live in a community

with people I didn't know, making friends, basically like a new kid fear, 'What if other kids

don't like me?'" The process of making new friends in the CRP was a necessary survival

process for one participant's recovery since she had returned to her same school after treatment.

She reflected,

> Well I guess I think at some point I took it a little like, "It's harder for me," but really it's just still external factors like when I went back there were still people there who I just used to party and do drugs with, so I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is really hard for me!" But really I don't think I had fully understood that it's, "Yes, it's kind of me, but it's more like you just need to change your friends." (Anne).

Others mentioned how they found it challenging and rewarding to live in a residential

community with others which I will address in more detail later in this chapter. Another related

subtheme is the issue of having romantic relationships, particularly for the first time in one's

recovery. I will address this in more detail later related to participants' best and worst experiences in their CRPs.

A final subtheme in this area which participants raised is the issue of learning to be authentic and vulnerable in relationships. Logan described this as a critical lesson learned in his recovery when he stated, "And the other thing was learning how to socialize and like, make friends and how to show up and be vulnerable and be honest with people because probably that's one of the biggest things I've learned in recovery - that rigorous honesty." However, Jack described having struggled with this issue and never having truly reached that level of honesty while in his CRP and consequently, remained very alone and isolated internally. He recalled,

> I oftentimes will seem like one of the most gregarious and one of the funniest or and I'm not sure but if you asked people after I left, they might all tell you that I was liked too. But I don't know but the personal, the internal feeling is very isolative always. It's very isolated, very alone, so for me that was something that you know I didn't make a lot of progress with again before, during or after.

This participant also noted how he lied about his sobriety when he came into his CRP and continued to drink periodically and keeping it secret throughout his entire time in his CRP.

Dealing with Loss

Having to deal with loss either in terms of lost opportunities for one's future or the death of former drug-using friends due to overdose comprised a seventh theme in the data. Alex reflected on how he had been very athletic in high school but his alcohol and drug use ruined any chances of him playing sports in a collegiate high athletic division setting. He stated,

> …one of my biggest challenges was I…grew up playing football and baseball and was pretty successful and drugs and alcohol basically ruined my chances of ever doing anything with that. And so one of my biggest challenges was seeing all of my friends that I played on all-star teams with go to Division 1 schools and going to Stanford or CAL. I have a friend now who is playing for the San Diego Padres and we played together in high school and so that was a really tough thing for me to face because I had a lot of guilt and self-reflection of, "Why did I do this to myself?"

An additional aspect to this theme of loss is the sense expressed by another participant that his former alcohol and drug use resulted in him being at a school with perhaps less academic challenge than he otherwise could have attended. Jack commented, "So...you're basically like you're at this school because you screwed up and it's not, it doesn't have like enough to offer academically."

A tragic aspect of this theme several participants discussed in this study is dealing with the deaths, usually by overdose, of friends whom they had used drugs with, in treatment with, or who had been fellow members of their CRP. Jason in particular noted how his early experience in his CRP was profoundly impacted by this kind of experience. He recalled, "I had a very difficult semester – I lost two close friends. One of them was a former (CRP) student and the other was a childhood friend. And it happened within thirty days of each other. And I just remember that fall semester it really kind of rocked my boat."

Dealing with Medical and Mental Health Issues

A final theme emerging from the data is the challenge of having to contend with one's own medical issues and one's mental health issues particularly on the level of daily functioning. Two participants had significant medical issues during their CRP stays. One had to spend considerable time at home during both the week and weekends for at least a semester resulting in some disconnection from the CRP community. Addison commented,

> I feel like when I got (sick) the fall of my sophomore year, I went home a lot. And that really, yeah, that's a point where I suffered a lot because it was just like, "I'm sleeping all the time." I don't know I still did okay in my classes and stuff but I just felt like my community wasn't, the community wasn't there.

Another participant had to take an entire medical leave from her school and return home for over an entire semester and had to deal with a lot of negative, untrue rumors as a result. Anne described her experience as follows,

I became very sick with a very rare autoimmune disease while I was up there. So some people thought – it was right around the time that synthetic marijuana and K-2 was out and about and I was really big into Zoh and some people thought I had relapsed on it – but it wasn't any of that. It was just all mental and physical and stuff like that.

These medical issues presented challenges beyond the physical aspects.

A second similar but much more common sub-theme in this area is mental health challenges which seriously impacted students' ability to function. Participants mentioned issues including compulsive gambling, video-gaming, ADHD and eating disorders which either they themselves contended with or saw their peers struggle with in their CRP. These themes become more prominent later in this chapter when addressing "worst" experiences.

Summary of Challenges

Although the challenges identified in the interviews seemed as varied as the individual participants describing them, some common themes did emerge around several thematic groupings. The first group seemed to cluster around a sense of vulnerability and unpreparedness. These participants reported feeling vulnerable to relapse and lacking confidence to succeed given past experiences and failures in previous college experiences. The second grouping clustered around the theme of adjustment challenges. These challenges related to needing to learn to establish priorities and find balance with one's recovery and academic responsibilities in addition to finding ways to socially "fit in" with the new recovery community. The third grouping seemed to bundle around the theme of dealing with co-occurring issues whether they be life crises, major losses, or learning and mental health issues. Finally, nine of the participants reported having had struggles to such a degree that they either failed classes in their first semesters of being sober, committed behavioral infractions of their CRP student contract resulting in their premature exit from the CRP, or actually returned to substance use while residing in their CRP.

Envisioning these challenges in light of their respective contexts is important as part of a phenomenological perspective on these data. It is interesting that the contexts can vary in terms of being positive or negative or supportive or risky. Interestingly, even the positive, supportive contexts can present their own inherent challenges as well highlighting the complexity of these milieus. This will become even clearer in the discussion of findings regarding best and worst experiences.

Important Supports

A second area I explored with participants was the supports they found most helpful to them while attending college and being members of their CRP. Participants seemed to give different weight to different resources and in different configurations. For example, the most common resources they cited as most helpful were the counseling support staff in their CRP, their peers in the CRP community, or Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings off campus. Some participants seemed to emphasize one over the others and other participants emphasized all three as equally important. There were other resources cited beyond these three and I will summarize the data findings in the following section.

Counselor Support

Fourteen of the twenty-one participants identified the counselors or recovery support staff in their CRP as one of the most helpful supports they had as students. There were several dynamics discussed by participants regarding the nature of this support and reasons for its helpfulness. One aspect was the strong relationship of trust which participants found with their counselor. Jason recalled, "I think as much as anything I connected right away with a counselor who was an intern…and he was fantastic. You know there was rapport there and I felt trust immediately…and I think that from that moment, I mean that was my number one resource."

This trust seems critically important because it allowed for genuine sharing to seek help. Logan commented,

> …working with Dave in particular, was really helpful for me because he was so cerebrally intelligent in such an abstract way that it was really easy for me to get down to the brass tacks with him and like, "Alright, cool, here's what's really going on. You know here are the issues that are arising. How do we process and deal with this?"

Closely related to this trust also seems to be the facets of the participants viewing their counselor as having expertise, insight, and skill in order to help them deal with their issues which several mentioned. Anne noted how her counselor could tell whether she was having a good day or bad day and she seemed to find that very reassuring. She described the meaningfulness of their relationship as follows,

> He was kind of like an uncle up there. You know I could talk to him about recovery or life or he could tell when I was having a bad day even before I did. Um, but he was definitely a good anchor for me when I got back up there because he was the one who got me into treatment.

A second aspect of the helpfulness of the counselors for several of these participants is the dynamic of accountability provided in this relationship. Anne recalled, "I resented it then, but I think that obviously the (CRP) Program – they were really, you know, as a freshman when you come in they're really on you about everything. I mean I had calls on my cell phone, I had emails; I would come by; I had to show up here…" A third helpful aspect of this support seems to be the result of the counselors helping the students find and function in a positive direction. Brian recalled, "I would say the counselors were definitely a really good resource too. I just remember…really struggling my first year and being set on…well, one of the counselors set me on a path that was really good for me and…that helped me a lot." Logan cited how helpful it was to have a plan of action developed with his counselor. A fourth helpful aspect several

participants identified was the regularity and availability of meetings with counselors. Clark

recollected,

> I mean obviously having counselors in the office is huge – people that we can go to while
> we're here every day of the week. And if they're not here, they're reachable at least you
> know. I think that's huge – having someone for our community that specifically we can
> go to, to help us with whatever our "unique needs" might be… I think that was, that was
> incredibly helpful.

Peer Support

The second most common helpful resource participants identified is the support they

gained from their peers. Twelve participants cited this resource as one of the most helpful.

There were several aspects of this resource mentioned in the interviews. One aspect was simply

the dynamic of having the commonality of experience of being in recovery and sharing the

experience of attending college together. Chloe noted, "… living with young people in recovery

was helpful because you can talk to them about what's going on and they get it… and living with

young people in recovery was extremely helpful." Clark emphasized the commonality of the

experience by stating, "…and I think just having a community of people – young people who are

going through the same thing helped too – um, transitioning into college for the first time or

transitioning back into college in a sort of new life of recovery."

A second aspect of this peer support is the role these peers played in their experience as

members of their CRP. Several participants noted how some of their peers served as mentors

and positive role models. Caleb recalled how helpful his peer mentor was in helping him get

acclimated to the CRP. He stated,

> …I remember when I got there they had a like a peer partnership when I got there.
> I was assigned to somebody who was supposed to kind of help me acclimate into the
> program… But I remember that really helped because I had somebody who helped me
> and kind of showed me around and showed me the program or taught me some of the
> different logistical things of being in (the CRP) and what that meant and kind of those
> different things. Also having a partner who and being assigned to somebody who was
> going to a lot of meetings and was really being sober.

Jamie recalled how seeing her peers do well seemed to provide an example which she wanted to

follow. She stated,

> I still had a lot of struggles at the time… but um I also watched the fellowship here and
> the students around me and they started working programs and I started seeing changes in
> them. So when I had the first awful semester, I started going to more meetings, I started
> working with a sponsor, and I started creating an outside sort of recovery program as
> well.

A third interesting aspect of this peer support is a dynamic which participants described

as their peers providing a culture of accountability and even positive peer pressure to do well.

Logan described it as follows, "…but the people that were there were, there was generally a

consensus towards sobriety. And so there was, it became in a positive peer pressure way kind of

like, "No, this is what we do. We go to a meeting. Okay, we're going to Squad 73 on Monday.

You want to go?" In this case it reflected a positive peer pressure towards recovery and

attending AA meetings.

A fourth aspect of this peer support seems to be how it provided avenues for socializing,

having fun, doing homework together and making lasting friendships which continue even to this

day several years after graduation. Cassie described this poignantly when she said,

> And just the bond – I mean the first year I lived on the floor house with like 12 girls and
> you know just the late nights of playing video games and doing homework and you know
> stuff like that was just, you know, I mean I'm still friends with many of them today. So
> those were definitely good bonds that were built.

Four of the twenty-one participants specifically mentioned how the friendships built while they

were in college in their CRP have lasted up until the present time as some of their closest friends.

Chloe noted this when she said, "So there was actually a whole new group of young women and

mostly it was great and I made some other friends who are still best friends of mine today."

Alcoholics Anonymous Support

The third most common helpful resource participants cited was the support they received from attending AA meetings outside of their CRP and working with a sponsor in that program for their own personal recovery development and growth. Eight participants noted this resource. Several salient themes emerged from the participants' discussions of the role Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support took in their lives and experience. One theme was that of having a support system outside of their CRP. Hannah commented, "And then there was the recovery aspect that was completely separate from (the CRP) – my meetings and working with a sponsor was something that thankfully, girls that were in (the CRP) (were doing)…" Luke noted, "…and then like my community meetings that I've been going to for some time are all really great – um, so a lot of good support there makes all the difference really."

A second important theme with this experience was attending AA meetings with peers who are in the CRP. Anne reflected on how attending the same meetings with her peers whom she lived with in the CRP provided a special closeness and accountability which she needed at the time. She stated, "And we went to the same meetings – so that was really helpful too. They knew how I behaved in the program, in class, and in AA. And so it was helpful having somebody who could see me literally 24/7 and then try their best to hold me accountable as best as they could I guess."

A third theme emerging in these discussions is the aspect of having not just a sponsor – a mentor in the AA program – but rather having a good one who is helpful to one's recovery. Anne reflected upon her initial time in her CRP that, "And then, yeah at the time I didn't really have a valuable sponsor or anything like that." A few others mentioned the value of having, "a really good sponsor" (Kaylee) as an important part of their support.

A fourth theme from these interviews in this area is the dynamic of significant life change or transformation which occurred when one became committed to a personal recovery lifestyle through the support of AA and the 12 Steps. Chloe reflected on how committing herself to this kind of recovery path became a significant "turning point" for her. She stated,

> So AA ended up being the most helpful definitely which is funny because I said it was a challenge in the beginning. You know the next year it was the most helpful. Or maybe a year and a half later it turned out to be, once I really dove into that. And I would say I've been committed to it ever since that turning point for me you know.

Beth described this as something that helped her to significantly change her initial trajectory of failure in her CRP. She described it as follows,

> Really it was starting to work with a sponsor and go through the Book (AA Big Book). As soon as I did that I went from failing to having A's; to balancing life very well; to making class; totally to having a Higher Power in my life to doing those 12 Steps was absolutely what changed my life.

Community Support as a Whole

A fourth resource which participants mentioned was the support they received from the community as a collective or whole as distinct from the sub-groups of peers with whom they bonded as close friends. Six participants referenced this in their interviews. Several sub-themes emerged from these discussions as well. First, Jason noted how the collective support of the community provided a hugely significant sustenance during a time of crisis. He recalled, "And I think just as much as anything I'd say the biggest resource was when my first friend died tragically, um I really felt the community close in on me." Second, a few of the participants mentioned how valuable they found the weekly CRP meetings when they got to see all of their peers in one place at one time. Cassie commented, "I loved the Monday meeting we had every week – Circle – that was great. I loved that."

A third sub-theme which emerged in this area is the sense of the uniqueness of the bond which participants felt with their peers as a community. Alex commented on this by stating, "It's

something that can't be found anywhere else or can't be mimicked or recreated, um, it's sort of its own organism, its own energy, it's just takes over and uh, you can't necessarily explain what it's like until you're actually in it."

Finally, a fourth sub-theme in this area is the dynamic quality of the support which participants experienced in their CRP. Mark noted how when he arrived in his CRP he found the culture to be one strongly promoting recovery. He stated, "…but the people that were there were, there was generally a consensus towards sobriety." Anne recalled how the quality of the CRP support was contingent upon the members living in the community. She stated, "…there were a couple of years that the (CRP) program had a really good group of kids there and that we all lived on campus and we were all right next door to each other…" However, she also noted how due to a few key factors, the quality of the community seemed to change and deteriorate. She reflected,

> Yeah, that changed after about a year. I think there were a couple of things going on. I think I had gotten sick and I think there were a couple of people that fell off the wagon and you know it was, I don't want to say that one person started it, but no matter what it was a domino effect. So things kind of fell apart after that…slowly.

This last comment reveals how participants experienced the quality of the CRP community as dynamic and better at some times than others.

CRP Program Structure and Accountability

A fifth area participants identified as a helpful support was the structure of the CRP and the accountability it provided by various means. Six participants mentioned these components as helpful supports. These responses clustered around three sub-themes. The first was simply the structure itself of having to meet with a counselor or support staff weekly as well as attending a weekly community meeting. Luke reflected on this by stating,

I think the weekly meeting with the counselor was definitely good –it was a good check in; it was a good way to stay on track and you know and kind of bounce some ideas off someone else…I loved the Monday meeting we had every week – Community Meeting – that was great. I loved that.

The second sub-theme was the expectations and accountability which arose around those expectations by the CRP staff. Mark commented on the helpfulness of this process with the following, "But the structure of having that weekly counseling meeting – someone was going to ask you, 'Are you going to class?' And Dave was my counselor and in the middle of all his ramblings about God knows what, he would …that was one of the questions, 'Are you going to class?'" Beth described this kind of accountability for her as necessary. She reflected, "…I just really needed something to be accountable to before I had actually worked the 12 Steps. And anything like going to class or coming to meet with you, I had a really hard time just showing up for life I remember."

The third sub-theme is this area relates to the means of the accountability which the CRP staff implemented to support the students. Anne commented on how the consistent reaching out by staff in various means were helpful even though she did not appreciate it at the time. She stated,

> I resented it then, but I think that obviously the (CRP) Program – they were really, you know, as a freshman when you come in they're really on you about everything. I mean I had calls on my cell phone, I had emails, I would come by, I had to show up here, to Community Meeting, I had to be accountable and show up to the big meeting every week; to get to see everybody and see everyone's face was really, really helpful.

Another participant reflected on how having to take urine analysis tests was helpful.

Furthermore, Jack reflected on how being accountable to attend AA meetings combined with other formal support mechanisms helped reduce his chances of drinking while in the CRP.

Faculty Support

A sixth area participants identified as helpful is the support they received from faculty at

their respective institution. Seven participants mentioned this type of support. Several sub-

themes emerged in discussions on this topic. First, a few participants cited how they were able

to form supportive relationships with some of their professors and establish a personal

connection. Kaylee recalled, "I had some professors who were really, really helpful too, who

knew that I was in the (CRP) Program so they were really good about looking after me kind of."

Carter recalled how he was able to develop significant connections with certain faculty whom he

could go to for support with many things. He stated,

> …eventually I certainly found a quite of bit of support from the faculty at the college as
> well too. And again there was some people there that I really felt some strong
> connections with – Gus Brown (pseudonym) in the History Department who later became
> my Advisor for that major – and some other folks like that who knew about my situation
> and um, but who I also felt comfortable with going to their office and talking about you
> know whatever difficulties I might be having with their class or beyond.

> Second, a few of the participants noted how they had professors who were very

encouraging and provided reassurance if they were struggling. Emma recalled,

> …well if it was a subject I was not very strong on, I felt like they were always very
> available. And then they would go through things with me that I didn't understand and
> they'd also reassure me and say, "Emma, you know this stuff. You're just over thinking
> it." So that reassurance was pretty awesome.

It is interesting that this participant noted how the faculty at her college with the CRP were

markedly different from the faculty at other colleges she attended in terms of understanding

addiction and mental health issues and being available to offer support. She noted,

> …well my one of the schools I went to…they just simply have way more people to deal
> with, so there's really no, there's not, it's probably really hard for them to form that
> personal connection. And then the second college I went to…I would say that the faculty
> aren't very informed about addiction or mental illness. Some of them were but most of
> them were like if you came to them and you needed something and you were like, "Hey,
> I'm sorry I couldn't go to class and this is what's going on," it would probably throw
> them for a loop if you did that.

Third, Brian noted how having to take a Religion class at his college helped him explore

his own spirituality in his recovery. He noted how much he enjoyed the class to his own surprise

by stating,

> I had to take a religious class from a nun and I was dreading it and I don't know if I was
> because of the program open to things but it was really a special class. She talked about
> God and I didn't judge her. And it was really cool and to be around that and I didn't
> think I was going to like that as much as I did. And so that was cool and I don't know if
> that was support but I looked forward to that class.

He later commented on how much he enjoyed getting to know this instructor through her sharing

of her own story.

Institutional Support

A seventh area of support participants recalled was the atmosphere and other resources

provided by their respective college in addition to the CRP which helped them be successful.

Four participants referenced this factor. These comments clustered around several themes. First,

Mark noted how well he thought his college helped to reduce the sense of stigma attached to

students in recovery. He commented,

> I think the school here specifically does a great job of fully welcoming in and bringing
> into the fold the (CRP) students without sort of making them wear a scarlet letter saying,
> "Oh, these are our special little egg shell drug addicts we have to make sure we hold their
> hands when they cross the street" sort of thing. It's a happy medium of what goes on
> with that sort of thing.

Second, a few participants mentioned how helpful the additional supports particularly for

learning disabilities or ADHD were for their own success. Anne recalled, "And I was in the LSS

program at Alexandra and they helped me with my learning disability. And they were really

over involved but I needed it so it was almost kind of therapeutic working with them…"

A third aspect participants noted was the small size of their institution which they believe

provided them the kind of personal support they needed. Carter noted how the small size of the

college with the CRP as compared to his previous college provided the kind of environment for deep involvement. He described this as follows,

> And you know I think that the helpful thing about a program like (CRP) and a school like Alexandra is that you know it's a small organization within a small organization. And so that's the type of environment I think I really needed especially to begin with was one where I could develop some level of intimacy with any facet of the school that I was becoming a part of. And you know I didn't find that at a larger university like CU. I think the program really compliments a smaller school like Alexandra very well.

Hannah recalled how the small class sizes and the professors reaching out to her when absent really helped mitigate her avoidance and minimal participation. She stated,

> I just think that just goes to Alexandra. Like keeping out class sizes small. I had professors who when I missed class would reach out to me and like, "What are you doing? Where are you?" And it's not easy to hide in a class of fifteen you know. People notice when you're not there no matter how quiet you are.

Leadership Roles

The final area participants identified as a key support in their success as taking roles of leadership in their CRP. Four participants referenced this phenomenon. Several sub-themes emerged from these discussions as well. First, a few of the participants commented on how much they respected the student leaders in their CRP. Beth recalled, "…and I remember viewing the leadership team as having their act together…" Second, Caleb noted how he was always encouraged by staff to be a leader and how much he learned about being a leader during his time there. He stated, "…I felt like I was always being lifted up and being encouraged to take leadership positions and all these really cool leadership positions in (CRP). It was funny because there was always, if you were willing to be a leader, then there was a position available." He further commented on how formative these experiences were for him with the following,

> But it was the whole democratic process and being able to vote on things and be involved and in kind of the governing of (CRP) itself. You know it really, it changed me a lot and it taught me how to be a leader. And I think that in terms of some of the more formative experiences I've ever had in my life, being a leader in (CRP) was one of the most important.

Finally, several students recalled how becoming a leader in their CRP helped instill confidence and pride and provided motivation for them to do well. Hannah recalled,

> I, growing up I was always in like a leadership position with sports or with high school stuff. And it had been a long time since I had had a leadership role or was looked at as a leader. And so that was just another thing to help me gain some confidence back I think. Probably being voted into a leadership position by your peers is a nice little ego boost.

Summary of Supports

In terms of supports participants identified as having been most helpful to them as students in recovery and members or their CRP, the data reflects a broad array of important resources and dynamics. The greater percentage of responses centered around the support participants received from either their counselor or CRP recovery support staff, their peers in the community, and involvement with AA meetings. Participants also identified various other resources from their respective institutions reflecting multiple levels and dynamics of these supports. These supports initially appear to have played a critical role in helping these participant find success in their college experience.

Community

The third major area I explored with participants was the experience of community within their respective CRP. The research on CRPs has identified this phenomenon as one of the most important variables in recovering students' maintaining their recovery from addiction and achieving a successful college experience while (Smock, Baker, Harris & D'Sauza, 2010). I asked participants how they experienced "community" in their CRP, what factors seemed to build it, and what factors seemed to inhibit its development. Anne poignantly underscored the importance of this variable by stating, "Well, that is still stands as my favorite part of the CRP Program and why I think it is a good program because – I mean the most important part are the

people who make it up, you know – the kids, or whatever, the students." In the following sub-sections I will summarize the themes participants raised related to this topic.

Belonging in Commonality and Inclusion

When asked how they experienced community, participants spoke about three qualities or dynamics within the CRP. The first was a sense of belonging. Brian described this as follows, "I just remember that being very positive – just having all those people feeling like you were in the same place as them. And it just gave you a…it just gave me a sense of, 'This is where I belong,' I guess." He made this observation on the basis that he was with a group of peers in which they were all equals having to live under the same rules and expectations with accountability.

The second dynamic participants identified is a sense of mutuality and commonality of experiences, both past and present. Jaime described it as a type of validation that one person shares with another when they struggle with addiction and form a mutual understanding of each other's experiences. She reflected, "You know it is the most validating and magical experience that one can have and I still experience it. And, living with, you know 60 other alcoholics at the time, like we got each other; we understood." She also described it as a sense of being on a mutual journey together with her peers. She stated, "… it's like growing up with someone because we all were getting sober together and trying to create our new lives and you're becoming new people." Chloe made a similar comparison by stating, "And like this sense of community and we're all in this together and because we've all been through addiction and now we're all trying to get our degree and do the college thing and have fun..."

The third dynamic emergent from the data in this area is inclusion. Mark described it as a process whereby everyone in the community had a place and found their own group within which to belong but with permeability between groups as well. He stated,

> So like no one was excluded, everyone seemed to fall into place, and it wasn't like it was a kind of competition or these are the cool kids and these aren't the cool kids, but everyone kind of had their own kind of circle and if you wanted to switch circles, you probably could.

He also described it not necessarily as an overall community-wide sense but rather a sense that everyone was welcome. He recalled, "…everyone was sort of welcomed. There was a good sense of community I would say. There was a sort of, it was different; it wasn't an all-encompassing kind of community, it was sort of an umbrella that we all fell under."

Participants identified numerous factors which helped build a sense of community in their CRP from recollections of their own experiences. One factor was simply the dynamic of sharing the journey of college and recovery together. These experiences included everything from having classes together, to doing homework, going to AA, and simply socializing. Chloe recalled,

> …going to meetings together was one thing. You know being active in AA together. Doing schoolwork together. Like we would have times where like this is homework time, or it's going to try to be homework time… and class, if we had classes together. Going out and having fun – let's say if we went to a movie together or went to a concert or just went out to dinner. Different activities in the city or even just hanging out in the flats having fun. Um, that really helped with the community sense too.

A second factor was the dynamic of living together in a residential community setting. Carter commented that the design of living together in a residential setting created a sense of community that he believed could not be replicated in a non-residential setting. He stated,

> Community, experiencing community. You know I experienced it first by the living situation. I think, I think the CRP is lucky that as a program it can offer separate housing for students as well too. That was my first and probably most direct sense of community I got right off the bat and that continued throughout the remainder of my three years there

too. I think that created an environment that would be nearly impossible to duplicate if it were a non-residential program.

Several other participants elaborated on this kind of living situation as being one in which one was constantly seeing other people and there was always someone to talk to (Anne); there was a constant presence of peers hanging out (Hannah); and this setting made it very difficult for one to isolate (Beth). In particular, Anne described the closeness that emerged as very much like a family. She recalled,

> And then pretty soon within even - especially within a recovery program because you make friends very quickly because you already have that commonality – so, at least from my experience, I got very close with a very large number of people where I don't have my family here but it was like a family.

In addition to the configuration of residential living several participants described the dynamic of community as occurring in designated spaces for the CRP. Dylan discussed how the CRP office was a key place for students to "hang out" and socialize as well as provide support to each other. He recalled, "…we basically hung out in an office all day. That's where we'd go between classes and rest and…but that was awesome because of the support from the other students there. You go to a class and you come back and so it was always kind of evolving and so it was a small group there." Another space in a different program where students tended to gather and organically generate community was the designated smoking area. Clark stated,

> …just having that space to let community happen naturally and there's a lot of places that can happen. And as much as the smoking pit – I mean smoking is bad (laughter) – but it's also, I mean everybody, but not everybody, but a lot of us smoke and just having that area where we all can be … you know, it really opens it up. It's a good place to start conversation and what not….I've had many an intense conversation there at all different times of the day. I don't think there's a time of day that I haven't had a super intense conversation there.

A fourth dynamic participants identified with the process of building community was making connections with peers through authenticity and vulnerability. Brian described this by stating, "It was like my second semester I just feel like I…you know, I just got to open up and be

myself. And then I just started making like a ton of friends and…I think that was just the coolest thing." Mark described this as a process of peers being very honest and genuine with each other. He recalled, "And so that was sort of this great concept of, 'Okay, people here are quite honest and you know kind of wear their heart on their sleeves for the most part,' and what you see is what you get."

A final dynamic which participants described as contributing to a sense of community is students providing support and accountability to one another. Jason described this as follows, "And I mean there was immediate accountability. I would run into CRP students on campus and they were all very interested in how I was doing." He made the direct connection between support and accountability when he stated,

> And so that kind of comes back to the nice idea that the community that's here you know it's that you are not only accountable for your own actions but you're kind of accountable for the actions of others. You know if the guy that lives next to you has kind of fallen off the face of the earth and no one checks in on him, then, "Well, what the hell are you doing?"

Obstacles to Community

Participants in this study were clear that their CRP was not a utopian existence and that there were problems among the community members as well as distractions which would pull them away from experiencing community. One potential obstacle or distraction from the CRP a few participants mentioned was romantic relationships outside of the community. Brian recalled, "And I was dating someone at the time who was really trying to make me feel like I shouldn't be here and I'm glad I didn't really listen to that because it really would have wrecked the experience that I had." Luke stated that had he not had the close group of friends he made in his CRP, "…it would have been very different without that. I would have been struggling with isolation. Of course I would have isolated with Jay."

A second obstacle participants identified was the variable recovery quality and maturity of peers in the CRP. Kaylee referred to this when she stated, "Well obviously in the not so good there was just who people who, they just didn't have a solid program you know." Logan recalled that during his time there was no sense of real community in his CRP. He attributed this to the adolescent tendencies and insensitive lack of maturity with his peers. He poignantly recalled,

> I felt like it was pretty, I mean there was from my own past experiences, there was still a lot of selectivity in terms of like there were still groups of people and naturally that's going to happen, especially when you put a bunch of young adolescents who are in early recovery together, like it's going to be nothing but a bunch of train wrecks, little mini train wrecks all over the place, and there was a lot of that. I don't think that sensitivity training would really like benefit anybody. Part of it is just being an adult now and I can look back and be like, "Guess what? We were a bunch of shit-heads."

He also attributed this in part to a perceived lack of accountability for CRP members during his time. He commented, "There wasn't any accountability. Guys weren't like going to meetings. When I was here, someone was drinking the whole time and there wasn't the accountability in terms of like – there was a lot of people who were like killing time."

A third obstacle identified was a reluctance of members to get involved. Addison recalled, "I don't know because I also wasn't as invested. Like I was really busy… and like the flat was like a big group of girls and we were all on like different pages and so we'd have flat meetings but I didn't feel as close with like some, a lot of them." Jack attributed his lack of connection and intentional isolation as due to social anxiety among other things. He stated, "I participated in all the things I was required to participate in but I don't think I ever let down sort of the protective barrier that I had up around myself or my ego or whatever. I just wasn't capable at that time of stepping out."

The Importance of Sub-Groups and Cliques

An additional interesting dynamic which emerged from the data was the helpful and even protective role that sub-groups and cliques served in the community. As a general rule Logan recognized the reality of not being able to be friends with everyone in the community but also of the importance of demonstrating respect and tolerance. He commented, "But understanding that you don't have to be friends with everybody but you do have to show up and be loving and tolerant. But you don't have to be friends with everybody and you're not going to be friends with everybody."

Luke recalled that he needed a smaller group to connect with within the community because he did not have an affinity for big groups. He recalled, I experienced community in a sub-community in a pussy palace informally… there were certainly certain individuals that I liked a lot and got along very well within the larger community, but I didn't really feel like the big group hug thing…" Mark saw this dynamic as a means whereby everyone in the community found a place to belong. He recalled,

> …there were enough people here and people were honest enough um that you could know if you liked somebody and it wasn't bad if you didn't hang out with them. Obviously treated everyone with respect and all that kind of stuff, there was almost these sort of unintentional, utopian cliques that got formed. So like no one was excluded, everyone seemed to fall into place…

Consequently, in essence then the CRP community was really a large entity made up of smaller communities or groups with dynamics characteristic of each one.

Program Events and Peer Activities

Another interesting distinction which emerged from the data in the context of community was the distinction participants seemed to make between CRP planned events and peer-generated social activities. In terms of the CRP events, five participants identified the CRP community meetings as helpful to having a sense of community. Beth recalled, "And Circle was that one

chance when everyone was in the same room. So that was something that even if I was a little tuned out, I absolutely think it was necessary to feel like we had a community here." In this regard as well, another participant commented how these meetings were particularly helpful when members were willing to take the time to share personal matters. Hannah stated, "Community Meeting was different but because there was less of us, there were less students, (it) was much more like a community thing. I feel like everybody would in the beginning open up and share personal things and put their stuff out there for everybody to be supportive of." The other events or activities which participants identified as helpful were orientation ropes courses, RA planned activities such as bowling, CRP BBQs, and ski trips.

The other type of activities participants mentioned as helpful to community were the ones peers planned or spontaneously implemented. The activities ranged from simply "hanging out together" (Hannah), to cooking together, studying together, going out to eat or to concerts. Chloe summed it up by stating, "Going out and having fun – let's say if we went to a movie together or went to a concert or just went out to dinner. Different activities in the city or even just hanging out in the flats having fun. Um, that really helped with the community sense too." Special events and holidays also seemed to play an important role as an occasion for activities. Participants mentioned how they had dance parties, Halloween parties, Thanksgiving dinners, Super Bowl parties and went out to celebrate peers' birthdays or sobriety birthdays on a regular basis.

The Role of Leaders

A few of the participants spoke to the role of student leaders in the CRP community. One in particular mentioned how they seemed to organically form a student leadership group to respond to several relapses that had occurred in the CRP. Their goal was to try to help bring the

community back to a healthy state of functioning they had experienced previously as well as to

work in partnership with the CRP staff. Kaylee recalled,

> So the rest of us toward the end we really tried to figure out that question for ourselves because we had been good and some of us had been there for the good year and stuff like that, and we were like, "How can we have it the way it was or like the way it was?" because things were really good. And so we came up with a CRP Committee and that took some of the stress and duties off of Gary and it put more responsibility on us. But it also gave us the responsibility and the ability to talk with one another about things we wanted to accomplish as a group and as a community.

Hence, she perceived their leadership as having the role of protection for the community and find

ways to improve the quality of the community as well.

Another participant spoke to how influential the role of leaders can be within the CRP

community. He stated that the leaders had a direct influence on the social norms of the

community and whether members were, "taking recovery really seriously" (Caleb). He also saw

the group of student leaders as vulnerable to the ebb and flow with the seriousness of their

commitment to recovery as well. He poignantly remembered,

> Like when I first got there, there was kind of the group of leaders, the cool kids of (CRP), who were going to meetings, were taking recovery really seriously, and were doing this thing, and the time that I was there I really got to see that kind of ebb and flow and at times the kind of the cooler leaders of (CRP) weren't, weren't really serious about recovery and it showed, you know. And then the entire community suffered as a result. I think that it's so important that people are leading the pack in the right direction.

Hence, at least in some participant's estimation, the student leaders in the CRP had a significant

influence of the norms and quality of functioning of the CRP community.

Summary of Community

The data emerging from participants' perspectives on community in a CRP underscore

the highly influential role of peers in providing not only recovery support but also support for

success socially and academically. The participants perceived the essence of community as

being a mutuality of experiences both past and present as well as a dynamic of being included

leading to a sense of belonging. The factors identified building a sense of community included sharing the journey of recovery and college together as well as living together in residential spaces designated for the CRP. This arrangement provided a constant availability of peers with whom to socialize, study together, and gain support from when needed. This also required of individuals a level of authenticity and vulnerability to become an active part of this dynamic. Activities also played a role whether CRP sponsored or peer generated. The obstacles to the sense of community included outside distractions as well as the ebb and flow of the collective maturity of the community members and the seriousness of their respective individual commitments to recovery. The community existed as a collective whole but smaller sub-groups played a critical role as well. Finally, student leaders played an important role in influencing the community social norms.

Best and Worst Experiences

The fourth area I explored with participants regarding their trajectory within their CRPs is the dynamic of their best and worst experiences. Numerous common themes emerged, some of which overlapped with previous topics in the interviews. However, exploring their experiences with this focus identified several new themes as well as deeper insight into previous ones identified. I will summarize the findings in this area by first reviewing the themes associated with "Best Experiences" and then follow with themes which emerged from "Worst Experiences."

Best Experiences

Participants' recollections of best experienced ranged from experiences they gained from living and attending college in recovery with their peers in almost a mundane day-to day manner to profound experiences of support in difficult times of tragedy and struggle. Several themes

which emerged from these experiences also had their flip side in worst experiences revealing a dual dynamic of very complex phenomena. A meta-theme which seems evolving from these data is the fact that these participants experienced in their trajectories significant growth and success but combined with difficult struggle as well as they sought success in this milieu.

Connecting with peers and making lasting friendships. One of the first major themes to emerge in these discussions was the recollection of having made genuine interpersonal connections early on with peers in their CRP and making friendships that lasted even to the present. Eight participants identified peer connections as some of their best experiences in their CRP. Brian described this experience as follows,

> I made some good friends my first semester but you know it wasn't near as many as I did my second semester here. And I think that just having you know a really solid group of guys that I knew I could count on you know. And I knew that they were going to AA meetings and you know I just felt like a…just like a really solid community to be a part of and I just felt lucky to have all these friends all of a sudden.

Another participant described this experience as the "first real friendships" she had experienced in her recovery (Jamie). Several participants mentioned how the friendships they formed then became the best friendships they still retain today. Emma stated, "…living with Jessica…she became like one of my best friends and she still is to this day. So I guess meeting people that I'm still very close with."

Attending AA together and other recovery-oriented activities. A second theme nascent in the data as a best experience was attending AA meetings together and engaging in other activities related to or promoting recovery. Five participants referred to this activity. This activity included not simply attending AA meetings but also attending other 12-Step social functions, AA Roundups, and even doing service-related activity such as speaking at treatment centers. Cassie reminisced about this by stating,

> I remember going to like the (Youth Treatment) Program quite a few times and speaking there with a bunch of people from here and meeting other people in recovery who weren't in (CRP) that way and going out to meetings with the girls. That was a lot of fun. You know we'd pack all five of us in a car and have a couple of car-fulls and just go out to meetings you know Monday night or whatever.

These activities seemed to reinforce the peer culture of promoting recovery.

Peer-generated activities and socializing. A third theme present in the data is the social activities which peers generated on their own. One sub-theme in this area is the phenomenon of simply, "hanging out with each other" in the CRP space. Cassie described this well when she reflected, "I think for me it was just the more day-to-day stuff that was like more meaningful and fun rather than like big events." Twelve participants referenced this phenomenon. These activities involved a range of actions such as watching movies, sitting around talking, playing games or doing crossword puzzles, playing video games, or engaging in "ridiculous shenanigans" (Logan) or simply, "being goofy" (Alex). Oftentimes these activities would last all night long or at least until 3 or 4 am. However, the late night activities together also involved homework and studying together. Cassie again recalled,

> And that's totally what it is because I look back now and it was like I really loved going to meetings with all the girls and I loved late night study sessions going to till 3 am or going to the gas station or grocery shopping you know, just the little things that at the time you're just like, "This is what I have to do," that is just like, "Oh, that was so fun!"

A second sub-theme in this area is more organized activities particularly centered on special events or holidays. Sometimes these activities involved going out in small groups to concerts or clubs to go dancing or going on "urban adventures" (Alex) or camping and cliff jumping. A few participants mentioned how meaningful taking trips with their peers were as they explored the region or traveled to another city for an AA conference. Going out to dinner to celebrate birthdays was another popular activity. Addison recalled, "… if it was someone's birthday and you would all go out, like 20 of you and go out to eat for someone's birthday."

The holidays also provided opportunity for meaningful activities. A few participants recalled how much fun their Halloween parties were and especially student-led Thanksgiving dinners. Chloe remembered, "… we did a…Thanksgiving Dinner that fall semester that was really fun. I remember that and I feel like that was a big community moment." Hannah commented on the significance of the level of participation in those events by stating, "…our first few big Thanksgiving dinners were awesome…but those were well organized and everybody participated and everybody made food and that was great." Caleb summed it up well when he reflected, "…you know I was less than a year sober, I was back in college, I was hanging out with a group of really sweet, wholesome kids who were also in recovery and we were just always doing stuff you know."

know."

CRP-planned activities. A fourth theme which emerged from the data of best experiences relates to the activities which were a part of the normal structure and operation of the participants' respective CRPs. Two participants mentioned orientation activities which helped them to get to know their new peers in their new setting. Jamie described her CRP's weekly community meeting as particularly meaningful. She commented, "I was just one of those weird ones that loved Community Meeting. I don't know, it's like having something where we're all here like those big group things…" Two other participants referenced the annual fundraising event for their CRP. One recalled, "I mean I remember looking forward to the Gala so much every year – the (CRP) Gala. And just like everybody getting dressed up is just like going to Prom all over again." (Cassie). Another participant was surprised by how much support was present for their CRP in the outside community (Emma). Finally, two participants referenced the

CRP Graduation ceremony as particularly memorable. Hannah recalled, "…all of the (CRP) graduations are pretty awesome."

Fun, "firsts," and developmental catch-up. A fifth theme in the data relating to best experiences is a dynamic of having fun but in the context of developmental catch-up or regaining what one lost in early adolescence due to one's addiction. In this regard Anne made the poignant observation that,

> I think my best memories are just um honestly, just being with the girls upstairs my first couple of years where we'd (do) just dumb things like we'd stay up till four in the morning on the weekends. And it had been so long since I had genuinely laughed about something… And I like things like that because it was just fun, it was like we probably didn't say it to each other but I feel like we missed out a lot on just being kids.

Mark reflected on how learning to have fun in recovery was almost a necessary developmental task they all had to learn. He stated, "You know I think the great simplicity of it, and I think all of us in treatment learned simple ways to enjoy ourselves. You know it was during our formative years that we had these great ways to enjoy ourselves that were destroying us ultimately…" Caleb framed these activities as necessary for students in recovery as a replacement for drinking. He commented, "Because I think that being sober and being in college is different and it's so important that you're always doing something fun or crazy because it's easy to feel or to have that fear of missing out on the drinking and partying that's kind of common in college."

Closely related to this theme are phenomena which participants framed as "firsts" for them in their recovery which they experienced while students in their CRP. After previous failed attempts at college before getting sober, Caleb recalled when he entered his CRP, "…you know my first summer there was, you know it was that first experience of a life that was pursuing my dreams…" Jamie reflected on the stark contrast of her life in recovery in her CRP and all the new "firsts" she got to experience by stating,

I learned a lot of my life skills here. Like I said I was doing what I wanted when I wanted. I didn't have a job; I didn't go to school; I was using all the time and didn't care so it was a big, big growing up period for me and I had my first job in sobriety here and I went to school for the first time in sobriety here; I had my first romantic relationship in sobriety here; I made my first like real friendships there.

Dylan recalled how his being a part of helping to start a new CRP at his college and he commented on the significance of this for him by stating, "(this) was the first significant thing that I accomplished and that was really, really cool." Clark summed it up well when he stated,

…and just getting to be regular college students without all the bullshit you know, were I think some of the best times. I mean it seems so simple but it's just being able to be a regular college student you know without feeling like we need to drink or drug to make it. Those are some of the best times that I had there.

These participants' trajectories in college and participating in their CRPs stood in clear contrast to their previous college experiences while active in addiction.

Becoming leaders in the CRP. A six theme several participants mentioned in the context of best experiences was the process of becoming leaders within their respective CRPs. One participant discussed how significant it was for him to play a major role in helping to start the new CRP on his campus (Dylan). Carter reflected on how significant the experience was for him to contribute to his CRP by being on a student leadership committee. He commented,

…it was fun moving from being kind of the lowest guy on the totem pole, you know the new guy who didn't know anything about the program to being able to have the opportunity to see how it works behind the scenes and have the opportunity to make an influence on it too and provide feedback. I think that a valuable part of (the CRP) is the amount of student participation and cooperation that's allowed.

Caleb reflected on his leadership experiences and saw how they helped him become and do who he is and what he does today. He stated,

But it was the whole democratic process and being able to vote on things and be involved and in kind of the governing of (the CRP) itself. You know it really, it changed me a lot and it taught me how to be a leader. And I think that in terms of some of the more formative experiences I've ever had in my life, being a leader in (the CRP) was one of the most important. And so I always thought I was so grateful for that because I don't know if I'd be doing what I'm doing now if I hadn't have had those experiences.

Consequently, the leadership experiences for some of these participants had positive lasting impacts not only during their college experience but afterwards as well.

Working in the CRP office. A seventh theme to emerge from the data, although limited to just a few participants but significant nonetheless, was the experience of working in the CRP office either as a student worker or volunteer. Emma saw this activity as a way to push herself outside of her own comfort zone and helped her to connect with the CRP community more than she would have otherwise. Carter echoed a similar sentiment but added that this opportunity also helped him to get to know the staff better. Reflecting on his first summer's experience in that role, he stated, "So much of the time it was either me and the counselors in the office and it was just a great opportunity to be able to catch up with them and get to know them working in the office but also students coming in and out in a way that I ordinarily wouldn't have been able to." Landon commented on how he volunteered in his CRP office and was entrusted to open it up early each morning. He recalled, "…and Ned would show up around seven or seven-thirty and just spending that morning time with him before class and studying and talking with him and that was to me the best thing that happened with the (CRP) program. It was probably one of my best experiences…" Consequently, this extra time with the staff and higher visibility with the community seemed to help these participants build even deeper connections.

Living inside the "bubble". An eighth theme emerging from the data is an interesting metaphor for what it meant to live in the CRP community. A few participants referred to it as, "the bubble". Anne used this metaphor to denote that the CRP was a safe space with boundaries for protection for students in recovery. She stated,

> I feel like, I feel like it was set up that way – that we were protected from the outside community but we were also protected inside our own community in that we could – but we got in trouble sometimes – but could like goof around and be kind of crazy and have that and kind of try out what sobriety was going to be like in like sort of a bubble but with

enough freedom – I mean if you wanted to go out and you wanted to test the waters, you could do that. I mean and that was up to you and it was a choice, but it was easy to push boundaries and to see what it was going to be like in a safe spot and know that you had a place to be and people to be accountable to but you are still having fun…

Jamie mentioned this as well and commented on how the community provided a very real sense of "safety." Some students found the CRP community to be a sufficient resource for friends and did not feel the need to branch out. Beth recalled, "And I guess I really didn't feel a need to branch out and make friends with people that weren't in (the CRP) because I felt like I had found great friends." However, other students experienced the value of branching out beyond the "bubble" and viewed it as a necessary part of their experience. Carter commented,

And it was helpful for branching out and becoming a part of different areas of the school at (pseudonym) too. I never felt I was too far away from my home base at (the CRP) – but it was nice to be around the school and community walking around campus and kind of know where my foundation was at the college but still be able to have the freedom to get away from that to a certain degree as well.

Consequently, some participants had more of an insular experience with their CRP and others wanted to broaden their experiences beyond the CRP.

Support in tragedy. Finally, a dual theme emerged from the data in this area showing that several of these participants experienced times of significant loss or crisis as students in recovery but they found these times also revealed the best of the CRP community in its support. Emma recalled how during her first summer in her CRP one of her roommates passed away from an overdose while visiting his home. She talked about the support she received from the community during that time as follows, "I knew some people in (the CRP) but not like everybody. And then there were people who were like I saw around but I didn't really know their names and they were coming up to me and like offering to take me to a meeting and they were just wonderful." Clark commented on the profundity of these experiences and the juxtaposition of support emerging from tragedy when he stated,

> I think some of the best times are when something, I don't want to say tragic, but when something bad happens in the community and the show of support you see – the outpour of support that you see in the community – those are really powerful moments when you can be really proud of the community that you are a part of you know. And I know we've had a couple deaths and some relapses and so I mean just seeing the outpour of support – those are really powerful moments where I think about how awesome it was to be a part of this.

Hence, when things did not go well for students or tragic events transpired, oftentimes there was significant support available for them from the CRP community. And, things did not always go well for these participants. I will review the data on their "worst experiences" in the next section.

Worst Experiences

Several major themes emerged from the data on participants' worst experiences during their times as students in their respective CRPs. Sometimes these experiences arose from their own behaviors and choices or those of their peers and even the dynamics of the community as a whole. Several times these "worst experiences" were simply the flip side of a theme which they earlier identified as a "best experience". Furthermore, the data shows that the trajectories for several of these participants was oftentimes a chaotic one with its challenges and twists and turns. I identified seven major themes from this data set.

Personal struggles. One major theme to emerge from these discussions was the dynamic arising from the participants' own personal struggles. These were varied. One participant mentioned how much she struggled financially to get through each semester until graduation and how this presented a significant amount of stress. Anne recalled,

> When I really think about it, finances were really, really hard for me. Um, I put myself through school through loans and it was very, very stressful. It was like a constant – at least low level panic at all times about money. Um, that was really, really hard for me – making ends meet and buying food and figuring out the responsibility of what can I spend my money on and what can't I spend my money on. Um, that was really distracting.

This struggle not only presented stress but also distraction from her primary responsibilities as well.

A second sub-theme in this area is one's own behavior and choices leading to unpleasant consequences while in the CRP. Two participants were asked to leave their respective CRPs because of behavioral violations of the CRP student contract. One example was difficulty following the rules of the CRP due to oppositional tendencies. Anne recalled, "I struggled a lot with the rules in the program in the beginning…I felt like either I didn't fully understand them in some capacity or they didn't apply to me – which is the story of my life…" Closely related to this was the dynamic of failing classes because of misplaced priorities. Again, she reflected, "…so I really self-sabotaged a lot and not just with the rules and my personal life, but also with my academics. I mean I bombed my first year because, my priorities were just out of whack…" Five participants experienced having been "kicked out" of their CRP for various behaviors, including episodes of return to substance use, and several of them worked their way back into their respective program. Logan reflected on this experience as follows, "I'm not resentful of the fact that I got kicked out. I understand the necessity of that and quite frankly I appreciate it. You know it forced me to grow up in a way that I didn't really see." Furthermore, a few of the participants reported having isolated themselves from their peers and thereby suffered from loneliness. Carter described it as follows: "The worst times you know I think part of that answer would be again that first year where I was still just so wrapped up into my own chaos and really without any kind of solution."

A third sub-theme within the personal struggles area several participants referenced was the difficult dynamics of romantic relationships whether it be an unhealthy relationship, struggling with sexual urges, or going through a break-up. Cassie recalled how she early on got

involved in a "very toxic" relationship that became "very unhealthy" and eventually abusive and traumatic. Clark referenced the struggles he had maintaining his sexual urges within appropriate boundaries in the CRP. He commented,

> …you know I came in when I was just 20 years old and my testosterone levels were through the roof, and not being able to you know fuck like jackrabbits and I mean, that's not even a downside, that's just one of the harder parts about it was staying away from the women or the men or whatever you're interested in.

A few others mentioned how difficult it was to go through a break up of a relationship particularly within the context of their CRP. Mark recalled how difficult it was to have his girlfriend break up with him while he was gone for the summer and then find out one of his peers in the CRP had been dating her. Hannah described how when she decided to break up with her boyfriend, "…that caused so much drama within (the CRP) when that happened" and that she was afraid, "…it's going to tear this community apart…" So from these participants' perspectives, their romantic relationship issues seemed to have challenging impacts not just on themselves but also on the community at large.

Struggles with peers. A second major theme of worst experiences centered on struggles participants had with their peers for various reasons. One factor was negativity and immaturity among some members of the community. One participant recalled how a female peer was greatly affected by the attitudes of some of the men in the program. Luke stated, "I know there were a couple of instances and I don't know if it was me personally but one of my friends had some incidences with some of the men of (the CRP) and some kind of misogynistic attitudes and expression." Jamie mentioned how there was gossip and criticism at times. Furthermore, Logan mentioned the struggle he had when peers were "sick and manipulative" and yet tried to pretend otherwise. He recalled the following:

> And other struggles when there's people that you're living with that aren't doing what…they're clearly still sick and that can be really hard um, because a person that is sick obviously that suffers from the same thing that I suffer from, is going to try to manipulate the situation and make it look like everything's okay.

Addison reflected on how when there were unhealthy dynamics operative in the community, then, "…I mean yeah just because of if there's an unhealthy group of people, then it's easier to get sucked into that or feel alone and on the outside of that…to be pulled into someone's negative energy…" Thus, the energy of subgroups within the community had significant impact on others.

A second dynamic participants mentioned was peers becoming complacent about their own recovery. Jamie commented on how there can be "collateral damage" from living in a community such as her CRP. She recalled the duality of the nature of the community by stating,

> You know one thing of (the CRP) is like you know it is a safe, a very safe environment. You're being, you're with sober people; there's not an option of using. At the same time there's also the option of not using but also not working a program…it's easy to stay sober here; it's not easy to work a program because it's safe. So things get weird sometimes.

Closely related to this dynamic is the perception that some peers may be in the CRP simply to please their parents. Logan referred to this by stating,

> …there was a lot of people who were like killing time. It was like…Sober Living where it was just, (whistling), "I'm going to go to school because my parents want me to but I'm just killing time. No, I'm not going to meetings. Like, I haven't been to a meeting in three weeks." Well, like, "Well, what are you doing here?" You know and I think that aspect of it where it's not just like, "Is this just sober living? Is this just a dry dorm? Or is this like recovery-based living?"

One of the participants (Jack) in the study who had relapsed several times throughout his stay admitted that he was in his CRP simply because that was the only option he had for financial support from his parents for college.

Simply having conflicts with peers for various reasons was a third dynamic participants referenced. Addison recalled how this occurred over moves from one space to another in her

CRP and how it seemed to destroy community cohesion. She stated, "…it was kind of like people dividing over who would like room together in the apartments and it was just like kind of like cliquey and icky and I just kind of got like this bad feeling about it and then in the apartment it was like the same thing." Emma mentioned how stressful it was to have an inconsiderate roommate. She commented, "…I had a roommate that was super inconsiderate and like, yeah, super inconsiderate and not receptive to feedback I guess. That was really hard but it was only for a semester, thank God." Another example of this dynamic is what Brian experienced with trying to hold a peer accountable for breaking rules in the CRP and it resulted with the ending of the friendship.

A fourth factor several participants recalled was struggling with the impacts of mental illness of other peers. Alex discussed how difficult it was for him to see one of his close friends having to be hospitalized for their mental health struggles while in the CRP. Chloe recollected the impact of living with someone in her residence hall with an active eating disorder. She described it as follows:

> The worst experience was living with that individual who was mentally unstable and stole our food and was just really negative energy in my living space. And I was I think in a really vulnerable place because I don't think I was committed to like I said, a spiritual program. So I think I was vulnerable and I was really impacted by living with that individual.

Thus, mental illness in the community was a very real challenge participants had to contend with – not just their own but those of their peers as well.

These themes illustrate some of the dual nature of these participants' experiences as students in their CRP. Many of their best experiences centered on bonding with their peers and developing meaningful friendships. However, their peer group could also be the source of great

stress and challenge depending upon how the group was functioning and the issues they brought to the community.

    Relapse and the community impact. A third major theme of worst experiences emerging from the data is relapse and its impact on the community. Nine participants referenced this in their interviews. Anne recalled, "I think my most negative experience was – it was really hard when people would drink and get high and lie about it. It was really difficult for me because I'm a drug addict and I'm an alcoholic and I'm not dumb – I know when people are using and it was frustrating…" Four participants revealed that they themselves had relapsed while in their respective CRPs and three of them had to go either to a detox center or to some level of continued treatment before returning to their CRP. Several sub-themes were present with this topic. One sub-theme was the perception of the inevitability of this occurrence in the CRP. Emma stated, "I guess watching people relapse –that was always hard. It comes with the territory, but still it's hard to watch." Clark expressed a similar sentiment when he commented, "There's people who are going to struggle and some people are going to fall off the wagon if you will…you know, and so…I think those are some of the harder parts about it." Anne described it as an inevitable occurrence given the nature of the milieu. She stated, "…it's bound to happen in a program with a bunch of drug addicts and alcoholics…"

    A second sub-theme a couple participants cited is the awareness that they had of the relapse occurring. Anne stated, "I know when people are using and it was frustrating because you had no control over it…" Kaylee recalled that every roommate whom she had while living in her CRP relapsed. She poignantly described the process as follows:

> …the roommates relapsing – it was the same thing but different kind of story line though – but just having to go through the suspicion of "something's not right" and "Oh, no, don't think that about…it's just whatever…". But then having it just staring in your face and, "Okay, something isn't right" and then having to confront the person and then them

lying and then you being standing firm and like, "Something isn't right" and then they finally cave after a while and then you have to tell so and so.

Landon mentioned how one year several of his peers relapsed and how this contributed to his own relapse as well. He recalled the following:

…well there were some I remember um a you know when I started St. Laudet's CRP, there were a certain number of us and who are friends of mine but by the end of the first year, a considerable amount of those people had fallen off the face of the earth and had left school and had left and went off the deep end. That was a negative experience for me which actually led me, I wouldn't say led me but inspired me to go off the deep end myself a little bit.

Hence, being in the CRP was not a guarantee that all of the members would remain sober even in spite of the valuable support.

Finally, a third subtheme was how participants viewed relapse impacting the community overall. Anne described it as, "…threatening to your bubble" and as an, "infiltration." Jack, who himself had relapsed numerous times in his CRP, admitted that members in relapse can be "toxic" to the community. Alex saw it as a threat to the community by stating, "But there are things that happen. There are people who slip and people that compromise the environment for others…and it's always addressed and always taken care of – the staff has always been excellent at that."

Again this theme illustrates the dual nature of what can exist in a CRP from these participants' perspectives. The community can be a great source of support reinforcing a culture of recovery. However, at the same time there can be peers who despite all the available support, return to use and present a potential threat to the safety of the community as a whole.

Community drama. A fourth major theme emerging from the data in this area is the dynamic of what participants called, "community drama." One participant stated that there is "collateral damage" which occurs from living in a recovery community (Jamie). Cassie described it as follows: "I mean I think that in any program the dangerous part is having 90

some not necessarily the most healthy people in one area – you know especially young adults –

and at different points in their recovery and so there was just a lot of toxicity." Emma saw this

as connected to relapses in the community. She stated, "I guess watching people relapse –that

was always hard. It comes with the territory, but still it's hard to watch…whenever like really

unnecessary drama happened, like it's, "Really? We're going to freak out about this now?"

Carter reflected on his own experience with the breakup of a romantic relationship with someone

in the community and the drama that followed. He recalled,

> Certainly one of those incidents in particular ended up being quite painful too and on top
> of that everyone else knew exactly what was going on. You know you're right in the
> middle of the gawker's circle too. So if I could give sort of an overall answer to that it
> would definitely be the proximity issue you know and those times where you know I felt
> like I needed to get some escape from whatever was going on with me or with some other
> member of the community and kind of being unable to get away from that.

This illustrates how the closeness in the community could be both a positive and a negative.

Positively, it helped to alleviate loneliness and built connection. Negatively, when something

went awry in a relationship, it became very public and the "drama" seemed inescapable.

Challenges with leadership. A fifth major theme emergent from the data pertains to the

challenges participants experienced as "worst experiences" in their respective roles as leaders in

the CRP. One challenge consisted of finding oneself in a dual role with fellow community

members trying to be a peer but also someone in authority. Dylan described this as, "…the

struggle inward within me – I'm a huge people pleaser – and so figuring how to be friends with

some of the kids in the program but enforce rules…" Brian recalled how trying to hold a friend

accountable for breaking rules in the CRP resulted in the ending of the friendship. Cassie

recalled how she saw student leadership decisions being overridden by staff. She recalled, "At

that time it seemed like, 'Oh my gosh, like the biggest thing in the world!' You know, kind of

dramatic." Caleb spoke more directly to this as a power shift or struggle between student leaders

and staff. He stated, "And I also kind of saw the power being taken away, taken away from the students and kind of um, you know, just uh, yeah, I felt like you know when I first got there we were all so empowered and I saw that kind of shifting by the time that I left."

Thus, a duality seems present with leadership from the data as well. Becoming leaders in the CRP gave students a sense of pride and accomplishment by virtue of being held in esteem by their peers and the opportunity to contribute to the community. At the same time it could also be a negative or challenging experience with unforeseen impacts on friendships and conflicts with staff over decisions.

Problems with privilege. A sixth salient theme revealed in the data consists of some of the participants' struggles with the financial disparities between them and other peers in the CRP who came from more wealthy or privileged families. Anne recalled how much she struggled with finances by stating, "When I really think about it, finances were really, really hard for me…I put myself through school through loans and it was very, very stressful. It was like a constant – at least low level panic at all times about money." At the same time some students felt, "less than" in comparison to others. Jason recollected in the context of the annual fundraising event, "I don't think (the CRP) enforced that as much as I just struggle with that. But there were times when it seemed that parents who donate you know their kids were privileged amongst us." He further commented, "…you know there were times um – I come from lower middle class – and (the CRP) at that time was a lot of non-traditional students many of which from the coasts – and I kind of felt an outsider to them. And I think a lot of it had to do with socioeconomic differences…" Addison poignantly recalled experiencing this dynamic as follows:

> And it's like I think I started to get really resentful about the money type thing too because I like worked, and had this side job and then had to take out some loans and I

> was like working on my shit and like being a good student. And then I'd see like people with this kind of self-righteous attitude and have all this money from their parents and so I kind of let that be a barrier and, "Oh, all these rich kids." I mean some people obviously I was really good friends with and some people I was like, "You're wasting a lot of money by being here," so you know?

Consequently, again the peers could be a great source of support while at the same time the financial disparity if present, could also be a source of resentment and a barrier to connection in the community.

Criticisms of CRP staff. Finally, several participants were very open about some of their disappointments with their CRP program and the staff who oversaw them. Several subthemes emerged from these data. One subtheme consists of the perception of staff being inconsistent and preferential with rule enforcement. Mark commented,

> I think and going forward and going past that I often had an issue with the application of some of the (CRP) contract issues that things were not always universally applied. And I always thought that was wrong – I'm sure there were reasons in those cases that different decisions were made for different folks. But you know I always thought that that was a…you know, they're there for a good reason.

Logan recalled seeing preferential treatment of students occurring based on gender and sexual orientation. He stated,

> I just felt like there was a lot of it, there was a lot of preferential treatment going on and I understand the well-intentioned nature behind it between feminism and GLBT issues. I like, I understand that and I understand as a cis-white male, I don't get the same difficulties. But there still should be a baseline of conduct. This isn't about orientation; this isn't about gender; this isn't about any of that. This is about being a fucking human being.

A second subtheme consisted of the allegation that staff were shaming in the ways they did enforce the conduct rules of the CRP. Jason recalled how he felt some of the rules around fraternizing as a prohibited activity were "shame-based." Logan felt like the basic right to dignity for students was sometimes missing. He commented about this by stating, "I don't give a shit if you're a one of a kind fucking leopard print lemur for God's sakes, it's like there's part of

being in the animal kingdom that there's still like everybody's treated with dignity and respect

but that wasn't there."

Interestingly in contrast to the previous criticisms, a third subtheme consisted of the

allegation that staff were becoming too lax and the rules, structure, and accountability of the

CRP were decreasing to its detriment. Caleb recalled,

> I think around the time that I left (the CRP), like maybe the second semester of my senior year, I started to see the community, or see the program changing a little bit. Um changes with things that were taken really, really seriously when I first got there, started to become, you know just got distorted…And around the time that I was leaving, all the accountability for those kinds of things just kind of disappeared.

Hence some participants believed the staff were too inconsistent or harsh and others seemed to

perceive them as too lenient.

A fourth subtheme to emerge from the data is the contention that staff sometimes were

hurtfully incompetent and demonstrated extremely poor leadership. Brian recalled how he felt

his counselor had breached his trust by revealing he had informed staff of another student's

infractions of the CRP's rules despite assurances to the contrary as well as not holding the other

student accountable according to the CRP contract. He stated,

> And I feel like I spoke up about something and nothing was done about it – absolutely nothing. So nobody…no one really learned anything except for me and it was just like to keep my mouth shut about things and that you can't trust certain individuals with information like that and I can't trust that anything will get done if I do say anything. So, I just lost a ton of trust at that point so with some of the CRP staff.

Another participant expressed even stronger criticisms related to his experience. Logan

commented,

> I'm not resentful of the fact that I got kicked out. I understand the necessity of that and quite frankly I appreciate it. You know it forced me to grow up in a way that I didn't really see. It was the interactions afterwards that felt like there were double standards, or not double standards but there was, I didn't feel like the table was clear of like what actually was going on.

His objections were related how he was treated afterwards and felt inadvertently publicly humiliated by leading staff members before the community. He concluded, "And I don't see leadership in that. That isn't how a leader acts to me you know, or a Director, or anybody who's like in that position period. Like that's just not how it works."

Campus Stigma. A final subtheme present in this section of the data comprised feeling subjected to stigma because of one's recovery. Kaylee expressed regret over how she felt treated by non-CRP students and even some faculty at her school. This stands in contrast to others' expression of recalling significant campus support for being in recovery. Kaylee reported having been the object of "snide remarks" about being in recovery or hearing negative things from general campus students about her CRP when others relapsed. She reported feeling this was due to the general student population being misinformed or biased towards addiction. She perceived this from some faculty as well. Her comments about this were poignant when she stated, "There's still a huge amount of stigma towards the whole of alcoholics and addicts…and I think especially for a Catholic school…"

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Summary of Best and Worst Experiences

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The data on the participants' recollections of their best and worst experiences while students in their respective CRPs reveals trajectories that can be very dynamic and chaotic. A majority of the participants reported significant growth and success but combined with significant struggle and even setbacks. Interestingly, many of the sources of the best experiences such as peers, being leaders, and the CRP community and program were also the basis for many of the worst experiences. Thus, the trajectories as a whole reflect a dynamic of dual phenomena of both good and bad, success and setback, but ultimately leading to positive outcomes for the majority of the participants.

Summary of Trajectories and Salient Findings

The data findings in this first dimensional theme show these students in recovery finding academic and recovery success as members of their CRPs but experiencing significant setbacks and struggles as well. First, as they entered a recovery risk-laden environment of college with a comparatively small oasis of CRP community support, they experienced challenges including a sense of vulnerability and lack of confidence, struggling to adjust to their new peer environment in the CRP, and dealing with additional co-occurring conditions or tragic events. The most salient finding in this subset is that although these students entered a community of significant support, there was still a challenging adjustment phase associated with becoming a part of this community.

Second, these participants attributed value to a broad array of supports ranging from CRP staff to community peers, institutional resources, and outside supports such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The most salient finding in this area is that no one area of these supports was predominantly more important than the others as a uniform experience with these participants. Different participants valued different supports and hence, a case could be made for the importance of the combination of all these supports as important elements.

Third, the dynamic of community played a critical and highly influential role in providing support as well as in forming the social norms and culture within the CRP. Peer leaders played an important role in this dynamic as well. The salient discovery in this subset is the dynamic quality of this entity in terms of its own collective developmental maturity and quality of support.

Fourth, the data from best and worst experiences reveals that these participants had very dynamic and even chaotic trajectories at times while in their respective CRPs. They achieved

progress and success but also setbacks and failures. Furthermore, the findings show a dual

quality or nature of many of the supports. They functioned both as valuable supports as well as

sources of great struggle and challenge depending upon their context and their own place within

their respective dynamic ebb and flow.

In summary these data show participants' experiences were varied with progress and

setbacks but the CRPs provided critical sources of support but also gross imperfections as well.

The contextual factors influencing the manifestation of positive or negative dynamics appear to

be the developmental maturity and collective well-being of the CRP members combined with the

expertise and sensitivity of staff overseeing the CRP. I will investigate these matters more fully

in the analysis section of this study. The next chapter of my study will review and summarize

the findings with participants' experiences with transformation and attaining resilience in the

face difficulty and challenge.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRANSFORMATIONS DATA FINDINGS

The second experiential dimension I explored with participants comprised their experiences with personal transformation as college students in recovery participating in their respective Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs). This dimension was important to examine to illumine how they changed towards a successful trajectory. I began this section of the interviews with questions regarding the major lessons they learned from their challenges. I also explored how they saw in retrospect their assumptions change regarding the necessary requisites for success in recovery and college. Furthermore, I asked them how they found resilience in the face of great difficulty as well as what role their peers in their CRP played in helping them find that resilience. I present these findings in the order of the topical flow of the semi-structured interviews with main subject headings representing the interview question focus. The subheadings represent the most significant themes which emerged from the participant interviews.

Lessons Learned

I began exploring how participants experienced personal transformation as students in recovery by asking them to recall some of the most valuable lessons they learned from the major challenges they faced during their college experiences. The following seven major themes emerged from these data in this section: functioning in peer relationships; engaging in recovery; learning new life skills; maturing and growing up; gaining confidence; identity transformation; and, finding academic success. I review and summarize the findings in this area in the following sub-sections.

Functioning In Peer Relationships

Functioning in peer relationships was the most frequent topic to emerge in the discussions of lessons learned. Almost half of the participants cited this area underscoring its significance. Several sub-themes arose relative to this topic. The first was simply learning the value of the support from these relationships and how to ask for help. Caleb commented, "You know the big lessons that I learned from being in (CRP) were that I didn't have to go at it alone. You know that there was always support available to me if I was willing to ask for it." Anne recalled the ever-present availability of this support when she recalled, "I knew that my support system that I had was stable and that they were there to help me and support me in whatever way they could."

A few participants noted how these relationships specifically helped them in their own journey towards being successful providing insight into some of the mechanisms of this support. Jamie recalled she gained motivation from seeing peers who were doing well. She stated, "It's very motivating to see people who have been sober for years and who are working solid programs and who have their lives together." Caleb recollected how his peers provided an impetus for him to fulfill a potential he did not yet see in himself by commenting, "And I think having a bunch of people around me that were always kind of pushing me to fulfill some potential that I didn't quite see in myself but I suppose they must have seen in me. I feel like that was really important to my development."

A second sub-theme was simply how to best function in these relationships. One aspect of this sub-theme was the filtering process of friendships in the CRP. Logan reminisced how he found he did not have to be friends with every peer in his CRP but rather that it was important to be supportive. He stated,

> You don't have to be friends with everybody…It doesn't matter if you like somebody, but you show up and be nice no matter what because guess what, they have more shit going on that you can even imagine. And that's just from my own experience because I had a lot of shit going on and nobody could imagine.

In a similar vein Anne recalled how she learned that engaging in negative community drama by "tearing other people down" with gossip as a means to fit in was actually ineffective. She insightfully recalled,

> One of the other huge lessons I learned was that being kind was so much more important than being liked… and eventually realizing that being kind to everybody no matter what was so much more gratifying and I ended up being liked anyway, than trying to fit by participating in that kind of stuff.

Beth reminisced how she learned to be less judgmental and found meaningful friendships to be significantly more satisfying than seeking happiness in external, material things. She stated, "I think I really did learn that it's really about those experiences with other people that I'm going to find happiness in and that it's not about me going out shopping and doing things on my own."

The dynamic of trust and setting boundaries with others comprised a third subtheme in this area. Kaylee described her experience as one of trying to learn whom she could trust and not trust by stating, "It's not always happy go lucky you know and some people you may think are like, 'Yeah, we can do this! And you can do this and I can do this!' and you know you just never know what someone has up there sleeve." In a similar realm, Chloe recalled how she needed to learn to set boundaries with others by asserting, "I learned I think to… maybe being able to kind of put up more of a protective type of boundary with people so that I don't get so affected by others' energy whether that's my perception or whether that's real." Dylan took this to another level by describing the process as one in which he learned, "…relying on other people and trusting them. And I guess in sense that would allow me to open up to them and maybe opening up to others?" indicating a process of trust leading to becoming vulnerable with others. He also

specified how this taught him how to have the "tough conversations" which he indicated are sometimes required in both personal and professional relationships. Finally, in a similar vein Hannah reported how this process of developing trust also helped her to become friends with women which was new for her. She recalled, "I learned how to be friends with women. Like that was huge. I learned how to live with people and have people trust me and how to trust people and that's not necessarily something I knew how to do in the beginning."

Learning to relate to peers in the broader campus context beyond the CRP was a fourth subtheme in these discussions. Hannah described this as a process of her moving beyond her comfort zone. She recalled, "…when I got a job on campus, I really, like I learned how to interact with normies again. That was something that I didn't necessarily, I didn't branch out at first. But working on campus really helped me to do that. Get out of my own comfort zone; get out of my own way."

Engaging In Recovery

The process of engaging in recovery as a process of personal growth beyond simply abstaining from alcohol or other illicit substance use was the second major theme to emerge. Approximately a third of the participants raised this topic in their discussion of lessons learned. Several subthemes arose in this area which I summarize in the following discussion.

Prioritizing one's recovery while trying to balance the responsibilities of college life comprised one of the first subthemes in this area. Cassie described her process of making her own recovery her top priority as unconditional regardless of life circumstances. She recalled,

> I think one of the biggest things that I've carried with me still through leaving (the CRP) and graduating and everything that's happened in life is I learned from the people around me and whether it was just from recovery around here with everybody that no matter what happened in life whether it was good, bad, or whether it was me graduating from high school or people passing away or whatever, it was that no matter what happened, I never had to use.

Landon described his experience as having his recovery be at least equally as important as his academics. He stated, "…what I learned I had to do was I had to figure out a way to do both and both had to be, if not recovery being more important than education, it had to be at least equally as important."

A second sub-theme in this area was the process of recognizing the value of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and a 12 Step recovery program for several of the participants. Chloe recalled how she saw this approach as necessary for effective personal growth and change. She stated, "I mean I learned the value for me of 12 Step program because I felt, saw, and experienced what happened when people and myself aren't doing the work and…so I learned that value." Jack described his experience as one of fluctuating between recognizing the value of AA for his own personal recovery, relapsing, and then returning to engaging with meetings. He asserted,

> One of the lessons that I think I still fight with a lot is it really does seem like AA meetings are important for me to attend. I've gone through different phases where I'm more or less…Vocal about how important AA is in general to my case. I think I've had periods where I'm, "Well, I'm such a unique snowflake that it's not exactly the right solution for me, or it's only part of it, or look, I haven't been in and its six months and I've been sober the whole time and so clearly it isn't," and then I drink again.

Thus, at least for this participant there was a strong connection between consistent engagement with AA and successfully remaining sober.

A third sub-theme to arise was the sense of personal transformation and change which occurred as a result of the participants' serious commitment to their own recovery. Brian described his journey as one of significant personal change once he got involved with the recovery community outside of his CRP and found a good AA sponsor. He stated,

> And ever since then, that moment when I got this new sponsor, my life really turned around. And I just became a really active member of AA and I got to – I hadn't ever really gotten to this point in my recovery until I met this guy. And I actually really got to experience what it's like to be happy and to not to …like I wouldn't say…I just don't

know but I began to think, "everything's going to be okay," and I never really had that feeling before.

Logan found his commitment to and engagement with his AA recovery and its basics as a critical survival tool after he had been asked to leave his CRP. He poignantly recalled the following:

> And right around year two I went pretty hard back to the basics in terms of like go through the book, copy and paste, you know here's what we get, here's where this is, and like just a tough approach to it. You know a tough approach to it, a tough love approach with like, "Here's what we have to do." Or rather, here's what I have to do to stay sober – work with sponsees, go through the book, have a home group, work with a sponsor and be in frequent contact with him. And that's determined a lot of, that's evolved and refined in who I am today.

One implication that arises from these participants' recollections is that recovery for them was not necessarily a given or already accomplished state of being. Rather, it appears to be a process that they needed to renew, keep committing to, and find deeper or meaningful ways to engage with as a process.

Learning New Life Skills

A third major theme emergent from the data was the process of learning life skills that were new to the participants. Seven participants recounted life skills as important lessons learned. Many of the skills were directly related to being successful academically but other skills were broader in focus.

Several subthemes arose in these discussions in this area. The first consisted of developing personal qualities such as perseverance, self-sufficiency, and authenticity. Brian described it as follows, "Like, I just figured out that if I want something, I just have to put the work in to get it. And that was just a very valuable lesson. You know those classes were like real challenging so I guess it just taught me not to give up…" Jason recalled how he learned about persevering when he suffered the loss of friends early in his own recovery. He stated, "I mean I think in my natural state, and not necessarily a healthy natural state, that when faced with

turmoil and grief is just to carry on and move on and not necessarily be open about you know the

terror that gave me and questioning why I didn't end up that way." In terms of the self-

sufficiency and authenticity, Anne recalled, "Yeah, and I think it was at times when I was living

by myself and it was like I've always been independent but I learned how to even more to handle

things by myself not always by myself but learned how to be by myself."

Personal skills of organization and time management comprised a second subtheme within these

discussions. Landon recalled how establishing a healthy routine had been critical for his own

learning and personal success. He stated,

> But it took me four, it took me four years to learn that I got to do this healthy routine so I
> hit a meeting almost every night no matter what and I didn't study past ten p.m. and I was
> sure to get my ass in bed by eleven. You know, and for the last part of my education, not
> only did that help me with my recovery and my state of mind, it also helped me with my
> grades.

Brian discussed how because of his ADHD he had to learn to keep track of things by writing

them down. He recalled,

> I have ADHD and if I don't write something down, it will not get done, ever. It's just not
> going to get done. And basically it's just luck if it does get done, but it's a crap shoot and
> the odds are stacked, you know, against me if I'm not writing anything down. And, uh, I
> think half the battle is just keeping track of assignments I had to do; making sure I did the
> homework.

Clark described his experience of learning time management as one in which he had to learn that

the rest of the world had a structure and time frame different than his own. He reminisced,

> The world has a set way of when things happen and it's not going to change because I
> want to sleep an hour longer or because I want to play video games instead or because I
> don't feel like going to my doctor or you know. So I think that's the big one – learning
> that the rest of the world isn't going to adjust to my time schedule.

Clearly these skills were necessary for these participants to achieve academic success in their

respective college careers.

A third subtheme arising from the data consists of a perspective of being realistic with

one's progress in light of one's challenges. When asked about the lessons she learned from her

challenges, Addison responded with a perspective of not catastrophizing by stating, "…that it's not the end of the world. Yeah, it's like feeling so melodramatic and then melancholy about life and just being, 'Oh, chill out.'" Caleb described how he learned to be realistic with his own progress by recalling,

> The other thing that I learned was that I needed to meet myself where I was and build upon the progress that I made. So when I got to (the CRP) I had just kind of scratched the surface of this progress and you know I kind of took things slow like I said. I took one class and then two classes the second term and then a full load and then I got the job and those sorts of things.

Consequently, learning how to have a realistic perspective and gradually build progress were key life skills for these participants.

Growing Into Maturity

Growing up into adulthood was a fourth major theme to emerge from the data. This theme appeared to consist of various dimensions relating to the construct of maturity. Several participants described their time in their CRP during college as a process of, "growing up". Cassie described her experience as follows: "And so I think just like learning that over the year and transitioning into like just growing up and being like able to grow up in a safe environment." The participants identified several subthemes which appear directly related to this construct.

The first subtheme related to learning from one's experiences and even adversity. Carter recalled how much he learned from the consequences of relapse for his own recovery. He stated,

> Yeah, I think uh you know it was important for me to see that there was going to be consequences to my actions you know. And it also taught me about recovery in a general way that you know drinking again or going back out and whatever it ends up being, if you're able to come back in sometimes it's just absolutely necessary to gain the humility and it was critical for me to be able to stay sober and have any appreciation for what I had gained at all.

Logan noted how being asked to leave his CRP for rule infractions taught him the valuable lesson of, "Like it doesn't matter if you were outside passively, 'This is not a good idea.' The

fact of the matter was that it was up to you to stand up for something and you didn't. Similarly, in that regard, that was a big learning experience. If you see something that's not good, you say something." Jamie saw her struggles in retrospect as opportunities to be a leader and help others. She recalled, "I wanted to be a leader so those challenges gave me experiences to share with other students, with other people in recovery. I had a lot of experiences so it hopefully makes me more able to be of service."

Moving beyond a state of egocentrism and learning to take responsibility for one's actions was a second subtheme in these discussions. Mark stated he learned that being right was not the priority he would like it to be. He recalled, "I think one of the biggest lessons I learned and it came later in my (CRP) career is that being right is not the most important thing. And I still have to learn it on a daily basis." Beth reminisced how she had to learn that she was not the center of everything by stating, "…I think I learned a lot of lessons. One was that it wasn't all about me and that external things couldn't make me happy. I really thought that I could run my life and manage everything." Anne recalled how she learned to take responsibility for her actions and not see herself as a victim of circumstance. She recollected,

> I learned a lot of personal responsibility. Um I think in my first two years because I really felt like things were being done to me and happening to me and somebody who ended up being my sponsor for five years here, she told me, 'These things aren't happening to you. They're happening because of you'… so I think one of the biggest things I learned was personal responsibility – taking back control of certain parts of my life…

Learning the quality of dependability comprised a third subtheme here. Anne described how learning to be dependable with showing up for a job was a new behavior for her in recovery. She recalled, "…getting a job and showing up to that job and being kind while I was at that job. And it was the first job I hadn't been fired from since, you know, forever, because I had always been getting high at work and not showing up and then going to rehab and whatever." Beth

applied this to her academics and life in general by stating, "And another big thing I learned is that I need to show up even if I'm not prepared to take a test or hand in a paper. If you have somewhere to be, then just 'go.'" This quality of dependability stands in stark contrast to their previous condition undependability while in addictive drug using before their recovery.

Gaining Confidence

The fifth major theme arising from the data was the dynamic of gaining confidence while in their CRP as students early in recovery. Four participants referred to this process as an important lesson learned. The theme of lacking confidence became much more prominent in the discussions on assumptions which I will cover later. Luke admitted he began his experience as a student in recovery questioning whether he could succeed. His sentiments were similar to others' when he recalled, "…but I think it came in terms of stress and academics and really starting from a place of, 'Oh my God, I don't know if I can do this…'"

Several participants came to realize their capabilities through their experiences with gradual success. Beth stated, "And I think I found just a confidence in myself just knowing that I can succeed in school and have real friendships." Emma recalled learning about her capabilities by stating, "I learned that I'm more capable of things than I thought I was. I just had a little more faith in myself. Um, and I also learned like how, I guess I learned I'm a lot more resourceful than I thought I was…" This process of gaining confidence also became important in the identity transformations these participants experienced which I address next.

Identity Formation

The processes of lessons learned entailed significant shifts in how participants viewed themselves in both depth as well as quality. Five participants referenced this in their discussions. A few participants described this as getting to know themselves on a deeper level. Alex stated,

"I mean part of the college experience is self-discovery and learning who you are and obviously you don't figure that out in just four years – it's something that's a continuous process; I'm still figuring out who I am and I will till the day I die." Other participants were clear in reflecting on how this was a process of moving from a negative to a positive self-identity. Anne described how for her the shift was not in just finding out about herself, but also in her life direction. She recalled,

> I think one of the biggest things is I just didn't know who I was when I came here; I had no idea. I had an idea – I was going to go to a college and major in like hydroponic farming and pottery and be growing weed in North Carolina and I literally thought that that was my and that's what I was going to do…and then I ended up (here) and finding the social work major and meeting all these people and realizing that I think I could be sober and I could do this and I think, and in fact it actually makes me really happy…

> Hannah was more explicit about her identity formation process by recounting, "I mean I just gained a whole new sense of who I was… I learned that I wasn't a terrible human which is kind of what I was coming in thinking. I just feel like I came in as an empty shell and left like a full person." The transformation for many of these participants seems to have been moving from a negative view of self early in their recovery to a more realistic, full, and positive one by the time they finished college.

Finding Academic Success

A final theme emerging from the data was the process of finding ways to be successful academically. Brian recalled how his first semester experience of failing some classes taught him what did not work in terms of academics. He stated,

> I didn't tell very many people that I failed a class. But I told some of my close friends; I told some family members. They all said, "Well, now you know what it takes to…" well, I guess I really didn't know what it took to fail, but what it took to pass, but I guess I knew what didn't work.

Hannah discussed how she learned how to study and be accountable as key elements which she missed out on during her previous college experience. She recollected, "I learned how to study

and how to hold myself accountable to classes and people in general. Those were all things that

in those first two years of college that I did not learn how to do." Carter described how what he

learned from his academic experiences generalized to other experiences as well when he stated,

"And I think the academic process as well taught me a number of lessons as well about failure

and success and you know that all complemented itself well into my experience in (CRP) as

well."

Summary of Lessons Learned

The data from participants' reports of their most valuable lessons learned from challenges

they faced as college students in recovery reflect seven major themes. The majority of the

lessons participants identified centered on either how to function in peer relationships or

individual growth in various realms of personal development and not necessarily in finding

academic success. However, a few participants did mention academics as a significant area but

this was not a predominant theme in this category. What seems most salient is the central role

peer relationships played in this context by means of finding meaningful and supportive

friendships. Furthermore, the data for several of the participants also underscored the condition

of their recovery as a delicate process requiring intentional commitment and priority for its

maintenance as well as a foundation for other life changes and growth. In the next section I

summarize the findings regarding participants' assumptions in relation to achieving success in

their recovery and academics.

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Assumptions

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The second major topic I investigated with participants regarding their personal

transformations was the assumptions they recalled having as students in recovery. More

specifically, I asked them to identify and discuss any assumptions they remembered having

pertaining to what it would take to be successful in their recovery as a college student as well as in their academics. Most of the participants had much to say on these topics but a few admittedly struggled with recalling what they were thinking at that time. I summarize the findings according to the themes which emerged from the data.

Recovery Challenges

The first theme pertains to participants' assumptions regarding their recovery and its inherent challenges. This topic emerged with four sub-themes. The first was a dynamic of questioning whether one truly could successfully remain sober while attending college. Three participants referenced this, particularly with concerns for the "party" nature of the college environment. Luke commented, "I think mostly assumptions were changed because as I said, I did come in with a lot of doubts and lack of confidence. So, and you know I also didn't have a good sense of how the college environment would be." Jack was much more explicit with his concerns by stating, "I think I had an assumption about recovery that it wasn't going to work."

Second, closely related to this was the questioning of having a quality life without using alcohol or other substances in college. Luke again recalled, "…and maybe on some level I had doubts about being able to have fun in recovery…" Jack reported he had convinced himself that he had to keep drinking in order to be successful in school. He reminisced, "…when I wasn't drinking I knew I had to drink because I was convinced that I couldn't do the work unless I was drinking. I was convinced that the work was better when I was drinking."

A third sub-theme in these data was the assumption of the necessity of peer support for successful recovery while in college. Cassie expressed how if she had to attend a regular college without CRP support, she would most likely relapse. She stated, "…I knew that there really wasn't another option because I knew that if I got kicked out and went to college somewhere

else, I was going to drink and I wasn't going to, I mean this was it." Hannah commented on the

necessity of community peer support for recovery by commenting,

> Like people think it's hard to get sober when you're like 18 or 19 years old. People, you have so much more opportunity to meet people and grow with people. You, I don't know, it's weird. Like I literally cannot imagine trying to get sober at age 25 for the first time. It would be so hard to get sober and not have something like (CRP) to help me for those first four years. Like, no way, because I just feel like I would have been just so alone. And only have using friends? Like, that sounds awful.

Clearly, these participants viewed their community of recovering peers as a key protective factor

for their own recovery.

A fourth sub-theme arose providing some contrast or contour of meaning for the process

of recovery and peer support as perhaps a necessary but not sufficient ingredient for successful

recovery in a CRP. Clark recalled how he wrongly assumed both recovery and school would be

easy for him. He commented,

> You know I think coming in I probably assumed that I wasn't going to have to work to stay sober in college. I wasn't going to have to – I mean I was going to be around a bunch of other sober people and school had always been easy for me. So I didn't think I was going to have to really work that hard at my sobriety or at school. And I was very wrong. It was a lot of work.

Anne expressed a similar assumption about both college and recovery going to be easy for her.

She stated,

> I assumed that I mean through my ego that I was just going to be able to do it and it was going to come easy to me… and I thought if I bought enough highlighters and like organized a book enough, then I would be able to get a degree and stay sober somehow. But I really didn't, I didn't understand how recovery worked…

She admitted her assumption was faulty due to a basic misunderstanding of the process of

recovery. Consequently, at least from the perspective of these participants, successful recovery

was not necessarily a guaranteed thing in a community of recovering peers.

Academic Challenges

The second major theme pertains to participants' assumptions regarding what was required of them as students for academic success. The subthemes to emerge from these data spread across a continuum of perception from overestimating the challenge, to being realistic, to underestimating the challenge of being successful academically. First, Brian seemed to overestimate the challenge by reporting he believed he overestimated the difficulty of the academic challenges he would face. He stated,

> And so I came from a place where I was really struggling and I was just expecting things to be harder than they were. When I got here I was like, 'Wow, everything is a lot easier than…' I don't know exactly why that was but I think as I was saying earlier, everything just kind of came into focus after I was here… And I guess I wasn't expecting to do as well as I did.

However, the data showed participants more commonly seemed to underestimate the challenges which academics would present. Five participants commented on having assumptions more in this regard as the previous comments regarding recovery by Anne and Clark reflect. Mark recalled how when he arrived as a new CRP student he thought, "And I kind of assumed that now, now is the kind of downhill coasting time; you know this is cruiser trail. And uh, you know that was not the case…you know the better your life gets, the harder it gets…" Another participant, Beth, admitted she believed she could do well without even attending classes by stating, "I think I thought I could do good in school and not be showing up for class – just by doing the homework and that wasn't the case…"

In terms of the more realistic perception, three participants reported what seemed to be more realistic estimations of what would be required of them and several discussed strategies they found to be helpful. For example, Cassie recalled how she was raised to do her schoolwork, "no matter what" treating it as a priority. She stated, "…yeah I think it took 12 years of those lessons here with me that was like whether I had to stay up till three in the morning doing school

work or all night long which I did many times, it was like it was going to get done." Logan

described his experience in this regard as a relearning process. He commented, "I had no idea

what I was getting into. I had to relearn how to do school." Caleb found success by taking his

academics in small steps and focusing on areas of interest. He recalled,

> And so when I got there I had a really strong working base and I didn't know what to
> expect but I had this idea that as long as I put one foot in front of the other I was going to
> be okay… I started out by taking classes that I wanted to take so I ended up taking classes
> that I was interested in… So, I remember I just kind of chose carefully what my first class
> load looked like because I knew that if it was all stuff that I was really interested in, I
> would have a better chance of succeeding.

Furthermore, Dylan remembered how his past failures in college helped him be in a state of

appreciation and readiness for the opportunity of returning to school in recovery. He

commented, "I was ready to buckle down and work because I want to go and I want to get this

done and this is the thing in my life I want to do."

Perceptions of Ability and Confidence

The third major theme to emerge from the data was the range of perceptions of ability

and confidence levels participants reflected in their assumptions of likelihood of success. The

perceptions of ability and confidence levels ranged from a crippling sense of fear and lack of

confidence to an over confidence and even an extreme sense of invincibility. In a way this

dimension examines the earlier theme regarding participant perceptions of academic challenge

but from an interior-subjective perspective of the participant's own perceived ability and

confidence in meeting the demands of the exterior-objective academic challenges. I summarize

the findings across the range by each category.

First, five participants reported having assumptions regarding themselves comprised of a

serious questioning or lack of confidence in succeeding. Luke reported, "…but I think it came in

terms of stress and academics and really starting from a place of, 'Oh my God, I don't know if I

can do this…?" Anne had such a deep lack of confidence that she assumed she would fail. She recalled, "I think I also assumed that I think I had the other, the opposite end assumption that I thought I was just going to fail so I just figured, 'Well, I'll only be here a few months and then I'll go back home.'" Emma discussed how she felt "crippled" by her fear of failure and how it prevented her from succeeding early on. She reported, "I think I more or less knew what I had to do. I just was so crippled by fear of failure and just so, I could just not show up; I could not." Furthermore, Hannah described her experience with this as rooted in lack of ability and an identity of failure. She recalled, "Yeah I think it just goes hand in hand with the thinking that I was a failure thing. I really just didn't think I was smart anymore…Like I had to get over the fact that I wasn't a bad person and I wasn't a failure."

Second, at the other end of the spectrum, five participants reported assumptions reflecting either an over confidence in their abilities or a sense of invincibility. Three participants reported having a sense of over confidence and two reported having had a sense of invincibility at the time both of which represented unrealistic assumptions about themselves. For example, Jack reported thinking, "…this college isn't going to be as hard as a college that you're supposed to be at. Or so like this school is, or you're basically like you're at this school because you screwed up and it's not, it doesn't have like enough to offer academically" which seems to reflect an assumption of at least over confidence if not superiority. Carter admitted, "…you know I think I was assuming that you know, I thought I was better than I really was." Kaylee discussed her surprise when she found college to be more challenging than she anticipated despite her having been a good student in high school. She recalled,

> I don't think I realized that you still have to put effort into school when you're sober. I mean and because I was always a really good student in high school even though I wasn't sober, but it still came just like perfectly to me. And then when I got to college it didn't. And it was like, 'What is wrong? Did I just become stupid?'

Along with the overconfidence, a few participants reported having had a sense of invincibility early on clearly reflecting an assumption scheme ill-suited for successfully meeting their challenges. While discussing her preconception that she could succeed in classes without attending them, Beth recalled, "Just that I wouldn't have any repercussions from any of my actions was really what I thought. I really had that kind of invincible attitude that I had when I was drinking…" Clark made a similar connection while discussing how he minimized his fears by stating, "… coming in, yeah, I was scared and yeah, being an addict and alcoholic you'd like to think you're invincible and that nothing can destroy you and you're this tough person because you've been on the streets with drugs and stuff."

The third genre of assumptions in this area with participants reflected a more realistic perspective and approach to their respective challenges. Caleb seemed to represent this kind of assumption evident in his reflection on how he had a sense of hope or confidence that he would find a way to succeed if he did certain things. He stated, "And so when I got there I had a really strong working base and I didn't know what to expect but I had this idea that as long as I put one foot in front of the other I was going to be okay."

As a parenthetical note in this area providing further insight into the dynamics of assumptions for these students in this area, one participant noted how she had to find a way to avoid thinking in extremes. Jamie commented,

> Black and white thinking like extremes like, 'If I'm going to be successful in school, then I'm going to do school 24/7. If I'm going to be successful at recovery or AA, then I'm going to do AA 24/7. And I found that to be detrimental in both ways… I just find that if you do everything to an extreme, then it's just bad news. So I mean I think that it's trying to find a piece of balance in life…

Consequently, finding a point of balance and avoiding extremes in thinking and behavior with both recovery and academics, was key for this student and her success. I examine these

dynamics of assumptions, their genres and extremes as well as their outcomes in the analysis section of this study.

Environmental Context

A fourth thematic area to emerge from the data was participants' assumptions they had regarding their expectations for their CRP, their peers, and the greater campus environment. In terms of expectations for their CRP, two participants had some distinctly different responses in their experiences. Brian recalled how he expected his experience in his CRP to be "a different world" but it seemed to exceed his expectations. He assumed it would be simply college but eventually he found it to be like a home. He commented,

> And it actually was a great place; it was a great place to be and a great place to live and you know I think once I acclimated, and uh…this place didn't feel like my home for a long time; it took a long time for that to kick in. But when it did…I guess I uh, I don't know if that was an assumption, but I wasn't expecting it to feel like a home; I was expecting it to feel like just a school.

On the other hand, Cassie reported she entered with the assumption that college was about "freedom" but when she entered her CRP, "I think that I was very like open-minded to how this is going to happen because I didn't have a plan. You know, I didn't have a way to do it. So, I definitely think I was shocked by the rules, but you know it worked. I followed most of them."

In terms of expectations for peers in their CRP, a few participants were surprised when peers relapsed perhaps reflecting an idealized assumption or view of their peers in the CRP. Addison recalled with her experience of peers relapsing, "Like I felt jilted by these things that happened by people leaving or like God…people like doing hard drugs in their room and the rest of us being like, 'What? That wasn't like I drank a little at a party and now I'm coming back to…' But it was just like off the deep end." In the previous chapter I mentioned how other participants were not surprised that some peers relapsed because of their knowledge of addiction.

In terms of assumptions regarding the greater campus environment, a few participants noted how they were concerned about whether they would gain acceptance as students in recovery from non-CRP members on their campus or be rejected because of stigma. Emma recounted her experience by stating,

> I guess I assumed, and this also was kind of a worry as well, I assumed that being a student in recovery was definitely fine within the (CRP) community, but I wasn't sure how the outer-(college) community would take it? I was like, 'Are people going to just treat me like sick, or are they like going to walk on eggshells around me?'

Chloe recalled, "I think I assumed that we wouldn't really blend in with like the rest of (the college) because I just assumed that they all drink all the time and that they wouldn't want to be friends with the (CRP) kids." Fortunately, both participants found their assumptions to be wrong and they experienced acceptance from the greater campus community. However, this was not the case for all participants. Kaylee recalled how the campus community outside her CRP had some faulty perceptions of students in recovery. She stated,

> …the student body doesn't really know our program or if they do know our program, we have the stigma outward, 'Oh, we're all just alcoholics and addicts,' so we get the nose up towards some of the snide remarks or the disrespect you know because they just think we're drunk when really it's the opposite.

Consequently, students from different CRPs experience different levels of acceptance from their peers in the greater campus community.

Peer Relationships

Peer relationships comprised a fifth thematic area emerging in the data regarding participant assumptions. Interestingly, these were not necessarily positive assumptions. One participant recalled how she seriously questioned whether she would be able to make friends with peers in her CRP when she arrived. Hannah recalled based on her treatment experience,

> I didn't think I'd be able to relate to other people that were sober necessarily. And when you're here you're given such a different cross section of alcoholics and addicts that, so I came in assuming that I was not going to make any friends; that I wasn't going to relate

to any of these people because I couldn't relate very well with people that I was in treatment with.

A second subtheme in this regard with a couple of participants was a sense of judgmental-ness towards others. Carter reflected on his immaturity and past ineptness in peer relationships at the time by commenting,

> I thought I was better than I really was… I mean I was really just this cocky 19 year old at the time and didn't have much of any conception of equality or understanding or forgiveness for other people in the community. You know I was very resentful and at the same time fearful and just you know didn't have any conception of reality of human interactions or anything like that you know.

Carter, while discussing how he thought he should have been at a better school than the one he ended up at with the CRP, admitted, "…that assumption would lead me to place judgments on everybody including students that were in (the CRP)." These assumptions seem particularly significant for the discussion of transformations in light of the key role that peer relationships played in assisting students in finding success both in their recovery and academics.

Preparation for the Future

A final subtheme emerging from the data on participant assumptions was the sense of having had too short-sighted goals while in college. Three participants noted how focusing on remaining sober and graduating exclusively ended up being insufficient for their future career preparation. Mark framed this as one factor leading to alumni from his CRP to relapse because of the short-sightedness of this goal. He commented,

> And I think that's why a lot of people, well not a lot, but the reason why, I've talked with them about it is that the reason why people relapse after they leave (CRP) is because they (think), 'Okay this was the goal' and that people of our age when they get sober at 17, 19, or 20 is that you've failed to hit the benchmark of going to college – that's the normative thing you're supposed to do – to graduate college. We weren't able to do that and we had this great transformation in our lives and then we graduated college. Check mark! And I think that's sort of the danger spot that a lot of people find themselves in is once I either got into college or graduated college is that 'Okay, I did that thing I wasn't able to do because of my addiction was preventing me from doing it.'

Jason reflected on how his exclusive focus on staying sober and being a good student prevented him from doing skillful career planning. He recollected,

> …you know I didn't look forward enough. You know I was so in the now in terms of I'm going to be the best student and stay sober – so that I did a very poor job of career planning and it's just a conversation that never really came up and maybe because I didn't bring it up I think in large part.

In another respect closely related to this is the choice of a major. Alex recalled how he chose his major based on family tradition only afterwards to find the career path dissatisfying. He commented,

> And like I said academically, it wasn't top on my priority list but I got into accounting because I saw the success that my Dad had had and I thought, 'Okay, I think that's a good, safe choice and safe path to take and there's a good foundation there and there's always going to be a need for accountants and I won't have a problem finding a job so I'll take that.' And so I took that path and realized that really all the worst grades I got in school were in accounting.

Consequently, several of the participants found that their goals, although important and necessary such as remaining sober and doing well academically, were not necessarily broad enough to help them succeed to their satisfaction afterwards.

Summary of Assumptions

In this section I reviewed the data findings regarding participants' reported assumptions relating to their perceptions of what was required for a successful recovery and collegiate academic experience. The findings reflect that several participants viewed recovery as a challenge and not necessarily a guaranteed given in that context of significant CRP-peer support. In terms of academics, participants reported a spectrum of assumptions ranging from overestimating to underestimating the challenges. Similarly, they also reported a similar spectrum related to subjective perceptions of ability and confidence to meet those challenges. Some participants seemed to have overestimated the consistency of their peers' recovery in their CRP as well as the stigma they might face from their respective campus outside of the CRP,

although experiences differed in this latter respect. Finally, several participants reported that their assumptions for recovery and academic success were too narrowly focused for adequate future career planning. Some of the most salient findings, though requiring further analysis, were the dynamics present within and between the spectrum of various assumptions and their respective outcomes combined with their respective processes of transformation. In the next section I review the findings of participants' reports regarding how they found resilience in the face of their most difficult challenges.

Finding Resilience

The third major area I explored with participants regarding their transformations while in college as students in recovery was the dimension of finding resilience in the face of great difficulty. Resilience is typically defined as, "the ability to overcome adversity" (Brown, 2010, p. 63). In many ways these participants' entire trajectories are examples of resilience given their pre-recovery lives in active addiction. However, I was particularly interested in how participants found the ability to persevere when they wanted to give up and what role their community played in helping them to do so. Hence, I explored the particular factors that helped these participants find that resilience. In many ways their responses echoed the data regarding most the valuable supports I reviewed in the Trajectories chapter. However, these data also provide further insight into their processes of transformation particularly at the juncture of greatest challenge and difficulty. I summarize these data according to the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the interviews.

Peer Support

A majority of the participants (90%) referenced the support from their peers as a key factor in helping them find resilience in challenging times. This underscores how the transformation these participants experienced with resilience was very much a collective

phenomenon and did not occur in isolation. The following is a summation of the data findings according to the emergent subthemes. In many ways these subthemes help to delineate the underlying processes facilitating the resilience participants experienced.

Encouragement. The first subtheme was the factor of the encouragement participants received from their peers. Brian recalled, "I guess just the encouragement from my peers was really good…" Several participants described this support as being, "a close knit group of friends" (Alex) and a "really great support system" (Cassie). Anne poignantly described her experience with this while describing the quality and level of genuine friendship this support represented. She recalled,

> My best friends here were very supportive. I really met people that genuinely cared about my well-being and not what they could get from me – which I think a lot of people do that you know when they're young – they hang out with friends because they're pretty or they have money or they like their clothes. But these people just genuinely cared about me which was really refreshing.

Caleb described his friendships of support as a group who would be there for him when he experienced failure. He recounted, "But the people that I hung around with really lifted me up and kind of caught me when I would fall."

Role-modeling and success. A second subtheme to emerge from the data was a dynamic of benefitting from the examples and success of others in the community. Participants described a dynamic of synergy and an apparent contagion effect of doing well. Anne recalled how talking to some older women whom she respected in her CRP about their struggles had a powerful impact on her. She described it as follows,

> Well it wasn't an odd thing to do to knock on somebody's door and talk to them even if you didn't really know them that well in this program. And there were a couple of older girls like Anne and Sophie for example, who, and Stephanie who I really looked up to. And when I think I finally got the balls to go up to them and say something…I went to Anne and I was asking her about like what it was like for her and she said, 'I did all kinds of stuff and things that were terrible when I first came here and I was really bad. And

they didn't find out about a lot.'… And so that was really helpful. There was like a wealth of knowledge from like the older kids that I could go talk to.

Mark described his experience with peers whom he respected as akin to being in a family with role models. He stated, "I think it just continued to provide me with role models. Um…and you know I think it's just in so many ways a continuation of just growing up and so many ways this became like a pseudo family… And when you come here there's people who are doing things really well."

The effects of seeing these role models was clear according to participants. Beth recalled how when she started spending more time with peers like this it kind of "rubbed off" on her. She described it as follows, "…I can't believe like how much better things got by just showing up and, hanging out with people and just being around people more it rubbed off on me." Caleb recounted how he made it an intentional act on his part to surround himself with role models. He reported,

> …you know one thing that I was always taught before I got into recovery was to stick with the winners. You know just to surround myself with people who embodied what I wanted to be. Um, so that's what I did. I the people I surrounded myself with were people who were serious about recovery, serious about school, serious about doing the right thing, and those were the people that I hung around with. And as a result of that I always had you know I had people modeling the behaviors that I wanted and people supporting me in doing the right thing.

Another effect of role models was the engenderment of hope. Jamie described this vividly when she stated,

> …it's really easy for us to see the change and strengths in other people before we can see it in ourselves. And you know seeing that in other people and seeing that it is possible and seeing that relating to someone and seeing them like move forward and coming from a very similar place and like it gave me hope.

A further effect of these role models appears to have been a synergy that motivated others particularly in the area of accomplishment and success academically and beyond. Dylan

recounted how when he saw others fulfill their potential, especially if they came from a challenged background, this motivated him to do well. He stated, "Realizing that potential and seeing it happen in other students; you know seeing somebody who came from a really tough background." Clark described this dynamic as,

> …and so we have a huge group of people that are all interested in different things and want to see each other succeed in those different things… And there's always just this level of wanting to see everybody succeed at whatever they're doing… We just really want to see each other succeed and it's almost like our successes are tied to one another. It feels good to see. And I think that maybe comes from the general sense of recovery community – we want to see each other succeed.

He further characterized it as a community, "…pushing you to be your best." Dylan styled it as, "…feeding off each other's energy." This was especially relevant for Jack who had returned to substance use numerous times while in his CRP. He recalled how he benefitted from the positive energy from his peers by recalling,

> But like the drinking at night is all internal. It's really not directly hurting anyone but me. And then the other thing during the day I'm getting flood of positive energy from all the other people and that's sort of sustaining in the daytime. And so I would kind of swing back and forth between them and sort of hang on to this tenuous balance…

Consequently, there seems to have been a dynamic of synergy working for community members being motivated by each other's examples and successes.

Accountability. A third subtheme related to peer support in finding resilience was the dynamic of accountability. Landon recounted how his sense of membership with his CRP and friendships provided him with a sense of accountability. He stated, "Well I had because I was a member of CRP I had this sense of accountability to (CRP). And really other than that and my relationships I built with the people in CRP that really is all that there was for me." Another participant, Hannah, cited the closeness of the relationships she built as producing that accountability. She commented, "And it was having people that were comfortable enough with me and knew me well enough to call me out of my bullshit."

An additional feature of this accountability was how it provided a safety-net like effect. Clark described it as his roommates not letting him fail. He recalled, "But it's like the healthy level of accountability – you know my roommates weren't going to let me sit in my room four days straight. They're pushing me to be better constantly." Jason described it as, "People didn't fall through the cracks."

Staff Support

A second major theme to emerge from the data was the dynamic of staff support. Eight participants cited this as a key factor in their finding resilience. Several subthemes arose in this area and I summarize the data accordingly. In many ways these data resemble the dynamics of peer support

Encouragement. Receiving encouragement from their respective CRP staff was a major subtheme in the process of finding resilience. Brian recalled, "…but I guess I knew what didn't work. I guess just the encouragement from my peers was really good and then encouragement from some of the staff members." Jason emphasized the importance of the rapport he had with his counselor by stating, "Well, I really feel like having that rapport with a counselor…" which enabled him to have some very difficult but necessary conversations. Carter reminisced on the importance of the support being there for him unconditionally by stating,

> Also in the office too, especially with…my counselor. And just you know to talk about what was happening and feel like I could afford to make mistakes and not be chased away with a stick as a result of it too. You know it became clear to me that I was a part of it and had become grounded in it was there for me despite whatever trouble I might happen to get myself into, so that was an important part of the process as well for sure.

The participants were clear in their assertions of the key role staff support played in helping them find resilience in difficult times.

Accountability. The sense of accountability from staff participants experienced

comprised a second subtheme in this area. Clark described how he found the staff had a healthy

accountability without being too overbearing. He stated,

> …most of the counselors in the office are really good at knowing their particular students' limits… Most of them have that perfect level of you know letting us know that they got their eye on us but not like all in our business either. And so having someone like that is huge too… you know, my advisor wasn't chasing me down to be sure I was going to class.

Kaylee recalled how her CRP staff were helpful in the following respect: "You know and I was

probably a little rough around the edges but they were there to just like reel me in and give me a

quick check and there's almost always somebody there in that room that would be there to talk,

you know."

Second chances. Reflecting a more program-systemic factor was a third subtheme

comprised of the sense of having second chances with room to make mistakes without

irreparable consequences. Brian recalled how this helped motivate him to do better. He stated,

> And I think the other thing that helped me not to give up was just knowing that I could try it again. And now that I think about it that was like the biggest thing – knowing that I would have another chance to take this class. And so I think this just having that…knowing that I could have that chance to fix it, it made me and it also made me try that much harder each time.

He further described how this prevented him from "falling through the cracks" as he did in his

previous college experience without this kind of support. He described it as, "Yeah…I knew that

no one was going to let that slide."

A few other participants described their experience in their CRP as one in which they had

some freedom to make some mistakes and learn from them. Carter referenced this earlier when

discussing the unconditional quality of staff support by commenting, "I could afford to make

mistakes and not be chased away with a stick... Caleb stated, "I felt like I had good guidance and

I also felt like the office over there I always had cheerleaders. Even when I would mess up I would have (staff) to say, 'You know, you can do this. You messed up but you are capable.'"

Recovery Commitment and AA Support

A third major theme to emerge from the data was the role that one's personal commitment to recovery and support from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), particularly with one's sponsor, played in finding resilience. Eight participants cited these factors as important in their experience with resilience. Several also alluded to this factor as a key turning point in their own trajectory of transformation.

The commitment to one's recovery shaped the first half of this equation in forming the foundation for resilience for several participants. Cassie recalled how her desire to remain sober stayed intact. She commented, "I mean I think it was just the strong desire to stay sober. I mean for me it has never ever been a struggle between staying sober and using." Carter recounted how his having become "grounded" in AA is what really helped him in difficult times. He narrated as follows: "…when things were difficult, whether academically or sometimes more with my personal life but I think the big thing for me was really that I had become pretty grounded in Alcoholics Anonymous at that point." Caleb expressed a similar sentiment when he stated, "…you know that was, what really pushed me through was this is the really, the truth of it was my own recovery program."

The second half of this equation consisted of the support participants gained from the AA community and in particular, their sponsor or mentor. Kaylee recounted how she found significant help from meetings attended by peers with "long-term sobriety." She also recalled how working with her sponsor helped her to take responsibility for her own actions which was key for her trajectory. She described it as follows:

But she definitely, if I was stepping out of line in any which way, she'd call me on my shit and I was like, 'Oh, dang-it! Or if I'd call her and like, 'Oh, life story, what's wrong?' And she was like, 'Seriously, it's your problem.' And I was like, 'How dare you.' And it was a lot of like ego deflation in my early sobriety.

Others described the experience of working with an AA sponsor as a significant turning point in their lives. Anne recalled, "And then what kept me going most was probably after I hit my year I met my sponsor, Lisa, and she completely changed my life." She described the process of her life changes as,

And she was just perfect for me and so I would, I mean I would go out of my way to find rides and go way out in to the boonies every week to a meeting and show up early to do a Step study every single week. I turned my grades around; I started going to bed earlier and taking care of myself more and just all sort of like, I don't know, I changed from there.

Beth described a similar experience with her life change with, "And things started to change really quickly when I started meeting with Amy (her sponsor) and doing like showing up to places and I can't believe like how much better things got by just showing up…" Consequently, making a serious commitment to one's recovery and working with a sponsor for personal life change was a turning point for several participants.

Family and Significant Other Support

A fourth area emerging from the data was the importance of support from family and significant others in the process of finding resilience. Four participants cited this realm of support. Several subthemes were prominent in this area as well.

The encouragement participants felt they received from family or significant others when things were especially difficult was the first subtheme in this realm. Anne commented that her mother was both supportive but also angry at her at times. She recalled, "…my mom was like supportive and then angry…" Jack described his family and girlfriend as providing a "grounded space" for him when he was particularly down. He stated, "And you know I had my personal

support in my tighter circle with Maggie, the long-term girlfriend at the time and my mother and father and brother and sister – all people that I would stay pretty close with. So that gave me sort of a grounded place." Caleb recalled how he came from a supportive family and they would give him assurance at times when he really needed it. He recounted, "I come from a really supportive family. You know when I would call my mom and say, 'I don't know if I can do this.' She would say, 'Buck up, you can do this. You need to just push through.'"

Feeling obligation towards one's family to succeed was a second subtheme in this area. Mark described his experience with this as follows: "You know my family put it all on the line to set me up to get to where I am today and if I don't return on that, you know then, who am I? And so that was definitely a big one." The question became a deeply seated sense of both identity and obligation.

An interesting twist of positive defiance comprised a third subtheme. Anne described her experience as reaching a point after several repeated failures and being told she would not succeed in college or recovery that she wanted to prove the naysayers wrong. She vividly recalled,

> I wanted to keep going to prove people wrong. I didn't want to go back to my hometown and see all these people I graduated with and who already thought I was dead or in jail or pregnant with my 3rd child or something… So, and then to my mom, my mom was like supportive and then angry; and when she would get angry with me about my behavior; that kind of fueled me because I also kind of wanted to prove her wrong too in a way because when she started doubting me.

Thus, this participant found a way to turn her oppositional tendencies in a positive direction to her benefit.

Individual Factors and Qualities

The next group of themes emerging from the data consisted of individual qualities and features which participants experienced or attained through various means which helped them

find resilience. I labeled these as "individual" because they stand in contrast to the external, collective resources which I covered in the previous section. I organized these according to thematic categories that best capture their essence.

Readiness and resolve. During the discussions on resilience, eight participants referenced a dynamic of feeling ready to change or having a resolve to persevere. Several dynamics appeared extant in these different states of readiness and resolve. First, a few participants discussed how they were tired of what they were doing and realized their efforts were not productive. Anne recalled, "…I was finally uncomfortable with it and wanted it to be different." Beth described her experience with this as, "…I really think I just decided like to try something different because my plan was not working." There appeared to be a tipping point phenomenon where everything seemed to come together for Anne. She recounted,

> And it seemed like, and maybe it was just coincidence but it seemed like I was already getting some of the gifts of the program because I was able to move back into the (CRP) program and I met somebody, I fell in love with somebody which was really cool. I met Maggie; I met some of my closest friends today. So it kind of all happened at once. I got my first 4.0 which a really big deal at the time for me. So that was cool.

Thus, in the process of transformation reaching resilience for some participants, there appears to have been a point of coalescence of factors coming together helping the change to occur.

Others described their resilience as due in part to an inner resolve which came about for various reasons. Cassie recalled how living in the CRP was still the best option for her even despite the community drama. She stated, "Yeah, I think that was tough to live in an environment where I don't like these girls that I'm living with – yeah, but in my mind there really was not another option; you just have to make the best of it and make it work." Carter described his experience as one necessitating changing old patterns of giving up when things became difficult. He recounted, "…and I think it was a combination of those two things of trying to drift away from my old patterns of behavior and having this new, this method for living

that I was really trying to implicate as best I could." A few other participants attributed their resolve to "a drive to become better" (Caleb) and simply being "stubborn and persistent" (Kaylee).

Future Perspective. The sense of participants gaining a perspective of the future with purpose and hope helping them find resilience reflected a second subtheme in these data. A few participants considered the future and weighed the consequences of not being successful in recovery or school. Luke commented, "I was working at Target and was not all that satisfied with it so that usually provided a good motivation to do well." He also considered the financial payoffs of finishing his degree. Mark found considering the list of consequences from being unsuccessful to be helpful. He reflected, "And honestly at the end of the day that was kind of like the last one – that you kind of had to work your way down your list of all the things you want to preserve and save and you know they might fall away…Okay, if I relapse, I am not going to graduate college…"

A second dynamic within this subtheme among participants was remaining centered on their purpose for being in their CRP as a manner of perspective. Emma recalled, "I remember during (CRP) Orientation they made us write down, 'Why are you here?' And I guess keeping that in mind. Um, just kind of keeping my eye on the prize kind of a thing." Alex recounted how his sense of accomplishment helped keep him goal-focused and resilient. He commented, "…even in those times of hardship and challenges I think I knew deep down that if I did give up and just quit, that it was a monumental step backwards and I had worked too hard to stop. I had worked too hard to quit." Other participants reported how keeping graduation in the forefront of their minds (Dylan and Landon) and the goal of eventually going to graduate school (Clark) is what helped them find resilience in the face of great difficulty.

A third component within this subtheme was a sense of hope and optimism that participants found. Jamie reported that her recovery program helped her to find this evidenced by here statement that, "Like that I would – any sort of struggles that I had, I would just throw myself into the program, things would always get better." Cassie reflected a similar sentiment by stating, "And I think a big part of it was just my program and just saying like you know having faith that things would work out and things would get better." Although not a particularly strong believer in God, Logan recounted his sense of hope by stating, "Well, God. But I'm a Deist – it's not like God cares about the fucking hang nail that I have. It's not like that. But I trust that the universe is going to seek equilibrium if I just keep fighting and kicking and biting and scratching… that's it."

Coping strategies. Strategies participants found helpful in gaining resilience with their challenges formed a third categorical subtheme in these data. First, Luke cited attending meditation meetings as a helpful strategy. Second, Addison chose escape and disengagement as a strategy. She recalled, "But then I also feel like I got in the habit of like going home on like a day of the week and then a weekend and then it just kind of, I couldn't live in both places at the same time." Third, Logan found creative outlets to be particularly helpful. He recounted, "…the thing that has been keeping me going as of late is that I've done my art. And that, if I didn't have that, probably not - we probably wouldn't be having this conversation." Finally, in strong contrast to the other strategies, Jack chose drinking as a means to cope with the most difficult times. He recalled, "During a lot of those times, I would drink at those times and that's how I would get through those times." This created other problems which I address in the analysis section.

Gaining confidence.   The dynamic of gaining confidence through experiencing success comprised a fourth categorical subtheme in these data. I mentioned this dynamic in earlier sections of this chapter on Lessons Learned and Assumptions where participants cited lacking confidence as a major theme of their struggles. In this section of the interviews participants noted how their experiences of success helped them to find the confidence they were lacking. Dylan recalled how being sober and helping to start his CRP, "...made me realize that maybe these things can come true." Anne recounted how when she finally got actively involved in her CRP she began to gain a sense of "being good at something." She stated, "…and for the first time in a long time I knew what I was doing and I was good at something and that was cool." Jason remembered how when he was awarded a scholarship by his CRP and he got to tell his parents by stating, "…it was like I mean all these things that really helped me build self-esteem and just like to feel accomplished." Another participant, Hannah, noted how when she started to gain self-confidence, she participated more in her classes. She recalled,

> I, when I started to gain back some more self-confidence you could just see it in the classroom. Like I was not the one that sat in the back row and didn't talk to anybody anymore. Like I sat in the front row. I started talking to my classmates. These were things that I didn't do in the beginning!

Thus, the results of gaining confidence had multiple effects helping to bolster academic performance.

Giving back through leadership.   A final categorical subtheme was the dynamic of helping others through leadership roles in their respective CRP. Jason recalled how much being a Residence Advisor and member of his CRP's leadership helped him. He stated,

> And it was immediately like you know I was an RA and I was on Leadership Team and that was just really important to me. And I became a leader and it happened so naturally… It was like, "Wow, I can feel good about what I'm doing for the first time in my life," you know without exception, without a secret, without a chemical.

Dylan recounted how being in a leadership position had a reciprocal process of helping the community he wanted support from by stating, "…and then I think about the kids involved and it was the sense of letting people down. But then community was kind of what it was because I wanted to be a good example for the CRP community; I wanted to have that support of people to kind of push me on…" Another participant, Anne, found how when she mentored younger students in her CRP and became a member of leadership this seemed to help her significantly. She recalled,

> …and then I think as I was starting to become more responsible with the newer people coming in, I was able to mentor them which meant a lot to me at the time because I was never allowed to be the mentor of anything. I couldn't keep like a fish alive, so I like being entrusted with a human and showing them around was cool. And um, they, like uh, they would look at me and say, "Well, what classes should I pick? Where do I go for this? And where's the nearest grocery store?" And I would show them around and it made me feel somewhat important and for the first time in a long time I knew what I was doing and I was good at something and that was cool.

She further commented on how much being a leader was in contrast to her previous experience by stating,

> And then when I got into student government, that was really cool for me because I was never… in high school I was a total burnout and they didn't want me in any club nor did I want to be in any club…and I failed at everything, so…it was cool being good at something, I guess. Or at least thinking I was good at something…

Consequently, taking on these roles of leadership and helping others played a significant role in helping several participants find ways to be resilient.

Summary of Resilience

The focus of this section is on how participants found the ability to persevere in the face of great difficulty and the role their CRP community played in helping them to do so. The data reflect participants accessed collective resources of support – peers, counselors, family, AA – as well as demonstrating individual commitment to recovery and various other individual qualities and coping strategies, most healthy and others not. These data provide further insight into the processes of personal transformation at the point of facing significant challenge. Some of the

most salient findings requiring further analysis appear to be the synergistic processes at play both at the individual and collective levels. There initially appears to be a complex combination individual readiness, peer modeling and encouragement leading to higher levels of functioning through transformation. These processes seem complex and even chaotic at times affecting individual perspective, motivation, and ultimately the ability to find resilience in times of substantial challenge.

Summary

This chapter has focused on participants' experiences with personal transformation in three areas. The first was lessons learned from challenges. The second was how their assumptions changed about requisites for successful recovery and academic functioning while in college. The third explored how they found resilience in times of significant challenge and difficulty. Numerous salient findings emerged from these data. In terms of lessons learned, participants greatly focused on the central role peers played in their experiences and how they navigated ways to find meaningful and supportive friendships. Furthermore, participants presented "recovery" as not necessarily a given in the supportive CRP environment, but rather as a delicate condition requiring careful attention and maintenance. In terms of assumptions, a spectrum of assumptions arose regarding the anticipated difficulty of challenges of college life as well as the internal confidence and ability to meet those challenges. The dynamic interactions and outcomes of these various assumptions along their respective place on their spectrum requires further analysis. Finally, the data on finding resilience revealed complex processes on both the individual and collective levels with an emergent synergy between external support and internal readiness leading to transformation. This also calls for further analysis. The next chapter forming the final data findings chapter will review participants' experiences with the transition to post-CRP and post-college living.

CHAPTER SIX: TRANSITIONS DATA FINDINGS

In this third and final data chapter I review participants' descriptions of their experiences with transitioning out of their Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRP) into post-CRP and post-college living. Some of the participants transitioned out of their CRP prior to graduation from college and others remained living in their respective CRP until graduation. The distribution among participants was almost equal with 10 remaining in their CRP until graduation and 11 leaving their CRP at least a semester or more prior to graduation. I asked participants about their experiences with challenges they experienced, how their CRP helped prepare them, what they felt they were lacking, and what recommendations they had to help current students in CRPs become better prepared for the transition to post-college life. The subheadings delineate the most salient themes which emerged from the participant interviews.

Challenges

I asked participants about the major challenges they faced after they left their CRP and embarked on post-college living. The emerging themes identified that challenges included finding a new balance of life responsibilities while maintaining their recovery and encountering many adult responsibilities quite different from when they were in college. I summarize and illustrate these challenges in the following sections.

Reconfiguring Recovery Support

Over half of the participants mentioned the challenge of missing the full-time support of the CRP and having to find new resources of support and/or rely more on Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. Experiences differed in this respect. Some participants simply kept attending the AA meetings they were already connected with and others had to find entirely new meetings because of changes in schedule or moving away. Several subthemes emerged in these

discussions including recognizing the absence of the CRP support, difficulty in finding AA meetings to fit their schedule, issues with studying abroad or moving out of state.

First, participants described how much they felt the absence of the CRP support when they graduated or moved out on their own. Jason commented on how he felt like he was leaving a place of comfort and safety by recalling, "I kind of felt like I was pushed out of the nest." Alex described his experience of moving out of state after graduation poignantly by stating, "…and overnight that support system was gone." Jamie recounted her experience as, "Well, I guess no one really prepares you for just being like, 'You are cut off.' You know like once you leave (the CRP), you're done." Another participant, Beth, recalled how she felt distant from the community afterwards by stating, "I was kind of distant from people because I was out in (the suburbs) and I wasn't going to as many meetings… I never really felt sad or anything but I didn't have that same social aspect…"

Second, participants reported changes in their personal schedule preventing attendance to their regular AA meetings for support. Brian recalled, "I ended up getting a job on night shifts for a while and that took a toll on my program because I couldn't go to my usual meetings. And so that was a struggle…" Kaylee described a similar challenge by stating,

> Really recently it's just been getting my jobs, um, job hours and meetings working with one another. Right now they've been working against one another so it's kind of like, "Well, I can't go to my normal meeting where everyone else goes that I see on a regular basis so I need to expand and go to meetings that meet my timeframe so that I can still go to meetings but I won't see the normal people at meetings that expect to see me, etc. etc." But at least I'm getting to a meeting.

Having to work full-time and the consequential unforeseen impact on one's ability to attend a regular AA meeting was a common challenge among several participants.

Third, a few participants described the challenge of finding recovery support when studying abroad. Addison recalled how critical having a peer in recovery along was for her

staying sober while abroad. She recounted, "But yeah it just felt good to have that support and while I was studying abroad… And so we met a lot - me and her and we would go to meetings…"

Fourth, several participants reported the challenge of having to completely replace their recovery support due to moving to another state. Carter recalled, "And it was difficult again because I really didn't know very many people there. There were a couple friends left over from college but aside from that I had virtually no connections with the recovery community out there." Clark discussed the challenge of leaving well-established supportive relationships and having to rebuild a similar community of support. He described it as follows:

> And then I mean leaving college and moving out of state, I mean that's like, I mean that brought on having to find whole new, I mean keeping my support groups intact but having to find whole new support groups out there, you know through sober people, through meetings, through school, through work, through finding people that you can really get to know and then eventually get to a point where you can, "Listen, I got this thing, you know, and sometimes it feels good to talk about it and so if you can support me in that" and then finding sober people as well who obviously know what you're going through. But yeah that's like a having to take what you learned and rebuild a community somewhere else as similar to that as possible, is the ultimate goal.

The above comment reflects how important recovery support consists of people who have had common experiences and with whom one can be vulnerable.

Challenges with Adult Responsibility

A second major theme to emerge from the discussions regarding challenges was the various facets of adult living and its inherent responsibilities. Three major subthemes emerged in these discussions with a primary focus on employment, work stress and work culture, and finances. How participants framed these experiences follows.

Employment. First, several participants focused on employment or lack of opportunities for employment. Four participants (Brian, Jason, Caleb, and Landon) mentioned struggles they

had finding suitable employment after graduation mostly due to the economy. Brian recalled

how when he graduated the economy was struggling affecting opportunities to find work. He

stated, "Well, my last few months here I was really concerned about getting a job. And I had

finally gotten at least an internship somewhere. So I felt pretty good about getting that but it was

unpaid and it was a tough time. That was 2011 and it was a tough time for everybody." As a

result he had to move in with his parents temporarily. Another participant, Jason, described his

experience at graduation poignantly and the shock of leaving the CRP and college at a time of

economic recession

> I graduated college and then was like, "Oh, shit." And I remember the president of the college gave a very startling speech on "You're graduating in a recession; this isn't the time of privilege. This is the time of hard work; good luck." And I was just shocked and I think it has to do a lot with the time I graduated because entry-level jobs didn't exist. You know like applying with my resume and being a 3.5 graduate didn't really mean much. And I kind of felt like the ship had sailed and that was really hard.

Caleb described his experience with this as, "The greatest challenge I faced after graduation was

finding a job." So clearly, after having completed four or more years of college and earning a

degree while staying sober and then not being able to find suitable employment would present a

significant challenge on several levels.

Work stress and culture. Second, participants who did find employment discussed the

stresses of working a full-time job, many for the first time, and what this brought to their post-

college experience. Anne reflected on how she found working full-time in a human service

capacity was simply, "exhausting."

> It's a rude awakening; but I think for anybody. I think it's amplified when you're in recovery because we are so sensitive to those things – to change and being uncomfortable – our natural reaction is, "No, I don't want to do this," and backing away and working a 40 hour, sometimes a 50 hour week…But you have to show up to work and especially in the line of work that I do, it's very exhausting and it affects you deeply on an emotional level and I was not prepared for that.

Another facet of this experience was the adjustment to the nature of work culture with strong

professional/personal boundaries in contrast to their CRP culture of support from whence they

came. Again, Anne observed, "…and people don't care if you're having a bad day and don't

care whether you want to drink or get high, and don't care that your personal life isn't the

greatest at the time. But you have to show up to work…"

Closely related to this is how a few participants found working full-time and its inherent

impact on one's life and schedule to be vastly different from college living. Jamie noted, "And

college and showing up for class or showing up for a part-time job is completely different from

showing up for a full-time job and looking to the future constantly and like oil changes and like,

it's terrible." Anne commented on how her experience with this helped her to realize, "I took for

granted so much what college life was…" Several other participants echoed a similar sentiment.

Chloe reflected on how working full-time resulted in a sense of a loss of freedom and her time no

longer being her own.

> But working full-time was like it wasn't, it wasn't like that - I mean I had, that was a
> tough transition. I couldn't hang out with my friends all the time. I was like after work I
> would just want to go to bed or whatever, because it was late. You know I would work
> till 11:30 and I just felt like my time wasn't my own anymore. And I would think about
> work when I was not at work, you know?

Another participant, Hannah, described her adult-living working full-time life as characterized

by "consistency" causing her to miss the social spontaneity she had while in her CRP in college.

> I just miss like the camaraderie and everyone always being around and playing cards till
> late into the night and ugh, Catch Phrase until late into the night. So it's not like, I just
> now that I'm graduated it's just like, "My life is so consistent." There's no like big
> things going on, no spur of the moment activities really…

A final aspect of work-life and particularly work culture participants cited was the

challenge of interfacing with the after-work culture of "Happy Hour" centered on consuming

alcohol. Jack described the multi-layered complexity of this experience with whether or not to

self-disclose about his recovery while wanting to fit in at the same time. He described it as

follows, "The guys that I connected with at work they like most young guys in New York like to

go out and drink and I didn't feel inclined to warn them that that might be something I shouldn't

do because for once I had sort of what I saw as this chance to just be a regular guy…"

Unfortunately, for this participant this did result in him relapsing.

> So it was only here that, I guess now I would have been 25 now at this point that I'm starting work and I was like, "Maybe I'm just a regular guy." I would go out and drink with them normally and then the night would end and they would and I would pick up more. So yeah, that started to have side effects.

This subtheme of dealing with alcohol use in professional culture became prominent in these

discussions related to other questions which I review later in this chapter.

Finances.   Third, participants also referred to the challenge of dealing with finances,

budgeting, and school loans. Two participants (Brian and Beth) reported they had to move in to

their parents' homes after graduation due to lack of suitable employment. Brian recalled, "I

couldn't afford just living on my own basically. So my parents just took care of me basically for

several months until I figured out my situation." Emma while commenting on how different

post-college life is from college life, commented, "…like now you have bills; you're paying back

your student loans; things that are pretty scary, but…But here it definitely was a balancing act

but it's different." Again, this subtheme becomes more prominent in a later section reviewing

discussions on related topics to the transition to post-college life.

Maturing as result.   Fourth, participants also identified how much they saw they grew

and matured through dealing with these challenges. They viewed these experiences as

precipitating personal growth. Anne reflected on how having to deal with adult responsibilities

which carried real life consequence forced her to grow up a lot. "Forced to grow up quite a bit.

You know you're paying your own electricity bills and if you don't pay it, the electricity gets

turned off. That's a thing." She further commented on how this experience helped her to gain

more esteem from being independent and self-sufficient. She described it as follows, "…and

there was also it was really, really fun and really freeing and it felt like good to be able to pay my

rent every month and come home to a place that was my house even though it was absolutely

disgusting – it was a really gross house…" Cassie described her transition as experiencing an

awareness of a new life stage of development. She stated, "I mean it was fun and it was exciting

and something new – I felt like it was a new stage in my life…"

Another participant, Logan, framed his experience with his transition as a significant

period of growth in large part because he had to learn accountability and being genuine with

peers on new levels due to encountering significant struggles. He commented, "…and so that's

the part for me that, that first year out really was a growing experience… and so there was a lot

of that that I learned how to, it forced me to show up and be real with my peers." Carter was

even more reflective on his experience describing how he gained a new perspective on what he

wanted for his life and new notions of stability.

> Albeit it's not perfect, but it's not exactly where I want to be but it's something and you
> know that whole experience gave me a lot of perspective into notions of stability and
> security and the types of security that I want for myself and again it gave me perspective
> on building the life I had in (the CRP) too – the life from that to something very
> unfamiliar and very uncomfortable. And it's really made me appreciate that.

Hence, participants seemed to view their challenges in a positive manner to the degree that they

saw how those challenges spurred them on to higher levels of maturity and functioning.

Finding a New Balance and Structure

The third major theme to emerge from the data was the challenge of having to find a new

balance in one's overall life. This was reminiscent of the challenges identified in the first

chapter related to trajectories as students entered college life newly sober. Anne commented, "I

took for granted so much what college life was like…" Several subthemes arose in these discussions as well.

First, was the need to build a new structure into one's life. New demands and new schedules seemed to require a new structure and self-care strategy. Brian recalled how this impacted his own access to recovery support by stating, "I ended up getting a job on night shifts for a while and that took a toll on my program because I couldn't go to my usual meetings. And so that was a struggle…" Luke found practicing self-care to be especially more challenging since he entered graduate school after college. "I've noticed with grad school I really find myself justifying self-care like I need to earn it somehow or I need to accomplish a certain number or volume of things before the self-care is earned."

Second, was the need for more planning ahead and scheduling for both social life and meeting responsibilities. Mark found that after he moved off campus his senior year he had to be even more disciplined and organized to make it to classes on time. He reminisced,

> But it was still an important thing that now I had to schedule myself even more. Because if I had an 8:00 class it wasn't getting up at 7:50; it was getting up at 7:00. You know I had to plan things out better and so it had the good and the bad stuff combined.

Another participant, Emma, also found this to be the case in her experience.

> One thing that comes to mind is when I lived on campus I did literally just roll out of bed and throw on some clothes and just walk to class. Moving off campus you have to get up earlier so you have time. You have to, there's just more effort that you have to put through to get here. Um, and I had an 8am class that I struggled to get to and yes, there were just extra hurdles to getting here that were challenging.

These instances serve as examples of perhaps what these participants may have taken for granted while living on campus.

A third subtheme was finding a balance between one's full-time work schedule or other responsibilities and relationships. Emma observed,

> Balance is definitely something that I struggle with – um, just finding time to get your recovery stuff like meetings and stuff like that. I work kind of like a weird schedule. I work 11:30 and 8pm so meetings are very difficult. Um, and spending time with friends and finding time to do that; and finding time to spend with my significant other. Um, finding time with my family. Uh, it's a juggling act; it really is. That's the thing that gets kind of hard.

A few participants found themselves allowing work to take over other priorities and thereby potentially compromising their own well-being and recovery. Jack remarked,

> I had an internship that I got after Deloitte and so I stayed there all summer and I worked there to like make more money and then, I can't remember how participative in AA I was around that time. I think I kept going sort of weekly. And then we just sort of like I said went off into the wild blue yonder and start my career in New York. And in the very beginning I didn't do much with AA. I just worked a lot.

Kaylee found herself having had a similar experience by describing, "…and so that's kind of a big thing and right now work is winning over the meeting slots. I still get to a few but not as many as normal or as I'd like to."

Social and Relationship Challenges

A fourth theme to emerge from the data related to experiences surrounding relationships and their social life or lack thereof compared to when living in the CRP. These challenges ranged from dealing with roommate challenges, romantic relationship struggles, and finding adequate social time with friends. I illustrate the delineation of these challenges with examples of participant reports.

Roommate challenges. First, conflicts with roommates which varied in nature and scope was a significant finding in this context. One participant, Mark, reported having moved off campus with a peer from his CRP and he found the social connection to be quite lacking and almost isolative in contrast to the CRP community living space. He described his roommate as follows, "…kind of guy – beautiful mind and all that all day doing math and sometimes it was difficult to kind of connect on a real emotional level and so I kind of isolated myself on purpose

and I was just isolated by default by proximity issues and things like that." Anne was in a

different configuration living with several peers from her CRP. She reported encountering a

significant challenge when one of her roommates "went off the deep end." She described her

experience as follows,

> And yeah, we had one person kind of go off the deep end – not drinking or using but it
> was really, really hard because there was nobody outside to kind of mediate it and it felt
> like all on our shoulders and it was very interesting watching the dynamic of a bunch of
> young, sober college students try to be like, "What do we do about this person?"

She further commented on how avoiding the situation was very unproductive. She reflected, "I

didn't say things for a while and made my living situation hell and then when I finally did speak

up, it probably made her feel really uncomfortable. But it ended up being good." Hannah who

was also a member of this group living together, commented on how living in a smaller

community of peers like this brought its own challenges.

> Like we had our own little off campus six of us living in a house which brought on its
> own challenges because it was soon learned like we're not in a big community anymore.
> And we don't necessarily want to be around these people 24/7. There was a lot of lack of
> respect in that house.

Another participant, Luke, who moved off campus with a two of his peers from his CRP

experienced a complete dissolution of the living arrangement because of conflicts.

> I moved in with Beth and Nina and it started out pretty well but kind of dissolved. For
> the most part I kind of, you know they had their little squabbles and then Beth moved out
> and then Nina moved out and that didn't really bother me a whole lot. I detached from
> that pretty well and had a lot of other stuff going on. The actual move out process with
> Nina was another story that's definitely still on Step Four.

These experiences reflect a dynamic of notable turbulence with live-in relationships which was

reminiscent what they experienced in their previous living environment in their CRP.

Significant other challenges. Second, was conflicts and even breakups with significant

others. Six participants reported having had these kinds of experiences. Luke commented on

how repeated conflicts with his significant other eventually led to breaking up. He stated,

"…there were a fair number of conflicts with Mark and I actually just broke up with him a couple weeks ago. And so that was kind of off and on and I kind of under the surface stressor I think." Another participant, Mark, reported he actually took a job requiring relocating to a different state in part to end an unsatisfying relationship. ,

> I was in a relationship I wasn't happy in and I didn't want to go to law school right away so I figured I would go to (a) Volunteer Corp and that would send me naturally to end this shitty relationship I was in; this unfulfilling relationship. And signing up for that and not telling this young lady about it, helped end this relationship very easily. She said, "You're moving where and you didn't tell me?" And I was like, "Yeah, sorry, but that's where my priorities are…whatever."

Beth reported she broke up with her boyfriend soon after graduating resulting in several significant life changes simultaneously. In another relationship trajectory, Carter moved out of state with his girlfriend whom he had dated for less than a year deciding to embark on a new stage of living together. The relationship did not last. He recalled,

> I was very naive with the idea that there wasn't going to be any great difficulty with moving in with someone who I'd been dating for less than a year. You know in some ways it was just a complete unveiling of you know just kind of alcoholic insanity again but it was, it was tough.

Thus, several of these participants had experiences with relationships that perhaps they did not feel completely equipped to skillfully deal with at the time.

Missing CRP social support. A third subtheme was the dynamic of missing the immediacy of social support which the CRP provided. Jason recalled his experience with graduating and leaving his CRP as, "I kind of felt like I was pushed out of the nest. Not that (the CRP) forced me in a way but I graduated college and then was like, 'Oh, shit!'" Eight participants explicitly reported missing the social support of their CRP and two reported experiencing significant loneliness as a result. Jamie described her experience as, "Well, I guess no one really prepares you for just being like, 'You are cut off.' You know like once you leave

(CRP), you're done. Like…I don't know I've talked to a couple of people about it but we all kind of split up." Still maintaining contact with the community but in a different way was a challenge for some participants. Clark remarked,

> But the struggles are leaving that community and – not leaving that community because you're always a part of that community – but leaving it in a certain aspect I guess. Leaving it in a, "I'm not here all the time" sort of way. So I think losing that little bit of community is probably the biggest struggle.

In a similar fashion, Hannah commented, "I just miss like the camaraderie and everyone always being around and playing cards till late into the night and ugh, Catch Phrase until late into the night." Cassie reported a very similar experience with missing this constant availability of peers by stating,

> I mean it was fun and it was exciting and something new – I felt like it was a new stage in my life – but it was like I'm not surrounded by 70 people; there's not someone here at 3 a.m. that wants to go to the grocery store. You know and there's not all these events all the time and there's not, you know it's a big adjustment to reality; it's just not college life. So I think that was the biggest thing that I had to get used to is not being surrounded by people all the time.

Thus, the transition to this new stage of life was a vast social adjustment for many of these participants.

A natural consequence of this transition became the need to be more intentional and organized around meeting those social needs. Four participants discussed how they found they had to make more effort to have a social life in this new stage. Jamie commented on how different post-college living is in this respect by stating,

> I think that it's college life in general where you can, you know walking down the hallway and going to meet up with friends and now you have to make an effort and like some people are just not willing to make that effort. And that's really hard.

Emma framed this process as "an extra step" when she reflected on her experience with this challenge.

...and I guess when I was living on my own, I was, again it was an extra step to make that to – it was an extra step to surround yourself with community, um, I mean here it's built in. And I guess living off campus it's more of a challenge to stay in touch with people here and to build your community outside of Laudet.

Another participant, Chloe, reported how she needed to be "intentional" about making time now for her social life. She stated, "I still carve out time to be with my friends but I think I'm very intentional about that. I'm not an isolator; that's never been a problem of mine. And I'm intentional about socializing."

Hence, many of these participants experienced challenge with having to navigate relationships in new living configurations as well as how to maintain or extricate themselves from unsatisfying significant other relationships. Furthermore, the disengagement from the CRP living context resulted in a sense of loss of the immediate support and socializing and even loneliness for a few. This new configuration required more intentional acts on their parts to replace this social support.

Career Direction and Satisfaction

A fifth theme to emerge from the data for several participants was a sense of lacking clear direction in their careers or even having significant dissatisfaction in their chosen career path necessitating finding a new direction. Carter recalled how when he graduated and moved to another state he did not have a clear sense of career direction.

You know, um, I didn't really know what the hell I was doing. I mean that was a big problem, I mean I didn't have a clear sense of direction and I think I learned pretty quickly that, "Yeah, no there is something to this whole idea of going to school to get vocation training of some sort."

Closely related to this is what Brian reported finding in his experience with discovering he was not very interested in his major after graduation. He was in a job interview when the interviewer told him, "I don't want anyone working here if they're not really interested in what they're doing."

> Not once did anyone just break it down for me like that so plainly… And this position that I was going for – yeah, I had gone to school for it – but I didn't care about it. So it was just really a wake-up call. It was like, "Oh, okay, I should have gone to school for something I was really interested in and not just because somebody told me just to do this."

Caleb had a similar experience with discovering, "Yeah, finance really sucked." He then entered a graduate program in Counseling and realized, "…after being home for a while and working for a while, I found that this is what I, this is what I felt I was supposed to do. And so I ended up applying, I applied to only one program and I ended up getting in…"

Health and Mental Health Challenges

A sixth theme arising in the data was the dynamic of having to contend with significant health or mental health issues after the transition to post-college life. One participant reported that soon after getting married his wife developed some significant health issues. Alex remarked about his experience, "Well, life's hard. I mean life sucks. I'm a terrible to ask this though because in the last three years I've had more happen to me than people experience in a lifetime." Caleb reported having to move back home ending a relationship due to his father's unfortunate turn in his health. Addison remarked how much of a struggle she herself has had because of chronic fatigue resulting in, "…I drop everything when I get overwhelmed and stressed." Mental health issues were also a part of the challenges several of these participants faced. Mark found himself contending with issues on several fronts. On the one hand his sister had attempted suicide. On the other hand he himself struggled with compulsive gambling after leaving his CRP.

> My sister attempted to take her own life that year and there was a lot of stuff going on… I've struggled with the gambling addiction since I've been sober… you know the last five months I was here I gambled compulsively, really, really recklessly. And that was a bad thing obviously.

Depression was another issue participants identified as a challenge they contended with. Logan recalled how he had to be hospitalized due to adverse reactions from his medication.

> …transitionally, I had a lot of difficulty with a lot of self-care stuff.   In terms of medication it was shortly thereafter that about a year later I got back on medication and we had to change medication; I had an adverse reaction and I wound up in the psych ward for five days. And that was another wake-up call.

These themes illustrate how critical a role self-care skills played for these participants in their transition to post-college living particularly given their individual challenges.

Readiness to Leave

One of the interesting distinctions among the participants in this study is the fact that a little over half of them left their CRP prior to completion of their degree and finished their collegiate experience living off campus. Among these eleven participants, seven moved off campus to live with peers from their CRP. The dynamic of "readiness to leave" was a sixth theme within these data relating to their transition. Five subthemes arose within these discussions of readiness.

Awareness of readiness. First, was the sense or awareness of being ready to leave their CRP and experience college life in recovery in a new transitional configuration. Jamie described her readiness as combined with some ambivalence as well. "I did not want to leave but there was a part of me that wanted to leave. I had grown so much here that I was ready to do post-college life." Another participant, Cassie, recollected, "I mean when I first moved out of (CRP), I mean I was excited, I had been here for three years and I kind of felt like I was ready…" Chloe recalled that her transition followed several previous ones she had completed and was preparing for such as studying abroad. "I had transitioned out of an intensive treatment program for my eating disorder and I had a little while out of that and I was very stable at that point. You know I was ready to transition out. And then I was going to go study abroad."

No longer needing CRP support. Second, was the sense that participants had of no longer needing the CRP level of peer support. In a sense they felt they had matured beyond the need for this. Emma remarked, "I felt like I was done with living here." She further described her experience as having reached a point of stability that she no longer needed that level of support. "I needed a safe place to go until I got some of that confidence back and I guess having that safe place to go was very nice and for a while until I just didn't need it anymore."

Dissatisfaction and burnout.   Third, was dissatisfaction with the CRP or the sense of being tired or "burned out" on some of the dissatisfying dynamics within the CRP. One facet of this for one participant was being upset over the direction his CRP was taking by virtue of its growth and development. Mark remarked, "And I will admit with no pride that part of it was that I was upset at the direction (the CRP) was going in and some of the decisions that were being made about program type things. And those weren't very good reasons but I thought they were at the time." Other participants commented on how they had grown tired of some of the more dramatic aspects of CRP community living. Cassie recalled, "So, I think part of me was ready for it because I was like I'm tired of all the drama and I'm tired of all this craziness…" Dylan admitted he had reached a state of, "…I'd been a little burned out on the (CRP) program…"

Future focus.   Fourth, was a sense of moving on as a natural transition by virtue of focusing more on the future. Mark recalled, "You know part of it was just a natural transition. You know it was time to just take the next step." Hannah framed it as a natural connection to preparation for her future.

> I didn't feel like I needed to be living with people younger than me…and I didn't feel the
> need to be living on campus. Like I wanted to start thinking about life after college and
> because that house then I had the first semester of my senior year in that house which was
> a spring semester. And so I was kind of ready to start transitioning out…

Hence, this transition became a natural part of their developmental trajectory.

Peers moving on.   Fifth, was wanting to move on with one's peers as a by-product of their sense of belonging. As peers were leaving and graduating from the college and CRP, this seemed to have the effect of influencing others to want to move on as well. Chloe had this experience. "And so I was kind of ready to start transitioning out and my other friends were graduating then, so…some of them were graduating and so, 'Yeah, we'll just all move out together…'"

However, given all the identified factors of contributing to this sense of readiness, the transitional process was not necessarily well-planned and smooth for several of these participants. Hannah recalled how her transitional process occurred quickly and in a disorganized manner.

> …looking back, I don't know how that happened so fast. Looking back on it. Like we were not necessarily prepared to move, I mean obviously Laura and I were homeless for two weeks. I wouldn't have been able to move out and live by myself. I don't think I would have been ready for that. But with the people that I was moving out with I felt pretty okay even though we were so unorganized and had no plan really and had no idea what it was to rent a house. Um, the people made it okay I guess.

However, despite the disorganized process, the support of her peers seemed to play a major role in helping her make a successful transition at this stage.

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Summary of Challenges

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The data regarding the challenges participants faced with the transition out of their CRP and into post-graduation post-college living reflected multi-layered and multi-dimensional phenomena. Participants' responses illustrated how this new stage of life, not unlike the previous transition into college newly sober, required a new reconfiguration and balance of priorities, support, and social life. This new stage of adult life brought its own inherent challenges quite similar to most new college graduates such as having to find employment and

manage finances in ways they had not done prior, and navigate conflicts in relationships, romantic and otherwise. However, distinctive with this population, several of these participants reported facing the challenge of protecting their recovery while simultaneously trying to engage in the after-work, Happy Hour culture of career networking. This raised the issue of how and when to self-disclose about their own recovery. Several participants also found their chosen career to have been not the most satisfying choice leading to a reexamination of career choices and direction. Despite these challenges many participants reported experiencing these challenges as impetus for personal growth and maturity demonstrating resilience. This is reminiscent of findings in the Transformations chapter. In the next section I review how participants viewed their CRP experience as having prepared them for this transition.

CRP Help in Preparation

After inquiring about challenges they faced, I asked participants how they perceived their experiences in their CRP and its support helped prepare them for the transition to post-college living. Well over a third of the participants reported feeling like they were well prepared for this transition and did not believe their CRP could have done more to help prepare them. However, their responses regarding how their CRP experience did help seemed to echo several of the themes identified in the Trajectories and Transformation chapters but in a manner reflecting a continuation of growth and development in these areas. I summarize these themes and illustrate them with participant comments in the following subsections.

Stabilized Recovery

First, participants identified regarding how their CRP helped prepare them for the transition was in helping them to stabilize a strong foundation for their recovery. Six participants referenced this in their discussions. Anne remarked on how her CRP enabled her to do what she

could not have done otherwise in this regard by stating, "Well it gave me a fighting chance of actually staying sober because um, otherwise I think it would have been pretty difficult to put myself out there and actually do it and do what I needed to do." Another participant, Caleb, described as his CRP as helping him build a "foundational structure" for success in recovery and otherwise.

> …you know I feel like I, (the CRP) gave me all of the foundational, (the CRP) gave me the structure I needed to be able to build a strong recovery while attending and living on a college campus and being successful in school. They gave me all the structure I needed to be able to build my own recovery program so that I could go out and do whatever it was that I wanted to do and do it sober.

Emma described it as having a "safe place" where she could learn some necessary skills. "I guess when I was living here (the CRP) just provided kind of a nice safety net, um, which is definitely what I needed you know during the time I did live here. I needed a safe place to go until I got some of that confidence back…"

A significant part of this stabilization process seems to have been the accountability and support from peers and staff. Mark commented on how helpful it was for him to have extended periods of time of accountability in his own process by stating, "And I think that having to have been accountable for such an extended period of time – if you start with treatment going through leaving (the CRP), you know I lived my life accountable to others for several years." This subtheme of attaining a stable recovery through accountability to others echoes almost a completion or at least progression along the themes in the Trajectories chapter of early challenges with fear of relapse but also helpful supports coming through accountability to others.

Gaining Maturity

Second, participants reported the sense of having gained a level of maturity preparing them to successfully transition out of their CRP into post-college living. Several participants

described their experience in their CRP as a time of "growing up." Cassie described her experience as all-encompassing in this respect by stating,

> I mean it's funny because it's hard for me to point them out because I feel like I grew up so much in (the CRP). I feel like all the stuff of values and morals I learned in (the CRP) you know. It's like asking a kid, "What did your parents teach you that you carry with you each day?" It's like everything, you know.

Carter described a similar experience in this regard.

> …But yeah aside from that there was also all the experience I had learned like we talked about earlier growing as an individual that I was able to take with me as well and really was tested to apply in a very new and scary position I had managed to put myself into…

Another participant, Hannah, designated her experience as learning a lot of life skills she finds applicable to her current life.

> …but I mean everything that I learned carried over. Like the showing up for school, being on time for things, um everything, I mean I cannot even put a like name specifically things that I learned but I think you know, just life things that I learned living there. They still carry over and help now.

Kaylee described it as learning important life skills such as a certain level of independence. "I think I had learned early on how to in a way be independent with my recovery because I couldn't always go to a meeting with this person or that person. I had to go to a meeting on my own."

Similar to the previous subtheme, these factors resonate with the previous themes of lacking confidence and fears of failure in the Trajectories chapter and the growing into maturity in the Transformations chapter. However, their relationship to these previous themes seems to form a continuum or progression along these developmental dynamics.

Gaining Perseverance and Structure

Third, participants delineated quality of perseverance and following a routine and structure as a way of how their CRP experience helped prepare them. Seven participants referenced this as a helpful component. While commenting on how much of a change this was for him, Brian reflected on how he learned to never give up while in his CRP. "I didn't really

have…before I came to (the CRP) I didn't have an attitude of like, 'Never give up' kind of attitude but then after I left Alexandra and (the CRP) I carried this, 'Never give up' kind of attitude with me."

Closely related to this was the fact that participants also identified learning how to follow a routine and structure in their lives as an important component in helping them prepare. Beth recalled,

> I think that I had established a good routine while here and was very responsible with just meeting with my counselor and going to classes and I had a job and I was used to, not necessarily the nine-to-five but was used to having responsibilities and juggling things. And I had really good study habits and work ethic when I left…

Hannah framed her experience in this regard as learning to be punctual and dependable.

> …I mean everything that I learned carried over. Like the showing up for school, being on time for things, um everything, I mean I cannot even put a like name specifically things that I learned but I think you know, just life things that I learned living there. They still carry over and help now.

Another participant, Anne, summed it up poignantly as, "I learned a lot about I think like suiting up, showing up, and doing what I needed to do." Other participants (Cassie, Addison) saw this as a process which instilled in them "a good work ethic" which helped them prepare for life after college.

Again these themes connect with previous themes in the Trajectories chapter regarding feeling unprepared and needing to learn responsibility as well as the helpfulness of the accountability and structure they experienced while in their CRP. Their reports in this chapter point to growth and improvement along these lines of development which helped them in preparation for their transition. There appears to be a clear progression in these respects from their initial trajectory in the CRP and college to the end point of graduation with growth and development in between. I address this further in the analysis section.

Social Skills and Support

Fourth, having learned certain social skills and gaining support from peers were important helpful factors for participants' transition as well. Actively seeking support from others and reliance on others were significant elements here. Luke described his experience as one in which he regularly seeks support from others.

> …having a community of people both staff and peer supports – you know peer supports that I'm in regular contact with – we check things out with each other; we try to get together when we can; it's a little harder; um has been really useful. It's kind of a common thread of continuity.

Jamie viewed her friendships she had developed in her CRP as lifetime friendships which she planned to draw support from ongoing. She described it as, "I, the biggest thing that I see from it is the community, is the people. Like that's the biggest thing that I got from it and I'm so grateful for that. But I guess I mean…these are the people that I'm going to spend the rest of my life with."

Closely connected to this are the social skills participants reported having learned which helped them transition to post-college living. Wanting to build community and helping others succeed were two things participants identified. Clark remarked, "People are going to want to be around people that want to see them succeed. People want to be around people that want to build community. You bring that sense of wanting to build community people are going to be attracted to you." However, these social skills also included learning how to set boundaries with others. Addison commented, "I think that thing about trying to not be so affected by others' energy...the fact that some people's emotional stuff and energy is really intense at times and I do get sucked into that…" Furthermore, a couple of participants also cited learning how to have meaningful relationships with same-gender peers as an important factor. Jack elaborated on how this has helped him with work relationships.

> I think that the community stuff, the stuff where I'm with the other guys in the dorms and in relation with them and in community with them and figuring that out. I think was probably helpful as I started work because it's my immediate antecedent example of how to be a guy amongst guys would be (the CRP) and then work. So, I think that was useful.

Addison reported a similar experience but with her women friends. "Just like my learning how to have a schedule but learning that I need like women too in my life because I have a lot of like guy friends. And I have a lot of like women friends too."

These themes also draw a connection with earlier themes in the Trajectories chapter. Participants reported having had some challenges with connecting with peers in the CRP due to the "new kid fear." However, once they did find connections they discovered this community support to be one of the most helpful supports in their recovery. This community support continued to be important even after the transition to post-college life.

Maintaining Contact with CRP Support

Fifth, several participants cited maintaining contact with their respective CRP as an important element of support even after graduation. They framed this in several ways. Luke described it as a "common thread of continuity" that he still continued contact with and stated, "But it's still like a home base. So that's really helpful." Mark analogized this support as a "safe haven" similar to leaving his parents and their home.

> I think knowing that there was always a safe haven kind of a thing was helpful. Not that if you had asked me then, I wouldn't have admitted it to you, but I obviously always knew. But it's like your parents almost – as long as your parents aren't like horrible monsters – you can always go to your parents whether obviously there's going to be a lot of swallowing of pride and whatever… but I was obviously moving on from those things but I wasn't necessarily like leaving them behind.

Other participants accessed this support by means of maintaining contact with alumni with whom they had been members in their CRP. Anne described her alumni group as a large network of friends and support.

> I think, well…one of the big differences between me and the other people, I mean the (the CRP) alumni that I know and just people in AA who weren't in (the CRP), is that we are this giant crew of people and when we go out, I mean I can call eight people right now and guarantee that they will meet me somewhere and we'll go out and have a blast just like it was before. And I mean for example, Pride Weekend, like Andrew, Taylor, and there was literally, I mean my friend came from out of town and there was literally 18 of us that were in the program together all just like showed up and it was like my friend was looking like, "How do you even have 18 friends?" "Like, this isn't nearly 10% of them. These are like my closest."

Interestingly, one participant, Carter, who moved to another state after graduation chose to engage with a new CRP at a local university.

> There was at least something that I could connect with and in a similar way go to if need be if there were some struggles I was having. You know I at least knew that I had another sense of community waiting for me to become involved with in whatever capacity might be appropriate, so that was helpful.

Consequently, even though these were not his own peers from his CRP experience he found this still to be a community he could connect with as a valuable resource for support.

This dynamic of gaining support from a recovery community creates another connecting thread from the data in the previous chapters on Trajectories and Transformation. Community support from peers was a key element in helping establish a stable recovery as well as to initiate processes of transformation. This element of peer community support continued as a critical component in the post-college transition as well.

Leadership as Preparation

Sixth, several participants cited their leadership experience in their CRP as a helpful element of preparation for the transition. Caleb was adamant about the central role his leadership experiences were for him.

> Oh my God, and that's what, that defined that experience for me, was that Leadership… You know I feel like the thing that defined my experience in (the CRP) was I felt like it was a program that groomed its leaders. And I felt like I was groomed and I saw people around me being groomed and I feel like that is what that program should be about.

Clark delineated several ways in which his leadership experience in his CRP helped engender important qualities he has found helpful in the present time.

> I think one of the biggest things l learned and that I refer to a lot is – and I don't know, in interviews and stuff and I always refer to and that I wrote in my personal statement and stuff – who knows if they liked it, but one of the things I always talk about is developing my skills as a leader is learning how to communicate in different ways. And learning how to bring two seemingly very different groups together because you're able to communicate with each one of them in a way that sort of have them understand aspects of these two dichotomous worlds maybe.

Hence having leadership experiences and growing in leadership qualities became an important preparatory component for the transition as well. This construct also provides an ongoing theme throughout the chapters reflecting these participants' salient experiences both during and after their stay in their respective CRPs.

The data on how the CRP helped prepare participants for their transition to post-college living reflects multi-faceted and multi-dimensional processes. Participants delineated several critical individual achievements and interior qualities developed such as a stable recovery, maturity, social skills, and leadership. However, participants developed these in a context of interaction with exterior resources providing accountability and support which they maintained contact with in various forms through alumni networking and ongoing friendships. Furthermore, these helpful factors appear to interweave with the major themes identified in previous chapters highlighting important supports and significant elements in personal transformative processes. This interweaving on the surface seems to manifest a progression along a developmental continuum of growth inviting deeper analysis. I address these interweaving themes and their relationships in the analysis chapter.

Areas Requiring More Preparation

Following discussions on how they felt their respective CRP helped prepare them for the transition to post-college life, I asked participants regarding areas they felt they were lacking in

sufficient preparation. Participant responses in this realm showed overlap with the identified

challenges they experienced as well as a continuation of earlier themes. Four major themes

emerged: the responsibilities of adult living; having an established support system outside of

their CRP; feeling adequately prepared for the professional culture of the workplace; and, having

clear career goals and preparation.

Responsibilities of Adult Living

First, several participants reported having experienced a significant adjustment with

having to work full-time, deal with budgeting one's finances, and having less freedom over one's

schedule and free time. A few participants described this transition as one which is impossible to

fully prepare for beforehand. Jamie asserted, "I don't think anybody ever fully prepares…" One

participant designated this as something particularly challenging for persons in recovery and as a

"rude awakening." Anne commented, "The real world. It's a rude awakening; but I think for

anybody. I think it's amplified when you're in recovery because we are so sensitive to those

things – to change and being uncomfortable – our natural reaction is, "No, I don't want to do

this." She further observed, "I don't think there's any way to prepare somebody for that other

than just going through it – because I think everybody has to."

Participants also delineated having to budget finances and be more intentional about the

use of one's time as other factors requiring more preparation associated with this transition.

Jamie stressed,

> I mean your schedule completely changes because you're not staying up till 5am playing,
> or watching the boys play video games and then rolling out of bed for an hour class and
> then rolling back in bed. Like it's really when you have to – you have to start paying
> back student loans and budgeting your money is something really easy to do when you're
> on a really short leash with like $40 in the college sort of thing. But when you have a
> steady income and you're having to pay like for student loans and you're having to pay
> for car maintenance you know like rent and all those sort of bills – money management
> was huge; it was a HUGE lesson for me.

Chloe reflected on how different her control over her expenditure of time was compared to her

time when she was in college

> I felt like when I was in college because I wasn't working full-time even though I still
> had homework, I was able to do kind of what I wanted. Like my time was kind of my
> choosing and I chose when I could be with friends and I chose – I didn't chose when I
> would go to class because I always went to class – but that was my structure and then I
> made homework time but then the rest was whatever I was going to do and I was never
> bored; I was a very active person. But working full-time was like it wasn't, it wasn't like
> that - I mean I had, that was a tough transition. I couldn't hang out with my friends all
> the time. I was like after work I would just want to go to bed or whatever, because it was
> late. You know I would work till 11:30 and I just felt like my time wasn't my own
> anymore.

This area dealing with the responsibilities of adult living is directly reflective of the earlier

discussions on the challenges faced arising from the responsibilities of adult living.

Establishing Recovery Support outside the CRP

Second, participants also discussed the need for more preparation with having a strong

recovery support system outside of their CRP. This is primarily because of the abruptness of the

change from living within a large recovery community to living on one's own or in a much

smaller configuration of support based on earlier themes identified in this chapter. Emma

expressed this as something each individual is responsible for on their own. She asserted, "I

guess I kind of feel like if you want to succeed outside of here, it's kind of on you. And that's

something that was on me. I while I was here I made sure to build supports outside of here –

have a home group, have the meetings I go to." Alex described this need as due to the

abruptness of the transition especially if one moves away. He reflected, "…because we

graduated and we stayed here…till January and then moved…and overnight that support system

was gone." Another participant, Addison, described her sense of lack of preparation or this with

studying abroad and the significant culture shift particularly regarding recovery. She

commented, "…but there's just like no sober culture there or if there is, it's like a very religious,

evangelical, "We don't drink because you're going to hell if you drink," or like, it's an abomination."

Several participants also noted how they saw others fail in their transition and how maintaining recovery was quite different outside of the CRP. Hannah reflected on how she had seen other CRP members fail because they made their CRP as their only support. She stated, "And that's where I've seen so many people fall off is like those who were literally only staying sober because they were in this community and were not doing the actual work." Finally, in this regard Dylan recalled how he found living in recovery outside of his CRP to be notably different from inside his CRP requiring a much different skill set. He asserted, "I think my struggle was more with life…my personal life and how to work my program of recovery into real life because college is a kind of not what real life is like."

Preparation for Professional Work Culture

Third, participants also noted they needed more preparation for how to function in a professional workplace and handle the issue of self-disclosure regarding their recovery. Cassie reflected on how she found the professional work culture to be quite different from college life and she wished she had more preparation for this. She stated,

> I think well one thing that probably would have been helpful is more for like seniors…more prep for like the field that they are going into or the business world and what to expect…. but you know just more of like you know I went into the business world – like, "This is what to expect in the business world" and you know because I feel like I went into that very used to the drama in (the CRP) and college life and stuff like that and that would have been a little more helpful had I been more prepared for like a more professional approach.

Another aspect of the work culture some participants felt unprepared for was the lack of personal support for personal issues in contrast to their CRP experience. This was highlighted earlier in this chapter associated with challenges. However, in this regard, Anne commented, "…and

people don't care if you're having a bad day and don't care whether you want to drink or get

high, and don't care that your personal life isn't the greatest at the time. But you have to show

up to work…"

Closely associated with this was the sense of not being prepared for how or when to

disclose in the workplace about one's recovery. Clark found his experience applying to graduate

school challenging in this regard, particularly in the sense of not triggering stigma but rather

highlighting the positives of being a young adult in recovery.

> How to function in the professional world as a person in recovery, it's still a very delicate issue and still a very – um, and what I think of in particular is when I was applying to grad schools is what and how to talk about my recovery in a way that would benefit me so that people could see the good part about it and not in a way that could be misconstrued as like – you know it's hard to talk about being a drug addict when you want to go to grad school. How do you talk about that delicately? How do you talk about that in a way that makes people understand that, yes, I was you know a drug addict and it's a part of who I am. I am a person in recovery and what that means and so and those things are really you know we're still kind of, the jury is out on it.

One participant found when he was pre-emptive with his self-disclosure to his coworkers after

returning from treatment, he experienced positive support in return. Jack recalled,

> And what I have found is it's best for me to be very upfront and honest with them about it. I came back from treatment and I told them, "Hey, listen you guys. I have a problem with drinking and I went to treatment for it and so I'm not going to be drinking anymore. I'm going to be trying to not drink anymore." And lo and behold, you know what these guys said to me? They were like, "Well, uh, so do we need to like find other stuff to do after work because we're going to make you uncomfortable?" I mean they were, I didn't even expect it to be the response. It's not that I thought that it was going to be like uncool. I mean it just didn't occur to me that they would be concerned enough about my welfare to even ask that question.

This would most likely not be the experience in every case and participants clearly expressed the

need for more preparation on this issue of self-disclosure.

Career Goals and Direction

Fourth, participants also reported lacking a clear sense of career direction and sufficient

goal directedness in this area for finding and establishing themselves in a meaningful career after

college. For example, Jason recalled how he wished he would have utilized the career services

on his campus more and not viewed his time in the CRP and sobriety as the only goal. He

reflected,

> Yeah, I'm sure there were other resources on campus that I didn't utilize and here I'm not set back, I'm very comfortable in my career currently, you know five years later – but it's not as if I utilized those as well. If I wanted that help, I could have sought it. But for some reason it's like you know I look back at my time and ask, "What were you doing kid?" Currently five years later. "Do you not realize what comes next?" It was like (the CRP) was the finale. But it was really only just the beginning of the next chapter.

He further commented about what he sensed he was lacking as,

> Career direction. I understood very little about it. I worked full-time throughout college but they weren't necessarily career-oriented jobs… And I think I could have done a much better job of learning about internships and asking those career-oriented questions as it related to my recovery and more so what I wanted to do with my life.

 Brian expressed a similar sentiment by stating, "I should have gone to school for something I

was really interested in and not just because somebody told me just to do this… But basically

you know I was going for jobs that I didn't want, you know. And I think it showed." He further

discussed how he seemed to take the path he did for convenience without taking the time to

examine his passions. Caleb had a similar experience of dissatisfaction in finance and it was not

until he returned to graduate school for preparation for another field – being a counselor – which

he discovered, "And after being home for a while and working for a while, I found that this is

what I, this is what I felt I was supposed to do."

Summary of Preparedness

Eight participants in this study expressed either feeling that they were well prepared for

the transition and/or that their CRP could not have done anything more for their preparation.

Although a significant portion of participants expressed a sense of preparedness, there were still

several areas in retrospect which they sensed a lack of preparation. These areas echoed many of

the themes in the challenges section of this chapter relating to facing adult responsibilities, establishing recovery support beyond their CRP, being prepared for the culture and routine of professional work life, and having a meaningful career and career direction. Although several of these areas may be common with all recent college graduates, there are a few which seem distinctive to a recovering population, namely, the issues of finding adequate recovery support and navigating the disclosure of their recovery status in a workplace environment. Furthermore, several participants also reflected a heightened consciousness or awareness of their desire for greater meaningfulness attached to their work life or career.

Participant CRP Recommendations

The fourth area I queried participants about was regarding the recommendations they had for their respective CRPs to better prepare future students for the transition to post-college living. Many of their responses reflected previous themes which emerged in the challenges and areas needing more preparation sections of this chapter. However, several new themes arose as well in regards to the CRP program operations themselves. I summarize these themes in the following subsections according to participant responses.

Recovery Support Planning

First, seven participants presented recommendations focused on deliberate planning for recovery support outside of the CRP. Participants emphasized the critical importance of this component for students in recovery both while they are living in and transitioning out of their CRP. Beth commented on how in her experience her initial struggles with setting appropriate priorities with school originated from her lack of a serious personal commitment to recovery.

> I mean for me I think it would be good to recognize earlier on that when someone is having problems it's probably because they're not working a program outside of here. I know you can't assume that and it may be that their classes are really hard but for me it was so everything was tied back to not having a program of recovery.

Many participants remained strongly committed to their 12 Step approach to recovery and several saw this as approach as an exclusive best approach for students. Caleb, while discussing who would be good candidates for leadership in the CRP, emphasized choosing those candidates who were strong in their commitment to this approach. He commented, "…and I'm sure that a person being strong in the program directly correlates to a person being strong in recovery in some 12 Step program." However, a few other participants supported a broader approach to recovery support going beyond the 12 Step model. One in particular, Addison, recommended Health Realization as a helpful approach.

> And it would be cool to have like a seminar or like have, I don't know, not required social gatherings, but stuff like, "Hey, we're all expected to be at this talk on Health Realization, or Meditation."… Like opening their minds to like other ways they can find that, I don't know, because after all that, it was like you realize that you are your own worst enemy.

Underlying these recommendations seems to be the understanding that a student's success is clearly contingent upon a commitment to some form of personal recovery plan requiring support.

Along with this recommendation participants were unanimous in their recommendation that students not rely on their CRP solely for recovery support and build meaningful support outside of their respective CRP prior to graduation. Emma stated, "I guess maybe really like encouraging outside support whatever that might look like. I know that was a big thing for me." Jack framed this in terms of having more of an "outside focus" as students get closer to graduation. He asserted, "I think probably that the more, the closer that the students get to graduation, probably the more things that they ought to be doing outside of (the CRP). Sort of leaving the womb."

However, even though participants emphasized the need for students to have recovery support outside of their CRP, several advocated for alumni to be able to access post-graduation

support from the CRP staff as well. Clark described a possible configuration of periodic alumni

check-ins with their CRP counselor. He designated it as follows:

> I wouldn't want to call it Aftercare per se, but some sort of you know when you're first leaving, stay in contact with your counselor. If you're in state, set up a meet for coffee every couple months. If you're out of state, you know, call once a month or so and say, "Hey, this is what I'm doing and I'm either struggling or I don't know what to do. Can you help me?"

Another participant, Dylan, also saw the value in this approach and stated, "Now, this is a whole

new world, so let's focus on how we can assist you afterwards? Let's do some follow up; let's

do some check-ins and get people in that community involved." Consequently, ongoing support

after the CRP experience is clearly a concern participants highlighted. However, they also

viewed the support from CRP staff as a valuable resource not only during their CRP experience

but afterwards as well.

Alumni Networking

Second, a third of the participants recommended the creation of more formal structures

facilitating networking between CRP alumni and between CRP alumni and current students

within CRPs. Some participants described a special bond they feel with alumni from their CRP

and an inherent desire to help them. Jason commented,

> So many people are graduating (the CRP) each year to strengthen that alumni network. Because one thing that I know when I run into (the CRP) students in AA or wherever you know those are people that I would take my shirt off for. That sounded awful – the shirt off my back! In other words, I would give my time and energy and whatever I could to help that person. And I know I'm not the only one to feel that way because there's such a special bond and it all started for me here.

Cassie described this as a resource of support for alumni to keep checking in with each other.

She suggested,

The only other thing would be kind of like an ongoing alumni thing. You know where it's like every month or every other month it's when the alumni come and kind of just catch up and it's, "How you doing?" And just kind of like an ongoing support system and not, "Okay, you've left (the CRP) and we're done!"

Dylan framed this as a way to help new alumni connect with other alumni if they are in the process of relocation. He emphasized the importance of also having this connection in place before graduation by stating,

So if students are coming from out of town to go to school, and when you move back to home or if you get a job in a different city, then have some networks of people out there whom you can call upon. I mean it's almost like you're leaving treatment and you need to have a plan in place; you need to have something in place.

Another participant, Clark, expressed the possibility of this networking as going beyond the local and to a national level for CRP alumni in different states that CRP staff could help alumni network with as a resource.

I think of things that are like alumni networks at colleges and stuff so some sort of alumni network and I know that that kind of stuff is sort of organic and you stay in touch with people and sort of word of mouth and like when I moved to WA the staff were like, "Oh, you know we know these people. Check it out and talk to them." Some sort of more concrete alumni network where you can go and be like where you know people in recovery and maybe it needs to be a broader thing with people that are graduating from collegiate recovery programs have an alumni network that they go to and look and almost like a Linked In or something for people from CRCs who are really looking at what's out there.

This participant's comments reflect how the CRP movement is becoming a national phenomenon on college campuses and the resource they could become for students nationally.

Participants also presented alumni networking as a resource for students in CRPs prior to graduation as well. Hannah stated, "I think that the setting up alumni with current students especially the seniors, that's huge! Definitely that would be great to have." Alex reflected on his own experience with professional networking prior to his graduation and how valuable the CRP alumni network could be for current students.

And so I took it upon myself when I was in the program to go to job fairs and network with people there but also to I developed relationships with very professional people and

career types…in recovery and developed relationships that way and networked. And overnight that network just became huge because it goes back to that sense of community where it opens up this whole new door to this professional network. And I think what we need to do is make that professional network like my own personal black book more accessible to the (CRP) students.

Consequently, the CRP community of peers in this sense seems valuable as a resource not only for recovery support but as a professional networking resource as well.

Career Focus and Planning

Third, participants recommended CRPs encourage students to do more career preparation and planning. In addition to focusing on academic success, Landon recommended that CRPs have their students connect with the campus career services. "Hey, you should be a part of career services now. You're in your last semester and you should be looking forward." Addison discussed how students should be encouraged to have a bigger picture in their focus and even find ways to "shadow" professionals in their respective field of interest. She stated, "…to talk about the big picture with students and what is their plan afterward and what are their career aspirations and like what can they do now? …like shadow someone and so keeping people to be like thinking about their future and wanting to invest in that."

Professional Culture and Self-Disclosure Preparation

Fourth, participants also suggested CRPs better prepare students for the culture of after work alcohol use they will encounter, as well as how and when to self-disclose about one's recovery. The necessity of professional networking which often occurs within the context of Happy Hour arose as a significant theme earlier in this chapter. This potentially could pose a risk for new, recently graduated CRP alumni. Alex reflected on how encountered almost a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon of end of the week Happy Hours in the corporate world. He stated, "…especially entering the corporate world, every Friday night everybody is going out for

Happy Hour. And as a young professional, what do I do? And you're forced to, I mean there's

little tricks to help, like club soda and put a lime in it and people think it's a drink." Furthermore,

he found participation in these after work events to be necessary for one's career advancement.

He recalled,

> Yeah, but there's little challenges like that that actually may seem little, but in the grand
> scheme, they're epic because there were plenty of times when I just got to the point
> where I didn't want to go to the Happy Hours. And I didn't go and that impacts your
> career because you don't have that relationship with your co-workers and then you're sort
> of ostracized for it. And you know they don't understand why…

Hence, at least in this participant's experience, he found a corporate cultural expectation of

networking in Happy Hour and potential misunderstanding if one choses to not participate.

This dynamic creates the need for some level of explanation or even self-disclosure.

Jason discussed his experience and has found in his case he has found acceptance from co-

workers on the drinking issue even though he kept his self-disclosure on this issue to a minimum.

He reflected,

> …in my current position there are about three or four people in a 70 person company that
> know why I don't drink at Happy Hours or this or that. You know and it's to the point
> now where it's really a non-issue. You know I just tell people I don't like the way
> alcohol makes me feel. They don't need to know anything else besides that; they're fine
> with that answer anyway. Because I can function as a normal person whether I'm at an
> alcohol-work-related event or not, so…that's I didn't know how to do that necessarily.

He further commented on how early on he over self-disclosed on this issue but had to adjust to

the work environment as a context in which that was not necessary. Another participant, Dylan,

discussed how he felt ill-prepared for this issue as well. He commented,

> I don't know if you can train for how business is going to go but I didn't know what to
> expect from my first job out of college. And so, "How do I talk to my employer about
> this? So you've hired me and you need to know that I'm an alcoholic." And a lot of that
> falls on the individual and I should have known that…

Alex reflected on how he found it helpful to have two separate resumes reflecting his college experience, one disclosing about his recovery as a member of a CRP and another reflecting his experience without necessarily the full disclosure as a means to guard against possible stigma. He described his tactic in the context of a conversation with a friend who a potential employer had directly told him that he would never hire an "alcoholic" as follows:

> …and I talked about how when I was in school, I had two different resumes. I had one resume that spoke of all my leadership stuff in the (the CRP) Program, and then I had another resume that carefully reworded it without lying and would instead of saying, "(the CRP) Leadership Team," it would say, "Gateway Leadership Team" and things like that. But that's why I had two because I felt that there was certain people that I could talk to about it and then there were certain people that, you don't do it. And that's fine. They just don't understand but maybe one day they will.

Thus, several participants reported encountering the stigma against addiction and the lack of understanding of what it means to be in recovery in their respective work cultures as well as the need for more preparation for students on how to deal with these issues.

Finance Management Preparation

Fifth, participants recommended students receive more direct assistance on how to budget finances, manage credit card debt, and gain more knowledge of student loan payment options. These issues arose in an earlier section of this chapter relating to challenges with the transition to post-college life. Anne reflected on her experience with this topic, particularly student loans, and found it difficult to talk about while she was a student. She commented,

> …learning more about student loans – that was one thing that I felt like it's kind of taboo to talk about – the loans and the money – but we all have it so I feel like it should be talked about more openly and I wanted more of a knowledge about what my options were. But I still don't even know. Um but I've talked to other alum who felt the same thing like, "I wish I had more help."

Interestingly, even though she graduated with a significant student loan, she still sees the CRP experience as worth it. She reflected on conversations with her mother about this and stated,

Yeah, it's insane. Yeah that was something that my mom and I have discussed, "Oh, maybe it would have been better if you would have gone to Community College longer and then went to Temple a little bit and then transferred" but I don't think I would have made it. I wouldn't have made it here. And I don't think I needed the amount of time I was here for so I always laugh every month that I have to pay my astronomical student loan with the no money that I make. But every time I complain about it, my mom is like, "Yeah, but would you be alive? Would you actually be a functioning member of society able to pay a student loan?" You know what I mean, "If you didn't?"

However, the size of student loan debt still remains a salient issue greatly impacting a student's recovery after college if they cannot afford to pay back to loan or live independently without inordinate parental financial support.

Another participant, Carter, framed this issue as broader than just the CRP and more of a liberal arts approach to college education. He asserted,

I mean I think our educational system could do a better job of preparing students for kind of the practical side of adult life. You know I think there is a lot that could be said for just basic courses on things like credit card management or bill paying – you know all of these things that sort of get overlooked in the process of learning the traditional topics of school but kind of in a new changing world kind of stuff that comes up with either home ownership or renting and just all of these things and I felt like I really could have, you know I think I really could have really benefitted from getting a little heads up on, "Hey, this is going to change and this is coming down the pike you know."

Hence, this recommendation taps into a felt need for more preparation at the college level for the practical, day to day dynamics of successful adult living.

CRP Improvement Recommendations

Sixth, participants presented recommendations for CRPs in particular regarding ways the programs could improve their services and support components to better prepare recovering students for life after college. Although these recommendations reflect their own experiences from their respective CRP, they do reveal dynamics and principles applicable to most programs offering support to students in recovery especially those with a residential component. Furthermore, these recommendations also echo themes identified in several earlier discussions

on topics regarding valuable supports. The common underlying theme for all these

recommendations is the impetus to protect or improve the quality of the CRP but not necessarily

in a unanimous way as to the means to that end.

Better screening. First, a few participants suggested increasing the selectivity of student

candidates for CRPs based on their individual commitment to their recovery as well as in terms

of their academic record. Caleb advocated for his CRP to return to its earlier standards with a

heavy emphasis on 12 Step Recovery and high student accountability but also student

empowerment. He suggested,

> And if I were to give my input I would say I would love to see the program get back to its
> roots and find whatever contract that was being used when I was there and you know
> kind of reinstate that contract and kind of do an overhaul. Get the program back to the
> students; be really selective in the admissions process; really figure out who the best
> people are in the, who are the strongest people in the community are and I'm sure that the
> strongest and I'm sure that a person being strong in the program directly correlates to a
> person being strong in recovery in some 12 Step program.

Chloe expressed a similar sentiment making the distinction between simply a "dry dorm" versus

a "recovery dorm" when she stated,

> But I thought it was great when I came in that they really wanted to be sure that the
> students wanted to be in recovery and that it wasn't their parents making them go there;
> that it wasn't them just assuming that it was a sober dorm, you know that there's recovery
> involved and it's not just a dry dorm…so making sure the students' intentions are there
> for recovery.

In a similar vein but with a slightly different focus, Landon asserted that his CRP needed

to place a greater emphasis on academic standards as well as support for students. He reflected,

> And I think they need a GPA. What's the word I'm looking for, like a 3.0? Like if you
> want to be a member of (the CRP) and get this stipend and graduate from (the CRP), then
> you need to keep up a 3.0 or that kind of thing. I think there needs to be accountability in
> the education, as much accountability in the class side of it with (the CRP) as there is in
> the sobriety side. I think that would have helped a lot of the people who ended up
> dropping out, you know, because it got rough for them and they didn't know how to
> handle it. They didn't know how to face the adversity of finding out that college isn't
> just easy.

Consequently, these participants' comments reflect perspectives that the CRP as a program plays a major role in helping protect the quality of recovery in its culture as well as the support for academic success.

   Increased accountability and freedom. Second, participants also advocated for an interesting juxtaposition of increased accountability by CRPs of their students while others promoted for a more *laisse-faire*-like approach allowing students more room to make and learn from their mistakes. In terms of the accountability side, Beth reflected on how she would have been helped by earlier intervention during her time about her lack of recovery commitment. She commented, "I mean for me I think it would be good to recognize earlier on that when someone is having problems it's probably because they're not working a program outside of here." Another participant, Jamie, recalled how much she needed to learn how to structure her time and life. She advocated, "More activities. You know ideally these things would have helped me if I had actually gone to them. But… more rules. I guess the biggest thing is some sort of way to create structure because I could not do that on my own." Chloe emphasized how important immediate accountability is for students including drug-testing. She stated,

> I think taking strict action if, because I think a lot of people would love a program like this and it's sad that spaces get taken up by people who are using or like, don't ever stop the drug-testing thing! Don't stop doing that. Don't stop having standards for people.

   On the other hand others recommended allowing more freedom for students so they could learn from their mistakes in a supportive environment. Carter recalled,

> Well, I do remember when we were on Leadership I was very much in favor of kind of the approach of "hands off" of raising students. And you know I think for me that was helpful and in a way continuing to do what (the CRP) is doing in kind of providing this space that students need in order to grow as individuals and make the necessary mistakes was a very helpful thing for me.

However, this participant also acknowledged that there can be the tendency for young adults in recovery to resist doing what they do not want to do. He further commented, "You know it's tough especially when you're dealing with alcoholics and addicts you know they're never going to do a damn thing they don't want to do." Yet despite this, he still advocated for the CRP being a supportive environment similar to a parental structure that allows students to make mistakes in a supportive environment with opportunities to learn from them. He remarked,

> And you know regardless of what it is I think the wrong approach is to try to pressure anyone into doing anything because you know how that plays out especially with adolescent alcoholics. You know I would say to continue to provide that space and kind of be that loving, hands off parent that isn't afraid to let their kids experiment and make mistakes.

Consequently, these participants' recommendations reflect a desire for CRPs to be places with firm accountability and structure but balanced with freedoms in a context of support providing opportunities for students to grow and learn from slip-ups in judgment and behavior.

Increased leadership opportunities. Third, participants also advocated for a broader array of opportunities for students to participate in leadership roles in their CRPs. These recommendations underscore the value they saw in gaining experience in these capacities. Participants emphasized the importance and value of leadership experience within their CRP several times throughout the interviews. Brian summarized it well when it stated,

> I was very lucky because I got put into leadership roles and stuff like that. And not everybody got to be in those roles and you know all of these experiences that I had, you know with dealing with people – you know with like kind of the go between - between students and staff and all that stuff – it really, it prepared me for a lot of things.

Consequently, Jamie advocated for more prospects or encouragement for students in CRPs to get involved with some leadership opportunities. She remarked, "More opportunities for everyone to get involved in some type of leadership position." Logan recommended that CRPs encourage students to take leadership positions who would not necessarily be the kind who would naturally

volunteer for these positions and who would most benefit from these experiences. He poignantly remarked,

> …in terms of Leadership Committee, don't pick the guy who is just the asshole on the top of the pile… I would encourage you to challenge students that may not be kids that go, "Oh yeah, I want to be on Leadership Team" to be on leadership team because they're not going to be the ones out there trying to be buddy-buddy with everyone. They're going to say either, "Yeah this is cool or this isn't."

Hence, participants viewed their leadership experiences as not only an important component of their personal growth and development while in the CRP but for success in post-college life as well.

Special gender-based programming. Fourth, one participant suggested that CRP programs offer programming and activities specifically for women. Anne recalled with her experience how helpful she thought a Women's Retreat would have been for her community. She reflected,

> But one thing I would have really liked to see which I was disappointed about was that I heard a while before I came that they used to have all the girls go on a Women's Retreat and the boys go on a Men's Retreat. And I know that we had things about gender and things like that, but I just really felt like that aside from all that B.S. people could decide which one to go on if it was really that big of a deal. I think we really missed out by trying to be politically correct that we didn't do that and I know that a lot of, especially the girls, really wanted to do that. And we kind of did it on our own but I feel like it would have been cooler to have it be more inclusive sponsored by (the CRP)…

Although during her time the CRP did not offer a specific gender-specific event, her community of women still found some ways to try to do it on their own to some degree. This reflects an emergent tendency of subgroups within the CRP community to create cohesion even in the face of institutional attempts to be "politically correct" creating unintended consequences of obstacles to cohesion.

Retaining the human element. Fifth, another participant made some salient observations about his CRP regarding the dynamics of its size and ability to provide

accountability combined with its sensitivity to student struggles. Logan noted how as his CRP

had increased in size, the accountability appeared to decrease showing an inverse correlational

relationship. While discussing tracking the recovery progress of students as the program

expanded, he commented,

> Like I understand that there's a need to fill the spots, because guess what, otherwise, you're not going to be able to continue as you are but there's a certain point where like it's easy to show up and be a face in the crowd. Do you know that every one of the 72 people are going to two meetings a week? No, you don't know that. Well, what Step are you on? Three? Cool. How long have you been on that one? Where it's like that level of accountability diminishes when you have that many people.

Combined with this he also remarked on what he saw as a need for the program to be more

compassionate and humane with its procedures of accountability. He stated, "I'd increase the

human element. You know. Understand that people make mistakes and our past actions don't

always define our future ones." Furthermore, he raised an important issue regarding the need for

the CRP to be clear on its identity and purpose as it continued to grow in size. He remarked,

> Are we treating this like a corporation or are we doing this because there's a need for this? You know, what's the point? You know are you coming at it from a corporate aspect where we need to fill these spots in this dorm, or you know like, what are we doing here? Are we doing recovery or are we doing college well in recovery or are we padding the bottom line…?

These are important issues for CRP staff to consider regarding the size and quality of their

programs and the relationships and unintended consequences between these variables.

Expanding program support and awareness. Finally, several participants

recommended increasing the breadth of support access for CRP students as well as the campus

awareness and CRP involvement with campus-wide influence. Landon remarked on how

important awareness of and access to campus-wide resources are for students in recovery. He

commented,

I think that any recovery program should be well aware of all the resources on campus that students can tap into like tutoring, again career services, and all those areas of different support. And I should just be able to walk into the CLEAN office and they should be handed a sheet saying, "Here are the resources that you are either going to want to tap into while you're here"…

Reflecting another perspective, Kaylee advocated for initiatives that would help educate the campus about the CRP and recovery in part to help reduce stigma. She remarked,

…definitely, and I know this is stuff we had talked about in the committee, reaching out to the campus…. I think that's, well not necessarily to spread awareness about who we are and what we do, but spread awareness about our name! You know that we're not stiffs and we're not drunks… so getting out to the community and student body because I know there are so many students that need help and either don't know where to go or how to get there or who, or they're afraid or whatever… and just to get it out and say, "This is a place where you're welcome"…

Hence, this participant viewed her CRP as having potential not only to support its members but also be a potential resource of support for the greater campus as well manifesting a bi-directional positive influence.

Summary of Participant Recommendations

The data findings on participant recommendations to better prepare recovering students for the transition to post-CRP and college life reflected several previous themes regarding challenges and areas needing further support. However, several other themes arose with the recommendations reminiscent of criticisms participants raised regarding their CRPs in the Trajectories chapter. What seems most salient with the recommendations is the underlying theme that although the CRP plays a critical support role while in college, by itself it does not provide a sufficient support for a successful transition to post-college living for students in recovery. In light of the broader context of challenged participants reported with this transition, engagement with outside recovery support is also necessary as well as preparation for other adult living skills and dealing with potential stigma in the real world outside the CRP.

Participant Reflections on the Interview Experience

During the latter third of the interviews I began to wonder how participants were experiencing the detailed reflections on their experiences as students in recovery. Thus, at the end of the interviews with the last third of the participants I asked them regarding their experience with reminiscing about their experiences with the questions asked in this study. In a way it formed a phenomenological reflection on their own recollections. Three major themes emerged in these discussions.

First, most participants reported this was a positive experience for them. For example, Chloe commented, "Yeah, so it's cool to look back and be sitting here and be thinking about that and it makes me super grateful for (the CRP) to have this place because I don't know what college would have been like for me without (the CRP)." She further commented on how this interview helped her to see her own growth trajectory by stating,

> I think it's cool. It's a really great reflection to see how far I've come and how much support I've had through (the CRP) and lots of other resources. Um, to really think about the transformation that has occurred since I first moved in… until now like a full-time, independent, working woman.

Thus, the focused interview experience led this participant to be grateful for the progress she saw she had made through her time in her CRP.

Second, several participants noted how the interview experience benefitted them in several specific ways. Jack reflected on how recalling his experiences helped him to reinforce more empathy for himself and to not necessarily have to relearn some previous painfully learned lessons. He remarked,

> It's good for me… It's been enough time that I can think about that and really feel kind of empathetic for that person back then and kind of feel like man, that was painful, but that was just not, there was just nothing that could have been done differently about that at that point about it. But I guess the big take away is that you know, come what may, those specific mistakes are not mistakes that I need to re-venture down.

Another participant, Carter, found that the experience helped him to reconstruct his memories of

his time in a more positive and honest manner. He reflected,

> …you know, it's brought up a lot. It's been great. Actually, it's forced me to think about these questions in a way that I haven't in a long time… But this has helped me to do it in a constructive way – you know to try and give an honest reflection on what the experience was really like and after having been away from it for a while I think my perception of it has changed a bit. Hopefully, you know to be a little more honest (laugh); a little bit more than I would have been when I was in the middle of it.

Caleb found that the interview helped him to be more realistic about his experiences in his CRP

as he admittedly tended to over idealize his experiences due to the tremendous impact it had on

his life trajectory. He remarked, "…well I have a really kind of a romantic like an idea of that

time. You know to just get nostalgic about thinking about my time in (the CRP). It was honestly

the most important time in my life you know."

Third, although participants found their interview experience to be mostly positive and

beneficial, several commented on how the experience was also mixed emotionally, or "bitter-

sweet." Hannah remarked, "Bitter sweet. Bitter sweet because I do miss it. It makes me miss a

lot of people, a lot of people. But really great to just reminisce." Landon expressed a similar

sentiment but with a slightly different emphasis by stating, "Well, it's not melancholy but it's

kind of got me missing it. Yeah, it's kind of got me reminiscing wishing I was back there. I

wish it was 2010 again. I wish I could repeat a couple years up there." Finally, Kaylee framed

her reflection which seemed to provide an excellent summary of the totality of so many of the

participants by asserting,

> …kind of good, bad, bitter sweet. You know just because, I have, you know it's been a long, long trip. It's really like seven years there and a lot, so much stuff has happened – um, a lot of learning experiences, good and bad. You know I don't think I would necessarily trade any of it, um, I think it all worked out the way it was supposed to work out. I mean yeah, there were good times and some bad times, and I think I came out on the good end for sure.

Thus, the totality of her and others' experiences were both good and bad in many ways but in the end, they benefitted and grew from all the experiences.

Summary of Transition Experiences

The data on student transitions to post-college living provided another purview into the dynamics of their experiences further along the continuum of their journey as emerging adults in recovery. The challenges they faced seemed quite similar in many ways to what most new college graduates would encounter. Dealing with relationships, trying to manage finances, and searching for employment are common. However, the participants in this study given the additional dimension of their recovery from addiction, faced some distinctive challenges. These consisted of finding a healthy life balance so to remain engaged with their recovery as well as replacing the recovery support which the CRP provided while in college. The recovery-distinctive areas reflecting a lack of preparation, also cited in the recommendations data, consisted of learning to deal with a corporate culture of after work Happy Hour networking. This presented a potential threat to their recovery as well as the need for the skill of appropriate self-disclosure regarding their recovery. Furthermore, several participants expressed a desire for more significance and meaning in their careers which they did not pay sufficient attention to while in college when deliberating on career direction and choices.

In general the data in this chapter reflect an underlying continuum of challenges, supports, and areas of growth these participants experienced requiring further analysis and synthesis. The main areas of inquiry I pursued in this study fit well into a temporal continuum of entry in the CRP (trajectories), living in the CRP (transformations), and life after the CRP (transitions). The needs and hence, challenges of participants necessarily changed throughout each of these phases requiring new strategies and supports. For example, the experience of

community and peer support within the CRP served as critical components for success for students while in their CRP but afterwards, they needed to find new configurations and resources for this support and experience of community. Some factors remained the same such as continuing to network with peers as alumni but others changed given the new life context. All of this represents a complex interplay of various components contributing to either success or struggle and failure. What emerged is a variable role for these important components during the various phases of these participants' journeys in recovery at this stage of their lives. The next chapter provides analysis of these variables and components and their respective roles and adaptations as well as in the context of innovative theoretical application.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS OF DIMENSIONAL THEMES

The purpose of this study has been to identify and deeply examine the factors and dynamics which enabled participants in this study to experience success both during college and the transition to post-college life as young adults in recovery from alcohol and drug dependence. I organized my research design around investigating three major thematic dimensional categories with the participants. The first was their trajectories going through college as members or Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) and much of what that entailed included their greatest challenges, most valuable supports, their experience of community, and their best and worst experiences. The second thematic category was their experience with personal transformation and what they learned from challenges as well as the assumptions they recalled that needed to change in order for them to be successful. The third thematic category focused on how they felt prepared or ill-prepared for a successful transition to post-college living and what role their experience in their respective CRPs played or did not play in helping them with that transition.

Kegan (1994) analogized the demands of contemporary culture as a school and its expectations upon its members as a curriculum. This raises important implications for this study given students in recovery are attempting to find successful means to navigate that curriculum while living in a culture that is risky for their recovery in the contemporary college context. Kegan made an especially poignant observation regarding this analogy together with his theory of consciousness development by stating, "It will enable us to consider the fit, or lack of fit, between the demands our cultural curriculum makes on our consciousness on the one hand, and our mental capacities as 'students' in this ongoing school on the other" (p. 7). This underscores the significance of those salient factors and processes that enabled these students to complete a college degree successfully and keep their recovery intact while also transitioning to being

healthy and productive adults leading meaningful lives. This also raises the issue of examining the issue of "fit" for these students as they attempt to pursue a college degree in a recovery-risky environment as a feature of the analysis for this study.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the data findings of participants' experiences with their trajectories, transformations, and transitions to post-college living through primarily a Phenomenological framework to illumine the essence of how they found success through those thematic dimensions. I present the results of this analysis delineating the emergent themes and comparing them with various methodologies. I also examine these themes further with innovative application of several theoretical frameworks helping to provide additional understanding to the "essences" of those experiences.

The Dimensions of Student Success

Researchers have used multiple constructs to define college student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek, 2006). The most common ones relate to quantifiable attainment indicators such as grades, persistence to sophomore year, length of time to degree completion, and graduation. More complex constructs consist of measuring student satisfaction and comfortability with respective learning environments in addition to variables related to student developmental outcomes. Many of the developmental outcomes relate to critical thinking, writing proficiency, and high levels of personal functioning and social competence as well as self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of purpose. In summary, Kuh, et al. (2006) defined student success as, "…academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post college performance" (p. 7). Kuh, et al. (2006) argued for broadening indicators of student success to apply to the varied range of contemporary students.

This is principally relevant to this study focused on college students in recovery and what might comprise indicators of success for this particular population. Hence, there is a strong basis of research defining student success beyond simply grade point averages and graduation rates.

An additional aspect of research on student success supporting the methodological dimensional structure for this study is the framework Kuh, et al. (2006) used to conduct their substantial literature review on student success research. These investigators employed a framework of three major dimensions for the analysis of the literature. The first was pre-college experiences focused on factors and conditions influencing preparedness for college. The second was student behaviors related to study habits, peer relationships, and other factors. The third was institutional conditions such as campus environment and supports helping to facilitate or inhibit student success. At the intersection of these dimensions is the factor of student engagement in their collegiate experience. This framework parallels the thematic dimensions I used for this study examining trajectories, transformations, and transitions to post-college living.

Analysis of Trajectories

I begin this chapter with an analysis of the data findings regarding participants' experiences with Trajectories and the various levels and mechanisms of success they found. I examine how learning self-control and social connection to the CRP community played central roles in helping participants find success. I also explore the various trajectories participants experienced as students in recovery in their respective CRPs.

The Challenges of Finding Self-Control and Social Connection

The overall arching themes in the data regarding challenges presented a thematic construct of finding individual self-control as well as connection with others within the CRP community for support. An important step in phenomenological analysis is identifying the

underlying themes or contexts accounting for the emergence of particular phenomena

(Moustakas, 1994). As a means to that end after identifying the most frequent co-occurrence of

subthemes related to challenges, I connected these themes with the developmental domains of

intrapersonal and interpersonal categories. The following table illustrates the co-occurrence

frequency of the top-five subthemes with their respective developmental domains:

Table 7.1: Challenges Subtheme Co-Occurrence with Thematic Domains

Code Subtheme	Frequency	Developmental Domain	Sub-domain
Adjustment to new freedoms	12	Intrapersonal	Behavior/skill-based
Finding balance and priorities	11	Intrapersonal	Behavior/skill-based
Fear of relapse	11	Intrapersonal	Affective/perceptual
Fear of failure/lack of confidence	8	Intrapersonal	Affective/perceptual
Fitting in socially	12	Interpersonal	Social connection

This table illustrates how the most frequently cited challenges occurred in the intrapersonal

realm related to finding self-control and second, finding connection in the social realm. The

intrapersonal challenges reflect both behavioral, skill-based focus of learning how to function in

an environment with new freedoms while simultaneously finding ways to establish balance and

necessary priorities to effectively meet the demands of college life in recovery. Maintaining

one's recovery as well as learning to function responsibly were the predominant themes.

However, the intrapersonal challenges also reflect an affective/perceptual domain of dealing with

the fear of relapse and lack of self-confidence in one's ability to succeed. Hence, the challenges

reflect more than just the needed acquisition of skills but also a transformation of mind in terms of one's affective and perceptual views of oneself. Furthermore, the interpersonal challenges of need for social connection relates directly to one of the most frequently cited valuable supports, which the next section of analysis will show.

Expanding Contexts of Support

The data findings and subtheme co-occurrence frequency shows a dynamic of expanding contexts of support which participants experienced and valued as important. The data findings show that these supports were critical factors in helping participants find success. I listed the salient subthemes participants identified with their relative frequency based on the *Dedoose* data analysis in connection with each subtheme's context of emergence in the following table:

Table 7.2: Support Frequency with Context of Emergence

Valuable Supports	Frequency	Context of Emergence
Peer support	23	Peer-based
CRC community	15	Peer-based
Counselor support	22	Program-based
CRP structure and accountability	17	Program-based
Leadership experience	7	Program/peer-based
Faculty support	13	Institution-based
Institutional support	10	Institution-based
Alcoholics Anonymous	10	External community-based

The co-occurrence of subthemes in this section reveals that participants valued fairly equally the support they gained both from their peers as well as their CRP program and staff. Their peers and the community of peers played important roles as did the structure, support and accountability they received from their counselors and CRP. This emphasis of the importance of peer support makes sense in context given the subtheme of finding social connection in the previous section on challenges. However, factors within the institution beyond the CRP played important roles as well – relationships with faculty and other institutional resources for support. Finally, recovery support from outside of their respective CRP, namely Alcoholics Anonymous, served an important role in the experiences of many participants in this study. This listing of important supports seems to form an ever-expanding matrix of different contexts of support emerging from the most specific locale of peers within the CRC and expanding out to the CRP and then the institution and finally reaching out to external support with AA creating a broadening context of support in various expanding contexts.

Theoretical Validation

The Bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, 1977) provides a helpful lens to validate and further explore the expanding contexts of supports revealed in this data. Bronfenbrenner (2005) postulated that human development occurs through several processes. First, it occurs through a process of increasingly complex reciprocal interactions between the person and his/her environment. Second, the direction, form, content, and power of these developmental processes vary systematically based on the characteristics of both the person and his/her environment. The developmental outcomes under consideration and the social dynamics of the individual's particular life course and historical context play important influential roles as well. Third, in essence then, there is a dynamic reciprocal interaction and

influence between the person and his/her own developmental context. Bronfenbrenner (2005) summarized it as follows: "In sum, the relations between an active individual and his or her active and multilevel ecology constitute the driving force of human development" (p. xix).

The application of these concepts to students in recovery living in CRPs is clear. The participants in this study were clear on the efficacious value of the supports they received while in their respective CRPs having a positive impact on their developmental trajectory while in college. However, the reciprocal nature of their influence on their CRP as a community was clear as well. The CRP and their peers were important resources of support but they could also be a source of challenge and difficulty particularly when peers were reluctant to change or actually returned to addictive substance use. The quality and culture of the CRP seemed very dynamic based upon the various levels of functioning of its members.

A second informative aspect of Bronfenbrenner's developmental model is his conceptualization of the ecological environment. Bronfenbrenner (1977) viewed this environment as a "nested arrangement of structures" in which each level was contained within each successive level (p. 514). He proposed that environmental features bringing about developmental change could either be "proximal" (in immediate setting) or "distal" (beyond immediate setting). He conceptualized these contexts as follows: (1) The *Microsystem* – the structures and processes in the immediate setting in which the individual engages in particular roles and activities; (2) the *Mesosystem* – the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person; (3) the *Exosystem* – the linkages and processes between two or more settings with at least one setting not normally containing the developing person; and, (4) the *Macrosystem* – the overall culture or "pattern of ideology and organization" of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture (2005, pp. 80-81). He also

further clarified that the Macrosystem does not refer to a particular context but rather the "prototypes" or "blueprints" that set the patterns for structures and activities within various contexts (1977, p. 515).

The data of participant experiences regarding challenges and valuable supports seems to organize itself quite nicely within Bronfenbrenner's framework of "nested environments" or in this case, nested contexts of support. Each level is included and transcended by the following level. The CRP and its community of students forms the *Microsystem* in which participants engage in roles as students and co-members of a recovery community providing each other support while trying to meet the challenges of college life. The *Microsystem* also consists of the CRP program and staff as well as its structures and systems for accountability. The immediate proximal broader context transcending the CRP is the college institution, its faculty and other resources which students interact with and gain support from forms the *Mesosystem* in the nested contexts framework. The broader community of contexts beyond the immediate college context such as community AA support and even workplace and internship settings, form the distal factors of influence comprising the *Exosystem*. Finally, the *Macrosystem* would represent in this context the "blueprints" forming the ideologies, policies, and practices regarding how higher education institutions address the issue of substance abuse (AOD) on their respective campuses and how they view students in recovery from addiction disorders and whether they offer them organized support. The following graphic illustrates this framework of nested contexts of support as the data reflects in these participants' experiences:

Figure 7.1: Nested Contexts of Support
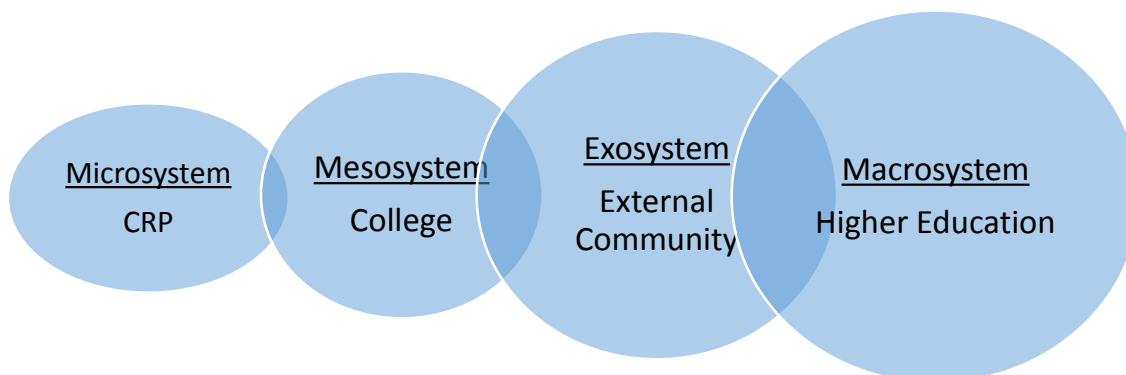
Microsystem	Mesosystem	Exosystem	Macrosystem
Peers	Faculty	Alcoholics	Higher Education
Counselors	College resources	Anonymous	Response to AOD
CRP Community	College opportunities		
Structure/Accountability			
Leadership			

The Central Role of Community

Viewing the co-occurrence frequency of most valuable supports shows that participants reported community as playing a central role in their experiences particularly when seen in the context of peer support. The analysis of how community was experienced, fostered, and potentially hindered by obstacles reveals some significant dynamics as the following table illustrates:

Table 7.3: Community Factors Frequency

How Experienced	How it's Built	Frequency	Obstacles	Frequency
Belonging and inclusion in commonality (7)	Peer and CRP activities	23	Peer immaturity	2
	Hanging out with peers	10	Peer reluctance to change	1
	Peer support and accountability	10	Romantic relationships	2
	Living in residence with peers	8		
	Authenticity and vulnerability	8		
	Peer leaders	7		

Several things stand out with the subtheme co-occurrence in this section of data on community. First, a third of the participants described their experience of community as a sense of belonging and feeling included within the community based on a commonality of experiences with their recovery from addiction. Jamie described this experience poignantly when she reflected,

> It's one of those things that you hear in like your first thirty days in meetings like, "No one understood me!" and then you can sit down with another alcoholic and tell them your deepest, darkest secret and that person can look at you and say, "Me too." You know it is the most validating and magical experience that one can have and I still experience it. And uh, living with, you know 60 other alcoholics at the time, like we got each other; we understood.

That commonality of experience with another person in recovery while describing intimate details of one's experience seems to be one of the most salient foundations for a sense of community among these participants' experiences. Second, the above statement also illustrates how authentic vulnerability, sharing one's "deepest, darkest secret," can be extremely validating in the process of building community. Third, worth noting is how frequent day to day living

experiences living together, "hanging out," and engaging in both peer generated and program

sponsored activities seemed to play a significant role in fostering community. Fourth, not only

peer support but also peer accountability played a role in this sense of fostering community with

these participants. Thus, it appears that both the positive support as well as the challenging

experiences of being held accountable by others played an important role in this dynamic. Fifth,

activities, whether peer driven or program sponsored, played a very salient role in the building of

a sense of community given participants referenced this more frequently than any other variable.

Finally, the role of peers in community seemed to play a dual role in several participants'

experiences. They identified peer support as an important component for community but also

referenced peer immaturity and reluctance to change as salient obstacles to community. This

illustrates how the environmental context of the CRP can change based on the quality of

interactions between members of that community.

The Duality of Experiences

The data participants reported regarding best and worst experiences while in the CRP

when viewed within a frequency co-occurrence framework illustrates the duality of many of the

salient factors identified throughout this study. Viewing this data within the context of its

thematic domain is also helpful. The following table displays the subtheme co-occurrence

frequency in this area:

Table 7.4: Best and Worst Experiences

Best Experiences	Domain	Worst Experiences	Domain
Peer social activities (27)	*Interpersonal*	Conflicts with peers (22)	*Interpersonal*
Lasting friendships (8)	*Interpersonal*	Peer relapse (20)	*Interpersonal*

Table 7.4 Continued

		Personal struggles (19)	*Intrapersonal*
Developmental fun (10)	*Inter/Intrapersonal*		
Recovery-oriented activities (8)	*Inter/Intrapersonal*	Poor choices (14)	*Intrapersonal*
CRP Activities (6)	*Programmatic*	Criticisms of CRP and staff (11)	*Programmatic*

These data illustrate how interactions within the interpersonal domain with peers help form the basis for the most frequently cited best activities. At the same time they are almost as frequently cited as a source of conflict forming the basis for worst experiences as well. The result is an apparent duality of experience with this phenomenon. The same dynamic appears present to some degree with the experiences with the CRP itself from a programmatic domain perspective. As valuable as CRP activities are as creating some of the best experiences for participants, there were also criticisms and dissatisfactions with some of the program components and its staff. The duality of these components becomes even more striking when viewing the subtheme co-occurrences from an aggregated perspective by comparing the salient themes with the perspectives of the various thematic domains. The following table illustrates the distribution of these themes with their respective co-occurrence frequency:

Table 7.5: Experiential Domain-Aggregated Themes

Experiential Domain	Supports	Building Community	Best Experiences	Obstacles to Community	Worst Experiences
Peer experience	Peer support (27)	Peer support and accountability (23)	Peer social activities (23)	Peer immaturity (2)	Conflicts with peers (22)
Community experience	CRC community support (15)	Living with peers (8) Hanging out with peers (10)	Making lasting friendships (8) Developmental Fun (10)	Peer reluctance to change (1) Romantic relationships (2)	Relapse and community impact (20)
Staff experience	Counselor support (22)				Criticisms of CRP and staff (11)

This table reveals how several of the salient experiential domains for these participants formed the basis for some of their most valuable supports and best experiences as well as obstacles to the critical component of community and worst experiences. For example, the "peer experience" domain as a source of valuable support and building community was paramount given the frequency of the co-occurrence of those themes. However, conflicts with peers and peer negativity and immaturity were also salient realities within the CRP context providing the basis for some of the participants' worst experiences as well as presenting obstacles to community. One can see a similar dual-dynamic with the experiential domain of community itself. This component was critically important as a source of support and formed the basis for the essential dynamic of forming lasting social friendships while simultaneously presenting a threatening dynamic of risk when peers relapsed. Another interesting observation is how the dynamic of support from CRP staff was one of the most frequently cited areas of valuable support while concurrently also not being without criticism forming the basis of one of the areas of worst experiences.

Theoretical Validation – Chaos and Complexity Theory

What can one make of these apparently conflicting dynamics of best and worst, support and obstacles in participant experiences with these various experiential domains? The research to date on the role of peers and community as elements of social support in CRPs has been clear that these constitute some of the most salient components for helping students in recovery succeed (Cleveland, Baker, Harris, et al., 2007; Laudet, et al., 2014; Misch, 2009; Smock, et al., 2011; Terrion, 2012; Watson, 2014). However, research appears scant on the other side of this equation regarding the negative and stressful dynamics arising within these contexts of support. This data may provide some insight into this other side of the equation.

A particularly helpful theoretical lens through which to view and interpret these findings is Chaos and Complexity Theory. This perspective helps to see the CRP as a dynamic, complex, and at times seemingly chaotic, nested context of support. Furthermore, one can also see how these turbulent dynamics play an important role in the developmental process for both the members of the CRP and the CRP as a whole.

Contribution to psychology and deciphering human behavior

Researchers and clinicians alike have recognized that human development is a messy process. Butz (1996) commented, "Development is a process difficult and many times a confusing process where organisms transform…the process may be painful and even feel chaotic, but on the other side of it is a new adaptation" (p. 239). In terms of the main contribution of chaos and complexity theory to the social sciences, Butz further noted, "We have entered a new era, an era where we just might have found the right mix of science and, for the lack of a better term, humanness" (p. xvii). Chaos and Complexity Theory are umbrella terms for diverse groups of

theory interested in nonlinear phenomena. Lewin (1999) summarized the role of this theoretical orientation within scientific disciplines as follows:

> Complexity science offers a way of going beyond the limits of reductionism, because it understands that much of the world is not machine-like and comprehensible through a cataloguing of its parts; but consists instead mostly of organic and holistic systems that are difficult to comprehend by traditional scientific analysis (p. x).

One can claim the same for human development as a process. Adaptation and development are non-linear processes. Furthermore, these approaches offer validation for the ideas that change on the behavioral level is a process interrupted by periods of instability and provide an avenue for "more holistic concepts of the change process" (Butz, p. 3).

Theoretical distinctions

Several distinctions need clarification before delving into the application of this theoretical lens. First, although there is still debate within the scientific community whether "Chaos Theory" is truly a science, the term, "chaos," is really a misnomer because it denotes how phenomena appear from a linear scientific perspective. While phenomena may appear chaotic and random on the surface, this perspective argues that there is an emerging order or pattern within the apparent randomness. Second, Complexity Theory as a challenge to the reductionist parsimonious focus of science, arose as an outgrowth of Chaos Theory. Its central premise is that systems adapt to environmental demands and evolve into more complex levels of development by balancing at the edge of chaos (Butz, 1996; Lewin, 1999). These theoretical distinctions are especially important with the application to understanding the duality of dynamics with participants as members of CRPs.

Basic principles

Several key basic principles within Chaos and Complexity Theory are particularly relevant to understanding the dynamics participants in this study experienced within their respective CRPs.

These principles highlight the ostensible dynamics of instability and progression towards more stable periods of growth and functioning. I summarize these combined with their application to understanding the complex dynamics within CRPs.

Stability and instability. The first key principle is stability which as a concept is central to understanding the process of change particularly in relationship to instability. Instability denotes the state in which change is either immanent or in actual occurrence. Stability signifies the state after change has occurred or will occur in the future (Butz, 1996). According to Butz, theories of chaos and complexity assert, "systems are both inherently stable and unstable" (p. 9). Participants in this study described their experiences within their CRPs as having fluctuating periods of both stability and instability. Peers and friendships seemed to change as time passed, sometimes for the better and other times for the worse. Social turbulence was common. Mark recalled, "one of my roommates, my actual roommate, - I'm trying to remember – so my actual roommate got kicked out four days after I got here." Addison described the difficulty she experienced with instability in her friendship circle by stating,

> I was really close with like Kate, Natalia, Frankie, and Sophia, and I feel like Kate, Natalia and Sophia after that Natalie got kicked out, Kate was on a very different plane of priorities and Sophia also just, I don't know I felt like our little group up in that corner kind of disbanded and so yeah, I was looking for new people to hang out with.

Thus, even though friendships formed one of the most valuable supports for these participants, these social relationships could also be subject to turbulence and instability.

Dynamic of self-organization. A second key principle within these theories is that systems as complex organisms self-organize through processes of adaptation in an evolutionary fashion. Waldrop (1992) commented on how complex, self-organizing systems are qualitatively different from static, non-living entities such as computer chips or snowflakes in that, "Complex systems are more spontaneous, more disorderly, more alive than that. At the same time,

however, their particular dynamism is also a far cry from the weirdly unpredictable gyrations known as chaos" (p. 12). Theorists have described this evolutionary process as occurring through three states – stability, bifurcation, and chaos. According to Butz (1996), the bifurcation state indicates that the system has grown less stable due to internal or external influences and it appears as turbulence. The issue is whether this occurs as a random state, a new phase of "unusual stability," or is a part of the evolution of the system (p. 11). Complexity Theory provides the distinctive claim that actually systems evolve by finding a balance point between order and chaos. Waldrop (1992) stated, "The edge of chaos is the constantly shifting battle zone between stagnation and anarchy, the one place where a complex system can be spontaneous, adaptive, and alive" (p. 12). Furthermore, this innate tendency to self-organize is an evolutionary process that can lead to more complex and adaptive forms of order. Thus, the "chaotic transitory period" plays a critical role in this process (Butz, p. 16).

One can make several applications to the understanding of CRPs as complex, dynamic systems. First, the myriad of social and recovery dynamics occurring within the community influenced the shift from stability to bifurcation and chaos in terms of the dynamics within the CRP. This helps to illumine how participants recalled a duality of experience with their peers and the community supports. On the one hand, they experienced stable components of peer support helping them with their recovery while also encountering negativity and immaturity as well as relapse amongst their peers. Second, the descriptors of "stagnation" and "anarchy" are great metaphors for the challenges these participants faced while navigating their challenges as students in recovery. If a significant part of the community were to return to addictive substance use, "chaos" and "anarchy" would be great descriptors for the dynamics that would quickly ensue. However, at the other end of the spectrum, "stagnation," would also not be an ideal state

of living presenting risk for return to use as well. The implication seems to be that CRPs as a

community need to find a balance between these two dynamics to be healthy and thrive. A third

implication as well may be that this model suggests there is an important role that the negative

dynamics of immature community members and even of those who return to use may play in the

evolution of the CRP community. I address this further in a later section of analysis in this

chapter regarding the dynamic of return to use.

Dynamic of strange attractors. A third key principle in Chaos and Complexity Theory

consists of the dynamic and role of attractors, and in particular with this study, strange attractors.

Attractors in nonlinear systems are dynamics, which tend to converge, settle, and then result in

new typical patterns (Barten, 1994). Furthermore, they are dynamics that tend to "attract,"

meaning they influence dynamics towards a particular state. There can be several types of

attractors including fixed-point, limit-cycle, and strange attractors (Butz, 1996). Strange

attractors are distinct from the previous two in that they are non-linear in nature with more

complex rules of operation than the previous two. According to Butz (1996), although they have

parameters and boundaries for their behavior, within the motion of those parameters the system

is unpredictable. Butz stated, "Attractors though different and illustrative, are important

descriptively. They indicate where a system is in its evolution across time and with regard to

stability" (p. 13). As applied to CRPs, the dynamics of attractors and strange attractors in

particular, are helpful in understanding the CRP as a system and possibly illuminating the roles

of various dynamics within that system. I address this further in the next section.

Envisioning the CRP as a complex system

Chaos and Complexity Theory (Butz, 1996; Lewin, 1999: Waldrop, 1992) provide a

helpful lens through which to envision the dynamics within a CRP as a nested context of support.

One can view the CRP from two dimensional perspectives, structural and dynamic. The

structural dimension reflects how a CRP tries to provide objective systems of support for its

members and the dynamic dimension reflects the myriad attitudinal, motivational, and relational

dynamics within and between its members. In essence, the CRP attempts to provide sufficient

support to enable students to be successful while interacting with and responding to the various

dynamics the students bring within that community context. Thus, arises the complexity and

chaos reflected in the duality of experiences participants reported in this study.

The data findings analysis revealed that the major theoretical constructs comprising the

most valuable supports helping students be successful were the support from peers, CRP staff,

and the CRP community overall (see Table 7.2). Interestingly, participants also frequently cited

constructs of CRP structure and accountability as an important support mechanism.

Conceptually, the term "support" denotes, "to bear all or part of weight; to hold up; to give help

or assistance to" (google.com; merriam-webster.com). This term seems to imply students

received a needed kind of assistance to help them do what otherwise they could not have. The

term "accountability" signifies, "an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to

account for one's action" (merriam-webster.com). Anne described how helpful the combination

of these factors were for her by stating,

> You know, as a freshman when you come in they're really on you about everything. I
> mean I had calls on my cell phone, I had emails, I would come by, I had to show up here,
> to Community Meeting, I had to be accountable and show up to the big meeting every
> week. To get to see everybody and see everyone's face was really, really helpful. Um,
> and then I made very fast friends when I came in like my closest friends that are still my
> close friends today held me accountable a lot. And we went to the same meetings – so
> that was really helpful too. They knew how I behaved in the program, in class, and in
> AA. And so it was helpful having somebody who could see me literally 24/7 and then try
> their best to hold me accountable as best as they could.

This combination of support and accountability seemed critical to her success.

In a similar fashion, Kegan (1996) framed what is required of an environment to facilitate growth among its members as reaching a delicate balance of challenge with support. He described it as follows,

> People grow best when they continually experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge; the rest is commentary. Environments that are weighted too heavily in the direction of challenge without adequate support are toxic; they promote defensiveness and constriction. Those weighted too heavily toward support without adequate challenge are ultimately boring; the promote devitalization. Both kinds of balance lead to withdraw and dissociation from the context. In contrast, the balance of support and challenge leads to vital engagement (p. 42).

Hence, the challenge for CRPs would be to find that appropriate balance between support and accountability, or in Kegan's frame of reference, challenge, to help its members optimally thrive.

How might one envision the attractors and strange attractors within the CRP as a system? These would represent the various dynamics on attitudinal, motivational, behavioral, and relational levels among and between its members. One could analogize the fixed-point and limit-cycle attractors as the structural systems and expectations of the CRP program attempting to support successful trajectories of students. The accountability dynamic would be external influential factors attempting to guide behaviors and relational dynamics within the community again, in positive directions towards success. The strange attractors could then be the myriad of competing dynamics among community members when there are competing agendas, attitudes, behaviors, and relational dynamics. The competition could be the tension between the healthy and unhealthy agendas and dynamics which the CRP members must decide to choose between. Again, this would be where the dynamic of duality would arise in participants' experiences with their CRP. Sometimes their experiences are positive and other times not. All of these dynamics combine and interact as a complex system attempting to self-organize into a cohesive whole building community, connection, and trajectories towards recovery and academic success if

dynamics are leading away from chaos towards order. If they are not, then the self-organization would perhaps lean more towards a lack of connection and community, discord instead of support, and repeated failure leading towards more chaos. The following figure illustrates this phenomenon as a whole.

Figure 7.2: The CRP as a Complex System
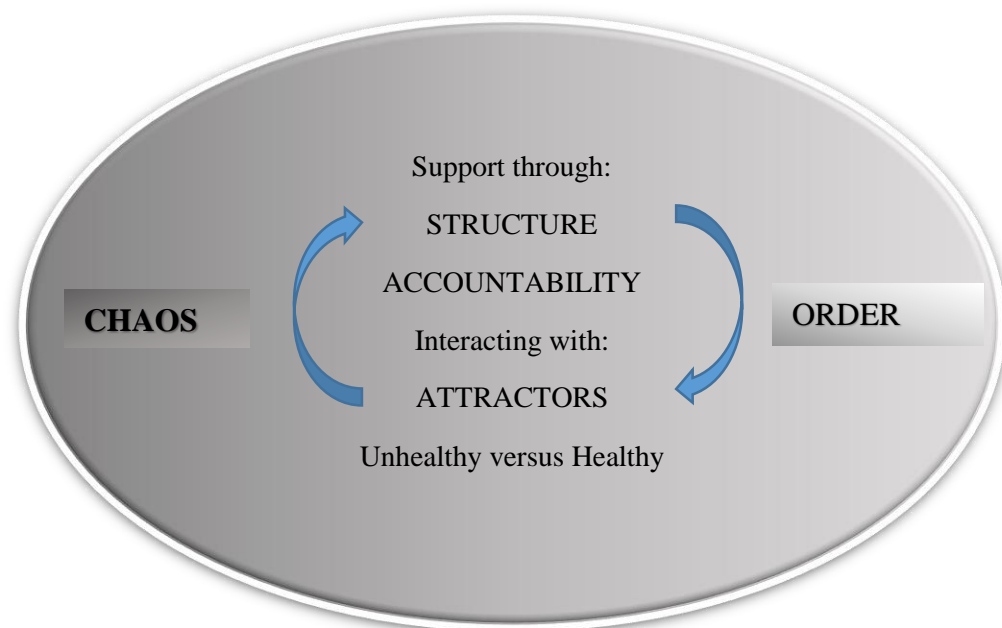
CRPs as systems of support can contain dual forces in competition with each other at times depending upon the health or stage of the community and its development. The CRP would also be a mixture of both chaos and order but in orders of gradation. It would most likely never be one or the other. However, a certain blend of both in a delicate balance could be healthy for its development because of the unhealthy dynamics of the extreme of either too much order leading to rigid stagnation, or too much chaos leading to destructive tendencies. The roles of structure and accountability as means of support would then be to promote and reinforce the healthy attractors within the system.

Trajectory Pathways

In regards to participants' experiences with trajectories as students in recovery, four major themes emerged from their stories. Each theme represents a qualitatively distinct trajectory pathway but with commonalities across all four of the thematic experiences. There are at least two common elements across these trajectories. First, each trajectory experience contained challenges and struggles but with varying degrees of success in dealing with those challenges and struggles revealing varied nuances resulting in qualitatively different thematic experiences. Second, each trajectory experience contained some level of resilience leading to eventual success both in recovery and academic completion in college. A major part of my analysis will be to examine how different experiential variables correlate with these various trajectories and thereby providing insight into how these trajectories occur. However, I begin by first describing these trajectories and defining their parameters based on participants' experiences.

Early Successful Adaptation. The first trajectory pathway is one of early adaptation to the challenges students faced with relatively consistent sustained success both in their recovery and academics. This seemed to be the case with a majority of the participants (13 of 21) in this study. The defining parameters of this experience were that although participants did report times of struggle and challenge, they did not report any major episodes of academic failure or return to use of addictive substances and maintained their status as successful members of their CRP until graduation. Cassie represents an example of this trajectory when she reflected,

> I mean school has always been pretty easy for me, so that aspect wasn't very difficult. I think the hardest thing for me was just all the new rules…I mean you know it was challenging definitely, but I enjoyed school for the most part. By my senior year I was definitely ready to be done which is pretty normal but overall, I just had so much fun in college.

Initial Academic Failure. The second trajectory pathway consists of students initially not dealing successfully with the academic demands of college life leading to failing classes and even Academic Probation for some. This was the case with at least three of the participants according to their reported experiences. However, they eventually found ways to be successful and complete their degree. Brian recounted his experience in this fashion.

> I just remember my…really struggling my first year…I would say that my main challenges were like, probably like I had a couple classes that were extremely difficult and I actually failed two classes here. But I retook them and got A's in both those classes.

Residual Adolescent Immaturity. The third trajectory comprises participant struggles with impulsivity, immaturity, and irresponsibility leading to serious infractions of their CRP's conduct expectations. These infractions resulted in either the students being placed on social probation by their program or actually being withdrawn and having to move out from their respective CRP prematurely. Logan represented this trajectory in his recalling of his experiences.

> And part of that is just being adolescent and growing up and I think there's a lot of that that people miss in especially the young people…Welcome to growing up in addition to being sober. I think that, yeah, that's another big point – just being an adolescent in general. And we look back on the absurdity of our decision-making processes in the day (chuckle) and like there's a lot of it that those decisions, good or bad, are like we were fully committed and we were in… especially when you put a bunch of young adolescents who are in early recovery together, like it's going to be nothing but a bunch of train wrecks, little mini train wrecks all over the place…Part of it is just being an adult now and I can look back and be like, "Guess what? We were a bunch of shit-heads.

This was the case with at least four of the participants in this study. However, they all were also able eventually to find ways to be successful, return to good standing within their CRP, and complete their degree. Only one of the four had to complete his degree while not being a member of his CRP.

Return to Use. The fourth trajectory pathway consisted of a return to use of addictive substances by select participants while being members of their respective CRP. This was the circumstance with four of the participants in this study. Each of them had to move out from their respective CRPs and three of the four worked their way back to being active members of their CRP in good standing. Jack had the experience of return to use on several occasions throughout his stay in a CRP.

> The formal support systems made it unlikely that in any given normal week at school I was going to drink or anything. But then when I would go home, in a high percentage of the times I did drink. And then upon return I would be drug and alcohol tested but passing that only required that I not drink basically the day of the test.

All of them eventually graduated from their respective colleges and maintained varying degrees of success in their recovery afterwards.

Comparative Analysis of Trajectory Pathways

I illustrated the frequency in which codes co-occurred in the following table comparing each group's most frequently cited challenges with most frequently cited valuable supports.

Table 7.6: Comparison of Trajectory Pathways Challenges and Supports

Trajectory	Early Successful Adaptors	Early Academic Failure	Residual Adolescent Immaturity	Return to Use
CHALLENGES:				
Finding balance and priorities	5	4	3	2
Socially fitting in	3	3	5	3
Adjusting to new freedoms	6	2	4	0
Fear of relapse	5	1	2	3
Lacking confidence	5	0	1	2

Table 7.6 Continued

MOST VALUABLE SUPPORTS:				
CRP structure/ accountability	6	6	4	4
Peer support	11	6	4	4
Counselor support	11	3	7	7
CRP community	11	3	1	1
Alcoholics Anonymous	6	3	2	2
Taking leadership roles	4	4	1	1

Early successful adaptation. The code co-occurrence frequency with challenges for the participant group who found early successful adaptation to both their recovery and academic pursuits showed that they experienced challenges similar to the other three groups such as adjusting to new freedoms, finding balance and priorities, fear of relapse, and lacking confidence. However, distinctive features of this group appear to be in the most valuable supports arena showing the most consistent references as a group to be with peer support, counselor support, and support from the CRP community as a whole. This may suggest that they were more able to effectively utilize these supports early on compared to the other groups given they reported encountering similar challenges. Interestingly, this group cited the value of the structure and accountability of the CRP as a valuable support only half as much per capita as a group as compared to the others. This may imply that they had a higher level of internal self-control than the others. Regardless, even though this group found success early on, they clearly had struggles as well.

Early academic failure. Predominant themes regarding challenges for the participant group who experienced academic failure struggle early on in their CRP experience displays

struggles with adjusting to a new context of freedoms with responsibilities, finding balance and priorities, and struggling with fitting in socially with the CRP community. The intrapersonal dimensions of self-control and finding social connection seem to have played the salient roles with this group's challenges. Not surprisingly then, in regards to supports, this group frequently referenced structure and accountability as most valuable. Perhaps this suggests that these participants had a higher need for external controls until they developed their intrinsic mechanisms of control. Furthermore, taking leadership roles seemed to play an important role for this group as well as a support mechanism.

Residual adolescent immaturity. The group who seemed to struggle more with adolescent-like behaviors leading to a probationary status or actual exit from their CRP, cited fitting in socially and adjusting to new freedoms and responsibilities as their key challenges. The social dynamic played a key role for this group in most valuable supports as well. They most frequently referenced peer support as a key valuable support followed by other factors. Perhaps this suggests a dynamic of both a high need for social acceptance coupled with a high susceptibility to peer influence as a support mechanism in this context for this sub-group.

Return to use. The group who experienced a return to use of addictive substances while in their CRP, most frequently cited a fear of relapse and not fitting in socially as predominant challenges. The fear of relapse is expected; however, the difficulties with social connection are intriguing here. Perhaps this underscores the salience which connection to peers and the community plays as an important protective factor in these participants' experiences. In terms of supports, this group most frequently referenced counselor support followed by CRP structure and accountability as well as peer support, again, emphasizing the key role connection to the community played in a successful recovery trajectory.

Summary of Salient Processes for Success

Analyzing the distinctive features associated with challenges and most valuable supports manifest in each of these four groups underscores and further validates previous findings in this study and others regarding important factors and processes helping these participants establish a successful trajectory. First, connection to the CRP community and effectively accessing the various components of support played a key role. The early successful adaptors most consistently referenced their connection with the various support components – peers, counselor, and community – as compared to the other groups. However, the other groups also rated the peer and counselor support as highly valuable indicated by their frequency of reference. Second, not surprisingly, the connection to the CRP community also seemed to play an important protective role for recovery evidenced by this being a common challenge among the return to use group. Third, the analysis of these findings implies that a high level of internal self-control also played an important role as one would expect in creating a successful trajectory. The early academic failure and residual adolescent behaviors group reported challenges in this area in particular. But they also more frequently cited the structure and accountability of the CRP per capita than the early successful adaptors group. This validates the importance of this variable particularly for those groups who struggled more early on. Finally, each of these groups identified struggles and challenges within their respective trajectories. However, some found success earlier than others.

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Analysis of Transformations

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The second major area of analysis for this study comprises how these participants experienced change and transformation as students in recovery engaging in their respective CRPs. The participants' histories of active addiction and consequential failure in prior attempts

in college, necessitated the analysis of these constructs given the assumed dynamic of change and transformation while moving from failure to success at various levels. The analysis provides insight into the dynamics within and behind these processes.

Trajectory of Fulfilling Potentials

The thematic essence of the trajectory progression for these participants revealed a course of development moving from chaotic instability and failure to varying degrees of ordered stability and success. Several participants described their journey as one of moving from a place of seeing oneself as less than capable of succeeding to finding confidence through successful experiences. Luke reflected this by stating, "I guess it was a mentality shift of, 'I can't do this or I am doing this and I have resources to help me with this'." Learning from one's challenges and difficult experiences seemed integral to finding resilience and one's capabilities. Furthermore, some participants framed this experience as one of discovering their potentials. Caleb recalled, "And I think having a bunch of people around me that were always kind of pushing me to fulfill some potential that I didn't quite see in myself but I suppose they must have seen in me. I feel like that was really important to my development."

Thematic Progression. Comparing the emergent subthemes within the "Trajectory Challenges" participants identified with the emergent "Lessons Learned" subthemes, shows a clear progression of transformation between the themes. The trajectory of growth and development fits well within a rubric of moving from instability (chaos) to stability (order). The following table illustrates this dynamic:

Table 7.7: Transformational Thematic Progressions

Instability (Chaos)	Thematic Category	Stability (Order)
Fear of Relapse	*Recovery*	Recovery Engagement
Fear of Failure	*Academics*	Experiencing Success
Feeling Unprepared	*Academics*	Gaining Confidence
Questioning Making Friends	*Social*	Connecting with Peers
Dealing with Loss and Mental Health	*Emotional*	Learning from Adversity and Failure
Disliking Oneself	*Identity*	Accepting Oneself

This progression is significant because it displays how participants were able to successfully meet their respective challenges through a process of transformation and thereby fulfilling unforeseen potentials. Anne illustrated this process poignantly when she commented,

> and then I ended up in (the state) and finding the social work major and meeting all these people and realizing that I think I could be sober and I could do this and I think, and in fact it actually makes me really happy and I mean I don't know, you literally really grow up in it.

This progression of themes describes what happened but not necessarily how it happened. Several other aspects require analysis to uncover this dynamic.

Recovery Commitment and Connection to Peers. This process entailed several important components revealed in the data findings. One component in the process of transformation involved a serious engagement with one's personal recovery. A second important component was finding ways to connect with peers in the CRP. The predominant themes in the "Lessons Learned" dimension, as the frequency of participant references reflects, shows that learning from their respective challenges promoted growth and maturity resulting in a higher

level of functioning, or more specifically, confidence and hope. Anne discussed her challenges as a student early in recovery and how she learned as follows: "I think I wasn't ready. I was not ready to live on my own in a place where I was challenged to rise to the occasion but I was very glad I did. I don't regret it because I fell on my face and learned from it."

The predominant subthemes participants cited in this section were as follows: growing up and maturing (19 occurrences); engaging in personal recovery (16 occurrences); changing one's self-perception from a negative to positive basis (10 occurrences); and, building confidence through successful experiences (8 occurrences). Interestingly, participants also described the relationship with their peers in terms of establishing trust and receiving support as fundamental to this process (14 occurrences).

Hence, what appears to be the essential thematic components in this area are the individual commitment to one's recovery as foundational combined with the connection to the community of peers for support. This formed a basis for finding the means to build confidence and change one's self-perception. Participants framed this as a process of growing up and maturing as young adults in recovery. Anne described her experience beautifully with this by stating,

> And then what kept me going most was probably after I hit my year I met my sponsor, Rebecca, and she completely changed my life. And we found each other at the exact right time because I had just realized that something was wrong; I was finally uncomfortable with it and wanted it to be different. And she was just perfect for me and so I would, I mean I would go out of my way to find rides and go way out in to the boonies every week to a meeting and show up early to do a Step study every single week. I was, I turned my grades around; I started going to bed earlier and taking care of myself more and just all sort of like, I don't know, I changed from there. It was my one year mark probably.

The point at which she made a commitment to change through her personal recovery program and connecting with the right AA sponsor (mentor) was when she noticed significant life changes for the better in several areas.

Changes in Assumptions

The thematic progression of moving from a place of instability to stability repeated itself in the data regarding participant transformations on the level of personal assumptions. This constituted a third major component for the process of transformation. Several themes emerged revealing some of the constructs and dynamics of the transformations. Four areas were predominant in the data findings in this regard.

Academics. The first was academics and participants referenced this area more frequently than any other in the discussions (15 occurrences). The most common assumption in this realm was underestimating the challenge that college life would present. The participants who reflected more realistic perceptions of the challenge were most commonly the ones who had attended college prior.

Recovery. The second most common area of assumptions participants cited was in regards to their recovery and the challenges that would entail while attending college (13 occurrences). The common subthemes were two-fold. First, many participants expressed an assumption of questioning the possibility of maintaining recovery while attending college in a recovery-unfriendly environment. Second, several participants expressed a type of extreme, black and white thinking of an "all or nothing" approach regarding their commitment towards recovery or academics with one almost to the exclusion of the other. What was missing was the realization of the need to find an appropriate balance between the two. Eventually, participants

came to realize that success with both were possible in the context of the CRP with the appropriate support.

Identity. Perceptions about oneself was the third most common realm of assumptions participants referenced (11 occurrences). These perceptions ranged from being overconfident in one's abilities (4 occurrences), to being under confident (4 occurrences), to finding hope in one's abilities to succeed (1 occurrence). What seemed particularly salient in these discussions was how several participants construed their identity completely around a negative construct and then found themselves in a cycle of behavior reinforcing that construct. Anne described this poignantly as,

> I think I hated myself a lot. And they said that when I was in treatment in 2007 and I didn't believe them and then they said that in AA in 2008 and I didn't believe them and then they said it when I came in 2009 and I still didn't believe it and then I started to believe it because my actions showed that I didn't love myself or like myself. In fact, I hated myself. So I slowly started to accept who I was and grew into the person I was supposed to be, or towards that which was probably the biggest thing.

The transformation that occurred for several participants was almost a complete reversal of their identity from a negative construct to a positive one. Hannah recounted, "I mean I just gained a whole new sense of who I was. I don't know. I learned that I wasn't a terrible human which is kind of what I was coming in thinking. I just feel like I came in as an empty shell and left like a full person."

Connecting with Peers. Relating to and connecting with peers was the fourth most frequent theme participants cited (10 occurrences). The issues of being judgmental towards peers (5 occurrences) and questioning whether one could actually make friends in the CRP (5 occurrences) were the common subthemes. This dynamic of relating to and finding connection with peers is thematically critical to accessing the support, which played such a critical role in participants' success. This thematic construct was predominant in both the "Lessons Learned"

and "Assumptive Changes" sections of the interviews. Furthermore, the criticality of the role of

peer connection will become even clearer in the data analysis regarding finding resilience as it

played a central role in the dynamics engendering personal transformation for participants.

Finding Resilience

The data regarding how participants found resilience through their challenges provided

the most clarity regarding the synergistic properties participants experienced helping them to

transform. There emerged a constellation of factors, which configure into a rubric of elements

intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensionally. The intrapersonal factors consisted of a state of

readiness and resolve to change towards success. The interpersonal factors comprised all the

different levels of support and in particular, peer encouragement and role-modeling. The

following table illustrates the thematic frequency co-occurrence of these factors helping to

underscore their relative prevalence in the dialogues:

Table 7.8: Resilience Factors Co-Occurrence

Thematic Category	Subtheme Factor	Frequency Co-Occurrence
Intrapersonal	Perspective of purpose and hope	18
	Readiness and Resolve	5
	Gaining confidence through success	6
	Leadership/Helping others	7
Interpersonal:		
Peer Support	Encouragement	*24*
	Accountability	11
	Role-modeling by others	9
Counselor/Staff support	Encouragement	14
	Accountability	5
	"Second chances"	4
Alcoholics Anonymous	Support	13
Family/Significant Other	Support	9

Intrapersonal Dynamics. These data with their respective subtheme factors suggest at minimum and perhaps even reflect a progression of development and change within these participants, which manifest behaviorally reinforcing dynamics. One could argue that their process of finding resilience began with an internal state of "readiness" to change leading to a sense of resolve to continue on that path. Anne recalled how she grew tired of being constantly negative and in trouble in her CRP for those residual adolescent behaviors cited earlier in the Trajectories section. She recalled,

> I didn't want to be the person who is like constantly brooding and angry about everything because it was exhausting and you get to a point where people just don't want to be around you if you're like that… I had just realized that something was wrong; I was finally uncomfortable with it and wanted it to be different.

Beth described a similar dynamic in her experience by stating,

> I really think I just decided like to try something different because my plan was not working… I remember sitting in the office with my family like, 'What the hell is going on?' And I honestly didn't know what the problem was – why I couldn't like just be honest and just start showing up and didn't realize that I was just sick and couldn't cure my sick mind with my sick mind. And so that was a hard time here. And I was just really lonely and didn't even realize that I was lonely. I didn't really feel like I had any friends.

These sentiments are consistent with several developmental change models, which I will discuss in the Theoretical Validation section.

The second subtheme factor in this process of finding resilience was the dynamic of finding "purpose and hope" which was most prominent based on participants' frequency of reference to this (18 occurrences). Clark discussed the role of purpose in his experience as follows,

> But it was framed early on very clear to me what my, what was my goal, why am I here? And having it framed in that way and having something always to go back to – well, why am I here? Am I here to stay up all night and drink energy drinks and hang out with friends and have sex and just be wild and get a degree with maybe C's or D's? Or am I here to really better my life and complete this part of my journey that is going to push me

forward with what I want to do? And my journey from the beginning was to go to graduate school.

This suggests how this factor was important for a sense of phenomenological grounding and direction. Perhaps this also provided a buffer against the challenges experienced to help maintain motivation to persevere and do well.

The third salient subtheme in this context was the reinforcing factor of gaining confidence through experiencing success. Perhaps the readiness to change combined with a sense of purpose and hope provided impetus to find ways to be successful which in turn had its own reinforcing effects. Anne recalled how she began to experience success and its impact with the following:

> I was starting to become more responsible with the newer people coming in, I was able to mentor them which meant a lot to me at the time because I was never allowed to be the mentor of anything. I couldn't keep like a fish alive, so I like being entrusted with a human and showing them around was cool. And I would show them around and it made me feel somewhat important and for the first time in a long time I knew what I was doing and I was good at something and that was cool. And then when I got into student government, that was really cool for me because I was never… in high school I was a total burnout and they didn't want me in any club nor did I want to be in any club…and I failed at everything, so…it was cool being good at something.

Thus, in her experience being given the responsibility to help new students resulted in a new, alternative view of herself and her identity by virtue of "being good at something." This was in stark contrast to her earlier experience in the CRP of engaging in reinforcing negative dynamics of self-sabotage based on her assumptive identity. She recalled,

> I kind of took on a role of a scapegoat like, 'Oh, they're just putting this on me because they've chosen me as the person whose just going to mess up this year so I might as well just live up to that'…so I really self-sabotaged a lot and not just with the rules and my personal life, but also with my academics. I mean I bombed my first year because um, my priorities were just out of whack, so…um…that was pretty, I mean freshman year was really fun but I also learned a lot from being negative and a lot of bad things happened.

These experiences suggest a dynamic of how small successes may provide an alternative view of oneself on the assumptive levels as well as strengthening confidence and hope for doing better.

Clearly these self-identity assumptions provide a kind of feedback loop leading to reinforcing behaviors. Theoretically, they fit well within the Chaos/Complexity framework of the dynamics of navigating challenges between chaos and order, or instability and stability, within the intrapersonal realm. The following figures illustrate this process.

Figure 7.3: Intrapersonal Self-Reinforcing Dynamics
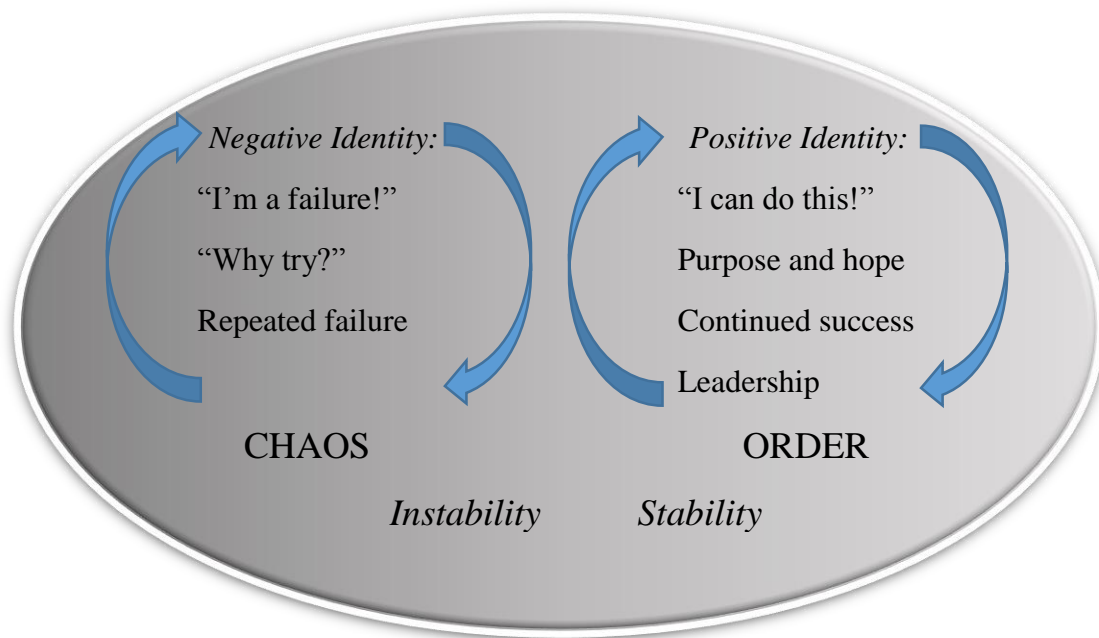
The fourth subtheme of participating in leadership and helping others seems to emerge as a result of the different functioning on a more positive plane but also as a part of the feedback loop reinforcing a positive identity and continued success. Several participants described their experiences with this in that regard. Beth recalled how when she reached a point of critical change in her trajectory, she moved beyond what seemed to be a stage of egocentric functioning – focusing just on herself. She stated, "Yeah, because then I was stopping what was about me and what I want to do and it was about how can I give to the community and about having friends and family became a priority again and things just naturally fell into place." She further

described the influence leaders in her CRP had on her and the impact of motivating her to

emulate their example by stating,

> And I guess for a long time I never guessed that I would be in that kind of leadership role because for a while I was just kind of doing my own thing and was a little bit crazy. But when I started changing and started succeeding then I did feel like – yeah, that's when I actually realized I admire these people and I do want what they have and I want to be with the winners.

Hannah recounted how her participation in leadership roles within her CRP helped reinforce her

confidence and identity by asserting,

> And it had been a long time since I had had a leadership role or was looked at as a leader. And so that was just another thing to help me gain some confidence back I think. Probably being voted into a leadership position by your peers is a nice little ego boost.

Interpersonal Synergy of Peer Support. The prevalence of subtheme co-occurrence in

this area underscores the significance of encouragement from both peers (24 occurrences) and

staff (14 occurrences). Participants reference this construct at least twice as many times as any

other subtheme helping them find resilience. Accountability from peers and staff was important

but participants cited this only half as many times as encouragement (see Table 2). This

underscores the salience of encouragement as a critical component in this process of resilience.

The phenomenological approach is particularly helpful in examining the dynamic of peer support

and its role in resilience with these participants because it highlights the essence of their

descriptions as a synergistic process of influence. The essence of the process appears to be one

in which the dynamics of encouragement and support combined with peer role-modeling, helped

to set in motion a dynamic of collective influence and motivating energy for individuals to find

direction, hope, perseverance and success. This synergistic process appears to be comprised of

several elements.

First, there appears to be a dynamic from proximity to peers within the CRP leading to a

personal benefit for growth and change. Beth commented, "I can't believe like how much better

things got by just showing up and hanging out with people and just being around people more it

rubbed off on me." Dylan framed this in a way denoting "energy" by stating, "And just hearing

from other people in (the CRP) program with what their hopes were too – 'Hey, you can do it

too!' – and sharing that and feeding off each other's energy." Thus, participants appear to have

experienced a proximity benefit from their peers and the community in helping facilitate their

own growth and development.

A second element is an increase in motivation to do well gained from the energy of

others. Jack described his experience as one of peers' energy influencing his own motivation

and helping him survive. He recalled,

> Just being amongst roommates you know amongst students of (the CRP) on a day to day
> basis – you know I'm getting up, I'm interacting with my roommates, I'm going to
> meetings with them and so I'm getting a, I'm getting a like a motivating energy and
> companionship out of that that is making every single day to day not so excruciating.

Hence, a dynamic aspect of the peer support was the positive influence on his motivation through

social connection with his peers.

A third component was the particular role encouragement played not only in difficult or

challenging times, but also to excel and be a leader. Caleb recollected,

> you know one thing that I found and one thing that really changed my life about being in
> (the CRP) was that I felt like I was always being lifted up and being encouraged to take
> leadership positions and all these really cool leadership positions in (the CRP).

Hence, the support played a role not only in helping students survive but also to excel.

Momentum to succeed through peer influence comprised a fourth component of this

process. Caleb described this as, "I think having a bunch of people around me that were always

kind of pushing me to fulfill some potential that I didn't quite see in myself but I suppose they

must have seen in me. I feel like that was really important to my development." Carter

described this as a collective community dynamic creating a culture of success. He commented,

I'm not sure how it sort of organically came about, but it's a community not only of accountability but of, I mean pushing you to be your best. I mean we all want to see each other succeed to our maximum potential. I mean we see it I mean in the way we build each other up… In our building we have the whole gamut. You know we have the people that are interested in Art and the people interested in Science and Religion and so we have a huge group of people that are all interested in different things and want to see each other succeed in those different things. And so when Jason would have an Art exhibit, we would all go see his Art exhibit because we want to see him succeed in that.

Hence, the community dynamic appeared to be one of investment in each other's success, which created a positive energetic dynamic pushing towards success instead of failure.

Finally, there appeared to be a significant influence from role-modeling by peers in this dynamic of creating motivation and finding resilience. Dylan described the impact of seeing other students in his CRP succeed despite particularly challenging circumstances by stating,

Realizing that potential and seeing it happen in other students; you know seeing somebody who came from a really tough background… and they came in with almost nothing and are doing these amazing things and it was, 'Look at that!' And here I am complaining that, 'Oh, here my…and these little problems' and seeing it happen in other people and realizing like their struggles and they're able to do it and that's great.

Luke described this experience as a process of role-modeling by his peers. He recalled, "I think in the lens of academic success seeing other people succeed and seeing other people do it and seeing other people work through their own shit and ask for help was useful. It was kind of a modeling process." Furthermore, Jamie recounted how this role-modeling process induced motivation for her to do well as well as to be a leader. She commented,

Because it was very apparent to me how much I was struggling and I didn't want to be that person especially in (the CRP). It's very motivating to see people who have been sober for years and who are working solid programs and who have their lives together like…I wanted to be a leader so those challenges gave me experiences to share with other students, with other people in recovery. I had a lot of experiences so it hopefully makes me more able to be of service.

Therefore, the positive examples set by peers provided more than simply an example to these participants, but also a positive motivating influence for them to do well and become examples for others.

Finding Resilience Summary

The data analysis in this area has revealed that the participants' experience of transformation was more than simply an individual phenomenon. This process entailed both intrapersonal and interpersonal synergistic dynamics. The process of transformation required an individual commitment to one's recovery from addiction presumably beyond simply abstinence from addictive substances as a foundational starting point. However, the process also required finding a connection with the community of peers in the CRP to access the more energizing and motivating dynamics leading to transformation. Dealing with and learning from challenges played a key role in participants' experiences with change and transformation. These transformational processes comprised change on assumptive, cognitive levels, particularly in regards to self-perception and identity. These assumptions provided an influential role in self-reinforcing or perpetuating dynamics on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels leading to either repeated instability or movement towards stability and success. However, the intrapersonal readiness to change combined with the proximity connection with CRP peers seem to be the elements which provided the energetic impetus and momentum for change.

Theoretical Validation

Several theoretical orientations are applicable to the analysis of these participants' experiences with transformation as students in recovery. The first is Kegan's Constructive Developmentalism. This model is helpful to examine how participants constructed meaning from their experiences as a part of their trajectory of growth and development in the context of their CRP. The second approach is Meizirow's Transformative Learning Theory. This model assists in uncovering the critical role assumptions played in development as well as to clarify further the various phases of meaning participants may have traversed through along their

developmental trajectory. I will summarize the relevant aspects of each theoretical orientation and discuss their respective applications.

Kegan and Constructive Developmentalism

Kegan (1982) asserted that the primary activity of being human is the act of making meaning. His model of development addressed how humans construct meaning from their experiences through various stages of stability and change. In fact, the meaning-making system is the very activity, which gives rise to the self. Kegan (1982), while commenting on the centrality of this activity, stated, "Anxiety, defense, psychological maladjustment, and the processes of psychotherapy are all understood in the context of the efforts to maintain, and the experience of transforming, the self-system" (p. 5). The "constructive" descriptor for this theory implies that human beings actually "construct" their own reality based on their experiences. The "developmentalism" descriptor refers to the evolutionary stage-like processes organisms go through as they construct their meaning through various phases (p. 8). The focus of this theory is actually the development and evolution of consciousness towards more complex stages at higher stages of development. Kegan (1994) described it as follows: "…the evolution of consciousness, the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind" (p. 9).

The environmental and relational context of interactions is also central to Kegan's theory. Kegan (1982) viewed his model as an extension of the schools of ego psychology and object relations theory. He stressed that a central assertion of these approaches to personality development is, "personality development occurs in the context of interactions between the organism and its environment" (p. 7). Hence, one cannot "decontextualize" the individual from the social context in terms of its development (p. 115). As a part of this relational context, a

major tenet of this approach is that development largely depends upon the ability of the organism

to "recruit the invested attention of others" to sustain its survival (p. 17). This capacity to recruit

the attention of others also changes throughout various stages of development.

The meaning-making and relational context concepts have direct application to the

findings and analysis of this study. First, participants seemed to define their identity based on

their past experiences. The trajectory of moving from a negative to more positive identity seems

to reflect this dynamic. Participants with histories of past failures with academics had low

confidence and at times defined themselves as a "failure." However, this began to shift once

they experienced some levels of success. Participants then moved to a more positive sense of

self as well as gaining confidence and hope in their ability to succeed. Their experiences with

subsequent success seemed to help provide a re-definition of themselves on an identity level (see

Figure 7.3). Second, the power of the relational context in assisting with the movement within a

positive trajectory of development was clear throughout the data. The role of social connection

and peer support seems even more salient in light of Kegan's assertion of the necessity of

"recruiting the invested attention of others" as critical for development and survival. Participants

attributed the connection with and support from their peers as critical in their continued recovery

and growth leading to success. They described their experiences in this regard as a synergistic-

like process of motivating and energizing them to find resilience through their challenges (see

Table 7.8).

Kegan (1982) also framed development as periods of evolutionary truces trying to reach a

dynamic balance. He asserted, "Every developmental stage…is an evolutionary truce" (p. 44).

The dynamic balance is essentially between what the organism views as the subject versus the

object of consciousness. Kegan stated, "The question always is to what extent does the organism

differentiate itself from (and so relate itself to) the world?" (p. 44). Essentially, development in

this sense is the subject of consciousness at one stage of development becoming the object in the

next stage. What this means is the consciousness of the organism moves from an

"embeddedness in" the subject at one stage and then moves on to "relationship to" the previous

subject now having become an object of consciousness (p. 77). This is helpful for explaining the

strong dynamics of identification with a negative "failure" identity with participants in this study.

This led to a sense of futility and attitude of "why even try?" or living up to the "scapegoat"

identity resulting in more failure and thereby, reinforcing that identity for some participants. The

subject-object shift appeared to have been moving from being defined by one's failures – or

being embedded in this perspective as "subject" - towards a more positive identity of purpose

and hope reinforced by the experience of success. This reflects the entire trajectory shift from a

negative towards a positive one fulfilling potentials and the "failure" aspect no longer defining

their sense of self. Participants could now perceive past failure as an "object" of their experience

rather than as its subject or identity.

A final component of Kegan's (1994) theory of development applicable to this study is

his instructive analogy of the demands of contemporary culture as akin to a "school" and the

expectations of modern life as the "curriculum" of that school (p. 3). Kegan raised the question

regarding whether there is a fit between the capacities of students and the demands, which our

culture and society places upon them ultimately impacting or even determining successful or

unsuccessful outcomes for students. In terms of the focus of this study on college students in

recovery and the distinct "curriculum" they encounter, Kegan made a critical observation

regarding the heart of the issue by stating,

> The mismatch between external epistemological demand and internal epistemological
> capacity is characteristic of some portion of every person's adolescence…people grow

best where they continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge; the rest is commentary. Environments that are weighted too heavily in the direction of challenge without adequate support are toxic…Those weighted too heavily toward support without adequate challenge are ultimately boring…the balance of support and challenge leads to vital engagement (pp. 41-42).

Finding that appropriate balance and equally important the match between the adequate supports in light of the distinctive challenges of students in recovery is critical as the data on trajectories and transformations in this study have shown.

In this regard Kegan (1994) made the interesting claim that adolescents facing numerous challenges that they are not necessarily adequately prepared for and hence, "in over their heads," is not necessarily a bad thing if they experience adequate support.

Such supports constitute a holding environment that provides both welcoming acknowledgement to exactly who the person is right now as he or she is, and fosters the person's psychological evolution. As such, a holding environment is a tricky transitional culture, an evolutionary bridge, a context for crossing over. It fosters developmental transformation, or the process by which the whole ("how I am") becomes gradually a part ("how I was") of a new whole ("how I am now") (p. 43).

His analogy of "holding environment" which fosters transformation into new stages of development forms a great metaphor for the CRP as a nested context of support transitional to adult, post-college living. Participants recalled their experiences within their CRPs as occurring in supportive environments in which they literally got to know themselves, developed long-lasting friendships, and literally, grew up. The supports, challenges, and even conflicting dynamics within the CRP seemed to be combined elements contributing to the growth and development of participants leading to successful outcomes.

The relevance of Transformative Learning Theory to this study is with the critical role of assumptions in the change process. Several participants discussed how they had quite negative assumptions about themselves on the identity level as well as regarding their capabilities for

success. Clearly the former influenced the perception of the latter. Hannah reflected this when she commented,

> So I was coming in viewing myself as a failure pretty much. And so that was a huge obstacle for me to get over the fact that I had failed twice. I was very fearful of that happening again - which I think was clear in my first or second semester. I didn't do as well as I did when I was finally finishing up.

This participant later revealed how she underwent a complete change or transformation on her identity level regarding her value and worth as a person. She stated, "I mean I just gained a whole new sense of who I was. I learned that I wasn't a terrible human which is kind of what I was coming in thinking." This comment reflects a transformation on the assumption level of her habit of mind regarding her identity.

Transformative Learning Theory

A second framework I used for theoretical validation in this section was Transformative Learning Theory particularly from the work of Meizirow (1991, 2000, 2012). This approach was especially helpful for illuminating many of the processes of change participants experienced along their respective journeys reaching for success in their collegiate contexts. This framework was also helpful in identifying how participants experienced change on assumptive levels as well as how they underwent identifiable developmental phases in this process. Furthermore, this approach also helped to underscore the influence of the CRP as a critical support component in the overall social context of participants.

The Transformative Process. This approach focuses on how people change their personal "frames of reference." Frames of reference are the coherent bodies of experience including values, beliefs, emotions, conditioned responses, and cognitive associations that define perspective and one's world view (Meizirow, 1997). As such they encompass cognitive, emotional, and meaning components and are comprised of two components. The first is "habits

of mind" or habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting based on one's assumptions. These can be sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, philosophical, or psychological in terms of self-concept, personality traits or types. The second component of a frame of reference is "point of view." This consists of clusters of meaning, or habits of mind, comprised of immediate expectations, beliefs, emotions, and judgments that directly have an impact on the interpretation of experiences and attribution of causality (Meizirow, 2000).

Transformative Learning Theory views learning or change as a transformation or "reformulation" of personal frames of reference. Meizirow (2000) stated that transformation occurs through the reformulation of meaning structures by "reconstructing dominant narratives" (p. 19). There are several types of learning and several ways learning can occur within this model. First, learning can be *communicative* in which at least two persons are in discourse with each other attempting to understand an interpretation or justification of a belief. Second, learning can also be *instrumental* which entails "learning to manipulate or control the environment…to enhance efficacy improving performance" (Meizirow, 1997, p. 6). Furthermore, learning can be either *epochal*, or sudden and dramatic, or *incremental*, meaning, progressive steps of change or reformulations resulting in a transformation of habit of mind.

The crux of the process of transformation in this model is how experiences can result in critical reflection upon one's assumptions or misconceptions. A distinct contribution of Transformative Learning Theory to the understanding of the process of change is how it elucidates the role of assumptions. Essentially, this approach emphasizes "to become critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Meizirow, 2000, p. 4). Frames of reference undergo

transformation by means of critical reflection upon the assumptions forming the basis for habits of mind and points of view.

However, Meizirow (1991, 2000) also recognized that this transformational process does not occur in isolation but rather in context. He stated, "Critical reflection, discourse, and reflective action always exist in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historical settings, and these inevitably significantly influence the possibilities for transformative learning and shape its nature" (2000, p. 24). This is reminiscent of Kegan's work on the role of environmental and relational interactions as a critical context for change. This also points to the crucial role of the CRP as a supportive relational environment impacting the trajectories of personal transformation.

The Phases of Meaning. A second major area relevant to this study is Meizirow's theory of the stages of change or in his terms, "Phases of Meaning," individuals seem to progress through as they undergo transformation. He is clear that these are not necessarily fixed stages but rather a form subject to variation based on individuals' experiences. Meizirow (2000) delineated these phases as follows: (1) A disorienting dilemma; (2) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (3) A critical assessment of assumptions; (4) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; (5) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; (6) Planning a course of action; (7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; (8) Provisional trying of new roles; (9) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and, (10) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 22).

What is striking with the data findings in this study is how participants' reported experiences reflect many of the themes delineated within this model. The following table illustrates several examples:

Table 7.9: Phases of Meaning Examples

Phase of Meaning	Participant Experience
1. Disorienting dilemma	"I didn't want to be the person who is like constantly brooding and angry about everything because it was exhausting and you get to a point where people just don't want to be around you if you're like that… I had just realized that something was wrong. I was finally uncomfortable with it and wanted it to be different." (Anne)
2. Self-examination with feelings of anger, fear, and guilt	"I remember sitting in the office with my family like, 'What the hell is going on?' And I honestly didn't know what the problem was – why I couldn't like just be honest and just start showing up" (Beth)
3. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions	"I really think I just decided like to try something different because my plan was not working." (Anne)
4. Provisional trying of new roles	"I mean I would go out of my way to find rides and go way out in to the boonies every week to a meeting and show up early to do a Step study every single week. I was, I turned my grades around; I started going to bed earlier and taking care of myself more and just all sort of like, I don't know, I changed from there." (Anne)
5. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles	"I was starting to become more responsible with the newer people coming in, I was able to mentor them which meant a lot to me at the time because I was never allowed to be the mentor of anything. And I would show them around and it made me feel somewhat important and for the first time in a long time

Table 7.9: Continued	I knew what I was doing and I was good at something and that was cool. So…it was cool being good at something." (Anne)
6. Reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by new perspective	"I mean I just gained a whole new sense of who I was. I learned that I wasn't a terrible human which is kind of what I was coming in thinking. I just feel like I came in as an empty shell and left like a full person." (Hannah)

Meizirow's *Phases of Meaning* construct provides several contributions to understanding the processes of transformations participants seemed to undergo in this study. First, it helps to provide some structure with identifiable phases of change reflecting the incremental nature of transformation in these participants' experiences. Second, this process also reflects dynamics of instability (or even chaos) with the trajectory of change moving from one state to another of assumptive identity. The "disorientation" echoes tension within the intrapsychic dimensions of cognitive and affective realms with the realization of behaviors accompanied by emotional discomfort and desiring change at the same time. Third, this process reveals a strong cognitive and intentional process of self-reflection motivated by the discomfort. This seems similar to the dynamics of accountability identified earlier in the thematic analysis of this study (see Table 2: Resilience Factors). Fourth, this course of change also displays an incremental dynamic with participants having reported taking steps to change in various areas with attending AA meetings, changing sleep habits, and establishing new study habits with academics. Fifth, this process also mirrors a strong consequential dynamic with the trying of new behaviors and finding successful functioning resulting in changes in self-concept and self-valuation. The ultimate effect appeared

to be a transformation of self-identity reflecting an accompanied change in assumptions about oneself.

Phases of Meaning in the Context of Chaos and Complexity

Examining Meizirow's *Phases of Meaning* as a stage-like process within the context of Chaos and Complexity Theory helps to illuminate these participants' experiences further as an incremental movement from a negative-based identity towards a more positive one leading to resilience and eventual success along their respective trajectories. The following figure illustrates how these constructs fit together:

Figure 7.4: Phases of Meaning in Context

Negative Identity

CHAOS → Instability

Disorienting Dilemmas

Self-Examination (anger, fear, guilt)

Exploration of new roles roles

Positive Identity

Stability → ORDER

Reintegration with new perspective

Building new confidence

Provisional trying of new
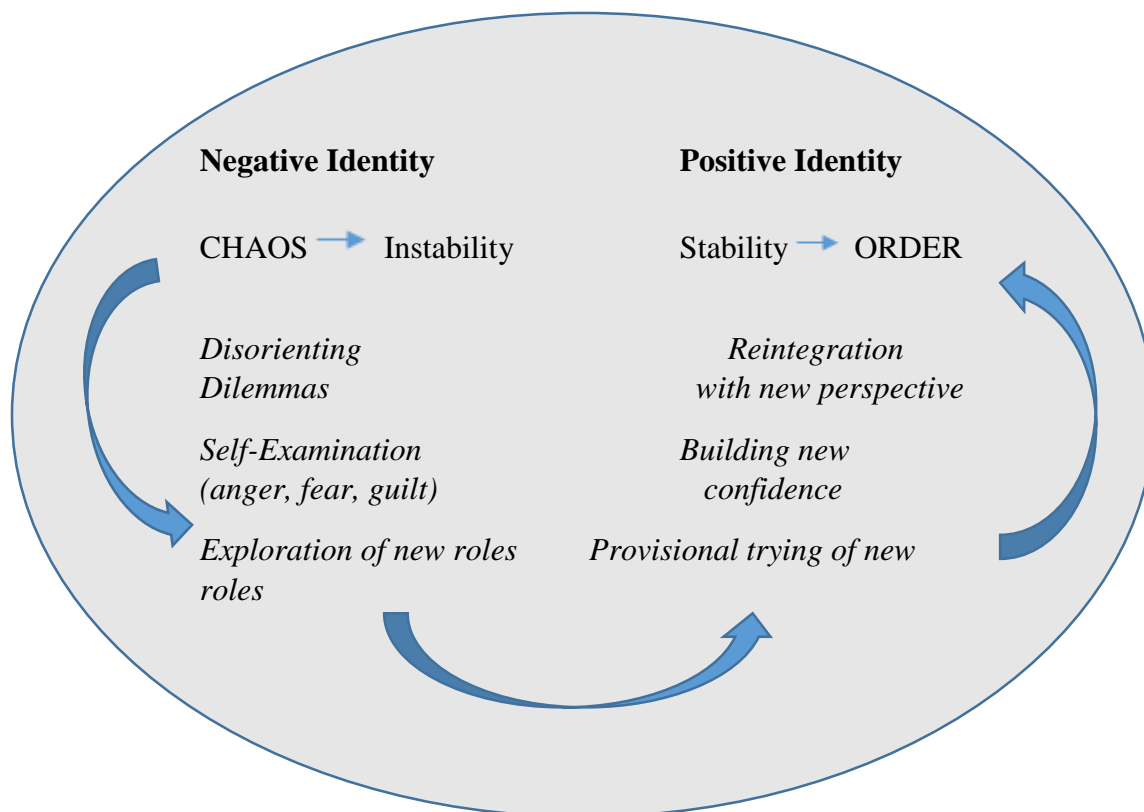
This figure further illuminates how instability appears to be a necessary part of the process of growth and development along this trajectory of transformation. This process entails

cognitive disorientation, emotional discomfort with self-reflection, combined with exploration

and tenuous attempts at new roles and behaviors. These dynamics perhaps validate the

consistent subtheme of struggle found in the various major trajectories of participants in this

study as a common characteristic of the experience of transformational growth and development.

The Group Context of the CRP

Several researchers within the Transformative Learning arena have recognized the role of

the social context in transformative change (Meizirow, 2012; Schapiro, Wasserman, and

Gallegos, 2012). Various group contexts influence transformative change by virtue of the

dialogue these settings facilitate. A core element of transformative learning is the dialogic

engagement with others helping to put in motion critical reflection. This context of relationships

provides the "petri dish or growth supporting environment" which helps foster transformative

learning (Schapiro, Wasserman, and Gallegos, 2012, p. 356). Schapiro, et al. (2012) identified

the essential qualities of these contexts of relational groups as comprised of a continuity of

members' commitment and motivation, a level of curiosity and openness, an emotional

engagement through storytelling creating cohesiveness, and personal reflection leading to mutual

sense making. Many of these qualities are present in the CRPs in this study with the common

commitments and shared experiences with addiction and recovery as well as with the high levels

of trust and cohesiveness created through the dynamics of peer support and accountability. As

such the CRPs serve an important role as "growth supporting environments."

Summary of Transformational Processes

Analyzing the data on participant experiences with transformation revealed a trajectory of

development moving from a place of chaotic instability towards stable order. The chaotic

instability represented experiences with fear of failure and relapse combined with a negatively-

defined assumptive identity. The state of ordered stability embodied a gaining of confidence, experiencing success, and a positively defined identity as a result. Several key components emerged as key elements in helping to initiate and facilitate this process of change. Personal engagement with recovery, finding connection with peers, and changes in one's assumptive identity were important components in this process. Furthermore, the role-modeling and interactive relational connection with peers as well as the overall context of the CRP served as critical contextual factors providing energetic support for these dynamics of change. The Constructive-Developmental Theory of Kegan and Transformative Learning Theory of Meizirow helped further elucidate these process of change as attempts to navigate meaning-making between one's identity and actions as well as the different phases of change participants may have incrementally experienced in this messy process we know as development.

Analysis of Transitions

The third area of analysis for this study entailed examining the data findings regarding how participants experienced the transition from their CRP to post-college living. The examination of this area is important so as to identify the salient factors contributing to a successful transition to post-college life for these participants. I define "successful transition" as a trajectory consisting of sustaining of one's recovery and achieving a lifestyle of satisfying social relationships and meaningful employment or further educational pursuit. Similar to the previous sections of analysis for this study, this area also revealed a complex dynamic of varying kinds or trajectories of transitions among participants as well as several significant thematic occurrences throughout the data. I review these analytic findings combined with further theoretical validation from relevant theoretical perspectives providing further insight into these participants' experiences.

Salient Transitions Themes

In regards to participants' experiences with their transition I explored three major areas with them. These areas were what they found especially challenging, how they felt prepared, and how they felt ill-prepared. Conducting a Code Co-Occurrence frequency analysis with the data from these findings in *Dedoose* revealed four major dimensions being significantly present across all three areas of inquiry. I have summarized the occurrence of these dimensions with their correlate subthemes and the latter's frequency of reference within the interviews in the following table:

Table 7.10: Dimensional Subtheme Co-Occurrence

Dimension	Sub-theme	Frequency Co-occurrence
Recovery:	Reconfiguring support	22
	Stabilized recovery	8
	Establishing outside support	7
Developmental Gains and Challenges:	Adult responsibilities	15
	Finding balance and structure	8
	Learning perseverance and structure	9
	Need to learn to handle adult responsibilities	6
Work and Career Issues:	Finding career satisfaction	4
	Finding career direction	6
	Dealing with professional culture	12
Table 7.10 Continued: *Social Interpersonal Issues:*		
	Relationship challenges	21
	Maintaining CRP contact	9
	Social skills and support	18

This table illustrates how several dimensions figured prominently in participants' discussions of their experiences with their transition. First, recovery-related issues were highly prominent.

Participants most frequently referenced how they needed to reconfigure or establish recovery support outside of their CRP (29 occurrences) as a part of their transitional journey. This is not surprising given how predominant a role peer support within their respective CRPs played in helping them stabilize in their recovery and experience transformation towards successful functioning.

Developmental gains and challenges particularly as they related to learning important life skills, finding balance, and dealing with the challenges of adult living comprised the second predominant dimensional theme. The issue of finding balance and structure for one's life was a major theme in the initial data set relating to the challenges participants encountered in their initial trajectory into the college setting. This challenge finds an important place in the transitional phase as well revealing how this is a recurrent theme throughout various transitions and contexts along these participants' journeys. New contexts required new configurations of balance and structure. Furthermore, similar to how the initial challenges related to learning responsibility consisted of academic requirements – attending class, doing homework – now the adult responsibility challenges shifted to issues such as finding employment, managing finances, and paying student loans.

The third major dimension reoccurring throughout the inquiries in this section consisted of dealing with career and work-related issues. Finding a direction for one's career path as well as finding a meaningful job or career were common concerns. However, the most predominant subtheme in this area related to dealing with professional work-culture (12 occurrences) in terms of whether to disclose about one's recovery and handling work-related networking situations which frequently involved alcohol use and "happy hours."

Social and interpersonal relationship issues related to the transition to post-college living were predominant as well in these discussions as a fourth theme. Participants experienced challenges in social and intimate relationships in the post-college setting similarly as they did while living in their CRP. However, they also found the social support while in the CRP as significantly helpful in preparing them for a successful transition as well as maintaining contact with their CRP as an interim support measure.

Transition Trajectories and Success

Analyzing the data on participant experiences with their transitions to post-college life revealed several trajectories, patterns, and factors related to successful or unsuccessful transitions. First, not all participants lived on campus in their respective CRP until graduation from college. Ten participants remained in their CRP until graduation. Eight participants voluntarily moved out of their CRP off campus at least a semester or more before their graduation. Three participants involuntarily left their CRP prior to graduation due to either returning to alcohol/drug use or behavioral infractions of their CRP's student agreement leading to removal from their respective program. Second, among these different trajectories participants reported a distinct thematic quality of their transition as either "easy," "challenging," or, "very difficult." Third, participants also referenced particular factors which seemed important to helping them experience a successful transition. I have summarized these variables in the following table:

Table 7.11: Transition Trajectories and Salient Factors

Trajectory	Reason for leaving	Transition quality	Salient factors for Success:
In CRP till Graduation	Graduation from college	*Easy* – "It wasn't even difficult" (Caleb)	Pre-established support outside CRP

Table 7.11: Con't.

| Voluntarily left CRP before Graduation | Matured out – "I was ready to transition out" (Chloe) | *Challenging* – "That transition was tough" (Chloe) | Moving out to live with CRP peers |
| Involuntarily left CRP before Graduation | Return to use Behavioral issue | *Very difficult* – "I got the early, hard transition, the tuck and roll at 30 miles per hour" (Logan) | Re-engaging with personal recovery, self-care, and support |

Several factors deserve noting. First, the different trajectories of temporal relationship with the CRP – remaining until graduation versus moving out prior to graduation – were distinct trajectories with different reasons for leaving their respective CRP. However, the quality of the transition was not necessarily purely distinct for each group of participants. There were varying degrees of challenge and difficulty associated with each trajectory. In other words, not everyone who remained in their CRP until graduation had an "easy" quality of transition and conversely, not every participant who moved out early found it especially challenging. However, the ones who involuntarily left their CRP did all have varying degrees of "difficulty" with their transition. Furthermore, even those who described their transition as "easy" also had challenges within their journey but perhaps not to the same degree as some of the other participants.

A second important theme relates to participants who left their CRP before graduation and their experience of being "ready" to leave and no longer needing the level of support the CRP offered. Some of these participants seemed to have reached a point of "dissonance" between their level of functioning and what their CRP offered or required. Chloe described it as,

> I felt that just as in a developmental phase that my life that I had changed and I was ready to have a change of pace. I didn't feel like I needed to be living with people younger than me at (the CRP) and I didn't feel the need to be living on campus. Like I wanted to start thinking about life after college and because that house then I had the first semester of my senior year in that house which was a spring semester. And so I was kind of ready to start transitioning out…

It appears they matured out of their need for that particular configuration of support and structure and reached a point wherein their CRP configuration no longer fit them. Anne provided an excellent description of this as a "natural expiration date." She reflected,

> And then I think but I don't know if it's necessarily negative, but as I started growing like in my last year and I got older, things started to feel kind of 'hoky' because what was working for me when I was a freshman was not working for me at age 21 or 22 you know with a couple years sober. And it felt daunting to go the meetings and to have to do all this stuff, and it wasn't as shiny and new and I was tired and I didn't want to give back because I was being selfish about my future which is good in a way. But I think there was a natural expiration date when you stay in a program like that. And I had reached it, stayed a little longer and got uncomfortable and I realized, "Okay."

I examine this dynamic further in the theoretical validation of this section.

A third major theme was the factors participants cited as important for finding success in their respective transitions and trajectories. Finding recovery support outside of the CRP seemed predominant for many. Those who remained in their CRP until graduation indicated having a relatively easy transition if they already had an established support network outside of their CRP. Caleb provided a good example of this when he stated,

> By that time you know I had a couple years sober and to be totally honest, it wasn't even challenging. You know I just graduated from college. I believe at the time I had two home groups and two service commitments every week and continued to go to a lot of meetings. Uh, you know I had a really great sponsor at that point and I remember my sponsor had a meeting at his house every Sunday where all the sponsees would come and we'd do Step work together.

Some participants seemed to indicate how students depending solely on their CRP for support would put them at risk for an unsuccessful transition and return to use. Hannah commented,

> I don't even know how to put a word on it or not a word on it but how you would emphasize the importance of not relying on (their CRP) to stay sober. Like the benefits

of fellowship in the real world where you're not living in a community like this, you only get those benefits by working the Steps. And that's where I've seen so many people fall off is like those who were literally only staying sober because they were in this community and were not doing the actual work.

Hence, connecting with a network of recovery support outside of their CRP was important to ensure success for several participants.

A fourth factor contributing significantly to successful transitions, particularly for those who moved off campus prior to graduation, was the dynamic of bringing support along with them into their new living situation. Several participants reported moving off campus with peers in their CRP. Chloe had this experience and recalled,

> Well, I moved into a house with (the CRP) alums; yes, as a lot of (the CRP) people do. And I'm so glad I did it! I'm so glad. The house was physically itself, was a challenge. It was an old house; it was falling apart; there was not enough space for everyone. You know it was dirty; just, that was a challenge (laughter). But I, you know, I would do it again if I, or the same thing; that was a great time for me…. But besides the structure of the house and that, otherwise it was great. I was, I loved (the CRP), but I think I was ready once I studied abroad; I was ready to be off campus but still be with people.

In a sense this process of moving off campus with CRP peers seemed to provide a continuation of support similar but on a smaller scale to what participants found while living on campus within their CRP.

However, this trajectory also provided them with the opportunity to create their own structure and mini-culture of support. Anne recalled her experience with this as,

> I moved in with kind of a unique situation with like five other people in an old frat house so it was crazy and we still had such a community and we actually took kind of the model and had like family meetings and a certain week we would talk about bills and others you need to do your dishes… And yeah, we had one person kind of go off the deep end – not drinking or using but it was really, really hard because there was nobody outside to kind of mediate it and it felt like all on our shoulders and it was very interesting watching the dynamic of a bunch of young, sober college students try to be like, 'What do we do about this person?'

This transition reflected a greater level of independence but also retaining connection to peers as a smaller configuration of a supportive living situation. Furthermore, they had to navigate their living challenges with peers on their own without the support or intervention of a CRP program.

Finally, the role re-engaging with personal recovery, self-care, and finding support played for those who involuntarily left their CRP prior to graduation constituted a fifth notable theme. Those variables served a critical role for those participants in finding their success during their difficult transition. The tenor of these participants' descriptions strongly suggests that they had to strive towards a certain quality of living, self-examination, and support beyond simply abstaining from alcohol and drugs. Jack described his experience with episodes of returning to alcohol use and his eventual finding longer periods of sobriety as follows,

> Well, wow, I like worked really hard for this many years and I can actually point to the fact that I'm now capable of the following things professionally or personally or whatever. I mean in the last six years I think I've been on a long journey of more honesty in sobriety, less drinking and lying, you know more integrity, less arrogance, and these themes have been a part of my life forever... One of the lessons that I think I still fight with a lot is it really does seem like AA meetings are important for me to attend.

In a sense it appears that these participants' eventual finding of success was due to similar factors as the other participants but just on a different, later timeline.

Theoretical Validation

The major themes recurrent through the Transitions data combined with the analysis of data revealing various transitional trajectories and factors for success revealed a dynamic of participant development of shifting into new contexts after college presenting entirely new challenges. Also, as participants stabilized, grew, and made progress towards the completion of their college degree, their needs changed resulting in several of them no longer requiring or even wanting the support and structure of their CRP. A few others lagged in some developmentally with their recovery or behavior and had difficult transitional experiences. These findings

highlight how their experiences with development appeared to be a continual process of adaptation in relationship to their CRP environment.

Kegan's Developmental Adaptation and Self-Authorship

Kegan's Constructive Developmental Theory again provides a helpful lens whereby to further analyze and validate several of these findings. I review several key aspects of these theories and apply them to the relevant data. They help illumine the processes participants experienced as an integral part of their developmental growth towards successful trajectories.

Tenuous balances. One relevant area of theoretical validation is how Kegan (1982) described human development as a process of adaptation in which individuals continually reorganize themselves in relation to their environment. He explained it as follows,

> If you want to understand another person in some fundamental way you must know where the person is in his or her evolution. I have been saying that a lifelong process of evolution or adaptation is the master motion in personality, that the phenomena of several developmental theories are plausibly the consequence of this motion… 'adaptation' (is) an active process of increasingly organizing the relationship of the self to the environment. The relationship gets better organized by increasing differentiations of the self from the environment and thus by increasing integrations of the environment (p. 113).

The basis for how the person constructs their individual meanings from their experiences is based on the way in which the person differentiates between what is "self" and what is "other." Kegan described these "self-other" distinctions as tenuous balances, or truces and as fragile states subject to change with "chaos and a state of siege hanging around the corner." (p. 114). Hence, one could view these "evolutionary truces" as states of relative stability a few steps removed from the dynamics of chaos which is reminiscent of the previous discussion and analysis with chaos and complexity theory. Furthermore, the descriptions of identifiable stages of development would represent those periods of relative balance in an ongoing evolutionary process of development.

This description of development implies reaching periods of relative balance but also of imbalance and vulnerability from the new challenges which a new condition of circumstances may present. This is a poignant way to describe the experiential process participants underwent during their transition to post-college living. Each stage and transition brought its own challenges and vulnerabilities as the data findings revealed in the first chapter on Trajectories. The transition of leaving the CRP brought participants into a new stage of instability but also growth as they navigated their recovery and engaged in the tasks of emerging, post-college adulthood with its inherent challenges requiring new adaptive coping strategies. In many ways it represents the entering of a new phase of chaos and instability reaching ultimately towards a different kind of stability and order.

The duality of developmental trajectories. A second relevant area for validation is Kegan's (1982) framing of human development as an experience of duality between two incessant drives. He asserted that the two greatest yearnings in human experience are for separateness and differentiation as well as inclusion and connection. The yearning for inclusion and connection entails, "to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied". Conversely, the yearning for differentiation involves, "to be independent or autonomous, to experience ones' distinctness, the self-chosenness of one's directions, one's individual integrity" (p. 107). And yet, these two great yearnings create a tension of duality. Kegan asserted,

> But what is striking about these two great human yearnings is that they seem to be in conflict, and it is, in fact, their *relation* – this tension – that is of more interest…I believe it is a lifelong tension. Our experience of this fundamental ambivalence may be our experience of the unitary, restless, creative motion of life itself (p. 107).

Hence, human development becomes a process of navigating this tension between separateness and connectedness.

This duality and the fluctuation between these two yearnings is evident in the data from the participants' experiences particularly with those who expressed a "readiness" to leave the CRP prior to college graduation. Participants reached a new level of differentiation emerging from dependence on the structure and accountability of the CRP towards a new level of separateness revealing a readiness to move on to a new level of independence in their lives and recovery. This reflects a dynamic of desire for a greater level of differentiation from the CRP and its structure leading to more individuality while at the same time needing to find a new configuration of relation to support. This represents the dynamic of that "creative motion of life" Kegan referred to in regards to the tension between the two great human yearnings. A new state of relative balance towards greater independence required a new configuration of support but with more independence. This required a reintegration into a new context. Perhaps what was lacking with those who had an unsuccessful transition was the reintegration into the new context – configuring new supports appropriate for the new context of living.

Reconfigured supportive contexts. A third area of theoretical validation is Kegan's (1982) description of the role of supportive contexts in human development. I referenced this earlier in the Trajectories Analysis section as a poignant description of CRPs. According to this framework, the process of development occurs not as individual, isolated abstractions but rather in context of relation to others in social settings and interactive processes. Kegan described this as both the person creating the world – their own constructed meaning – but also the world creating them. Kegan noted,

> One of the most powerful features of this psychology, in fact, is its capacity to liberate psychological theory from the study of the decontextualized individual. Constructive-developmental psychology reconceives the whole question of the relationship between the individual and the social by reminding that the distinction is not absolute, that development is intrinsically about the continual settling and resettling of this very distinction (p. 115).

Consequently, the trajectory of human development entails a series of psychosocial environments providing "cultures of embeddedness" to support growth and development but from which individuals must eventually differentiate and separate from to move on to the next stage (p. 116).

In the context of this study then the CRP becomes a transitional holding environment providing specialized and additional support to students in recovery. It affords opportunities for growth but from which members must ultimately separate from in order to be successful after college. Kegan stated, "All growth is costly. It involves the leaving behind of an old way of being in the world. Often it involves, at least for a time, leaving behind the others who have been identified with that old way of being" (p. 215). A few of the participants experienced their transitional trajectory in a similar manner. Chloe described her experience of transitioning as one of "shedding" friends into smaller and smaller contexts of support. She commented,

> Yeah. It's funny because if I think about it, it's really like I've been transitioning into adulthood and in the process kind of shedding people whom I've been living with (laugh) because it's been going from the dorm and you know the (CRP) community to six of us in the house and then last year it was just four of us in a nicer house and how it's just me and Hannah in a townhouse which it feels like, it finally feels like our first adult place.

Furthermore, the dynamic of moving towards greater levels of independence but with reconfiguring contexts of support and relation is also clear in this narrative.

Self-authorship. A fourth and final area of theoretical validation is with Kegan's model of self-authorship as a stage of development. Kegan (1982) described several stages of development adolescents and emerging adults traverse as the "Interpersonal" and "Institutional". The context of the evolutionary balance and psychological embeddedness represents moving from an embeddedness in mutuality and interpersonal concordance towards one of personal autonomy and self-system identity. The previous stage is one of mutuality and reciprocal one-to-one relationships and the latter entails self-definition, capacities for independence, an assumption

of personal authority, and the exercise of personal enhancement, achievement, and ambition. The stage of Self-Authorship is essentially one of "independent self-definition." (p. 191). The former phase seems to emphasize more of inclusion and connection whereas the latter weighs more on the side of differentiation and independence yet not to the complete exclusion of some form of the former.

The stage of self-authorship then becomes one in which the source of direction and value becomes not the present social context as much as capacities of the self at this stage of development. Rather than depending on others, the self provides initiation, correction, and evaluation. Kegan (1994) stated,

> This new whole is an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states. It is no longer *authored by* them, it *authors them* and thereby achieves a personal authority (p. 185).

The application of this construct to participants' experiences in this study helps to further elucidate the dynamics within the developmental trajectory experiences again particularly with those who felt the need to move out of their CRP prior to graduation. They had reached a stage of needing more independence and autonomy in terms of how to structure their lives. The ones who moved off campus with peers actively engaged in creating their own structure and rules for governing their small communal environment. Although they encountered challenges they also appeared to have found ways to be successful. They chose their interpersonal loyalties and acted upon their own values towards their own best interests as autonomously functioning emerging adults.

Summary of Transitional Experiences

The analysis of the data from participant experiences with the transition to post-college living and the factors which helped facilitate a successful transition revealed several distinct

trajectories. These trajectories each had their own distinct but also similar challenges, level of difficulty, and varying degrees of success. The most common elements leading to success seemed to be finding a new life balance and structure combined with some form of replacing or reconfiguring recovery support outside of their CRP. Several theoretical constructs from Kegan's Constructive Developmental Theory helped to provide further validation and insight into these participants' experiences with their respective transitions and trajectories into post-college living. Essentially, this transition represented a stage of moving into another context of instability and tenuous balance but also necessary emergence from the supportive context of the CRP towards a new stage of self-authorship.

Summary of Analysis

The primary question for this study regarding what helps students in recovery find success in a recovery-unfriendly environment in college appears relatively simple and straightforward. However, the answer to that question is highly complex and varied. The participants I interviewed had all been members of a supportive recovery community on campus (CRP) which played a major role, though not exclusive one, in helping them find success. I investigated their journeys of trying to find success through three dimensions of inquiry – the nature of their trajectories, the process of their transformations, and their experiences with the transition to post-college living.

My findings reveal that these participants' successes were contingent upon multiple and multi-dimensional sources of support and dynamics of personal change as they each navigated their own personal challenges. Their trajectories through college manifested varying levels of academic and recovery success as a general movement from chaotic instability towards more ordered stability in their lives. Finding and establishing a trajectory of success required elements

on both individual and collective levels. These elements were comprised of participants finding a strong social connection with their peers in the CRP community as well as an individual commitment to and engagement with their own personal recovery. Their own personal recovery seemed to be foundational for success in other areas as well. They also needed to learn skills of internal self-control in part through the structure and accountability provided by their respective CRP.

Analysis of participants' experiences with transformation displayed similarly complex as well as thematically similar dynamics within the trajectories leading towards success. There was a movement of transformation from a place of unstable, negatively-based assumptive identity towards a more stable, positively-based self-identity on assumptive levels as a general course of development towards finding personal success. The role-modeling and encouragement from peers, as well as CRP staff, played a critical role in helping energize and motivate participants to engage with this personal transformational process of learning from their challenges, engaging with personal recovery, and moving towards successful completion of their degree. Participants' experiences with the transition to post-college living again revealed similar trends and dynamics with earlier phases of their experiences within this study. Similar themes with varied trajectories and different timelines of success with that transition were apparent. The most salient themes relating to experiencing a successful transition entailed finding a new life balance and structure conducive to that success as well as replacing the CRP with a new reconfiguration of recovery support.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary question I sought to answer with this study was, "How do students in recovery from alcohol and drug dependence find success in the recovery-unfriendly context of college?" I defined "success" in this study as two-fold: first, sustained recovery from their alcohol/drug dependence, and second, academic success leading to eventual graduation from college. As I delved into this topic both in the research literature as well as in planning for this study, I quickly realized the examination of this topic would entail investigating a specific population as well as several dimensions. I decided to explore dimensions along both the temporal lines of trajectories through college and the transition to post-college living in addition to the process dimension of transformation. These seemed to be logical areas to explore given I wanted to deeply explore how participants found success while both in college and afterwards due to the inseparable connection between these two areas. This also entailed investigating how they experienced the changes necessary to have a trajectory different than their previous one in active addiction, namely a successful one. The specific population most appropriate for this study seemed to be students who had participated in Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) while in college. The type of CRP the majority of these participants belonged to in college was residential-based, meaning they lived in a sober residential environment with peers in recovery.

Study Approach and Design

The primary theoretical framework I used to research my topic was a Phenomenological Inquiry approach based on Moustakas' (1994) work particularly for the analysis methodology. I also incorporated analyzing my data findings through *Dedoose*, a mixed methods data analysis software platform. I interviewed 21 participants all of whom had been members of Collegiate

Recovery Programs at two different post-secondary institutions and had successfully graduated from their respective schools.

I organized my interviews around the three major themes of Trajectories, Transformations, and Transitions with semi-structured, open-ended questions pertaining to each thematic area. I coded my data utilizing the Phenomenological approach identifying thematic constructs which formed the "essence" of participants' experiences based upon their verbal thematic descriptions. I then analyzed my coded data through *Dedoose* to help identify salient thematic connections based on Code Co-occurrence frequencies. I further analyzed my data findings through several theoretical lenses which to date have not been used much if at all to research this population. These theoretical lenses were Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development (2005), Chaos and Complexity Theory (Butz, 1996), Kegan's Constructive Developmental Theory (1982, 1994), and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (2000).

The Research Literature Context

In the arena of alcohol research, college student alcohol use and its related consequences has been the most widely studied topic (Dowdall & Wechsler, 2002). Researchers have also given considerable attention to prevention and early intervention strategies noting some varying degrees of success (Cronce & Larimer, 2012; Saltz, 2012). However, what has remained constant is the college campus culture being a recovery-unfriendly environment to students who are in recovery from alcohol and drug dependence. Some of the latest *Monitoring the Future* (2014) data show that college students binge drink (35.4%) and drink to intoxication (42.6%) more than their non-college peers (29.3% and 34.1% respectively). Furthermore, daily marijuana smoking has increased from 1.8% to 5.9% among college students from 1994 to 2014 (*Monitoring the Future,* 2014).

A relatively new phenomenon on college campuses has been the emergence of Collegiate Recovery Programs (CRPs) designed to support students in recovery and provide a supportive-space for them to belong, learn, and grow. This has largely been a grass-roots movement as opposed to a well-designed strategy by higher education administrations. Consequently, students in recovery have virtually been a "hidden group" to higher education staff and researchers (Laudet, Harris, Winters, Kimball, & Moberg, 2014). In the mid-1980s a handful of universities developed and offered organized recovery support to students. By the 2000s a rapid growth of these programs emerged increasing from four programs in 2000 to approximately 50 currently registered with the Association for Recovery in Higher Education (Laudet, et al., 2014; ARHE, 2016). Laudet, et al. (2014) described the current status of research on these programs and this population of students by stating, "The rapid development of CRPs, although highlighting the need for these services, is occurring without a formal model or a solid empirical basis to guide service planning because we currently lack knowledge about college students in recovery" (p. 90).

Hence, college students in recovery participating in CRPs are a relatively unexamined population on college campuses insofar as research is concerned when compared to their active alcohol and drug-using counterparts. The research to date on this population is relatively recent having emerged mostly over the past decade and a half. The focus of this research has largely been conducted within the following three domains: (1) the demographic characteristics of these students (Cleveland, Harris, Herbert, Baker & Dean, 2007); (2) the academic performance of these students in terms of GPAs (Harris, Baker, Kimball & Shumway, 2008); and, (3) the impressive sustained recovery and conversely, relatively small rates of return to substance use among these populations (Cleveland, Harris, Baker, Herbert & Dean, 2007; Harris, et al., 2008).

In my own review of the literature I found the majority of the studies to include a program description focus (20 studies) and only a handful primarily focused on student demographic description. Furthermore, the mix between quantitative (7 studies) and qualitative (6 studies) was relatively equal with only two studies having substantial theoretical focus for their analysis (see Chapter 2 Table 2.2).

A major aim of my study has been to contribute to areas lacking in research with this population with a more in depth examination of the experiences of college students in recovery. Although several studies have identified the value and importance of CRPs and auxiliary support components (Bell, Kanitkar, Kerksiek, et al. 2009; Casiraghi & Muslow, 2010; Finch, 2007b), few if any studies explored the other side of this equation in terms of the potential stressful or negative dynamics of the CRP and how these impact students. In addition there was scant if any research delving deeply into student experiences with their transformative processes. Furthermore, there have been no studies to date examining the experiences of students in recovery transitioning to post-college living and how their CRP helped prepare or not prepare them for this important new phase. Finally, there also appeared to a need for further theoretical validation of studies with this population with innovative applications of different theoretical approaches to help further understand their experiences. Hence, it made sense to structure my study around the three major thematic categories of trajectories, transformations, and transitions with the application of theoretical approaches in some innovative ways.

Findings Summary

My data findings revealed complex interplays of multidimensional dynamics contributing to the success of study participants as students in recovery. Although the experiences seemed highly individualized at times, numerous common thematic constructs did emerge coalescing

around several "essences of experiences" particularly within the context of a phenomenological approach. The dynamics within these thematic constructs were clearly contributory to success in participants' recovery and academic and post-college journeys. The application of the theoretical lenses helped to validate many of the findings and provided further nuances to add to the explication of their experiences.

Trajectory Findings

The Trajectories data findings showed participants experienced challenges centered on feeling vulnerable to relapse at times as well as a general lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed in school. I identified four major trajectory themes or pathways among the participants' experiences. I described the four themes as follows: (1) Successful early adaptation leading to early success; (2) Early academic failure; (3) Struggles with residual adolescent behavior; and, (4) Return to alcohol/drug use. These thematic groupings revealed that all participants experienced varying degrees of struggle as well as different levels of success across various timelines.

Accessing and utilizing valuable supports played a critical role in participants' success. These supports consisted of a multidimensional configuration of resources ranging from their peers in the CRP, CRP staff (counselors), in addition to AA groups in the community. In terms of the CRP itself, a sense of community within the CRP played an important role as well. The basis for the "community" appeared to consist of the common experiences of members with their addiction and recovery as well as the mutual belonging and support they provided for each other. As valuable as that CRP support was, it also reflected a duality of quality depending upon the maturity of its members as well as the amount of support versus conflict present within the CRP on a collective level.

Transformation Findings

The data findings in the Transformations area showed that challenge and struggle played an important role in the growth and transformation of participants. Participants reported important lessons learned from their challenges around three major theoretical constructs. The first area was learning how to function in relationships with peers which connected to the larger theme of peer support and community in the CRP. The second thematic area related to developing skill and maturity in areas of personal growth as needed precursors to academic success. The third area of growth and transformation connected to the construct of recovery as not an automatic given state, but rather a process requiring intentional commitment and prioritization to ensure its stability.

The transformations participants reported experiencing occurred on not just behavioral levels but also personal identity levels. The thematic constructs arising from the transformations data revealed a progression of movement from a negative, failure-assumptive view of self towards a more positive, capable-assumptive view of self. The fuel for this transformation appeared to be both small successes combined with encouragement and role-modeling from peers. The combination of these factors seemed to promote movement towards success for participants.

Transitions Findings

The Transitions data findings revealed several important discoveries. First, participants had different trajectories with different degrees of challenge and success along their transition to post-college living. Some remained in their CRP until college graduation. Others seemed to mature out of their need for the CRP support and moved off campus prior to graduation. A few participants left their CRP involuntarily before graduation due to behavioral struggles or return

to substance use. Second, these data also showed distinctive challenges that this population faced as they graduated from college and left their supportive CRP context. Participants reported this transition required a reconfiguration of their recovery support as well as a new balance of life responsibilities. Furthermore, they experienced challenge with encountering the after-work networking culture of "Happy Hour" as a potential threat to their recovery. They also reported challenges with how and when or even whether to disclose about their recovery in the work context. A majority of the participants reported their CRP helped prepare them by learning social skills, gaining maturity, and becoming stabilized in their recovery. The data seemed to support that a successful transition to post-college living for these participants entailed developing outside recovery support beyond the CRP as well as finding a level of new life balance with intentional and sufficient self-care.

Analysis Summary

The analysis of the findings in all three areas reflected a similar pattern of revealing complex, multidimensional, and not necessarily uniform and linear dynamics leading to successful experiences for participants. The analysis methodology entailed Phenomenological techniques of thematic analysis combined with a thematic code co-occurrence examination based on *Dedoose*-filtered data. I did find validation for findings as well as further elucidation of dynamics through innovative application of several theoretical models.

Trajectories Analysis

The analysis of findings in the Trajectories data provided helpful understanding of what factors seemed to play important roles in helping participants experience success. Several factors stood out as important. First, establishing a meaningful connection to the CRP and peers in sub-groups for support combined with effective utilization of other available supports (CRP

staff/counselors, institutional resources, AA) was important. Second, the CRP itself seemed to play a critically important role as a main protective factor for participants' recovery within the recovery-unfriendly context of the college environment. Third, participants needed to develop sufficient levels of internal self-control and skill in order to be successful reflecting a dynamic of both collective-external as well as individual-internal dynamics as important. Fourth, although some subgroups of participants found a successful trajectory earlier than others, they all experienced challenge and struggle to varying degrees reflecting all of them having experienced a "messy" trajectory to one degree or another.

The application of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Developmental Model (2005, 1977) and Chaos and Complexity Theory (Lewin, 1999; Butz, 1996; Barten, 1994; Waldrop, 1992) provided theoretical validation for many of these findings. First, Bronfenbrenner's model helped to validate that the important supports leading to a successful trajectory resided on multiple levels and dimensions and were inter-variably different in importance and effectiveness for participants. Second, the lens of Chaos and Complexity Theory helped to underscore how human development is a messy process moving between states of instability and stability. Furthermore, this lens helped to exhibit how the dynamics contributory towards growth and development are characteristically non-linear and complex.

Transformations Analysis

Analyzing the findings from the Transformations data helped to further illuminate the dynamics operative in trajectories leading to success for participants. Several dynamics seemed salient. First, learning from challenge and struggle played an important role in participants' experiences as a dynamic leading to success. Second, the lessons they learned seemed to merge more in the realms of personal growth and development as well as in finding meaningful

connection with peers as opposed to simply learning academic skills alone. Third, the

foundation for the needed personal changes leading to a successful trajectory appeared to be an

intentional commitment to one's personal recovery and growth. Fourth, both individual and

interpersonal dimensions played an important role in the transformation process itself,

particularly in terms of finding perseverance during times of great difficulty and challenge. The

individual dimension consisted of a level of readiness for change. The interpersonal dimension

revealed a synergistic process of peer role-modeling and encouragement providing an energetic-

reciprocal dynamic affecting individuals' motivation and ability to change and transform.

Finally, the transformations themselves appeared to occur on both assumptive, self-identity and

behavioral skill levels and followed a trajectory of movement away from a negative, deficit-

based quality towards a more positive, ability-based quality.

Utilizing Kegan's Constructive Developmentalism (1994, 1982) and Meizirow's

Transformative Learning Theory (2000, 1997) provided helpful illumination of the dynamics

underlying these processes of transformation. Combined with a Chaos and Complexity

framework, these processes appeared clearly as a developmental movement from phases of

instability towards stability on both self-identity and behavioral skill levels. Kegan's

Constructive Developmentalism validated the importance of the relational context for individual

meaning-making in development as well as for the CRP being a critical supportive "holding

environment" as a context providing a mixture of support and challenge fostering positive

transformation. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory helped to validate and further

elucidate how participants changed their internal "frames of reference" particularly on self-

identity, assumptive levels. This lens also helped to provide some structural and incrementally

progressive sense with his "Phases of Meaning" showing how participants progressed from

unstable and disorienting states of internal dilemmas to more stable states of competence and self-confidence in their new roles as successful college students in recovery.

Transitions Analysis

The analysis of the Transitions findings showed similar and almost parallel-like dynamics reflected in the Trajectories sections. The analysis revealed several transitional trajectories among participants each with their own distinct yet similar challenges, levels of difficulty, and consequential varying degrees of success. The transitional trajectories were threefold: first, some participants remained in their CRP until graduation; second, others seemed to "mature out" of their CRP and moved off campus prior to graduation; and third, a few others were asked to leave their CRP prior to graduation due to returning to substance use or behavioral issues. Each of these groups found success to varying degrees but across different timelines as occurred in the earlier Trajectories section. The most common elements contributing towards a successful transitional outcome appeared to be establishing a new life balance and structure combined with replacing the CRP support with some individually meaningful recovery support whether from AA, friends, or other means.

I found theoretical validation for these data furthering previous findings primarily through the lens of Kegan's models of Developmental Adaptation and Self-Authorship (1994, 1982). The Developmental Adaptation model helped to further illuminate how the transition to post-college living represented a new phase of tenuous balance for participants inherently bringing a new sense of imbalance and vulnerability but also new opportunities for growth and development. Kegan's Self-Authorship theory revealed particularly how those who seemed to "mature out" and left their CRP prior to graduation were ready for a new level of autonomy and independence. One can explain this by virtue of these participants having reached a normal and

even healthy developmental stage of higher reliance on self for direction and values as opposed to being more reliant on their respective social context.

Findings and Analysis Conclusions

Returning to the original question for this study, "How do students in recovery find success in the recovery-unfriendly environment of college?" I have drawn several conclusions based on the framework of dimensions I explored combined with the findings and analysis of data from this study. First, the Trajectories dimension seemed to explore the "what" of the participants' journey towards success in terms of the factors contributory towards that success. The data findings and analysis revealed that these factors are complex and multivariate in the sense of being multidimensional and individually variable as well as dynamic. Furthermore, participants' journeys and experiences towards experiencing that success were messy and the factors seemed more commonly non-linear given the nature of human development. The messy and dynamic nature of these processes were evident not only in the participants' trajectory experiences but also in the dynamic and variable quality of the CRP itself. Therefore, no one simple, linear formula would suffice as a recipe for success for these students but rather a combination and configuration of various components of support and individual factors seem necessary to help promote a successful trajectory in college.

Second, the Transformations dimension seemed to provide an opportunity to explore some of the "how" regarding participants' experiences with the change and transformation necessary for finding that pathway of success through college. Again, I found these processes of transformations to be messy and complex revealing dynamics on various levels. In part this seemed to occur as an internal process of individual readiness for participants but there was also the relational context of supportive peers providing a synergistic dynamic for motivation and

ability to change. This further underscored the important role the context of relationship and connection with peers in the CRP seemed to play.

Third, the Transitions dimension provided a purview into how participants' experiences both within or outside their CRP may have helped prepare or not prepare them for a successful transition to post-college living as emerging adults in recovery. Again, the findings and analysis revealed this to not necessarily be a simple, linear process. However, this study did reveal a dynamic of balance needed between reliance on the CRP/peer support and one's own autonomy and independence. This seemed to help further explain how two groups of participants experienced non-successful transitions but for different reasons. Perhaps the dynamic is one of balance. Those participants who relied too much on the CRP for support without building the necessary outside support before their transition seemed to more commonly experience an unsuccessful transition as well as those who relied too little or were not very connected to the CRP. The one group was too connected and the other too little with the intervening important variable being a balance between autonomy and support. That needed balance seemed to be a connection to the CRP support while also moving towards a level of autonomy of self-authorship combined with reconfiguring a new kind of outside support appropriate to one's developmental level of growth. Furthermore, these dynamics seem to imply that the CRP itself formed a necessary but not necessarily sufficient resource of support for success.

Implications for Practice

The data findings, analysis, and conclusions from this study raise numerous implications for practice. Although many of the findings of this study and the consequential implications may not necessarily be new to me as a clinician working in the field of collegiate recovery, these findings do help validate these as real issues and hopefully provide some reasonable, research-

based direction for dealing with them. I presented these implications as addressing three realms

of practice – clinical/counseling support practitioners working with students in recovery,

directors of Collegiate Recovery Programs, and Administrators in higher education institutions.

Implications for Practitioners

Several implications arise for practitioners based on this study. First, is the need to

individualize support for students in recovery. The findings were clear that the CRP was critical

as a source of support but different participants seemed to value different things differently.

Hence, the configuration of supports for these students need individualization. Second,

practitioners should remain sensitive to and explore with students their interior views of

themselves and levels of confidence in recovery as well as academics early on. In retrospect I

have too often over-assumed students' level of confidence in their recovery thinking the CRP has

provided all they needed. Remaining sensitive to their individual challenges can help to clear an

early path towards a successful trajectory. Third, practitioners need to maintain a dual focus

when working with their students in regards to their well-being. The focus should include both

the individual well-being of their students as well as the collective well-being of the community

as the one greatly influences the other. Fourth, practitioners should also encourage their students

to live both inside and outside the "Bubble" of their CRP. Encouraging involvement in

extracurricular activities their institution has to offer as well as remaining engaged in outside

recovery support has great potential to help prepare them for a healthy self-authorship and

autonomy for when they graduate and transition to post-college living. Finally, the data also

supports practitioners helping their students have a broader focus beyond simply the present of

their current collegiate experience in recovery. They also need to help them prepare for dealing

with stigma and potentially risky situations in everyday corporate culture.

Implications for Program Directors

The findings of this study also raise important implications for CRP program directors. First, they should coordinate interdepartmentally for easy access for resources their CRP students may need. Some students may need mental health support and others learning disability support and easy access to those resources is important for their success. Second, program directors should also configure their CRPs in such a way as to provide numerous opportunities for students to engage and grow as leaders in their respective programs. Participants referenced the importance of leadership for their own growth as well as the health of their CRP community numerous times throughout this study. In many ways it seemed as if the student leaders were a key protective factor for the healthy functioning of the CRP community.   Third, program directors would also do well to develop a flexible and variable program structure and range of support services and opportunities for students given their different levels of growth and development along their respective trajectories. Some students may need higher levels of accountability and structure whereas other more mature, stable students may need less with more autonomy as they focus more on preparation for life outside the CRP. Directors should develop and oversee the implementation of services that are relevant, developmentally appropriate and thereby helpful to students who are at varying stages of growth. Fourth, CRP alumni networking opportunities for current CRP students could also be a helpful resource particularly for those preparing for graduation. Finally, program directors could use their positive program outcomes with student successes clear to institution administrators to help reduce stigma against this population as well as a means to procure more funding.

Implications for Higher Education Administrators

This study also raises implications relevant for those in high level administrative positions within post-secondary institutions. First, the impressive accomplishments of these students when given the appropriate supports, seen in the context of their trying to succeed in a recovery-unfriendly environment, highlights their resilience. This also illustrates their clear potential for positive contributions to a college campus and mitigates stigma-based negative stereotypes of this population. Second, the above could help to provide impetus for advocacy of specialized resources for these students in the form of CRPs so as to make these resources available to more students in recovery on college campuses. Finally, the findings of this study also brings implications to the retention issue so relevant in higher education today. CRPs can be a viable avenue of retention for numbers of students who struggle with AOD issues and who could become positive, successful, and contributing members of their respective college campuses if their institutions provided them this valuable support.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the implications for practice several specific recommendations are in order for those working with students in recovery in the context of CRPs. One issue regards the modality of recovery and need for individualized support. Many have found the traditional 12-Step/AA approach helpful but this is not the only mode for successful recovery. Research has identified strong evidence for AA participation after treatment and sustained recovery (Pegano, Kelly, White, et al., 2013). Researchers have also found modest beneficial effects for recovery with adolescents and AA attendance with motivation being one of the important variables (Kelly, Myers, and Brown, 2000). Further research has identified the effectiveness of mutual self-help group attendance such as AA to be related to process mechanisms such as supporting self-

efficacy, coping skills, motivation, and supportive social networks (Kelly, Magill, and Stout, 2009). The Project Match research has found the important variable is finding the right approach for the right individual, in other words, matching the treatment approach to the client's needs but also acceptance of a particular approach hence, underscoring that no one approach is effective for all persons suffering from substance use disorders (Matson, Allen, Miller, et al., 1993).

The challenge is for professionals working with these students is to identify support mechanisms appropriate to their students' needs and desires beyond the traditional AA network. Explorations could be done with various faith-based or spiritual-based avenues such as Zen Centers for meditation or other community support groups not necessarily 12-Step based. My experience has been many of the alternative support groups such as Rational Recovery or Health Realization approach their support more for persons in early recovery as opposed to those in more stable to advanced stages of recovery and are not necessarily a good fit for this population. It appears the important mechanisms to attend to are the ones promoting self-efficacy, healthy coping, and support social networks per the previously cited research. Furthermore, the case may be that some students may not need community support and reach a level of health self-efficacy without the community component. The question is both need and fit. What are their needs and what configuration would they find a good fit for them individually?

A second important dynamic to remain sensitive to regards students' gradual growth towards independence and the CRP structural changes necessary to appropriately meet the needs of students in these later stages of growth. Oftentimes students early in their trajectory of college need lots of structure and support to establish a successful mode of functioning. This structure includes weekly counselor meetings in addition to weekly community meetings and access to other campus support mechanisms. However, once they become juniors and seniors their college

trajectory begins to look quite different with greater focus and involvement outside of the CRP with internships and other responsibilities. Perhaps the CRP support structure needs to change with that as well helping these students find a greater level of independence. The counselor check-in meetings should become less frequent – perhaps every other week or monthly as needed – to address whatever concerns may arise as well as to promote more CRP-independent living. This would seem to be a natural progression.

An important component of success for these students is to not become too insulated in the CRP bubble. CRP staff should encourage their students once stable, to become more involved with campus activities, clubs, organizations to get more experience outside of the CRP and help normalize their collegiate experience. This would also help them to build a broader repertoire of skills and networks in preparation for the transition to post-college living. Furthermore, CRPs could host informational sessions for their respective campuses educating participants on the realities of addiction but also the avenues for recovery for college students. This could help demystify this process as well as potentially help reduce stigma on their respective campuses.

Finally, as an effort to help students prepare for the transition to post-college life, CRPs could organize CRP alumni networking events for their current students. StepUP has begun to do this by hosting several events during the school year. Alumni are invited to discuss challenges they experienced as recently graduated young adults in recovery. This has also provided networking possibilities for current students to find internships or even job prospects.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several themes and dynamics I identified within my study kept engaging my curiosity as lingering questions within my researcher self but encroaching deadlines and limited time barred

their exploration. Consequently, they formed the basis for areas of recommended further research. The first set of questions more narrowly focus on the findings with this population in this study. The second set reflect a broader focus with these findings and how they might compare and contrast on a larger scale.

The first realm of recommended further research relates to findings in this study. One such area is the dynamic of return to substance use for participants. One area needing further exploration is an analysis of factors influencing how participants who engaged in episodes of return to use experienced either acceptance or rejection from their CRP community. I identified these dynamics within my study but did not delve deeper into correlate themes which may have influenced those different qualitative experiences. My initial suspicion is one significant intervening variable may have been their depth of connection with peers in the community but further analysis is needed to substantiate this or identify other significant factors. A second area in this regard is the need for a deeper examination of the dynamics leading to episodes of return to use by participants. This could have great heuristic value for helping students struggling with this issue. A third area worthy of more exploration is the theme of leadership and its role for participants and the community. I identified several themes related to how participants benefitted from being leaders in their CRP and a few of the impacts of leaders on the CRP community but further exploration would be helpful in identifying what motivated participants to be leaders and what helped them to fulfill these roles.

The second realm of recommended research entails broader applications and implications of the findings and analysis of this study. One such area is how participants' experiences in this study might compare to students in recovery attending college successfully while either not accessing the support of an on campus CRP or where one is not available. How might the

challenges and avenues to success be similar or different for these students? A second area would be in terms of students' experiences who engage with a non-residential CRP on their respective campuses and how their experiences may be similar or different to those who engage with a residential-based CRP. A third interesting application would be to compare the experiences of students in recovery with a general student population in terms of challenges and avenues for success so as to further highlight the distinctive needs of this special population of students. Finally, the participants in this study all came from two relatively small, private institutions with overall student populations ranging from 1500 to 2000 undergraduate day-student bodies. Further research is needed to compare how their experiences may compare to students in recovery attending large, public institutions particularly with how they build and experience a sense of community.

The role of the institution and CRP providing necessary support for students in recovery parallels findings in Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whit, and Associates (2010) work on student engagement and success in college. Kuh, et al. (2010) found that institutions fostering student engagement and graduation rates do two things very well. First, they teach students the institution's values, what successful students do, and how to avail themselves of the needed resources to be successful. Second, these institutions match the resources to the values of the institution and have support systems in place responsive to students' needs. This speaks directly to the need for higher education administrators to provide those support systems needed for students in recovery to succeed.

Consequently, the findings of this study also call for more research on further broadening the definition of student success particularly in regards to students in recovery. Kuh, et al. (2006) argued, "Novel definitions are borne out of ingenuity and necessity and often require

measures of multidimensional constructs" (p. 6). This study's findings highlight the multidimensional factors influencing the success of students in recovery as well as several of the distinct developmental trajectories of this student population. Further research is needed to examine both the distinct as well as similar developmental needs and successful developmental gains of this population with college students in general. Perhaps many of the success-supporting factors particularly in the context of community with peer support and accountability may have applicability to configuring supports for general student populations as well. Research is needed to find the applications and their respective efficacy.

I could list many other areas needed for further research particularly given this field of inquiry is still relatively young compared to literature focused on college students with active alcohol and substance use problems. However, the research to date is clear that peer support and intentional institutional support through CRPs and staff trained in addiction disorders are valuable mechanisms helping these students find success. My hope is that this study will spur further opportunities for my own exploration as well as stimulate other researchers to delve into important previously unexplored questions and areas within this topic.

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Closing Reflexive Statement

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As I came to the concluding reflection on the completion of my study several things immediately came to mind. I approached this topic with a significant professional as well as personal interest in the topic. I have been the Assistant Director of a CRP at a post-secondary educational institution and have worked with students in recovery as a specialized focus of my professional practice as a counselor. One of the largest challenges I encountered was the particular focus of my question for my study. I am always asking the where, how, and why questions when working with these students while trying to help them find success in their

journey. I am coming away from the conclusion of this study with a few significant reflective impressions, perhaps a few answers, and not surprisingly, a myriad of further questions. I have summarized my reflective impressions with a new emergent identity of myself as a researcher-practitioner.

As a practitioner I have emerged from my own process in this endeavor with a renewed and deeper appreciation for these students, their struggles, and even more their successes. I frequently found myself thanking my participants for their stories and candor during the interviews and feeling honored to be allowed into the depth and vulnerabilities of their stories. I felt grateful to be in the role of a student learning from them and their experiences. Their transformations and eventual successes are often nothing less than profound. I can only hope my written analysis has remained true to and has justly represented the essence of their experiences and avenues for success. I also have found myself frequently reflecting with my current students with whom I work on some of my findings and how these findings may relate to their current experiences and struggles.

As a budding researcher, this being my first formal venture with this endeavor, I could not help but to feel at times that I was mostly validating what I had already learned, experienced, or suspected to be true through my practitioner experience. There were no earth shattering new discoveries worthy of immediate NIH funding. However, I do believe and gain great satisfaction from the findings and analysis of this study helping to uncover many unforeseen nuances and dynamics as well as fresh perspectives for understanding students in recovery and their salient experiences towards success. Furthermore, I do believe this study has provided validation and a sound research basis for many practices in this field. I feel I have grown and made a worthy contribution as a researcher within this area of study.

As a researcher I was also surprised and intrigued with how creative and emergent the research process became the further I delved into my data. My graduate training as a psychological practitioner has been primarily from a quantitative, experimental paradigm and I often felt stretched with this venture into qualitative study. Some of my initial analyses clearly reflected this and provided fodder for humorous supportive and constructive criticism from my Chair. One of the greatest sources of my struggle was the initial ambiguity of my primary research question. The responses from my study participants eventually removed the fog of opacity allowing for the emergence of the question I had been asking all along without realizing it. Hence, my primary question became participant-driven and my study participants became my teachers in so many more ways than I initial realized. I learned how to be a qualitative researcher in the end.

Finally, as a practitioner-researcher, I found myself looking for research-based concrete answers to some challenges and dilemmas we face as practitioners. But I also quickly realized that there are no easy, black and white answers to many of these challenges because of the complexity of this endeavor. This study has helped to validate that the experiences of students in recovery, the dynamics of CRPs as collective organisms, as well as the organizations and institutions embedding them, are all complex and dynamic to such degrees as to preclude easy and black and white answers. However, the findings of this study do provide some direction to help find answers to some of those professional challenges involved with working with these students. I do hope my colleagues and other professionals in this field find valuable information for their practice here. Finally, I am also closing with the sense that the conclusion of this study is really not a conclusion per se but rather an emergent beginning to new explorations within this important area of study.

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Appendix A: Participant Interview Questions

Experiences while participating in the CRP

1. What were some of your biggest challenges while being a college student in recovery?

2. What were some of the most helpful or valuable supports you received while being a college student in recovery?

3. What factors or activities helped you the most to build a sense of "community" within your CRC?

4. What were some of your best experiences while being a member of your CRC?

5. What were some of your worst experiences while being a member of your CRC?

Personal transformations while in college

1. Among the biggest challenges you faced which were some of the most difficult or most memorable which you learned from? What did you learn from them?

2. How did your assumptions change or transform throughout your college experience regarding…

   a. What it took to be successful in your recovery as a college student?

   b. What it took to be successful academically all the way to graduation?

3. What seemed to "push you through" or "keep you going" to successful in these areas?

4. How did your membership and/or participation in your CRC influence your personal transformations in these areas?

Transition to life after college

1. What were some of your biggest challenges in the transition to life after college as a young adult in recovery?

2. How did your participation in your CRC help prepare you for this transition?

3. What do you feel like you were lacking in preparation for adult life after college?

4. How could your CRC have helped to better prepare you for life after college?

5. What has this interview process and reflection been like for you?

Appendix B: Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions by checking the box or filling in the answer that best fits you and your current life situation.

1. What is your age?

   o 21-23

   o 24-26

   o 27-29

   o 30 or above

2. Gender Identity – How do you identify in terms of gender?

   o Female

   o Male

   o Transgender

   o Other _____

3. Ethnicity – How do you identify in terms of ethnicity?

   o African American/Black

   o Asian

   o Caucasian/White

   o Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American

   o Native American/American Indian

   o Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

   o Biracial

   o Other _____

4. How long has it been since you graduated from college? (choose the option that best fits the time frame)

   o One year but less than two

   o Two years but less than three

   o Three years but less than four

   o Four years but less than five

   o Five years or more

5. Employed
   o Full-time
   o Part-time
   o Unemployed

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

"Student Experiences in Collegiate Recovery Communities"

IRB #617543-1

I am conducting a study investigating student alumni experiences who have been members of a Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC) on a college campus. This study comprises my dissertation research and I am interested in examining and comparing student experiences both during and after college as members of a CRC. You were selected as a participant for this study because you are an alumnus of a Collegiate Recovery Program at (pseudonym) College. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by Scott Washburn, Ed.D. Candidate, under the direction of Dr. Kate Boyle, Associate Professor and Program Director, Student Affairs and Leadership at the University of St. Thomas Department of Leadership, Policy and Administration.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is examine and compare student alumni experiences as emerging young adults recovering from alcohol and drug addiction from two different Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC) programs from institutions which offer recovery support services to students. My study will address three key questions regarding these student alumni and their experiences. The first pertains to the most salient challenges, supports and experiences of community these alumni had as emerging adults in recovery attending college as participants in a CRC. The second relates to any assumptive transformations which these students experienced regarding the requirements for sustained recovery and successful completion of college. The third addresses how these alumni experienced the transition to post-college life and any challenges they encountered during this phase.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following: First, I will ask you to participate in a 60-90 minute digitally audio-recorded interview, either in person of via telephone. The interview will focus on your experiences while participating in your respective CRC, personal transformations on assumptive levels which you experienced, and your experiences with transition, challenges, and growth in post-college life. Second, I will ask you to complete the "Recovery and Life Satisfaction Survey" questionnaire which I will provide at the end of the interview or email you if you prefer and request that you return the completed survey to me via email or in person.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

This study does present several minimal risks. The first is the potential recollection of emotionally-charged past experiences as well as possible past triggers to relapse. I will minimize this risk by not probing into any past traumatic or highly sensitive personal information participants might disclose. The only other risks include personally sensitive information regarding being a former alcohol/drug dependent person. I will mitigate the recovery identity of the participants by protecting their anonymity in the study in addition to the anonymity of their respective host institution.

However, the study also presents potential benefits to participants. You may directly benefit from participation by recounting the reinforcement of recovery-sustaining behaviors as well as positive recollections as a CRC member. The study also presents potential benefits to the selected CRC programs in regards to furthering knowledge for program development to improve services for current and future Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP) student participants.

Compensation

There will be no compensation for participation in this study. However, I will provide you with a $10.00 Caribou Coffee Gift Card as a "Thank You" for your time and effort in this study.

Confidentiality

The data and records for my study will remain confidential and I will protect their access with reasonable measures. In any sort of report I publish on my findings I will not include any personal identifying information of any of the participants. I will assign pseudonyms to all participants as well as their respective college institutions. The types of records I create will include audio recordings of interviews, data sets of program description and student outcome trends – which will exclude any personal identifying information of students – transcripts of recordings, personal notes and analysis for the completion of my dissertation. I will store all of the audio recordings, transcribed interviews, personal notes, and analysis in a password-protected location of my laptop computer hard drive. The only individuals who will have access to raw data which will include personal identifying information of participants are myself as the principal investigator and Dr. Kathleen Boyle, my Advisor at the University of St. Thomas.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College, the StepUP Program or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the scheduled time for the interview. You also have the right to review and comment on my summary and analysis of your interview. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will be used only with your explicit written consent. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Scott Washburn and I am the Principal Investigator for this study. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 612-644-1061 or at wash9022@stthomas.edu. You may also contact my Advisor, Dr. Kate Boyle, at 651-962-4393 or at kmboyle@stthomas.edu. The University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board can be reached at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns you may have.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I also give consent to the audio recording of this interview.

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____

Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   **Date**

_____   _____

Signature of Advisor   **Date**