

The Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help-Seeking

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined students' lived experiences of shame in university and how this emotion interacts with factors related to student persistence (such as, motivation, self-efficacy, sense of belonging) and help-seeking. Previous studies have demonstrated that shame can negatively impact factors related to student persistence, but researchers have yet to investigate how experiencing shame impacts students during their academic studies. All sources of data were collected through semi-structured interviews (n=7) with shame-prone, undergraduate, domestic students. Following the interview participants had the opportunity to participate in an optional 10-day journaling activity (n=3). All data were analyzed following an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, resulting in the creation of six super ordinate themes: Processing Shame, Impact on Self, Motivation, Belonging, Factors That Promote Help-Seeking, and Factors That Deter Help-seeking, and 32 subordinate themes. This study demonstrates students' experiences of shame impacting their motivation, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and identity. Participants also shared difficulties seeking help in moments after experiencing shame. These findings provide evidence that shame impedes students' persistence, and acts as a barrier to seeking help when struggling. This thesis reiterates the need for universities to design policies and programming that understands how during times of struggles students are less likely to reach out for support, and such initiatives should be structured to address this issue.

DEDICATIONS

To those who have struggled in silence.

This one's for you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Why students depart from educational institutions is a complex phenomenon that both students and institutions face. This chapter highlights various theoretical perspectives and factors around the issue of students departing from institutions. A background to shame and the role this emotion has on students in post-secondary education will be highlighted. Additionally, outlined in this chapter are the research questions, significance, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, relevant definitions, and the researcher's perspective.

Background to the Problem

It is a logical assumption that a student who enters a college or university institution has a particular goal that motivated said individual to enter the post-secondary system. While there are varying motives to trigger such behaviour, one goal would be for an individual to complete a desired program to pursue a particular career. In times of economic instability for higher education institutions, traditional and non-traditional student enrollment increases while government funding often decreases (Langston & Scheid, 2014). A decrease in government funding can cause hardship on institutions as they support an influx of students from lower socio-economic background, who are more likely to encounter additional barriers that will impede their degree obtainment, all while institutions have less funding to support these students. Institutions are attempting to counter the gap between populations by providing additional interventions and programs to support students in their transition (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). Students departing from the post-secondary system affects not only students, but also institutions who invest in their students to become alumni, and the taxpayers whose dollars go into institutions (Schneider, 2010). Bean and Hossler (1990) argued that an institution makes the same money from one student who stays for four years, as compared to four students who only

stay for their first year of university. This amount does not include the cost it takes to recruit a student; Okanagan University College (1996) estimated the costs to recruit a student who only stays for one year was \$4,230. This estimated cost has most likely increased since the article was published, over 20 years ago. Looking at both the extra recruitment costs and lost revenue that occur from a lack of student retention supports the argument that in times of financial struggles, universities should focus on supporting students that can be retained to degree obtainment; rather than increase enrolment numbers that would then require additional services and recruitment costs.

The phenomenon of student departure is complex. Tinto (1993) provided a change in the language we use around categorizing student departures, as *stopouts* and *dropouts*. This language allows for the distinguishing between students who leave for a period of time and eventually reenter the post-secondary system (*stopout*), and those who leave the system without ever planning to return (*dropout*). Complexity arises when students transfer between institutions, as through the institution's perspective the student would not be categorized as retained, even though the student remained within the larger post-secondary system. The same student that resides within the post-secondary system can still be viewed as persisting towards his or her educational goals. Clarifying the language around *stopouts* and *dropouts* is important as we explore reasons for student departure.

Students depart from an institution for a variety of reasons. Factors that have been determined as having a potential impact on a student's success are: academic preparedness (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003); socioeconomic status (Britt, Ammerman, Barrett, & Jones, 2017); first generational learners (Katreveck & Aruguete, 2017); students' integration (Tinto, 2017); students' involvement (Astin 1984); psychological factors, such as, self-efficacy (Krumrei-

Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013), motivation (Tinto, 2017), locus of control (Weiner, 1985), goals (Turner, Husman, & Schallert, 2002), and emotions (Pekrun, 1992). There are many factors that can interfere with a student's success. The phenomenon of student departure cannot be addressed through only one lens, but through a multidisciplinary approach to address these different factors associated with students exiting the post-secondary system.

Various theories have been developed to try and understand student departure; such as student integration theory (Tinto, 1993), Student Attrition Model (Bean & Metzger, 1985), Student Involvement, (Astin, 1984), Psychological Theory of College Student Retention (Bean & Eaton, 2000), Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985), Student Motivation and Persistence (Tinto, 2017), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Dewberry & Jackson, 2018). These theories will be discussed in more detail later in Chapter 2. This study will focus mostly on Tinto's (2017) model for Student Motivation and Persistence. As noted by the above cited literature, researchers from varying disciplines have attempted to understand and investigate this phenomenon of student departure.

Institutions are attempting to react to these factors that impede a student's success by applying these theoretical models to their practice. An example of this application is through institutions providing additional student supports through remedial programs (Bettinger et al., 2013). However, not all students are actively engaging with supports, even though several studies have shown a correlation between students who do use supports with better academic performances (Goodall & Pattern, 2011; Reeves & Sperling, 2015). One reason students do not engage in these supports could be because of psychological factors. Some studies have found a correlation between self-stigma and help-seeking behaviour (Topkaya, 2014) and students with

low self-efficacy were less likely to seek help (Roussel, Elliot, & Feltman, 2011; Yang, Taylor, Cao, 2016). In a study by Stamp, Banerjee, and Brown (2014), students' with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) identified shame as the reason for not seeking help. Another study regarding a math help centre identified students felt ashamed as barrier to seeking help (Symonds, Lawson, & Robinson, 2008). Students were identifying in these studies how they were conducting global evaluations of their identity. When we evaluate ourselves this process can cause affective experiences, or emotional experiences, such as pride and joy. Negative evaluations in particular may be a contributing factor to why students are not reaching out for support.

Shame can be defined as a global negative evaluation of oneself, where one feels “an intense pain, discomfort, and anger” (Lewis, 2003, p. 1187). There are often misconceptions around the difference between shame and guilt (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). The main distinction between these emotions is that with shame the objective of the affective experience is focused on the self, whereas with guilt the objective of focus is on the behaviour (Lewis, 2003). Lewis (2003) proposed one of the important features regarding shame is how the emotion elicits the response of individuals wanting to hide or disappear. Compared to guilt, shame has been associated with depression (Dunford & Granger, 2017), students' coping abilities (Van Vliet, 2008), children's' development (Mills, et al., 2015), and negative self-attitudes towards help-seeking (Stamp, et al., 2014). Individuals who experience shame on an ongoing basis, may begin to develop a disposition to shame, shame proneness or internalized shame. Thompson, Altmann, and Davidson (2002) explained that “high shame-prone individuals attribute transgression and negative outcomes to characterological faults, experiencing global feelings of self-debasement and enduring negative affect” (p. 614). These individuals will attempt to recover from these

shame events by changing qualities in themselves, rather than attempting to fix the situation the way guilt-prone individuals do (Niedenthal, Tangney, & Gavinski, 1994). The concept of shame-prone individuals' experiences could be an important factor to keep in mind as we imagine these individuals existing in our classrooms.

Studies around shame's impact on students' post-secondary studies has increased throughout the years. Pekrun (1992) viewed the concept of shame through what he called achievement related emotions. Pekrun identified how emotions affect students' achievement in the classroom; specifically, emotion's influence on a student's cognitive attentional resources, storage and retrieval of information, and motivation. Shame influences other areas that are associated with student persistence, such as, a student's sense of belonging (Johnson, 2012), self-efficacy (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Ewald, 2006), and motivation (Pekrun, 1992; Turner & Schallert, 2001). While these studies identify a link between shame and the factors of Tinto's (2017) Model of Motivation and Persistence, they do not attempt to understand what these shame experiences are like and how students make sense of their experiences.

Minimal research has been conducted around how shame-proneness influences help-seeking behaviour in university students. This research gap is surprising since a previous study found that nine out of twelve individuals interviewed identified feelings of shame and stigma as a reason for not reaching out for support (Stamp et al., 2014). Researchers have studied help-seeking behaviour in other domains. Dunford and Granger (2017), for example, studied shame-proneness and found this disposition predicted negative attitudes towards help-seeking in mothers. This contention is not to say that these findings are transferable to students in post-secondary education, but establishes the argument that shame and help seeking should be

explored. This study also intended to explore how students with high shame-proneness experience this emotion and the role it plays in students' help-seeking behaviour.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore students' experiences of shame and the role shame plays in the various factors theorized to be associated with persistence (self-efficacy, motivation, sense of belonging; see Tinto, 2017). In addition, how this emotion plays a role in student's help-seeking was explored. The target participants in this study was shame-prone, undergraduate, domestic students from a Canadian Midwestern university, who have experienced shame and were willing to share their experiences. Within the thesis, these students were referred to as shame-prone students (SPS). However, in the researcher's interactions and recruitment with students, the term was not used. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, participants were provided the option to participate in an optional 10-day journaling activity to examine students' experiences of shame throughout the period. Of the seven participants in the study, three participated in the journaling activity. The journal transcripts were analyzed through the same process as the interviews.

Research Questions

This study aimed to understand university students' lived experiences of shame. Specifically, the focus was on how students understood this phenomenon influencing their persistence and help-seeking behaviour in university. The main research question guiding this study was, how do shame-prone students' (SPS) identify these experiences of shame to influence their persistence in university? Additional research questions that guided the study were:

- How do SPS experiencing shame perceive their help-seeking behavior?

- How do SPS view their self-efficacy and sense of belonging in university when experiencing shame?
- How do SPS describe their motivation when experiencing shame?

Description of the Study

The present research project was a qualitative, phenomenological study. As the research questions for the study were directed to better understand how students make sense of their experiences of shame, and the role these experiences played in their persistence and help-seeking, a phenomenological approach was most fitting. Phenomenological research aims to “reduce the individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). The methodology, phenomenological research, in the present study falls in line with the researcher’s epistemological views of a social constructivist. Social constructivists have been noted to believe in multiple realities and set out to better understand the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study therefore was not interested in understanding whether or not the participants’ experiences were real, but understanding how students were making sense of their shame experiences in relation to their persistence and help-seeking.

The research participants were comprised of seven domestic, shame-prone, undergraduate students at a Midwestern Canadian university, who had completed at least 18 credit units of coursework over a minimum of eight months at the time of the study. Students were recruited through posters and PAWS announcements. The original intention to recruit through mass emails, and snowball sampling were not utilized as participants were successfully recruited through posters and PAWS announcements. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were performed with students who met the criteria of the research study. Interviews were

recorded using a portable recording device, which were later transcribed. Students who volunteered to participate in the research study were assessed for eligibility through a short online survey. Participants were assessed by their demographic information, credit unit completion, and internalized shame score (Cook, 1994). This assessment ensured each participant was a viable candidate within the intended parameters of the study.

After the interviews were completed and transcribed the researcher reviewed and began analyzing the collected stories by utilizing Smith and Osborn's (2003) approach to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). These researchers identified four main stages to IPA analysis, 1) identification of themes; 2) theme connections; 3) subsequent case analysis; 4) participant write up. In the first stage the researchers read through the stories and identifies themes that emerge at a theoretical level. Next the researcher begins to identify connections between themes, bringing them together in what Smith and Osborn identified as thematic clusters. These clusters can be consolidated into a table of themes. The research repeats the previous two steps on the next participant's experiences, coming with a fresh perspective to each participant's data. Lastly, the researcher begins to write up the participant's experience in a final statement to capture the overall meaning of their story. Chapter Three of this document explains the methodology and data analysis approach in further detail.

Significance

Research around the impact of emotion on learning is not a new endeavour. Research around learning and emotions has been studied since the early 1980s (Weiner, 1985); however, often these studies were limited to the realm of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 1992). Achievement emotions can be defined as emotions that focus directly on achievement activities or achievement outcomes (Pekrun & Stephens, 2010). This focus on achievement emotions

narrows the research to focus specifically on the classroom and the emotion's impact on the students' performance. Universities are an influential time of a student's development, where relationships, and a student's emotional awareness and control are developing (Chickering, 1969). This research aimed to look at all dimensions of a student's life, viewing them as a whole. The researcher understands that all areas of a student's life has an impact on their performance, and therefore, their success in university. For the purposes of this study, the research will explore any experience of shame that the student identified influenced their persistence or help-seeking during the student's undergraduate degree (such as, classroom experiences, relationships, research, residence, faculty interactions). This research is not to determine if the phenomenon of shame exists, as the existence of this phenomenon has been described in existing scholarly literature. The goal of this research is to improve our understanding of how these experiences of shame were affecting students. By changing institutions' perspectives regarding the way shame interferes with students' persistence and help-seeking, we can adapt how institutions frame their programming around seeking support. The way this emotion is interfering with students' intent to seek help, should influence how institutions engage with students who require support or are at risk of not persisting.

Assumptions

The researcher of the current study made the following assumptions:

- Shame has an impact on a student's motivation, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and help-seeking, as described in the literature.
- Participants had the self-awareness to reflect on their experience and the capacity to communicate how their emotions affect their behaviour.
- Participants had a similar conceptual understanding of shame.

- Participants had an interest in the study and answered truthfully and as accurately as possible.

Delimitations

This study focused on the experiences of seven, domestic, shame-prone, undergraduate students enrolled at a Canadian Midwestern university. The research focused on domestic students to ensure there was a similar conceptual understanding of shame that was not otherwise influenced by an individual's background from a country with different societal norms, beliefs, and values (Lewis, 2003). Students who participated in the study were required to have attempted at least one year of university. This parameter ensured participants had sufficient lived experience at a university to reflect upon during the semi-structured interview. This study specifically looked at individuals who are persisting through their university degree, including both students who were *stopouts* and those who are currently persisting. Data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews and journaling were performed at an institution during the months of September to December in 2018.

Limitations

Similar to all research studies, there are limitations regarding the findings and conclusions of this work. As the present study investigated the phenomenon of shame, one limitation was that participants might have varying understandings and definitions of the emotion. Participants in the study had the opportunity to define shame and explain how they came to this understanding. Following the participant's response, the researcher provided the definition that would be used within the context of the present study; however, there is the potential that not all students internalized this definition. Based on the participants' responses the researcher does not believe this occurred. Additionally, since the nature of shame is taboo and

often difficult to talk about, participants may have been uncomfortable speaking truthfully and in great detail. The researcher was transparent regarding shame being the primary target of investigation within the study when promoting and conducting the research. Based on the researcher's approach and the difficult experiences shared by participants, the researcher believes the participants who emerged to partake in the study shared truthfully and honestly about their experiences.

The study's sample size was small, with a sample size of seven participants. Polkinghorne (1989) claimed that IPA researchers should aim for 5 to 30 participants who have all experienced the phenomenon for phenomenological research. A small sample size does not allow for generalizability to an overall population. Smith, Flowers, and Larken (2009) claimed an IPA participant pool should be homogeneous enough to allow for theoretical generalizability. This isolated pool of experiences allows the reader interpreting the findings to assess how this information relates to their practice and determine its applicability. In addition to the sample size, all selected participants were from the same institution. This limitation may mean that the participants' experiences are not applicable to other situations. However, some participants completed their first year of university at institutions outside of the institution of this study, allowing these findings to be representative of shame experiences in other institutions as well.

Reflecting on the researcher's experiences of shame, the researcher of this study has a vested interest in its results. This vested interest could influence the researcher's bias and interpretation of the data. The researcher practiced reflexivity throughout the study. Creswell (2013) explained that "good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background" (p .202). Reflexivity helps to ensure the researcher is open about their values and beliefs, and how these internal

mechanisms may influence the researcher's interpretations of the study's results. The researcher of this study was open to with regard to their experiences and background of the research construct, and documented the research process throughout the project to be as transparent as possible. The data collection and analysis processes can be viewed in Chapter Three of this document.

Definitions of Terms

There are several key terms that will be used within the study. These terms will be defined in the following section for the purposes of clarity.

Dropout: when a post-secondary student leaves “higher education without completing a degree or diploma, and stating that they do not have any immediate intention of returning to higher education” (Hovdhaugen, 2009, p. 2).

Emotions: a multidimensional, psychological construct, of the *subjective, psychological, functional, and social* aspects present in the human experience (Reeve, 1994; Veronica & Paoloni, 2014).

Guilt: a negative affective experience that stems from evaluating one's action as a failure (Lewis, 2003)

Help-seeking: a multi-step process that individuals use to obtain support from other individuals to cope with an issue (Cauce, Mason, Gonzales, Hiraga, & Liu, 1994)

Motivation: the drive an individual has to perform the behavior in question (Campbell, 1990).

Persistence: “the ability of students to continue their postsecondary studies from one year to the next and ultimately to proceed to the completion of the program” (Parkin & Baldwin, 2009, p. 65).

Retention: a university or college's ability to keep a student enrolled and progressing through their university degree. Retention is the result of an institution's efforts to keep the student enrolled at their university or college (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985).

Self-efficacy: the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

Sense of belonging: the "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3).

Shame: a painful affective experience from an individual making a negative, global evaluation of one's self against the standards, rules, and goals the individual has internalized (Lewis, 2003).

Shame-proneness: when individuals "attribute transgressions and negative outcomes to characterological faults, experiencing global feelings of self-debasement and enduring negative affect" (Thompson et al., 2002, p. 1).

Stopout: a student who withdraws from an institution and their studies, but returns to their studies at a later date (Tinto, 1993).

Student success: the "complex mix of academic, co-curricular, and personal development factors that combine to produce well-rounded students..." (Humphrey, 2008, p. 2).

The Researcher: Perspective

As a first generational university student who struggled when first entering the post-secondary system, I wanted to better understand the barriers I encountered in my undergraduate degree. Additionally, I wanted to recognize how these same barriers I encountered were

impacting students I have supported through my role in student affairs. My educational background is an undergraduate degree in Psychology, with my professional experience comprised of working in Student Services at both a first-year college and a research-intensive institution. This complex phenomenon, shame, has manifested in both the educational and professional areas of my life. I aspired to better understand these experiences of shame that students encounter in post-secondary education, and how these experiences are influencing students' elements of persistence outlined by Tinto (2017), and their abilities and willingness to seek support.

The concept of shame first entered my life during my undergraduate degree when I was struggling academically. This period was a time when I had encountered various physical, emotional, and psychological barriers that were impacting my academic success and well-being. As I reflect on my time as an undergraduate student, with my newfound understanding of this emotion, there were many times I was overcome with shame. These affective experiences deterred me from accessing supports that would have ultimately aided me in being successful in the first half of my undergraduate degree. One specific incident that shame manifested during this time was when I had fallen ill of a blood condition that drastically impacted my health. I became extremely fatigued and stopped going to class. My energy was so low one day I slept through a final exam. My internal dialogue was fuelled by shame that was saying 'what is wrong with you? You are supposed to be better than this! You are just lazy', stopped me from reaching out to the instructor. A key take away from this story is that my struggle to seek help was not driven by my reluctance to be accountable for my actions, but the shame associated with my actions and that mental representation of who I thought I was supposed to be that influenced my

behavior. I hope that the experiences shared through this research can help enlighten university staff and faculty around the impact this emotion can have on a student's success in university.

My experiences as an undergraduate student profoundly influenced how I supported the students within my portfolio as an Academic Advisor and Program's Officer. In my roles, I assisted students in their transitions to university. Through meeting and helping students, I noticed my students were exhibiting similar behaviors and cognitive thought patterns that I had experienced during my undergraduate degree. By reflecting with them on their behaviours and cognitions, and bringing this emotion to their attention, we were able to openly discuss the impact this emotion was having on them. Through this dialogue, we explored strategies that would aid them in overcoming the effects of this emotion. Shame is a fascinating emotion as the affective experience forces people to withdraw and hide (Lewis, 2003); one way the literature has shown individuals can recover and move past shame is to talk about the emotion (Van Vliet, 2008), which was evident in my anecdotal experiences supporting students.

My previous experience as a student and a student affairs professional displays my vested interest in this research. However, the research is not aimed at proving this emotion exists. The position of this research is to investigate and understand shame experiences and how these experiences are impacting students and their persistence in university. I have been reflexive and transparent as possible throughout the research process to highlight how my perspective intersects with the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five separate chapters. The first chapter provided a background to the problem and the study's research questions. This section also shared the framework for the study, including all definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

The second chapter is a review of the literature relevant to the present research topic. The third chapter provides insight into the research design, methodology, and analysis conducted in this study. In addition, Chapter Three describes the research method selected over other qualitative research methodology and rationale for an IPA approach. Chapter Four presents the superordinate and subordinate themes that emerged from the data collection, utilizing participants' quotes for the reader to assess the trustworthiness of the findings. The fifth, and final chapter, discusses the researcher's interpretation of the results, and implications for future research, practice, and theory. The chapter closes with my concluding thoughts of the findings and my experiences as the researcher.

Summary

This chapter introduced the issue around student persistence and the impact shame has on help-seeking and the various elements Tinto (2017) has theorized to impact student persistence. This chapter also covered the purpose and significance of the study, while highlighting the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the proposed research. Important definitions that will be discussed throughout the research proposal were highlighted. The chapter ends with a reflection on the researcher's perspective and experience working with shame; the description of the organization of the thesis completes the chapter. The next chapter highlights significant literature related to the proposed study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this chapter is to review the current literature and provide context to the problem of shame in student persistence and help-seeking. Specifically, various theoretical models and factors in student retention and persistence are highlighted. The essential component around shame and its impact on students' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, motivation, and help-seeking will also be examined.

Student Success

The term student success is a broad and vague expression that often is misused to describe student retention. There is often an assumption made in the literature of student success that by default, student success equates academic success and performance; on the contrary, there are multiple theoretical perspectives around that aim to define student success. One example is by a student's academic performance, degree attainment, and life skills (Kim, Newton, Downey & Benton, 2010). Other scholars believe student success is defined by the student's whole development (Hunter, 2006). Upcraft, Barefoot, and Gardner (2005) identified multiple areas where success for first year students is defined and includes: developing intellectual and academic competence; developing relationships; exploring identity; identifying a career; maintaining health and wellness; exploring faith; developing multicultural awareness; and establishing civic responsibility. These definitions of student success encompass additional aspects of a student's university experience that is not only confounded by the walls of the classroom.

Researchers have argued that the definition of student success should be constructed by the entire campus community using the institution's mission as a framework (Hunter, 2006). Other researchers have believed that a student's academic success reflects the success of an

institution in accomplishing its mission to educate and prepare its students (Kim et al., 2010). Universities may try to keep this perspective in mind if their goal is to foster student success, and not only retain their students. A student for example may not have the goal of completing a degree, but may have identified new career goals that can only be achieved outside of the institutions. In the eyes of the student, they could view this goal realization as a success, whereas the institution views this differently since they did not retain them (Tinto, 1987). For the purposes of this study, academic success will be used in regard to academic performance and degree completion, and student success will be used as a student progressing towards achieving their own development, learning, and personal goals.

The language within higher education around student success and retention lacks cohesiveness. At its core, there are two kinds of departures from an institution, involuntary and voluntary. An involuntary departure describes the student's inability to meet academic standards or a breach of policy, whereas a voluntary departure can be identified by a student's active choice to no longer enroll in the institution (Noel et al., 1985; Tinto, 1993). Other terms used around student departure are student retention and student persistence. These terms are often used as synonyms to describe students staying within an institution, which is inaccurate. Student retention and persistence, while on the surface seem similar, are driven by separate motivations from different perspectives (Seidman, 2005). Seidman (2005) highlighted that "institutions retain and students persist" (p. 92), which is a pertinent distinction to make. Institutions can facilitate the development of students' academic and social skills through various programming that can support these students in persisting towards their educational goals. Through these programs' institutions may prevent any further student involuntary withdrawals from the institution. However, additional efforts need to be implemented to prevent students from departing from the

institutions for factors outside of academic capabilities, which will be addressed later on in this chapter. For the purpose of this research, student retention will be all efforts that support students staying within an institution, until degree completion. Student persistence includes factors (i.e. socioeconomic, psychological) surrounding the student that supports them in persisting towards their goals.

When addressing student departures there are multiple lenses and theoretical perspectives administrators can look through to understand the phenomenon around students departing from university or college; these lenses include economical, organizational, sociological, and psychological factors (Seidman, 2005). Many of these lenses incorporate elements that are outside of the institutions' control; however, institutions can develop programming to facilitate students' development and resilience to overcome these barriers. Colleges and universities have developed dedicated programming or offices to support students, such as: financial aid, advising centres, orientation programming, student counselling, career services, and services for marginalized populations (such as, women, LGBT, international, and students with disabilities) (Upcraft et al., 2005).

Factors That Impact Student Success

Andersen (1985) highlighted multiple positive and negative, external and internal forces that influence a student's pursuance towards higher education, as seen in Figure 2.1. Andersen explained that each force impacts a student in their own way, with varying levels of weight. One cannot assume that one force is more important than another. Students should be provided the autonomy over their academic journey with the relevant supports accessible to them to overcome barriers.

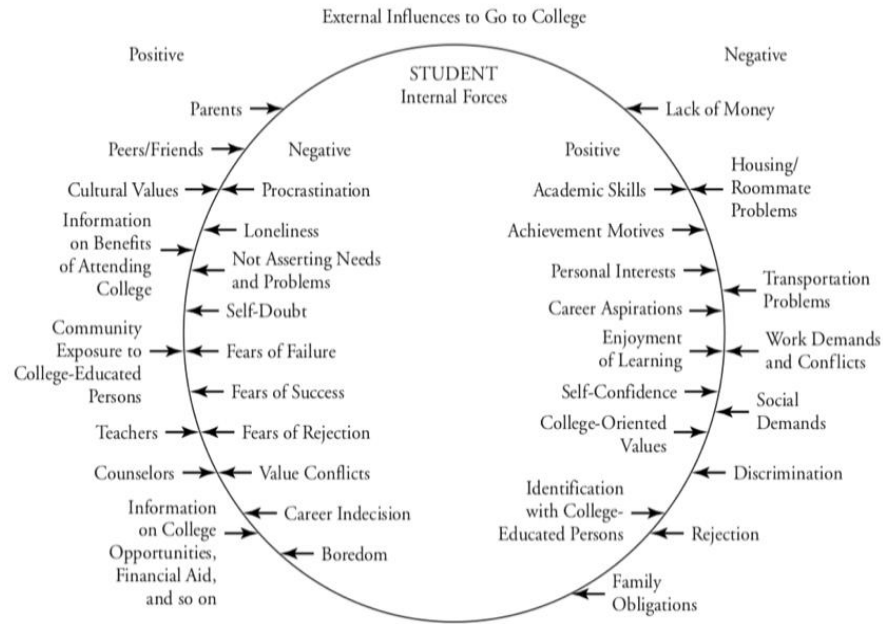


Figure 2.1: Force Field Analysis of College Persistence (Andersen, 1985). A model demonstrating factors that influences student decisions towards post-secondary.

Andersen’s (1985) force field analysis of college persistence provides a complex, visual representation of the forces impacting a student’s persistence. Andersen was not the only one to notice factors that influence students to continue in their educational efforts; other researchers have investigated similar factors that impact student’s success (Astin, 1984; Baird, 2000; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Swail, 1995; Swail et al., 2003; Tinto, 1993, 2017). Andersen’s model provides a visual representation around the complexity and multiple factors that influence a student’s decision around pursuing a post-secondary education; however, the researcher’s model is overly complex and fails to provide any deeper understanding around how these forces interact with each other and their interrelationships or if the forces operate on a hierarchical basis.

Academic performance. Academic performance is one factor to take into consideration when recruiting and retaining students, which would explain why universities and colleges often look at high school grades when considering admission to university; a student’s high school GPA has been found to correlate with their retention (Seidman, 2005). Swail et al. (2003)

explained that academic preparedness is measured by “one or more of high school GPA, high school rank, college entrance test scores (specifically math scores), high school college preparatory courses, advanced placement courses, the quality of high school attended, and quality and intensity of high school curriculum” (p. 51). However, academic performance is not the greatest predictor for persistence or retention in university, since less than 25% of students that leave an institution, leave because of academic dismissal (Tinto, 1993). Since academic performance and preparedness only explains a piece of the student departure and retention puzzle, university administrators need to look at other predictors for student success in their admission policies and standards.

Socioeconomic factors. In addition to examining factors that affect a student’s academic abilities and psychological elements, there are influences outside of a student’s control that can impact their retention and performance in a post-secondary education (PSE). Examples of these external factors are financial and work demands, housing issues, lack of transportation, and social and family obligations (Andersen, 1985). Andersen (1985) highlighted why these factors, such as socioeconomic background, are so important. While all students face the same obstacles around the demands of a PSE, students from a lower socioeconomic background have less time and energy to devote to their studies because of the added external factors outlined above.

Students with financial stress, or perceptions of debt, were more likely to leave an institution (Britt et al., 2017). Students with lack of financial support will also need to take part-time jobs, which, if the work is located on campus, can help to engage the student and help them persevere (Astin, 1984). Regardless of the location, part-time work distracts students and takes time and energy away from their studies.

First generational students, students who are the first in their family to attend post-secondary studies, often have less time and energy to devote to their studies because of work and family obligations, and less social integration with the institution (Katreveck & Aruguete, 2017). First generational students also tend to come from low income families (Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke, 2011), and have lower social capital compared to students whose parents have completed a post-secondary education (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2003). This lack of social capital means first generational student are less likely to understand the university culture, and how to navigate the PSE system.

Psychological factors. Psychological factors also play a role in students' academic success. Self-efficacy (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013; Young-Jones et al., 2013), motivation (Tinto, 2017), locus of control (Weiner, 1985), goals (Turner et al., 2002), and emotions (Pekrun, 2012), can all influence students' academic performance. These factors are important for university administrators to take into consideration when implementing student success programs. These programs should aim to develop the psychological factors mentioned above, since they have been proven to support students in persistence towards their academic goals.

Sociological factors. Tinto (1993) argued that academic and social integration are important factors that affect students' persistence in university. Tinto believed that a lack of integration could happen in one of two ways: incongruence and isolation. Incongruence refers to the general "mismatch or lack of fit between the needs, interests, and preferences of the individual and those of the institution" (Tinto, 2017, p. 50), whereas, isolation refers to the lack of interface between the student and the institution, which supports Astin's (1984) theory of Student Involvement. Astin believed the more a student is involved within their institution the more likely they are to succeed. Astin's theory, which will be discussed in more detail later,

looked at how students expend their energy in their university experience. Opportunities such as living arrangements, work, faculty interactions, extracurricular, and leadership opportunities, all impact how much a student is involved within the institution and supports them towards their success. Ultimately, the more time a student spends in their campus environment, the more likely they are going to remain in the institution (Astin, 1984).

Institutional factors. Institutional factors play a role in student retention as well. One institutional factor, campus climate, can impact a student's social and academic integration (Baird, 2000). Baird (2000) explained that the campus climate impacts how a student views the environment and its structure which shapes their views of their opportunities and limitations. These perceptions can impact students' behaviours. The institutional climate also can impact a student's sense of belonging within the institution, which has been linked to student retention (Tinto, 2017). Additionally, a student's institutional fit has been found to support student persistence (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattaeharaya (2010) stated that students who are "successful in knowing even one faculty member closely are likely to feel more satisfied with their college life and aspire to go further in their careers" (p. 332), which iterates the importance of having faculty and staff who are able to support students in feeling as though they belong within the institution.

Student Retention

Theories around student retention have received increasing attention over the years as institutions struggle to increase financial revenue to cover institutional expenses. These theories allow staff and faculty to understand this phenomenon of student withdrawal, in planning their policies and programming to support students towards academic success. Swail (1995) provided an organizational framework for student retention. His framework includes five components, as

seen in Figure 2.2, which all together are connected via a student monitoring system. Each of these services can be broken down into further services and will vary from institution to institution.

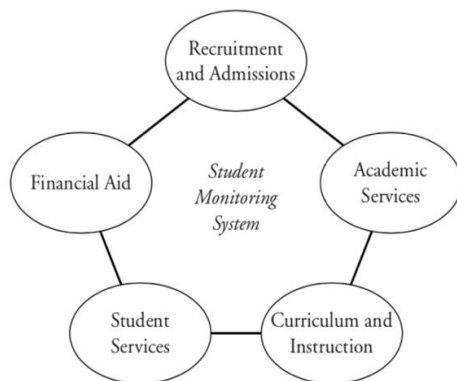


Figure 2.2: Student Monitoring System (Swail, 1995). A framework that conceptualize ways institutions are able to monitor students at risk of not being retained.

These elements of a student monitoring system include financial aid, recruitment and admissions, academic services, student services and curriculum and instruction. These services are provided by the institution and serve to create opportunity for students to overcome barriers that may be preventing them from succeeding in university. An example of how these components can be broken down is a student service, such as residence, which provides housing and supports the student's social and academic integration. This fluid framework provides university administration with a lens to examine how different departments work together to support student retention and overcome factors around student departure.

Tinto (1993) identified when a student departs from an institution there are two aspects that influence a choice to leave, intention and commitment. A student's intention includes their educational attainment goals (degree completion) and institutional goals (plans to transfer to another institution), whereas the student's commitment can be broken down to the student's commitment towards the institution or their own personal goals. The integration between the

student and institution is an important factor in persistence, where the student has established a membership with a group within the institution (Tinto, 1993). There are multiple psychological reasons students exit institutions; students exit institutions because of academic difficulty and preparation, struggles around adjusting to the academic and social life of university; unclear or conflicting goals, and a low commitment to these goals (Tinto, 1993).

While administrators investigate student retention within their respective institution they should aim to better understand the students' goals and commitments, and the barriers to these elements of retention. Institutions can incorporate programming that supports students in developing and identifying their goals, through academic advisors and career centres, and by providing supports that can aid students in overcoming socioeconomic barriers, such as financial aid and counselling. Institutions can also use their programming to help the students integrate within their new environment and developing a sense of belonging, through residence and learning community programming, further building the students' commitment to the specific institution.

Student Persistence

From the students' perspective, their objective is to persist through their studies to achieve their goal, which may or may not be degree attainment. Factors presented around student persistence also relate, or interweave, with student retention. Administrators need to be cognizant of the lens that they are looking through, student persistence or student retention, when they are providing student supports. While Swail's (1995) model looks to support students to be retained within the institution, this model is not supporting the development of the students that aids the individual in persisting towards their goal. For example, self-efficacy, a psychological factor, supports a student in persisting towards a degree if that is their goal, but they will only

remain within an institution if their goals can be achieved through that institution. There are multiple psychological theories around student retention, such as, Attitude-Behaviour Theory; Coping Behavioral Theory; Self-Efficacy Theory; and Attribution Theory (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Bean and Eaton (2000) combined these different theories to develop a Psychological Theory of College Student Retention.

Bean and Eaton (2000) provided a Psychological Theory of College Student Retention that combines the outlined four psychological theories above in hopes of explaining a student's behaviours while looking at an individual's psychological processes. Their theory works best for students who have the aptitude to perform well within PSE, and can be applied to a student's voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from the institution. The researchers argue that a student's low performance comes from a lack of motivation and sense of control over their academic performance. This model includes the belief that "past behaviours, beliefs, and normative beliefs affect the way a student interacts with the institutional environment" (Bean & Eaton, 2000, p. 56), meaning the student will utilize past experiences and abilities to perform in their new environment and assess their performance. There are a combination of psychological processes students goes through within the model. Ideally, the student will redevelop their world view and have a new perception of their self-efficacy, utilize coping strategies to reduce stress, and develop a sense of control over their academic fate, which results in a successful integration of the student into their new social and academic environments (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Weiner's (1985) Attributional Theory looks at the impacts achievement has on motivation and emotion. Weiner described three dimensions that exist and are the causes of success and failure including: locus of control, stability, and controllability. An important factor that will be discussed in more detail later is that these three dimensions determine our emotional

experiences, one of those emotions being shame. An example of this would be if a student failed an exam, they could attribute their failure to an external locus of control, the instructor's teaching.

Tinto's (2017) Model of Motivation and Student Persistence has three major elements, as seen in Figure 2.3. The model begins with a student having a goal, which motivates the student through their studies, helping them to persist through their academics. This motivation can be further broken down into three components: perceptions of curriculum, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging. Perceptions of curriculum can be described as the student's ability to find the usefulness of the curriculum to their experiences, looking at both quality and relevance (Tinto, 2017). Sense of belonging, Tinto (2017) explained, is influenced by the entire campus climate and the student perceptions of their daily interactions. Tinto (1993) highlighted the importance of social integration as the student attempts to successfully join the institution. Self-efficacy can be defined as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). The more an individual begins to identify their abilities and build their self-confidence, the more likely the results will be "higher aspirations for persistence, task achievement, and personal goals" (Bean & Eaton, 2000, p. 52). High self-efficacy has been linked to students' academic success (Krumrei-Mancuso, et al., 2013; Young-Jones, et al., 2013). Tinto's model provides a framework that student affairs professionals can apply to understand the various elements that are associated with student persistence.

Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement looks at multiple ways a student's involvement can support their retention within the PSE system. Astin (1984) defined

involvement by “the amount of physical and psychological energy these student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). This theory examines what the students do, their behaviours, and

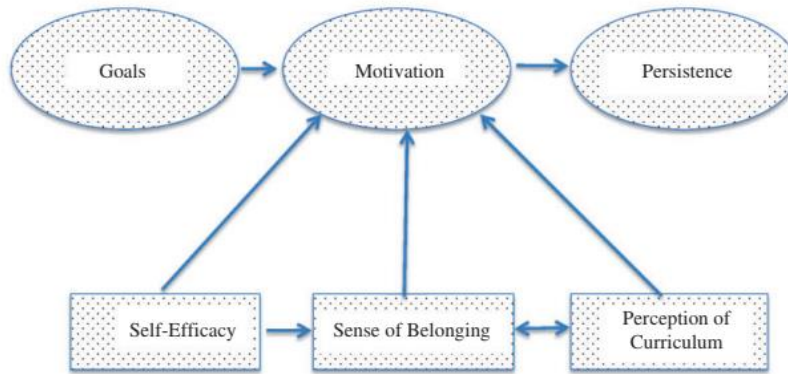


Figure 2.3: Tinto’s (2017) model of student motivation and persistence. A conceptual model related to student motivation and persistence towards their academic studies.

how they use their resource of time towards their development within the institution. The researcher looks beyond just involvement in the classroom but in social elements as well including sports, leadership, and living arrangements. This theory also explains that deeper academic involvement, such as participating in research, or increased student and faculty interaction, supports student engagement and retention. Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement fits in well with Tinto’s (1993) findings around the importance of student social and academic integration as factors in student retention.

Theories around student persistence stem from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, whether that be psychological, sociological, economical, or organizational. Each of these disciplinary lenses are important as each play their own role depending on how we are looking at the puzzle around student retention, persistence, and success. For example, Swail’s (1995) model in Swail 1 provides us with a framework around how to support the students within the organization so they stay enrolled but overlooks other factors that can support student success such as sociological or psychological factors. Tinto (1993) attempted to understand the issues

around students exiting the institution by understanding if the student was properly integrated into the community. Each of these models have their belonging in the literature; what model is used depends on the angle from which the student departure problem is examined.

Help Seeking Behaviour

There are multiple factors and barriers that can impact a student's persistence in university as previously described. Institutions attempt to overcome these elements by providing programming and services to support students. However, why is it that when students begin to struggle they do not reach out for support immediately? Topkaya (2014) found that there was a correlation between help-seeking behaviour and self-stigma. Comparatively, Ciscell, Foley, Luther, and Howe (2018) determined that students identify the stigma they felt around reaching out for support came from their own internalized attitudes, and not externally. Students with low self-efficacy, a component previously described as important in student persistence, are less likely to seek help (Roussel et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2016). Students have associated shame as a reason for not reaching out for help (Stamp et al., 2014; Symonds et al., 2008). Shame may play a role in why lower academically achieving students do not reach out for help, and are more likely to use less face-to-face methods of support compared to higher academically achieving students (Reeves & Sperling, 2015). Emotions are powerful internal systems that impact our daily lives. The role of emotions and students in university should be better explored.

Emotions and Student Learning

Emotions are complex and a fundamental component of the human experience. Emotions play a strong role in every interaction individuals have within a day; it is not surprising that emotions also impact students' learning (Pekrun, 1992). During university and college is the time when students begin to learn to recognize and manage their emotions (Chickering, 1969).

Emotions can vary in nature between positive (i.e. joy and surprise) and negative (i.e. fear, shame, guilt), which can be further distinguished between primary emotions (i.e. joy, fear, anger, sadness) and self-conscious emotions, which are more complex and require further cognitive capabilities to experience (Lewis, 2003). These emotions can affect our performance and motivation (Weiner, 1985).

Emotions impact students' achievement in the classroom through a variety of ways, such as influencing cognitive attentional resources, storage and retrieval of information, and motivation (Pekrun, 1992). Veronica and Paoloni (2014) stated “emotions are multifaceted or multidimensional because there are a wide range of *subjective (affective), psychological, functional* and *social* aspects present in every emotional experience, which act in coordinated fashion” (p. 572). Specific research has been conducted around achievement emotions, “emotions that are tied directly to achievement activities (e.g., studying) or achievement outcomes (success and failure...)” (Pekrun & Stephens, 2010, p. 239). Research has been performed examining linkages between achievement related goals, and achievement related emotions (Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2006). Control-value theory of achievement emotions “puts forward the idea that the emotions help to focus attention on a specific object. If a student is angry because of academic failure or anxious over an exam that is coming, he will probably have difficulty concentrating when studying” (Veronica & Paoloni, 2014, p. 580). As we support our students in learning we will want to take into consideration the emotions they are experiencing in and outside the classroom, and how these emotions are influencing their behaviours towards their studies.

Theories around emotions have been researched to better understand the impact emotions have on student learning; Pekrun (1992) defined achievement related emotions as “emotions tied

directly to achievement activities or achievement outcomes” (p. 15), so as students perform on assignments and exams, they have expectations to achieve a certain outcome, meaning they will experience achievement related emotions. Our emotions in learning are connected to our cognitive, motivational, and behavioural engagement (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). In particular, shame has been correlated to predict poor academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2006).

The Emotion of Shame

The study of shame has evolved over the years and the phenomenon has been studied from various perspectives. Shame has been noted as an intense pain and discomfort that often leaves an individual wanting to withdraw or disappear (Lewis, 2003). According to Lewis (2003) emotions can be broken down into different categories: primary emotions, such as, joy, fear, anger, or sadness etc., or self-conscious emotions, such as, pride and shame. What distinguishes these two types of emotions are three elements: 1) the cognitive capacity for standards, rules, and goals; 2) a sense of self; and 3) self-evaluation. Lewis explained when we experience shame we are making an appraisal and evaluation of our total self, compared to guilt where the attention is drawn to the actions. Nathanson (1992) observed emotions from a combination of both a biological and psychological perspective. Nathanson believed for an emotion to occur we need to first be stimulated, whereby an affect is triggered, which releases a pattern of biological events. An emotion is, as Nathanson (1992) described, a combination of the affect, feeling, and memory of previously triggered affects; the researcher explained shame as the “exposure of something that we would have preferred kept hidden, of a private part of the self” (p. 145), which is contrary to Lewis’ beliefs around shame.

Both Nathanson's (1992) and Lewis's (2003) perspectives agree in that shame is an uncomfortable emotion that is complex compared to other basic emotions; where these researchers' opinions differ is Nathanson believed that shame comes from the affect system experiencing a series of affects over and over again over a period of time and believed that individuals need to develop the cognitive capabilities of "perception, storage, retrieval and comparison of complex images" (p. 140). Lewis's theory (2003), however, identified how an individual performs a global appraisal of one's self against the standards, rules, and goals the individual has internalized.

Development of shame. These standards, rules, and goals mentioned by Lewis (2003) are collected by an individual from a variety of sources, such as family members, friends, coworkers, and our community, through active and passive processes; this collection of standards and rules can impact how students engage with their post-secondary environment. Once they gather these standards, individuals measure themselves against these standards. Leary (2007) defined self as "the mental apparatus that allows an organism to think consciously about itself" (p. 39). This definition of self can be broken down further into a private self and an extended self. Leary added that identifying private self is the ability to reflect on one's own thoughts, feelings, and intentions. The extended self is the ability to reflect on one's self in another place and time (Leary, 2007). These abilities are necessary for one to understand when investigating shame, as both need to be utilized for shame to appear. When a shame event occurs, one needs to be able to look back at their experience, and reflect on their thoughts or feelings about the shame eliciting event (Leary, 2007). To summarize the process so far, once a shame event occurs, an individual requires the ability to reflect on both themselves and a previous moment they have

participated in, and measure that experience against the standards they have internalized through societal forces.

Higgins' (1987) Self-Discrepancy Theory provides a framework that we can use to understand incompatible beliefs of one's self and how we attempt to correct these beliefs. Higgins outlined three domains of self: *actual* self, *ideal* self, and *ought* self, which can be witnessed from two separate standpoints: 'your' standpoint or 'another's' standpoint. These domains and standpoints create six self-states representations: "actual/own, ideal/own, ought/own, actual/other, ideal/other, and ought/other" (Higgins, 1987, p. 321). The first two Higgins described as a person's self-concept and the last four are an individual's self-guides. Self-Discrepancy Theory suggests individuals work to match their self-concept with their self-guide. Individuals whose self-concept of actual/own is experiencing a discrepancy against the self-guide of ideal/other are likely to experience shame (Higgins, 1987). Other theorists have included shame in the "ought" domain (Lewis, 2003), whereas Higgins' Self-Discrepancy only predicts that individuals with the "ideal" domain will experience shame. For the purpose of this paper both domains, *ought* and *ideal*, which represent an individual feeling as though they are not living up to an other's hopes, wishes, or ideals, will promote shame.

Shame and student learning

As alluded to earlier, shame has been linked to student motivation, learning, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and intent to leave school (Baldwin, et al., 2006; Ganotice, Datu, & King, 2016; Johnson, 2012; Turner et al., 2002; Weiner, 1985), all of which are important while investigating student learning and success. Emotions influence if a student will act positively or negatively towards learning (Ingleton, 1999). Individuals who are more shame-prone experience criticism greater and may avoid future events where they expect shame to occur (Shreve &

Kunkel, 1991). Wanting to lower students' shame does not mean lowering academic standards. Trout (2006) identified that lowering academic requirements so students are not challenged can have students experience more shame. Furthermore, Turner and Waugh (2007) identified that a student's perception of their failure was the predictor of eliciting shame, and not their academic performance. To reframe, what is causing the shame is the student's self-thought about the self (Lewis, 2003), not their thoughts about their behaviour. One way to understand shame in students is that those students who do not measure up to their internal standards and their perceptions will experience this emotion and its effects.

Shame affects how a student learns, engages in class, and handles conflict (Johnson, 2012). As previously stated, social integration is an important factor in student retention. Institutions should seek a better understanding around the impact that relationships have on learning. Ingleton (1999) identified that:

The disposition to learn has its basis in social relationships. Arising from those relationships are the emotions of pride and shame which play a key role in the development of identity and self-esteem. The dynamics of pride and shame and identity, in the context of experiences of success and failure, may dispose students to act positively or negatively towards learning. (p. 46)

Ingleton highlighted two important aspects of shame that are applicable to student learning and retention. The first was the impact shame has on identity, self-esteem, and social relationships, which are important for students to find a social fit within their institution. Secondly, Ingleton highlighted how this emotion is going to condition the student's reactions to learning in the future. Turner et al. (2002) were interested in shame "because it has the potential to bring out the best and the worst of student's cognition and behavior with their academic self-regulation

processes" (p. 87). Shame is such a powerful affect that students can become so overwhelmed they lose their ability to cope (Van Vliet, 2008). There is an important distinction to be made here. Guilt prevents a student from performing a bad behavior again versus shame that causes an individual to shut down (Lewis, 2003). Minor shame events are acceptable; however, when a shame event impacts an individual's normal psychological functions, the individual can become overwhelmed and immobilized (Shreve & Kunkel, 1991).

Shame and motivation. Turner and Schallert (2001) have noted that students who experience shame from negative exam feedback have negative motivational reactions. However, the researchers also found that when students received this negative feedback and had strong commitment to their academic goals and had a strong belief they could attain these goals, their motivation actually went up. This perspective around shame being a motivator has also been supported by Lickel, Kushlev, Savalei, Matta, & Schmader (2014) who found shame as a strong predictor for students to develop motivation to change oneself. One important distinction to make between these findings is that shame may only be a motivator if the student has a sense they can change or have control over their situation. This claim is supported by Turner et al. (2002) who found that students with non-resilient responses to shame "indicated they had lower perceptions of control and self-efficacy..." (p. 86). While shame and motivation have been researched together (Lickel et al. 2014; Pekrun, 1992; Pekrun et al., 2006; Turner et al. 2002), there is still a lack of understanding around what determines whether or not an individual will experience shame or not.

Shame and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, already established, is an individual's belief in one's self. However, shame is the opposite of self-efficacy in that when people experience this emotion, they believe they are flawed. Baldwin et al. (2006) found that the more shame an

individual was experiencing, the lower levels of self-efficacy they had. The researchers believed this link between shame and self-efficacy may come from the fact that “both self-efficacy and shame are constructs that closely tie to the foundational construct of the self” (Baldwin et al., 2006, p. 16). Shame and self-efficacy have close connections with each other. Shame focuses on a global evaluation that one is not living up to their own standards, whereas self-efficacy is one’s beliefs in their own abilities to accomplish one’s goals. Both elements have to do with beliefs that are connected close to one’s idea of their ‘self’.

Self-efficacy and fear of failure have been linked to shame (Baldwin et al., 2006; McGregor & Elliot, 2005). Because shame has been found to be "the core emotion of fear of failure" (McGregor & Elliot, 2005, p. 227), supporting a student’s beliefs in their academic abilities (i.e. self-efficacy) may be a way to ameliorate a student's fear of failure, and shame. As self-efficacy is the internal belief that one can accomplish something, and fear of failure is the possibility of failure, it makes sense that, by building their belief in their self, they will have lower levels of fear of failure, and therefore lower levels of shame.

Shame and sense of belonging. Sense of belonging has been associated with academic achievement, retention, and persistence (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Rhee, 2008). A student's sense of belonging and feelings towards their community are impacted by shame, which can result in students withdrawing from their studies and relationships (Allendoerfer et al., 2012; Brown, 2006; Johnson, 2012; Nathanson 1992; Van Vliet, 2008). This low sense of belonging is worrisome since a student’s ability to socially integrate within the institution has implications for their persistence (Tinto, 1993).

Sense of belonging can be defined in many ways, and can change based on the environment where one is aiming to belong. Strayhorn (2012) provided a working definition that was applicable to colleges:

Sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). It's a cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior (p. 3)

Applying this definition to Tinto's (1993; 2017) work regarding the importance of social integration, the impact of sense of belonging on student persistence fits. Walton and Cohen (2007) discovered when staff intervened with black students who were struggling, the staff facilitated those students' sense of belonging and increased their academic achievement.

There are many ways for students to obtain a sense of belonging. Family and friends are an obvious choice to support students with their persistence by providing a sense of belonging and emotional support (Allendoerfer et al., 2012). Van Vliet (2008) identified a sense of belonging as being a crucial element when recovering from shame. Communities have also supported students with building their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and volitional strategies (Allendoerfer et al., 2012); additionally, community has been identified as important in combating shame and maintaining a student's motivation in the classroom (Turner et al., 2002).

A student's level of shame has been linked to lacking a sense of belonging and withdrawing from university (Johnson, 2012); alternatively, a sense of community and belonging have been known to support an individual in staying in university (Allendoerfer et al., 2012). A sense of community has also been found to potentially protect students from burnout (Johnson,

2012), and belonging to a social group, such as an honors organization or fraternity, supported a student's GPA (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). These findings help iterate the importance a sense of belonging and being a part of the community has on shame, retention, persistence, and their academic performance.

This research project viewed shame as a moral emotion (Tangney, Stuewig, & Maschek, 2007) rather than an outcome-related achievement related emotions (Pekrun, 1992). Moral emotions are affective experiences that occur from aligning with or breaching our moral standards, which originate from one's internalization of moral norms and conventions (Tangney, et al., 2007), whereas as achievement related emotions look at individuals' affective experiences through achievement activities or achievement outcomes (Pekrun, 1992). For the purposes of this research project we viewed shame through the lens of a moral emotion. Rationale for this choice is achievement related emotions look at the affective experiences around achievement, or barriers to achievement, rather than the internalization of the rules, standards, and goals the individual is evaluating themselves against. An achievement related approach dismisses the complexity of around the emotion of shame which can occur in domains outside of achievement. This approach does not take into consideration how emotions impact behavior outside of the actual task or activity, such as, showing up for class or asking for help. Viewing shame as a moral emotion (i.e. Tangney et al., 2007) allows us to better understand how this emotion is influencing the individual, their behaviour, and how they make sense of their experience.

The model used to understand the relationship between shame and student persistence was Tinto's (2017) model of Student Motivation and Persistence. A psychological approach was used to investigate student persistence. This approach was decided to be a better approach for understanding the potential barrier experiencing shame could have on student persistence, and

the various factors that have been theorized to support student persistence (i.e., self-efficacy, sense of belonging, motivation; see Tinto, 2017). Other models can be used to understand socio-economic barriers, but in the present study I wanted to better understand how the role of the self, and how we view and evaluate ourselves, impacts students in university.

Summary

In this chapter, the current literature was reviewed, highlighting the increased focus on student retention over the years. However, the literature is inconsistent regarding the wording and utilization around student retention, persistence, and success. There are many theoretical perspectives that aim to understand the psychological, sociological, socioeconomic, institutional and academic factors that impact students. Human emotions are an important part of our psyche and impact all aspects of our daily lives, including in classrooms. Shame in particular is a powerful uncomfortable emotion, that leads individuals who experience this emotion a desire to withdraw or hide (Lewis, 2003). Shame has been associated with help-seeking (Stamp et al., 2014) and the various factors associated with Tinto's (2017) model of Student Motivation and Persistence: motivation (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007; Turner & Schallart, 2001), sense of belonging (Johnson, 2012), and self-efficacy (Baldwin et al., 2006). The purpose this study was to understand the role shame plays in student persistence and help seeking.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore university students' lived shame experiences, with hopes of understanding what role this emotion plays in students' persistence and help seeking behaviour. Since emotions are affective experiences that influence individual's behaviours in their everyday lives, one could claim emotions effect the lives of students during their post-secondary studies, both inside and outside the classroom. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was enacted to explore the common experiences of shame across high shame-prone students at a Canadian midwestern university. A phenomenological approach aims to systematically explore "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness" (Patton, 2015, p. 115). The goal of this chapter is to provide rationale around selecting a phenomenological research design over other research methods. In addition, the chapter explores information related to participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and other relevant ethical considerations.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study was how do shame-prone students' (SPS) identify these experiences of shame to influence their persistence with regard to university?

Additional research questions that guided this study were:

- How do SPS experiencing shame perceive their help-seeking behavior?
- How do SPS view their self-efficacy and sense of belonging in university when experiencing shame?
- How do SPS describe their motivation when experiencing shame?

Methodology and Rationale

This research project utilized a qualitative research methodology to answer the research questions guiding the study. Creswell (2013) identified that “qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/ theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Alternatively, quantitative research aims to control, predict, and search for generalizable claims. The research questions that guided this study were not aligned with controlling or predicting students’ experiences of shame, but with understanding students’ perceptions of how these events impact the various factors that are theorized to help students persist and seek support. Through learning about these shame encounters through the eyes of its students, institutions can shape their supports and practices to foster students’ persistence towards their individual goals and help-seeking in times of struggles.

The methodology the research identified with aligning most with the research questions, fell within a phenomenological framework. Phenomenology does not argue whether or not a person’s experience is valid or not; the simple fact that the individual experienced the phenomenon means it exists (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology aims to understand these experiences that enter one’s consciousness from the participant’s perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained phenomenological research as “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 75). The current study explored seven students' experiences of shame to understand the essence and patterns across these experiences.

Creswell and Poth (2018) identified five approaches to qualitative inquiry: case study, ethnography, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, and phenomenology. Whereas a

phenomenological research approach seeks to provide a deep understanding of a phenomenon through various individuals' accounts when they experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Poth, 2018), other research methodologies aim to gain understanding through other means. For example, a case study looks to gain a deep understanding through description and analysis of a case (i.e., event, program, activity, individual), or multiple cases, that are bounded within a system (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An ethnographic approach allows the researcher to examine a group's culture as they interact with each other, in order to gain an understanding of the group's shared beliefs and behaviours (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, neither of these methodologies allows for the deep understanding of a shared experience that occurs across individuals, including how individuals make sense of these experiences. On the other hand, narrative inquiry looks to understand a phenomenon through exploring the life of an individual, or individuals, through the telling of stories or narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Alternatively, a grounded theory approach aims to generate "a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82). Narrative inquiry is different from phenomenology in that phenomenology is looking at the common experiences across individuals, and how these individuals make sense of their experiences as it comes into their consciousness (Smith, et al 2009). The proposed research questions could be studied through a grounded study approach; however, due to the limited resources, confinement of time, and potentially limited number of participants who would volunteer for the study, this approach was disregarded. A phenomenological approach was the most appropriate research methodology for the study that is suitable for the research questions, available resources, and the researcher's knowledge.

Phenomenology dives deep into several individuals' experiences around a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Elements concerning perceptions, feelings, judgments, and interpretation are all used to understand the essence of the shared experience (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) identified that researchers who practice phenomenology do so under the assumption that a shared essence between experiences exists in the phenomenon under study. Three approaches to phenomenology will be discussed in this section: Transcendental (Moustakas, 1994) and Hermeneutic (Van Manen, 1990), which are more traditional approaches to phenomenology, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009), a newer approach to phenomenology.

Transcendental, or descriptive phenomenology, was founded initially by Husserl (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018) and focuses on the descriptions of individuals' experiences. Transcendental phenomenologists believe in Husserl's concept of bracketing (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing entails putting one's past knowledge and theoretical knowledge of the phenomenon under study aside (Giorgi, 2006). One way to achieve bracketing is through delaying the literature review until after data collection and analysis (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). While the perspective of bracketing in phenomenology is a highly regarded practice in the field (Giorgi, 2006; Moustakas, 1994), others have argued that it is impossible to rid oneself of the perspective that guided them to research the phenomenon in the first place (Koch, 1995). On the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenology developed by Heidegger (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018), transitioned away from Husserl's approach and focused more on interpreting the meaning of the lived experience. Alternatively to bracketing, hermeneutic phenomenologists believe in the practice of being reflective and aware of one's biases, rather than attempting to suspend one's knowledge (Smith et al., 2009). Major differences between

these approaches center on the opposing theoretical perspectives around whether the researcher should be relying on the essences of the participants' descriptive words of the experience, or through the interpretation of these experiences.

IPA began to emerge in the 1990s (Smith et al., 2009). While the approach is relatively new, IPA falls in line with a hermeneutical approach in that it is focused on the importance of interpretation of an individual's experience. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) outlined three theoretical ideologies that orient IPA: 1) the goal is to "investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences" (p. 8); 2) the analytical process is a double hermeneutic loop; and 3) the approach is idiographic. The first theoretical orientation explains how the goal of this specific methodology is to understand the way in which individuals make sense of their experiences. An IPA researcher asks what it is like to live in the shoes of the participant, with the aim of understanding the experience through the world of the participant (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This perspective is different compared to other phenomenological approaches that want either to understand the critical components of the phenomenon (i.e., Husserl) or understand the participant's mind-set and language to understand the participant's experiences (i.e. Heidegger). The second theoretical orientation is how IPA looks to both, examines the participant's interpretation of the experience, as well as the researcher's critical interpretation of the participant's meaning-making process, creating a double hermeneutic loop (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The last theoretical orientation is IPA's reliance on its idiographic approach. Idiographic is the in-depth analysis of multiple individual cases (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). By performing this in-depth analysis of each case individually, the researcher can analyze convergence and divergence between the different cases (Smith et al., 2009).

Research Methods

Data for this qualitative study was collected using multiple methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant journals, and researcher's notes. These sources of data are identified by Smith et al., (2009) as appropriate data collection methods for phenomenological research (also see Giorgi, 2006; Van Manen, 1990). However, in comparing other approaches to phenomenology, diaries as a data source has yet to become a standard practice in IPA (Smith et al., 2009). The primary source of data was the individual, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. In addition to interviews, participants were invited to journal their experiences of shame in their post-secondary environment for 10 days. Throughout all the data collection and analysis period, the researcher documented observations, reflections, and rationale for choices made. All data were gathered, transcribed, and analyzed. The following sections describe in more detail these data sources.

Data Collection

Participants. The study recruited seven domestic, shame-prone, undergraduate students, who had attempted at least 18 credit units, at a mid-western Canadian university. As shame is dependent on the values and beliefs internalized by the individual experiencing the affect, students from other countries that embrace different norms, values, and beliefs could interfere with the goal of the study to discover the essence of shame experiences between students (Lewis, 2003). According to Smith et al. (2009), three to ten participants is an appropriate number to achieve for an IPA approach, ensuring the study's sample size fell within best practices. The researchers also indicated that the quality and depth of data is more important than the quantity of interviews performed.

Instrument. To assess potential participants levels shame the researcher administered Cook's (1994) Internalized Shame Scale (see Appendix A). Only participants who scored within a reasonable range to indicate a proneness to the affect were offered interviews. Participants who did not rank high enough, were thanked for their time and communicated they did not meet the criteria for the study. Cook's Internalized Shame Scale has been validated through multiple studies to confirm the scale's validity, and is appropriate for researchers attempting to measure internalized, or trait, shame (Harper, 2011). The scale and other relevant eligibility criteria were assessed in a pre-interview digital survey that was administered through Survey Monkey (Appendix B). An interview schedule was created and developed by the researcher for the study's interviews as found in Appendix C. The questions were open-ended to allow for deep sharing of the participants' experiences under investigation. Potential prompts and probes were identified to guide participants deeper into their experiences if required. All questions related to students' experiences of shame in their academic study; this approach was to ensure the data and experiences collected throughout the study were credible to answering the study' research questions.

Recruitment. After receiving ethics approval from the appropriate University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board, the researcher began promoting and recruiting participants for the study. Students were recruited to participate in the study through poster distribution across campus (Appendix E) and PAWS announcements (Appendix F). While the study originally proposed to recruit participants through mass email (Appendix G) and snowball sampling, these methods of recruitment were not required as the participant recruitment was successfully achieved through the previously mentioned recruitment activities. Students who volunteered to participate in the study were contacted by the researcher through email as indicated in the

recruitment materials. The researcher ensured all potential participants were appropriately screened, confirming participants met the required criteria (i.e. demographic background, post-secondary educational attainment, shame-proneness) for the study. Participants who indicated interest in the study were provided a participant code and were instructed to complete the short eligibility survey where the participant was able to indicate their demographic background, level of course work completed, and complete a digital form of the Internalized Shame Scale (Appendix B). The participant code was used to separate the participant's name from their demographic and shame scale entry, helping ensure confidentiality and security of the data. The researcher scored the participant's Internalized Shame Scale entry. Students who were under minimum score, indicating low shame-proneness, were thanked for their time and notified they did not meet eligibility criteria for the study. Eligible students were offered an interview time slot that worked with both the researcher and participant. Once a date and time was secured, the researcher acquired a private meeting room for the interview, which was communicated to the participant.

After completing the interview, participants were invited to connect their peers who may be interested in participating in the study with the researcher, specifically other undergraduate students who were willing to discuss their experience of shame during their post-secondary education studies. The researcher is unable to verify if any participants were successfully recruited through participant referral as not all participants were asked how they learned about the study.

Interviews. Before starting the interview, the interview process and ethics form were reviewed with the participant. During this time participants received information around their role in the research project, their ability to ask questions at any time, risks of the study, and their

right to withdraw. Participants were instructed if they were interested in continuing their participation to sign the consent form related to the study (Appendix I). The consent form also included a list of campus resources that participants were instructed to utilize in the event they experienced any distress from participating in the study. Interviews were recorded through an audio recording device, which were later transcribed. A back up recording was collected to ensure the capturing of data. During the interview the researcher adhered to the questions outlined in the interview schedule in Appendix C; the interviews duration ranged from 50 to 120 minutes. Participants were invited to participate in the optional journaling activity, discussed next. At the end of the interview the participants were thanked for sharing their experiences and provided the compensation for their time as outlined in the form (Appendix I).

Participant journaling. As previously described, participants were invited to continue their participation in an optional, ten-day journaling activity where they were to document their experiences of shame. Smith (2004) highlighted diaries to be a useful source of data for IPA studies in conjunction with semi-structured interviews. The journaling design was a combined event-contingent, where the individual provides a self-report every time the event occurs, and interval-contingent, where the participants records at scheduled intervals (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). Their journaling entries were used to document their experiences of shame or reflective thoughts regarding shame that occurred throughout the ten days. Participants who indicated interest in continuing their participation received a journal with the Protocol Writing Guide on the first page. The Protocol Writing Guide instructed participants to record the shame event, thoughts, feelings, and duration of the shame event; an example of the guide can be found in Appendix D. Participants were instructed to provide a brief account of social encounters that occurred where they experienced shame. Participants were encouraged to document where the

event happened, what they felt, and what they were thinking after the experience. For those participants who partook in the journaling activity, a second meeting was scheduled to debrief their journaling and experiences after the 10 days. The journals were then analyzed following the same process of the interview transcripts. However, quotes from the journals were not utilized as the data was not as well articulated as the participants' interviews. Though these journals did provide perspective and context into the participants' lived experiences that aided the researcher in the analysis.

Researcher field notes and journal. Throughout the research process the researcher collected notes related to their observations and the research process. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) identified that as the researcher listens to the audio recordings of the interview they should record notes of their observations and reflections of the interview. The researcher documented their initial thoughts around the phenomenon, decisions made throughout the study, and reflections relevant to the study.

Data transcription. After meeting with the participant, their interview's audio recording were digitally transcribed and placed in a word document that were used for data analysis. These digital transcriptions will be housed on an external, password protected drive. Once transcribed, individual transcripts were provided to participants for validation, or member checking. Member checking occurred in a follow up meeting during a convenient time for the participants. In this meeting participants were able to review, change, and/or redact information to ensure participants still consent to sharing their experience, interviews were accurately transcribed, and adjust transcripts to more accurately portray their experiences. Participants then completed the transcript release form providing the researcher authorization to use the data for the purposes of this study (Appendix J).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis for this project followed Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) guide to IPA research. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) stated that their recommendations are meant to act as a guide, acknowledging that every IPA study is different; this guide should be adapted to fit the needs of the study's context. The analysis started by reading and rereading the first transcript, or case, to gain a familiar sense of the narrative from the interview. Once I felt familiar with the case, I would review and document comments on each case a minimum of four times. Each read focused on recording specific comments. During the first read of the case, I would document any initial notes and thoughts related to the case. In the second read, I recorded descriptive comments, where I focused on the context and description of the participant's experience. Throughout the following read, I made linguistic comments, understanding the specific language participants used (e.g., metaphors). During the last read, I documented any conceptual comments regarding the participant's experiences. Each specific review provided a particular lens, or focus, of interpretation during the read. In the event where an earlier comment emerged in a later review, the comment was still recorded.

After all comments were captured, I created themes built from my previous notations while grounded in the participant's words and experiences. Themes were then transferred into an Excel sheet, printed off, and cut into strips. These printed themes were then sorted to create superordinate and subordinate themes. While themes were being sorted, I explored the convergence and divergence between themes to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' experience from multiple intersections. Subordinate themes were created by grouping similar themes together and creating labels that conceptualized the experience captured in the emergent theme. Grouping subordinate themes or exploring how subordinate themes

related to each other created the superordinate theme. Subordinate themes were also provided a label that helped communicate this theorized higher level of association. Once the analysis of the initial case was completed, I moved to the next case repeating the previously outlined steps. When I was approaching a new case, it was reviewed with a fresh perspective, open to the new perspectives of shame that each case brought. When sorting and searching for connections between themes, the superordinate and subordinate themes captured from earlier analysis were used as a framework when analyzing later cases. While later cases used previously created themes, I was still open to the creation of new themes that did not emerge from earlier analysis. After all cases were initially analyzed, I reviewed all earlier cases to identify if previous unused themes aligned with the newly emerged themes. Themes that lacked substantive representation in other cases were dropped off at this time. Once the analysis was finalized, Table 4.2 was created to demonstrate the representation of themes across each case.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility in this study was believed to be established through five ways: adherence to IPA research best practices, member checking, researcher reflexivity, IPA research mindset, and methodological triangulation; the study's research design followed best practices in IPA research practices (Finlay, 2014; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). Following best practices assured that the methodology was appropriate and in alignment with the research questions and interview protocol, which were reviewed and approved by my committee. To support the credibility of the study, member checking was conducted with each participant after the interviews were transcribed. Member checking allowed the participants to ensure their perspective was accurately captured and allowed for an additional level of consent

regarding participants' sharing of personal stories. The criteria of the trustworthiness will be described in the following section. Of the original eight participants, only seven participants completed the member checking, meaning one transcript was not used in this study.

Transferability

It is important to reiterate that the goal of the present study was not to make generalizations regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Rather the intent of this project was to gain insight into how SPS make sense of their experiences of shame during university in relation to factors associated with student persistence. As previously stated, a vital component to IPA research is to gather a purposeful sample of individuals with lived experience of the phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Such a sample was achieved by recruiting upper year, Canadian, undergraduate, shame-prone students, at a midwestern Canadian university. Both the purposeful sampling and nature of IPA allows for the reader to practice theoretical generalizability, where knowledge can be transferred to other settings through critical reflection interacting with these findings and their specific context (Smith et al., 2009).

Dependability

The nature of phenomenology is to gain an understanding around the essence of a phenomenon through multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected were triangulated by gathering these experiences through multiple perspectives and methods (i.e., semi-structured interviews, journaling). To support the dependability of this study, all audio recordings of interviews were transcribed and validated through member checking. Member checking ensured that participants' captured lived experience regarding their experiences of shame in university were accurate to their perspective and experiences. The rigorous data

analysis process was recorded and documented in detail to allow for potential replications of this study.

Confirmability

The researcher would argue that objectivity can never be achieved. Subjectivity is present in every aspect of all research methodology, by the questions that a researcher asks or the statistical analysis the researcher performs. Giorgi (1994) pointed out, “nothing can be accomplished without subjectivity, so its elimination is not the solution. Rather how the subject is present is what matters, and objectivity itself is an achievement of subjectivity” (p. 205). More than objectivity is being aware of one’s biases and opinions, through active reflection. Throughout the collection, analysis, and reporting of data, the researcher practiced phenomenological sensibility, an approach to being phenomenological by engaging a phenomenological attitude (Finlay, 2014). A phenomenological attitude looks at the phenomenon under investigation with openness and genuine curiosity, which can be achieved by approaching the phenomenon with a curious nature and bracketing away previous understandings of the phenomenon. Finlay (2014) argued that the researcher does not need to extend to pure objectivity but develop a healthy tension between their past and present understanding, where the researcher is managing both their own and the participant's subjectivity. Additionally, the same semi-structured interview guide was used for all participants to help the confirmability of the study. The results from the interviews were rigorously analyzed and captured through the creation of an audit trail, which was comprised of interview recordings, interview transcripts, transcript notes, and a table of themes that captured themes, participant quotes, and line codes for quick referencing. The verbatim quotes and line codes accompanying the table of themes allow for

quick referencing and for ensuring accuracy between participants' experiences and created themes.

Triangulation.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe (2004) identified four types of triangulation: data, methodological, theoretical, and investigators. This study triangulated the data collected through two types of triangulation outlined by Easterby-Smith et al., data source and methodological. This study triangulated by data source through utilizing multiple participants so that the data collected were not limited to a single individual's perspective, but focused on the essence of the phenomenon present in multiple participants' experience. Triangulation by method, where the researcher gathers data using multiple methods, was enacted by collecting qualitative data through both participant and journal entries.

Bracketing

For bracketing, the researcher was reflective of their own bias and lived experience with the emotion. The researcher held the beliefs that not everyone has the same experiences with the emotion, including the researcher's own experiences with shame, and that the researcher was interested in understanding the phenomenon through the lens of the participants. As such, the research adopted an IPA attitude and approached the research project with openness and curiosity to participants' lived experience (Finlay, 2014), with the goal to understand and make sense of their experiences. It is important to note that the goal of the project was not to demonstrate that the phenomenon exists, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, but to understand individuals' lived experiences of shame during their university studies. The researcher was rigorous with their analysis to ensure themes were grounded in participants' texts as previously described.

Ethical Considerations

An application to the university's ethics board was completed before data collection. Data collection was conducted after approval from the ethics board has been received by the researcher and their supervisor. The researcher indicated to the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board (Human Behavioural) the research methodology, data collection tools, recruitment of participants, benefits and harms, a copy of the letter for information, and protocol for privacy and confidentiality (see Appendix K).

Participants had the right to withdraw at any time. Due to the phenomenon under investigation, participants could experience uncomfortable feelings. Participants were provided information regarding campus support services if required. Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants were provided pseudonyms in the dissemination of results in order to protect the identity of participants.

Data Storage

All physical data (i.e. interview notes, participant journals) is locked and stored in a secure location at the University of Saskatchewan. Electronic data (i.e. journal transcripts, interview transcripts, researcher observational notes, audio records, Internalized Shame Scale Score) is being stored on a locked external hard drive at the University of Saskatchewan. All data, physical and electronic data will be kept for five years and destroyed after the required time period.

Summary

The study aimed to use a qualitative research methodological approach. This chapter explored five potential qualitative research methodologies to study the phenomenon of interest, and rationale for choosing an IPA approach. The study's main, and subsequent research question

were also explored in this section. The chapter ended by explaining the data collection and analysis processes, ethical guidelines, and trustworthiness of the proposed research study

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research project was to explore individuals' lived experiences of shame in university while describing the emotion's role around their success and challenges in post-secondary education. More specifically, the goal was to understand how participants made sense of their experiences of shame concerning their motivation, self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and help-seeking. The researcher conducted an IPA study that involved seven semi-structured interviews, with three individuals participating in an optional ten-day journaling exercise. Each participant described at least two experiences of shame in university; while not explicitly prompted, the concept of failure emerged in every interview. It is important to note that failing was not always reflected as an inability to pass a course. While this specific example was described by some participants, other experiences reflected events where participants failed to meet internalized standards, and where participants interpreted such inability to meet said standards as a failure. The analysis led to the creation of six superordinate themes: processing shame, impact on *self*, motivation, belonging, factors that promote help-seeking, and factors that deter help-seeking. There were a total of 32 subordinate themes that fall under the previously mentioned superordinate themes. To protect the anonymity of participants, I withheld the participants' specific ages. Instead, I shared general age ranges to provide context to the participants' experiences located in Table 4.1.

This chapter begins by discussing the participant selection process, as well as an introduction and background to each participant. Following, I highlight the data analysis process. The chapter concludes by moving through each superordinate and subordinate theme, utilizing participant quotes to provide evidence and context of the phenomenon under investigation. While data were captured through both semi-structured interviews and the optional journaling

activity, only quotes from the semi-structured interview are illustrated in the findings below. The data from the journaling activity helped immerse me, as the researcher, into my participants' world to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The results have been arranged in a logical order, allowing the reader fluid sense making of the research findings.

Sampling procedure

The participants were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy. IPA research studies seek to gather a small, homogeneous, purposeful sample size, where participants are similar in demographics, or other characteristics (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). The small sample size allows for idiographic, in-depth, time consuming, analysis of each participant as a case. The sample population for this research project is arguably purposeful, where all participants identified as being Canadian university students, having attempted at least one year of university, and had frequent experiences with the emotion of shame, as assessed through Cook's (1996) Internalized Shame Scale. Participants were all university students enrolled in at least their second year of university; this criterion ensured participants held enough lived experience within post-secondary to draw from during their interview. While the sampling of the project is believed to have been purposeful, participants' stemming from similar contexts, the experiences of shame within university shared were very diverse.

Participant Profiles and Demographic

IPA studies are suggested to recruit between 5-30 participants (Smith et al., 2009). However, for novice IPA student researchers a sample size of three is recommended (Smith & Osborn, 2003), ensuring this project's sampling of seven students fell within an appropriate size. Table 4.1 outlines the participant's pseudonym, age range, current year of study, their previous and current degree pursuits, and the two most prominent shame objects identified by participants

in their university experience. A shame object is a framework I will use to conceptualize and refer to the object of participants' shame. These objects could be thoughts, experiences, events, or interactions. Using the frame of an object allows me as the researcher to further understand and compare how participants' encounters with their object relate to the objects' impact on their academic experiences. In addition, this section provides participant descriptions, with brief biographies to help provide a high-level insight into the participant's demographic background and experiences with the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 4.1						
<i>Participant Shame Objects and Demographics</i>						
Name	Age	Year of Study	Previous Degree	Present Degree	Shame Object 1	Shame Object 2
Teddy	Early 20s	3	Pre-Vet. (Biology)	Pre-Vet. (Environmental Sciences)	Failing [Organic Chemistry]	Sexual Misconduct
Olivia	Early 20s	4	Nursing	Nursing	Failing [Learning Contract]	Near Miss [Wrong Medication]
Amelia	Late Teens	2	Psychology	Psychology	Failing [French]	Professor publicly exposing flawed self
George	Early 20s	2	Pre-Pharmacy	English	Failing [Organic Chemistry]	Failing [Psychology]
Izzie	Mid 20s	2 ^a	Pre-Medicine	Art	Failing [Calculus]	Parental rejection towards academic performance
Richard	Late 20s	5 ^a	Commerce ^b	Law	Failing [Calculus]	People exposing flawed/imperfect self
Karev	Mid 20s	4	Nursing	Nursing	Failing [Statistics]	GF's rejection of academic identity
^a Participants took time away from post-secondary after their first year.						
^b Participant completed degree.						

Description of Participants

Case 1 – Teddy. Teddy grew up in a region outside of her current province of study. Originally, Teddy was raised in a rural community before moving to an urban setting where she completed her high school education. Teddy completed her formative university years at an institution in her home province before transferring to the institution where the present study was conducted. Teddy is working towards completing her Arts and Science degree, where she hopes

to continue her studies in a professional program. In her early twenties, Teddy is completing her third year of university and has a strong passion for academia. During Teddy's interview, she mentioned two shame objects: failing Organic Chemistry and experiencing sexual misconduct. During her interview, Teddy indicated failing was a significant fear for her before not passing Organic Chemistry. Failing had a substantial impact on Teddy's self-efficacy towards achieving her goal of attending the ideal professional school required for her career goals. Teddy's other shame object was an interaction she described between herself and a friend where an act of sexual misconduct occurred. Teddy described her conflict between attributing blame on either herself (internally) or her friend (externally).

Case 2 – Olivia. Olivia originated from a rural community within the same province of her current place of study. Olivia spent her initial year of university at a rural institution before applying and transferring into nursing for her second year of study. Currently, Olivia is in her early twenties and is completing her final year of nursing. Olivia identified two shame objects. Her first shame object regarded an experience where she nearly administered the wrong dosage to a patient, however, catching the mistake before any harm transpired. Olivia identified great shame around the whole experience, specifically related to her supervisor's reaction and treatment towards her for the rest of their placement. Olivia described the dynamics between her and the instructor as negatively impacting her, and a trigger for her shame. Olivia's second shame object was the result of the previous near miss, where she was placed on a learning contract as per departmental policy, which up until that event Olivia perceived herself as a model student. The learning contract communicated to Olivia that she was unsafe to be around patients and that she was not good enough to be a nurse, placing a strain on her nursing identity. Issues

within post-secondary around power dynamics with people of power and student care also emerged.

Case 3 – Amelia. Amelia is in her later teenage years finishing her second year of psychology within the same urban areas she was raised. In her interview, Amelia identified university as a stressful time for her – specifically regarding the lack of coordination around professors’ instructional assessments. Amelia is a high functioning student, registered with the disability service unit at her institution. Amelia shared her struggles with mental illness and the desire to not be a burden on her family. Amelia’s first shame object was regarding a negative interaction between her and the instructor during class where the instructor breached previously established boundaries between the two of them regarding Amelia’s mental illness and needs. In the initial meeting where Amelia established these boundaries, she described the professor’s adverse reaction, where the instructor dismissed her needs based on the invisible nature of her disability. Amelia’s second shame object mentioned during her interview regarded failing French and not living up to her own internalized standards towards her desired performance in this subject area.

Case 4 – George. George, in his early twenties, is studying his second year of Arts & Science with the hopes of pursuing a graduate studies or a professional program after completing his undergraduate degree. George came from a small rural town and took a few years away between high school and university to conduct international work that included teaching English. Both of George’s shame objects related to failing, one in organic chemistry and the other in psychology. Comparing these two shame experiences demonstrates the difference in George’s connection to others, and the affect’s intensity based on the contexts related to the situation. The dynamics around George’s experiences in Organic Chemistry allowed him to develop connection

to others who were also struggling, which George described as minimizing his shame.

Comparatively in his psychology experience, the setting did not allow for similar awareness or connections to transpire. The combination of his experiences with shame and organic chemistry steered George away from his original degree path in the health sciences.

Case 5 – Izzie. Izzie is in her mid-twenties and grew up in a rural area of the same province of her current institution. Initially, Izzie started a pursuit towards medicine based on parental influence. At the start, Izzie struggled with the adjustment to university life, which resulted in time away from university. She has since returned to university and is in her second year of Arts and Science. Parental standards had a significant impact on Izzie during her formative university years, which ultimately influenced her major choice, standards around success, and negative attitudes towards help-seeking. These parental attitudes were a major deterrent from seeking help. Upon returning to the institution, Izzie has accessed the disability support unit of her institution to assure proper supports were in place to address the barriers associated with their learning and physical disabilities. Izzie identified two shame objects during her interview: failing calculus and parental rejection related to her academic performance. Both of these objects fed into each other and further perpetuated shame.

Case 6 – Richard. Richard is from the same urban center where he pursued his university degree. Although now in his late twenties, Richard went directly to university after high school. After struggling in his first year with managing the social and academic demands associated with post-secondary, he decided to take a year away from university. After returning, Richard completed his undergraduate degree and returned later for the third time to complete a professional degree. Richard identified his struggles around processing shame and often numbed this affective experience through maladaptive, and potentially harmful, coping strategies. During

Richard's interview, he identified his experience of failing calculus as his first shame object. Richard's second shame object was identified as his uncomfortableness with people exposing his flawed self when receiving care or discipline and he will go out of his way to avoid these interactions. In addition, Richard identified his diagnosis with a learning disability that emerged later in life.

Case 7 – Karev. Karev is in his mid-twenties, coming from a small rural community. Karev took several years off between completing high school and starting his university education. Currently, Karev is at the end of his nursing degree and has struggled with help-seeking throughout his degree. Karev described his double standard around help-seeking, encouraging other people to approach him for help but identifying difficulties when roles are reversed, and he needs to ask for help. The first shame object mentioned in Karev's case was his experience accessing the math help centre for the first time during his first year of university due to his struggles with math. The second shame object was Karev experiencing negative attitudes from his partner towards his academic program and that his program was 'beneath her.' Karev's interpretation of breach of trust and acceptance by his partner was described as impacting his purpose at university and his identity around 'not being enough.'

Results: Shame and Student Persistence

Through the data analysis, six superordinate themes emerged from the experiences of the participants. These superordinate themes are separated into two domains: student persistence and help-seeking, with the latter to be discussed in the following section. The domain of student persistence housed four of the six superordinate themes: processing shame, impact on *self*, motivation, and belonging (as seen in Figure 4.1). Each superordinate theme had subordinate

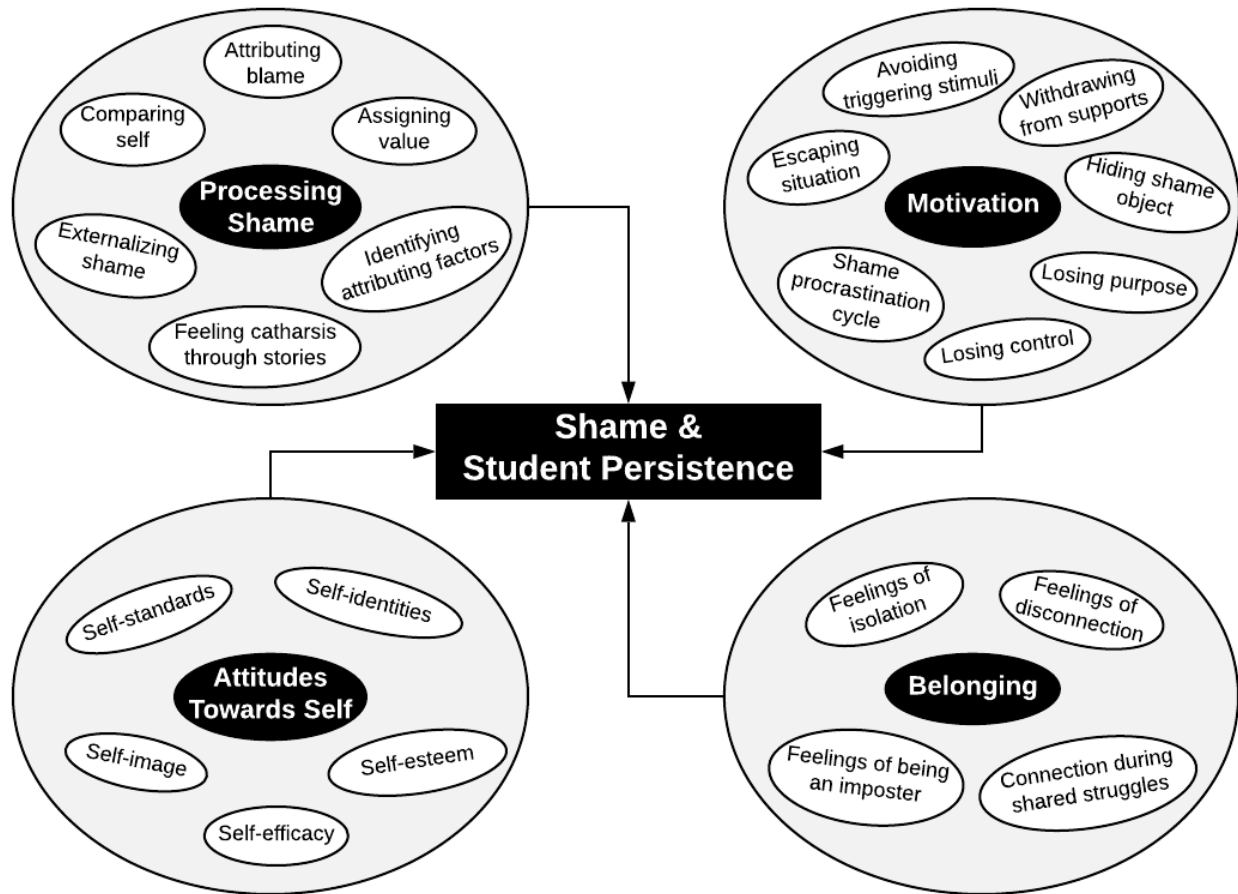


Figure 4.1. Shame and student persistence. This figure visual illustrates the relationship between the emergent themes related to student persistence and shame.

themes that will be discussed and explored in their corresponding sections. The order of themes does not reflect the importance or level of data associated with each theme. Instead, the order is structured a way that allows for logical sense-making of the results by the reader. While all participants were represented in each superordinate theme, participant representation in subordinate themes varied, as seen in Table 4.2. In order for a theme to be represented in the results, the theme had to be represented in over half of the participants.

Table 4.2							
<i>Student Persistence Table of Superordinate and Subordinate</i>							
Superordinate themes and <i>subordinate themes</i>	Theme Representation ^a						
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
Processing Shame	(n=7)						
<i>Comparing self.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Attributing blame.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Assigning value.</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<i>Externalizing shame.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Feeling catharsis through stories.</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Identifying attributing factors.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Impact on Self	(n=7)						
<i>Self-standards.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Self-identities.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Self-image.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Self-efficacy.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Self-esteem.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Motivation	(n=7)						
<i>Escaping situation.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Avoiding triggering stimuli.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Withdrawing from supports.</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
<i>Hiding shame object.</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<i>Shame procrastination cycle.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Losing control.</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Losing purpose.</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Belonging	(n=7)						
<i>Feelings of isolation in their experience.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>Feelings of disconnection from others.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Feelings of being an imposter.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Feelings of connection during shared struggle.</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Note.</i> Subordinate themes represented in italics.							
^a Each column represents a different participant's case.							

Processing Shame

The first superordinate theme mentioned for this study is the theme Processing Shame. While the questions in the interview protocol did not directly ask participants about their experiences of processing this emotion, individuals naturally described their initial encounters and struggles with moving through shame. Processing shame relates specifically to participants making sense of how they reacted and how they described worked through their shame

experiences. The superordinate theme, processing shame, had six subordinate themes: comparing self, attributing blame, assigning value, externalizing shame, feeling catharsis through stories, and identifying attributing factors.

Comparing self. As participants discussed their experiences of shame, they mentioned the internal comparison they would conduct on themselves. Participants would compare their performance, or way of being, against others they determined to be at a similar, or comparable, level as themselves. Other areas participants would compare themselves were internalized standards stemming from parental upbringing or learned societal standards. Socially comparing themselves against others seemed to have resulted in the creation of a standard the participants would then evaluate themselves against, acting as an archetype of who they ‘should’ or ‘desired’ to be:

But most people will be totally normal and it's like why can't I be like them? Why can't I just be high-functioning? (Amelia)

At times it was really frustrating too where I had found I was at a better stance than they were in the class. They quickly improved and got things and I still was dumb with the math. (Karev)

I just also felt ashamed too because I had a friend that was in that class and she was doing so well and I was doing so poorly. (Izzie)

This social comparison mechanism is an important dynamic represented throughout the results that both trigger shame and provide connection depending on the context and results of the comparison.

Attributing blame. All participants described the act of attributing blame after experiencing shame, and they were driven to find the source, or cause, of the failed standard achievement or moral breach. Finding a source external to the *self* acted as a mechanism to ease the discomfort the participant was experiencing. This blame was attributed either internally (e.g., their *self*, lack of intelligence, being lazy) or externally (e.g., classmates, professors, difficult

exam, family). Both Teddy and Amelia described their original feelings of placing blame for the moral transgression on themselves:

For me I found that I was in this weird limbo where maybe I kind of brought it upon myself, but also I still didn't want it to happen so it wasn't my fault so I was kind of in this purgatory in the middle. (Teddy)

And so it was really shameful because I could handle her, you know, being mad at me, but when the entire class felt like they were against you it's like I felt, like I felt like I was doing something wrong. (Amelia)

Other participants described placing their blame both internally (i.e., on their self) and externally (i.e., professors, teacher assistants [TAs], partners). Some participants would attribute such a large focus of blame towards themselves with so much intensity that it could be perceived as attacking one's *self*, as seen in George and Richard:

And then as soon as I was done blaming him. I started blaming myself, like well you didn't study hard enough, like how did you miss that?... Why isn't my TA giving a crap? Why don't I have a better lab partner?" Just going back to the why wasn't I getting this kind of thing. (George)

Inwardly first, but sometimes outwardly. It really bothers me, I don't like it when other people treat me badly which is ironic because I treat myself terribly. (Richard)

For the participants within this study, the source of the attribution would dictate the affect experience. For example, attributing the blame on the *self* would cause further shame. Alternatively, attributing blame externally seemed to have provided an affect relief for participants.

Assigning value. When discussing their experiences of shame within university, participants assigned a value to the object of their shame. One example was explaining a task as 'easy' with the belief they should have been able to perform the task. Another example was defining a concept as 'simple', something that everyone should know. Olivia's experience

around her shame object was associated with the fear of others becoming aware of her shame object especially when she had assigned the value of the failed task as ‘basic’:

I didn't want to tell them that I had done that. Failed at this very basic thing, you know. (Olivia)

A further example around assigning value to shame objects was Karev's experiences with two different shame objects, an academic issue and a relationship conflict. During Karev's interview, he compared and assigned value to his shame objects, providing insight into how he felt around these objects of shame and seeking support:

And I think again stems from that kind of I don't ask for help mentality really. With the more serious issue, I guess was a bigger hurdle than it was for the math thing. Where it was at the time getting into it was just a math class. So asking for help was just a little thing. So it was only a little barrier to ask for help because it was only a little issue. (Karev)

Participants in this study would under value their successes, while over value tasks they struggled with achieving. In some cases, the value placed on struggles would also act as a barrier towards student accessing help, as noticed in Karev's case.

Externalizing shame. Externalizing shame was described as a conscious act to disclose the shame object to others. Externalization occurred towards their support system — family, close friends, peers with similar experiences, online communities, and professional supports (such as counsellors, professors). Receivers of this information were seen by the participant as someone they could trust. Teddy described one of her shame objects as easier to disclose after processing her experience, with the act of sharing and hearing other people's experiences an important step in healing from the shame:

So being able to kind of joke about that and my friends joking – that's all good and that's fair game and after the initial trauma's over, it becomes humor quite quickly and you can move on from that because it's not indecent, it's not something you want to hide.... With the other kind of example it was not as easy to – to kind of air out my kind of feelings of embarrassment and be reassured they happen to other people and kind of like heal that shame. (Teddy)

Olivia and Izzie described their experiences of externalizing through different mediums, face-to-face, or an online community. While these mediums were vastly different, the act of externalizing their shame and the connection to others minimized the affect's intensity:

From peers it's been really nice, I've opened up to them – a few of my friends a little more about the experiences I had my instructor and that's like very after the fact now that I'm not on the learning contract and all this and it's quite a ways in the past it's really helped to be able to talk to them about it and have them say like "Yeah, that does suck." (Olivia)

What I usually do is I share it on a forum to kind of get that feeling of shame that might start, out there, and then people that understand and have been in those abusive situations will then kind of reassure me a little bit and say "wow that was awful, I'm sorry you had to go through that" and that kind of helps push that shame away and I don't feel it anymore then. (Izzie)

Regardless of the medium a participant externalized their shame through, face-to-face or online, did not alter the positive impact stemming from sharing one's experience. It should be noted that participants only described positive experiences relating to externalizing their shame. Negative experiences were not mentioned as either occurring or not occurring.

Feeling catharsis through stories. Mentioned across several participants was the comfort and reduction of shame from hearing experiences of others in similar contexts. These connections between experiences often occurred after participants externalized their shame to a trusted source. Hearing other people's stories allowed for participants to realize they were not alone in their experiences and for the individual to see potential futures after shame. As discussed in the previous theme, the hearing of similar experiences and struggling alongside others minimized the negative affect associated with shame, as described by George:

In chemistry, I don't know, negative self-talk didn't do anything for me, but the fact that I was feeling like I couldn't do it – it hurt a little bit less knowing I was with other people who felt similarly. (George)

Through these interactions of hearing other stories, participants not only learned more about other experiences, but these interactions also allowed participants to reflect and gain deeper insight into their own experiences. Izzie explained how connecting with others through her online community allowed for this insight to occur:

That being repeated to me over and over again helped so much. I started sharing my story a bit more on Reddit as well and hearing the same thing from other people which could be an echo chamber kind of situation. (Izzie)

Similar to externalizing shame, no participants described negative experiences after hearing others' similar stories or experiences.

Identifying attributing factors. In the progression of processing shame, being able to identify other attributing factors that were associated with the event that caused shame, minimized the affect's intensity. Support systems were often discussed as a way to gain perspective with regard to additional attributing factors that can be taken into consideration as the participant was evaluating the transgression. Olivia described her use of a professional support system, for example a counsellor, as a way to externalize, process, and gain insight into other attributing factors:

It's definitely like post-externalizing and counselling and all that it's definitely like helped in, like I said, not feeling it so much as a problem with me as – and then more – including more of the like problems with the environment and instructor and stuff. (Olivia)

While some participants used more formal supports, as previously mentioned, other participants claimed utilization of their previously established support systems, such as close friends, families, and professors. George communicated the importance of his parents as his support system. He identified the role his parents played in bringing awareness to the wholeness that is George, outside of the flaws shame is placing a spotlight on:

Again, which is again, really nice because it's an objective opinion for when you're in one of those moments – talking to someone who's outside who can say "No,

you're not just your flaws. You're not just this mistake, you're more than that. You have more potential, like you're a better person than you're giving yourself credit for – you're just thinking that because you're in the situation feeling this then because of this.” (George)

Regardless of using professional or social supports to help identify attributing factors, being aware of other attributing factor helped remove the spotlight off the *self*.

Impact on Self

The second superordinate theme was the way participants described shame's impact on their sense of *self*. While this superordinate theme was also not intentionally set out to be investigated, participants described how shame influenced the way they saw themselves. This theme related to participants' descriptions of how experiencing and working through shame, impacted how participants saw themselves, their identities, and their abilities. Impact on *self* had five subordinate themes: self-standards, self-identities, self-image, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Self-standards. Mentioned by all participants when discussing their experiences of shame was a standard, or expectation, that they identified was not met. This failure to meet the standard resulted in the experience of shame. The basis of these standards and expectations originated from varying sources. Some participants internalized standards imposed on them by other individuals (such as parents, faculty). Alternatively, these standards were assumed steppingstones to achieve their goals (including 'working hard to be a scientist'; 'never failing'). Other times the origin of these self-expectations was unidentifiable. Both George and Richard discussed their high standards they have for themselves regarding their academics:

And a bit of backstory – I've always – I expected more of myself than perhaps than is – than perhaps is needed. I hold myself to a higher standard than sometimes I'm willing to work to achieve and that was really bad in high school and I kind of felt like that was like coming back in university. I was just like “Well I can” – average for university courses is like 70 – 75ish and I'm like “well I want to do an 80 this semester in all my classes”... And having not experienced university yet that was kind of a silly thing to commit to, not knowing what I was getting myself into. (George)

Like sometimes my standard is much higher than society's and sometimes my standard is nil or much lower than societies. So yeah I just kind of wing it and I don't really have a lot of exam anxiety. But when I don't perform well and my grade is bad and I don't get results I feel very ashamed of myself afterwards. and then I would build it up every few days or every week I would have like a little bit higher standards. And then before I know it, I'm coming along just as well as I ever was. (Richard)

Olivia shared her struggles with the expectation of herself of always being a top student. Her experiences of shame resulted from the internal conflict that occurred when she was not able to meet her self-expectations:

You know, I've always been a top student, I've never done that – that's never happened to me kind of thing. I've never been one of the people that that happens to or – it's a very shocking and, yeah really shameful and disheartening. (Olivia)

In all cases, the source of the shame originated from these standards and expectations against which participants were measuring themselves.

Self-identities. As students were unable to meet their internalized standards or expectations, most participants identified the tension towards their varying identities. As students experienced shame regarding an essential component of that identity, shame called into question the identity for that person. For example, Karev explained his cognitive struggles after his partner negatively evaluated his program and career path, which had a large impact on his identity while navigating shame:

But overall I'd say it definitely impacted my ability to study and to go into clinical and do anything that if I wasn't to them what I thought I was in terms of my capacity of a student or as a nurse or what a nurse is to the profession then, why am I doing it? (Karev)

Teddy had a similar experience regarding her struggles with her identity as a scientist. For Teddy, failing called into question whether she belonged in the rigors of science as she battled with 'not being good enough':

Then after that I really questioned my place there and really kind of questioned my place on, should I be in academics, and that kind of thing. It was also, my immediate

thought was “should I be in sciences?” Not so much academics, but sciences. I thought “Well, it’s not that I don’t belong in academics, I don’t belong on the podium of the sciences. I belong – I don’t know, maybe I’ll go into psychology” or something like that. (Teddy)

Olivia shared her experiences with a near miss regarding a patient’s medication, and how being placed on a learning contract challenged her identity. Her shame object heavily called into question her confidence regarding caring for patients and her identity as a nurse:

Shame definitely, of that time, definitely impacted my self-worth and how I felt about myself as a nurse, nursing student. (Olivia)

In the case of both Olivia and Karev, their identities were challenged after a single incident. It appears all previous successes related to their identities were disregarded and the attitudes towards their identify were based solely on the current circumstances in front of them.

Self-image. All participants mentioned the concept of self-image when experiencing shame. Self-image was reflected by both the focus of how the participant saw themselves in light of their shame experience, but also with concerns regarding how others would see them in relation to their shame objects. There was a strong desire for individuals' image to remain unaltered as others became aware of their shame objects. Both George and Richard discussed their struggle regarding their self-image when experiencing shame. George discussed his struggles with trying to view himself positively when experiencing shame. In contrast, Richard shared how shame drove his negative self-image:

And experiencing – when you’re in the midst of experiencing shame it’s really hard to have that positive self-image of yourself, like there’s a pretty significant bias towards obviously the negative self-talk. (George)

It was inaccurate, it was poor self-image driven by shame but it was really demotivating and I was just very inactive, and inaccurate in thinking that they were constructive. (Richard)

Lastly, Amelia pointed out how shame influenced her motives to avoid re-engaging with her shame object due to fear of the professor's static, and unchangeable image of her:

and it was so hard to go back in because I was like that prof has made up their mind about me and nothing I do will change it. (Amelia)

When participants were concerned about their self, participants focused on assuming others' attitudes towards them without any altercations or interactions occurring, as seen in Amelia's circumstances.

Self-efficacy. Represented across all participants was how shame impacted their beliefs related to their abilities to succeed, or accomplish, the task related to the shame object. It seems shame feeds the self-doubt that occurred when an individual was unable to meet their own standard or expectation; failing to meet said standards further reinforced their self-doubt. All of this negative reflection took place while not taking into consideration other attributing factors. For some participants, their low levels of self-efficacy were very specific to the shame object. For example, Teddy's shame object that was related to her failure in organic chemistry resulted in her low self-efficacy towards that specific course:

Yeah. I definitely, right after I failed O-chem, I didn't think I would ever be able to pass it. So Christmas break after I failed it, I was just looking at it and thinking about it and I was like "That's not in my capability to pass that. I will not be able to pass that."... But I didn't feel like I could scrape a pass in it going forward... And the shame really acted as an – as a reinforcement to "Man I can't do this." (Teddy)

Other participants' shame impacted more their global levels of self-efficacy towards their abilities in university. Izzie's experiences with struggling academically fed into her self-doubt around her abilities towards university in general:

I just let the shame really get to me and it carried over for many years where I didn't think I could do university. (Izzie)

Both previously mentioned cases related to the evaluation from instructors; other participants reported how a faculty member's action elicited shame and influenced their levels of self-efficacy. Olivia, in particular, struggled with her experiences around one faculty member's conduct towards her. Olivia's perception of how she was being treated by the instructor impacted how she viewed her abilities:

Very badly. I did not feel like I could do anything, like I didn't feel like she trusted me enough to do anything. So yeah, that really very negatively impacted my self-efficacy and self-confidence. (Olivia)

As seen above, participants' self-efficacy towards their respective shame object remained static, as if there was nothing within their control to change their circumstances, almost demonstrating a sense of hopelessness.

Self-esteem. Shame had a reportedly large impact on individuals' feelings towards their *self*. Regardless of the shame object (such as, failing, partner rejection), individuals reported their self-worth being impacted, where shame elicited an almost self-attack mechanism. Izzie describes her experience of how failing reinforced how she felt about herself:

I was a bad daughter, I was a failure, I wasn't family oriented enough, so therefore I was the black sheep of the family and I didn't belong with my family, and why couldn't I be like them and why couldn't I just be normal sort of thing. It was just a cycle where I would just put myself down and feel terrible about myself. (Izzie)

Interestingly participants would often equate summative evaluations from instructors as an accurate reflection of their own intelligence, allowing a specific subject to reflect their global levels of intelligence. Both Karev and George reported experiences of feeling 'stupid' or viewing themselves as 'not smart enough' after failing:

Yeah I felt just stupid for that whole class. (Karev)

and then you get the test back and it's just like "What?" Like what did I do wrong? Well I guess I just wasn't smart enough to do well on this test. (George)

Allowing one's self-concept to stem from their level of intelligence as evaluated from someone else's perspective creates fragile identities. As previously described, Karev and George's self-concepts regarding their intelligence was negatively impacted by a summative evaluation from a faculty member. Amelia shared how her self-worth comes from her intelligence, compared to her boyfriend's:

My boyfriend was told constantly that he's lucky he has me because I'm so smart and because in high school he was a 60's student and I was 90's student so people would constantly compare him to me and say like "He's not smart."... but like when he finds things hard he gets really like a confidence boost. So he doesn't validate himself on his – his self worth doesn't come from his intelligence where mine does a bit. (Amelia)

As shame is fundamentally a self-conscious emotion, it appears that individuals' self-concepts are attacked during these moments of achievement and moral transgressions.

Motivation

The third superordinate theme that emerged from the data analysis was motivation. This theme was conceptualized by participants' efforts directed towards, or away, from their shame objects. The superordinate theme of motivation had seven subordinate themes: Escaping the situation, avoiding triggering stimuli, withdrawing from supports, hiding the shame object, shame procrastination cycle, losing control, and losing purpose. When discussing their levels of motivation with their shame experiences, participants mostly described struggles with motivation, where their initial intentions around motivation were to create space between themselves and their shame object. In addition, participants described their struggles when re-engaging with their shame objects. Mentioned by two participants were incidents where they were motivated through competition with another student, but there was not enough evidence in other individuals' experiences for this to occur as its own theme.

Escaping the situation. When being initially confronted with the object the participants identified as shameful, participants described their desire to flee away from the shame object. The purpose of fleeing seemed to be about creating distance between themselves and the object that was eliciting shame. It was shared amongst participants that this disengagement from their shame objects occurred after experiencing shame in a public space, with the intentions of retreating to secluded spaces (such as an individual's home or dorm room). George, Amelia, and Olivia all described their motivation in the initial interactions with their shame objects:

Sometimes it's just like get rid of the feeling. Sometimes it's just to leave the environment of the classroom or whatever, because that's where these things happen. (George)

I was like "I can't, I can't." I tried to come to class and I couldn't and it was awkward. It was like I just stared at her and then walked out... So I just left, gone. (Amelia)

In terms of motivation, I guess, in terms of academic motivation it [shame] made me kind of want – that particular experience with the email made me want to like, you know, run away and never come back kind of thing. (Olivia)

George, Amelia, and Olivia's cases each provide evidence to the wide breadth of contexts where individuals could be triggered to escape. George's case shows his adverse reaction was related to the physical space related to the shame object. Comparatively, Amelia's experiences revolved around interpersonal conflict. Lastly, Olivia's situation related to digital communications that triggered her shame response. While not an exhaustive list these three cases help demonstrate the complexity of this shame response.

Avoiding triggering stimuli. After the initial experience associated with the shame object, all participants mentioned intentional acts to avoid re-engaging with their shame objects. Participants would expend intentional efforts to avoid spaces, conversations, or other contexts they identified where the shame object may be present, or consume themselves in activities to avoid thinking about the shame object. Richard discussed two separate experiences where he

would go out of his way to avoid his shame object. The first experience related to his actions to avoid facing any institutional figures of authority that could elicit shame. His second experience was associated with his avoidance of reengaging with health care professionals, and his intentional acts to numb their uncomfortable affect:

But I've never given anyone the chance in university. Every single failure has been voicemail or an email. I've never actually been sat in front of a committee or sat in front of anyone's office chair or across a desk to face rejection or shame or face judgement for something I did at all. Ever.

because every time it seemed like we were getting somewhere I would get uncomfortable and then just fuck off and get drunk with my friends and never see them again. (Richard)

Teddy shared her perspective around intentionally avoiding the other individual associated with her shame object of sexual misconduct:

Like it was this horrible, very, very – it wasn't just like you were just anxious and like "Oh, I feel anxious today, but I don't know what I feel anxious about." It was very acute and then I saw – I saw Nathan my friend the next day at school and I just – like I just about threw up and I couldn't look at him and I couldn't make eye contact with him and I would go way out of my way to avoid him. (Teddy)

In comparison, Olivia struggled with engaging with her academic work that elicited shame. She describes her difficulties with starting, or even merely thinking about the task:

I would majorly procrastinate and not want to do it and cry every night before clinical because I didn't want to do it and had to do it and left it way too late again...

So I didn't want anything to – I would put off doing the work and – to get there, because I just hated thinking about it so much... (Olivia)

Similar to the previous theme, the above three cases help demonstrate the diverse reactions and behaviours participants reported experiencing when attempting to avoid reengagement with their shame objects.

Withdrawing from supports. As participants shared their experiences of processing their shame, most participants identified acts of withdrawing from social supports or self-care

activities. Unlike avoidance, withdrawing relates to avoiding interactions with supportive people close to the participant regardless of their association with the participant's shame object.

Richard described his experiences of withdrawing from his support systems, individuals he identified who were both supportive and would hold him accountable:

I stopped working out, I stopped seeing not my friends but my close friends, the people who really know you and hold you accountable to the standards you set for yourself and support you and stuff, I stopped seeing them, I avoided my family. (Richard)

Similar to Richard, Karev discussed his withdrawal from not only friends but other self-care routines. Karev's experience described withdrawing from peers, friends, and engagement with his academics:

Yeah I didn't talk to anyone for a while kind of outside of class interaction. Yeah that week was my last week of clinical so I didn't have to, I didn't have any clinical group or shifts with other people from my class... So definitely contributed to not seeing people but even then I didn't, I played a lot of games, watched a lot of Netflix, read a lot of cheesy paper backs but did no studying. I didn't talk to my usual gym crew, I didn't really. (Karev)

In Teddy's experience of the sexual misconduct shame object, she seemed to place the blame of the incident on herself and withdrew herself from the group of friends where the other individual related to the incident was. Teddy identified even though these were her only friends she still withdrew herself from the group:

So then I made new friends and it all worked out, but – so that definitely – just from the social dynamics I was excluded from that group and that wasn't – I thought “Wow, I've done enough damage here”. I was declining their offers to hang out, it wasn't like they excluded me, I excluded myself just because I felt that I shouldn't be there anymore and that I didn't want to (Teddy)

While most cases identified withdrawing from social supports, it is important to note that in some cases withdrawing from supports also included withdrawal from self-care activities that the individual identified supported their wellness.

Hiding shame object. There was a strong drive described by all but one participant to purposefully expend efforts to prevent others from becoming aware of their shame objects. Of particular interest, one participant described extensive energy he devoted before meeting with people of authority to prevent such individuals from becoming aware of objects, or flaws, he identified as shameful. Richard identified his experience of spending extra time preparing for meetings with instructional personnel to prevent these individuals from becoming aware of, what Richard identified as, his lack of preparedness and thus, not deserving of support:

I like study and cram before I go to visit an instructor or professor, TA, so that they don't find out how behind I am in the course, or they don't find out how ill prepared I was for the test or whatever. I will spend four, six, eight hours, prior to that appointment date doing all of the studying I should of before just so I don't feel personally embarrassed and ashamed in front of them.

Someone who doesn't prepare or someone who doesn't happen to buy in so to speak through studying and preparation and stuff. Personally, I wouldn't want to support someone who was like me so I try to hide that I am like me. You know?(Richard)

Similar to Richard, Izzie dedicated specific cognitive and physical energy to hide her actions of accessing university supports. Izzie's parents had negative views around western medicine and seeking support, requiring Izzie to spend additional time and energy when navigating conversations with her parents' and the university system:

I didn't really tell my parents too much that I was actually accessing [disability supports] because I was scared of what they would say. I just secretly made doctors' appointments and would go to that to get the paperwork filled out and not tell them that I had a meeting with DSS. (Izzie)

Teddy provided an example that related to her interpersonal interactions with a peer that was associated with her shame object. She described being driven by a strong desire to not engage with the individual in fear of the shame object being brought to light:

I – I was – my first response, it was kind of a double response. I was a little scared, fearful – not that he would hurt me, but that he would want to talk about it and rehash it and discuss it and I just didn't want to so I was scared he was going to bring it up or that he was going to tell somebody else, I didn't want him to. (Teddy)

While there was a case this theme failed to emerge in, participants' responses did not contradict the above findings. Rather this theme failed to naturally occur compared to other cases.

Shame Procrastination Cycle. All participants described difficulties engaging with their objects of shame and they also identified desires around not engaging with said objects. Because shame objects revealed to participants components of their flawed *self*, creating discomfort for the experiencer, it appears this discomfort drove participants away from engaging with the shame object, thus avoiding any discomfort the *self* would experience. However, participants stated moments where they were forced to reengage with their shame objects (such as course deadlines, scheduled class or lab times, exams) led to experiencing additional shame, resulting in further avoiding, or procrastinating, the tasks associated with the shame object. Olivia described her experiences of the shame procrastination cycle, and her difficulties with motivation and procrastination:

I just kept repeating like putting it off and staying up really late to do it and probably not making the greatest decisions the next day because I was so tired and sleep deprived and just beating myself up about that constantly and it just kept cycling and never ending...

*And then I'm just going to go through that same pattern of behaviour based on procrastinating and not knowing things and not doing what I should do, I guess so that lack of motivation to do the work and shame about not doing the work and like kinda kept feeding into each other and cycling, but never enough for one to overcome the other if that makes sense. You know, like the shame about not doing the work was not – and the shame about the lack of motivation and that was not enough to make – give me motivation to do it until it was the very last minute.
(Olivia)*

Participants described how engaging with the course content that was eliciting shame would bring awareness of their flawed self, or lack of desired subject knowledge, and they were driven to not engage with the subject, or delay engagement, as seen in Teddy and George's experience:

Like I was really in denial on that and which really then – it actually really impeded my ability to study because every time I go to study I would realize how little I knew and I'd be like aw, I don't like this, that's not so fun to think about, I'm not going to study. (Teddy)

It's like well crap, I got a bad mark and then I just kind of like leave that off until the next time a test came around. So I'd like study like mad for it and then kind of like the same thing would happen again. but like the reaction to it I didn't learn like well you feel this way when you do poorly on a test so you should study more if you don't want to feel that way – like it makes logical sense. (George)

Participants described how the shame procrastination would continue to perpetuate in a cyclical fashion until the participant was forced to reengage with their said shame object. However, it remained unclear what caused the end of this cycle.

Losing Control. In the initial response to shame, the majority of participants described their lack of control when their affect response was triggered. Experiences were around not being able to control themselves in those moments or their responses. Teddy described how responses to the emotion caused a lack of control and cognitive distortions:

So with that, you know, with the organic chemistry I definitely – it was emotions that I felt that were out of my control. The emotions just kind rolled over you and just happen and so that's how I felt about the shame. The shame happened without my consent and enforced my – my somewhat illogical, “Oh I'll never be able to pass this class” type of thoughts and it kind of reinforced that. So I think that definitely made it – made it worse I would say just because I think I just got into a vicious cycle. (Teddy)

On the other hand, Izzie identified that her long history of shame from her childhood created an almost automatic response. As Izzie moved throughout her life, shame responses were a constant reaction she described in a metaphor that denotes a lack of control in those moments:

I know now it's because I've been shamed my entire life and it was pretty much programmed in like a button that will be pressed and stay in most of the time and almost every little thing then would repress that button to keep it where it is. (Izzie)

Amelia shared how experiencing this emotion started to elicit an unintentional tear response they had to fight, and the meaning they associated around crying in front of others:

but I was like “Nope, I’m going to cry and I’m not crying in front of other people” because that’s like ultimate shame, like die shame. And then you can’t move because you cried more because you cried in front of people and it is awful. (Amelia)

In cases where this theme emerged, the loss of control described by participants when experiencing this affect was identified to be disruptive to participants’ daily and academic lives.

Losing purpose. When battling through their experiences of shame, most participants identified encountering a loss of purpose. This loss in purpose was described as a battle through the loss of their academic goal, a loss in passion, but also questioning one's intentions towards their studies. Richard and George described similar experiences of how shame created not only doubts towards their self-efficacy but also created doubts around why they should even devote efforts towards their studies:

Not only is it an attitude like we just talked about in underestimating my capabilities but it’s an attitude of why even try? You can be capable of anything but the shame tells you just why try? (Richard)

Just a lot of, again, well why are you here? What are you doing? Like you can’t do this or like well you tried this is the result kind of thing so why keep doing it? (George)

Karev struggled with his partner’s negative attitudes towards his program of choice. As Karev battled with the shame from his partner’s judgments towards his program pursuit, he explained how his attitudes towards his degree goal shifted and he questioned his purpose:

If I made it this far and everything else was not even comparative to this, well then why would I keep going? (Karev)

Losing purpose was often described alongside struggles with motivation. As shame challenged participants’ purpose in their studies, participants’ responses indicated their motivation was also hindered during those times.

Belonging

Belonging, the fourth superordinate theme that emerged was described by participants as feelings of being alone and a lack of connection to others when experiencing shame. In addition, participants described feelings of being an ‘imposter’ or ‘fraud.’ The superordinate theme of belonging had four subordinate themes: feelings of isolation in their experience, feelings of disconnection in their experiences, feelings of being an imposter, and feelings of connection during shared struggles.

Feelings of isolation in their experience. Mentioned by nearly all participants were their experiences of isolation when struggling through shame. Feelings of isolation were conceptualized as participants feeling alone in their experiences and how others would not understand or be able to relate to their experiences, creating an almost mental divide between themselves and others. Amelia and Olivia both discussed how feeling unable to share their experiences was a significant contributor to their feelings of isolation:

I didn't feel like I could talk to other people in my clinical group about it because I felt – I didn't think that they were having the same problems with the instructor that I was. So I felt, yeah very disconnected from my peers in that time. (Olivia)

Which has its downsides obviously, and it also makes you feel way crappier when you can't tell people things. And it makes you feel more isolated. (Amelia)

George discussed when struggling with shame that he felt like he was the only individual experiencing that affect. In situations where he was aware of others who were struggling, this awareness lowered the intensity of the shame affect:

A lot of times when I'm in that kind of head space I kind of feel like I'm the one who's experiencing that. Like it's hard to feel connected when you're struggling so much even when you have – chemistry was a little bit easier in that regard – well, easier in that specific regard because you knew there were other people who were struggling along with you so no matter like how much you struggled you knew there were also people in the lab who were just like “Well I don't know really know what's going on much more than you do” kind of a thing – so it was really reassuring. (George)

All participants describe experiencing shame as a very isolating experience. These feelings of isolation may be compounded in situations where participants were withdrawing from their social supports as previously mentioned.

Feelings of disconnection from others. Feelings of disconnection were mentioned by all participants. While feelings of isolation referred to the individual's feeling of being alone in one's experience, feeling disconnected from others relates to the social bond between two people. For example, an individual could feel alone in their experience, but still feel connected to their partner. Essentially, one theme is in relation to themselves and their experience, and the other theme relates to themselves with others. Both Amelia and Teddy identified their feelings of disconnection around their shame object, making particular references to the length of time related to their experiences of disconnection, even past the initial shame encounter:

I did not feel connected to anyone, especially because I felt that they were on her side so I felt super disconnected and then I went home and felt disconnected as well and the next day I was home alone because I didn't want it to continue so I felt super disconnected... (Amelia)

Yeah, so I think up until a point for chemistry, I already had kind of – I felt as though I had a place of belonging in the academic community; that I was working my way up and wanting to get into veterinary medicine, so that kind of thing. (Teddy)

Generally, when discussing connections or disconnection participants were referring to the bond between themselves and another individual; some participants identified additional areas of disconnection. Richard identified his disconnection from not only people but disconnection from his emotions as well:

But the more emotional stuff it just piles up on me to the point where I get so stressed that it just breaks and I start feeling nothing. I'm just totally disconnected from emotions and from other people, from any sort of social duties or allegiances or anything like that. (Richard)

The intensity of the disconnection amongst participants was clearly evident. Throughout all the cases, feeling connected when experiencing shame did not occur.

Feelings of being an imposter. It appears that when experiencing shame, participants felt such a strong emotional barrier between themselves and others they indicated feeling like they did not belong in university or beside their peers. These thought processes were so strong that participants stated feeling like they were an ‘imposter’ or ‘fraud,’ with a fear of being discovered that they did not belong in university. Shame seemed to reinforce their insecurities of belonging or not being ‘good enough’ for university. Both Olivia and Izzie accounted for their experiences of being a fraud or imposter:

I felt like I didn't deserve to be on the same level as my peers like in nursing. Like I was to the point like maybe I'm not cut out for this, maybe I'm not – like I can't, you know, go on and go out into the work force like this – I'm a fraud, I can't – I shouldn't be out there, I'm not safe to be out there. (Olivia)

I just felt like more and more of an imposter and like I didn't belong and that for some reason, out of the two parents that went to university, my dad being an engineer, my mom having been a dental hygienist... I couldn't do university where they both easily did it.... They didn't have to worry about somebody pressuring them for their marks to be good, but I did, and I felt like because of that I was terrible at this. I didn't belong, I wasn't cut out for university. (Izzie)

These described imposter feelings were brought on by shame that was triggered after, what the participant identified as, failing. The shame from failure seemed to have fueled previous internalized self-doubt that they did not belong.

Feelings of connection when struggling with others. For participants where the theme of struggling with others emerged, participants referred to how the act of sharing their experience with others improved their own experiences and provided a connection between themselves and their peers. Karev shared the affirmation he experienced when becoming aware of other classmates who were also accessing help for the same content as him:

Yeah eventually it was I think definitely in part to meeting people in that class who were also in the stats help. It was really nice to know that like I'm not the only one sinking I guess, which is odd but yeah just having people in the same boat was really nice. (Karev)

George provided a unique parallel between two classes in which he was struggling. In one class the context allowed George to become aware of and connect with others who were struggling with the same content. Compared to his psychology class, where these interactions did not occur, George indicated how this similar awareness around others struggling would have been beneficial:

Psychology is a little different because even though I knew there were people who struggled in the class I had never talked to any of them so I didn't have that like backup in terms of like "Well, I'm struggling with this too," "well I kind of feel the same as you do" "Like I felt bad myself doing this, so maybe we could like study together," I never had that in psychology at all and that would have helped enormously, honestly. Because just like having someone else who knows what you're going through and someone else who can like, "Well, I can relate to that..." (George)

While struggling with others was not mentioned by all participants, not everyone's circumstances or contexts allowed for such interactions to occur.

Results: Shame and Help-Seeking

The second domain of the data analysis was related to shame and help-seeking, where the final two superordinate themes emerged: factors that promote help-seeking and factors that deter help-seeking (as seen in Figure 4.2). Similar to the section on student persistence, the order of the results does not represent a hierarchical nature, but logical order for the reader to follow. Table 4.3 represents the participant representation in each superordinate and subordinate themes. All participants were represented in all subordinate themes, requiring a theme to be represented in over half other cases for the findings to be reported in this thesis, as seen in Table 4.3.

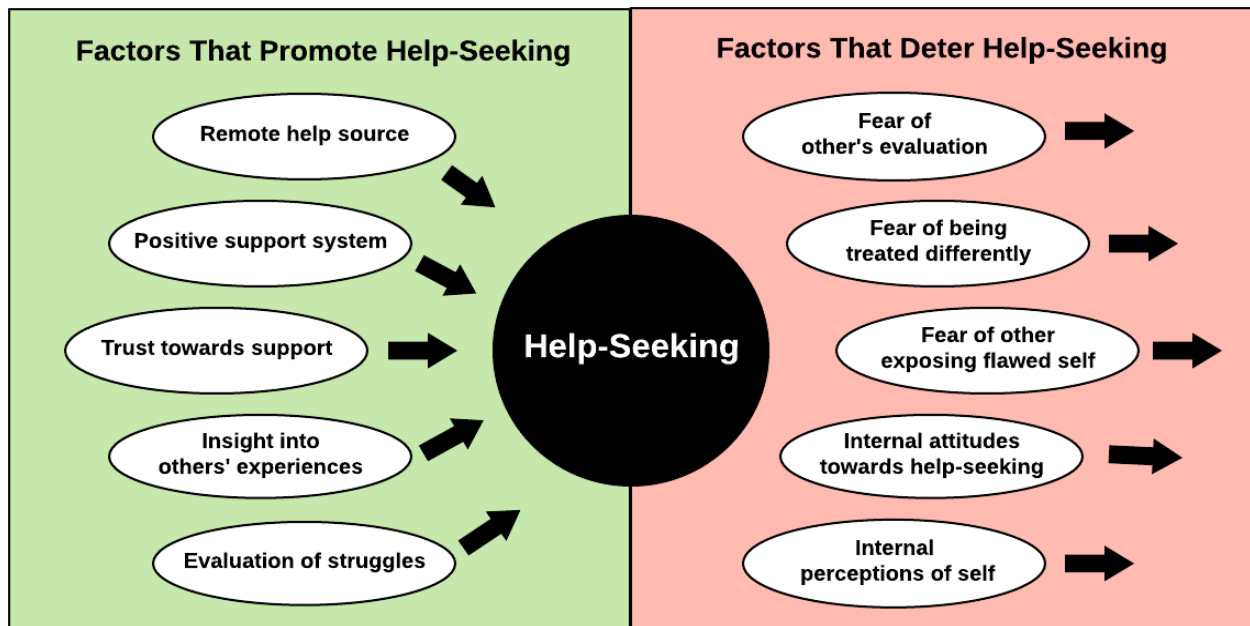


Figure 4.2. Shame and student help-seeking. This figure visual illustrates the relationship between the emergent themes related to student help-seeking and shame.

Table 4.3

Student Help-Seeking Table of Superordinate and Subordinate

Superordinate themes and <i>subordinate themes</i>	Theme Representation ^a						
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
Factors That Promote Help-Seeking	(n=7)						
<i>Remote help source.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Positive support system.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Trust towards support.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Insight into others' experiences.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Evaluation of struggles.</i>	✓	✓		✓			✓
Factors That Deter Help-Seeking	(n=7)						
<i>Fear of other's evaluation.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Fear of being treated differently.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Fear of other exposing flawed self.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Internal attitudes towards help-seeking.</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Internal perceptions of self.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Note. Subordinate themes represented in italics.
^aEach column represents a different case.

Factors That Promote Help-Seeking

The first superordinate theme in the help-seeking domain was factors that promote help-seeking. This theme was conceptualized by patterns that emerged in participants' experiences

where they sought help related to their shame objects. The superordinate theme, factors that promote help-seeking, had five subordinate themes: remote help source, positive support system, trust towards support, insight into others' experiences, and the evaluation of struggles.

Remote help source. It appears that if an individual was to seek help over an object they identified as shameful, the source of support was remote from the object that elicited shame. Participants were reluctant to seek help directly from the source related to their shame object (such as math support from their math instructor) but would seek help from sources that the individual identified as disconnected from the actual object (namely, a partner, or math help centre). For example, Karev initially confided in his partner about his struggles with math, and the partner encouraged him to access math support. Karev identified he reached out to his girlfriend at the time as the shame object was not going to impact their relationship:

That it was someone who was completely separated from that side of things. She had no part of my math class or how my math grade wasn't going to impact our relationship kind of thing. It was just pure support behind it. (Karev)

Both Olivia and Amelia reached out to help from sources that were removed from the sources of shame themselves. While Olivia sought support from a mixture of personal and professional supports, Amelia felt uncomfortable seeking support from personal supports and only reached out to professionals:

Yeah, so that – I sought out help from a different avenue that way far removed from the instructor and yeah. (Olivia)

I don't tell anyone except people I pay to listen to me. (Amelia)

The remoteness of the help source does not exclusively refer to physical proximity, which was the case in some participants' experiences. Remoteness also refers to how the help source's distance ensures the shame object will not impact the relationships between the individual and the help source, as seen in Karev's case.

Positive support systems. Supports, or support systems, were identified as a potential person from whom the participant would approach for help. There were two criteria that indicated if a participant would engage their support system for help. The first criteria was the participant desired to seek help, and secondly, the support person was not associated with the shame object. It appears that support systems were very individually and contextually dependent. George identified his family as a significant support when battling with his shame. It seems through using his support system that George was able to gain an objective view of himself through his support's perspective. Through this interaction they were able to minimize the impact of shame and the internal conversation saying 'you are not enough':

But, yeah my parents are definitely my number one resource to go to when I was feeling crappy because you know they don't – it's kind of like an objective third person who you just, where you're like, they see you without your flaws when it's really hard to see yourself without them sometimes...

It's like, well I know that I'm not going to do this myself so I'm going to reach out to someone who will give it to me straight who will say like "Look, you're not this. You're better than you think you are, keep going." (George)

Support systems' roles varied among participants but were all able to provide participants with something they needed at the moment that helped the participant with their shame. For Amelia, one professor was able to validate her experience, demonstrate she understood and provided space for Amelia to connect:

Not like the same, she's like "I've had shit days too when I work around professors" and she validated it, she didn't try to fix me and she just listened and then she just let me hang out so that I could have the presence of someone while I did stuff. So that was the only connection I had in my university experience in my first year. (Amelia)

In comparison, Izzie found support from her partner and her therapist. Both supports were able to validate who she was and help improve her self-image:

He has helped me a lot with realizing that I'm smart, I'm beautiful, I'm nothing that my parents were telling me I was. Through him and my therapist and just kind

of surrounding myself with people that I now consider my family, really helped with that. My self-image improved, I think better of myself. (Izzie)

Support systems ranged from medical professionals, faculty, and support staff to classmates, family, and friends. It is important to note that support systems varied among participants. For example, while some participants identified family as a support, other participants described family as a source of their shame. This pattern emerged in other relationships as well.

Trust towards support. Trust was a significant component in participants' decisions to seek help from their supports. Some participants acknowledged specific support systems they were not comfortable utilizing based on fear of being treated differently. Participants who did seek out support did so with those they identified as trusting and would not treat them differently, view them differently, or cause any emotional harm after becoming aware of the participant's shame object. Karev identified three factors that contributed to asking his partner for help: his partner's disassociation with his shame object, his partner's knowledge of the system, and his partner's initial modeling of trust. These factors seemed to provide Karev reassurance it was safe for him to ask for help. In addition, his partner's support was identified as an important component to his help seeking:

I thought she knows the system, she trusts me when I give her advice... she trusts me on that. She's been in school for four years, I can trust her with that. So I think that really helped in that aspect for the first bit.

Having support going into it [math help centre] where it was someone who wasn't going to judge for that factor. (Karev)

The trust towards a support can be influential in mending previously severed connections that the individual cut due to prior negative interactions. Olivia identified the way her instructor approached her in a caring way, showing an investment in her success, and reacting in a way that resonated with the participant's desired response, and that helped build trust:

My next instructor was really nice about kind of asking like “Oh like, what can I do as an instructor to help you succeed and overcome this learning contract?” So that was really nice of her and really made me feel like I could trust her and that she was going to support me because she kind of brought it upon herself to help me succeed and that really made me feel like I was worth something – that she cared about my success and yeah so that was really nice.

*Yeah, asking me what happened in that caring matter and asking me how she could help me succeed really made me feel like I could trust her and the way she reacted too when I told her that... but the way that she reacted to the other things I said and the way she reacted when I said those things, again, made me feel I could trust her.
(Olivia)*

There were cases where participants identified having supports where a lack of trust occurred within the relationship with these individuals. This lack of trust prevented participants from engaging and seeking help from these sources. It appears across the participants in this study that it is not only enough to have supports, but trusting these sources is also required.

Insight into others’ experiences. Hearing others’ similar experiences with the participants’ shame object helped motivate help-seeking. The time period between when the other’s experience occurred did seem to influence the participants’ acceptance of the comparison between experiences. However, similar context between the two experiences was important. For example, Teddy’s support from her parents, who tried to connect with her by normalizing her experience, was rejected by Teddy as they did not understand her specific context whereas when Teddy heard about a similar family member’s experience that was also in the sciences, the story helped affirm her attitudes and perspective towards her failures:

*One of our family friends is a professor at [American Institution] so by all accounts a very smart person. And she failed Intro to Physics twice. And so she said like – I mean I got chem, but she said “I couldn’t make anything, any progress on physics at all, the prof mercy passed me”. So, you know, lots of support was reaching out from that with people talking about their academic misadventures and that type of thing and I actually felt kind of good about it and it was actually really okay.
(Teddy)*

Olivia and George brought different perspectives to how hearing the stories of others helped support them through their experiences:

But once I was able to start talking about it more to my peers that like helped me because they were like “Oh, yeah we’ve heard nightmare stories about that instructor as well.” And so that was validating to hear and like that helped me feel less isolated and less – again, less that it was a problem with me. (Olivia)

Because just like having someone else who knows what you’re going through and someone else who can like, “Well, I can relate to that. I mean I did a little bit better, but that doesn’t mean I’m any smarter it just means like I study differently so like here’s a suggestion maybe you could try it and see if it works or maybe we could study or something.” (George)

Being aware of others with similar experiences not only helped participants minimize the shame towards their objects, as previously mentioned, but also helped move the focus away from the *self*.

Evaluation of struggles. Appearing in over half of the participants’ stories was the act of evaluating their struggles, seemingly guiding participants’ help-seeking. For some participants evaluating the issue as emotionally heavy deterred help-seeking. Alternatively, when the evaluation resulted in the situation appearing urgent or serious in nature, participants were triggered to engage in help-seeking behaviour. George identified that his attitudes towards seeking help was based on the evaluation of his circumstances as either urgent or crucial to perform well:

I definitely like – I usually would not ask for help unless it was like either a dire circumstance or I’m just like “Well I do not get this worth anything I don’t want to admit it, but I kind of have to if I’m going to actually like perform any questions of this nature on a test” or something. (George)

In contrast, Teddy’s experience transpired after evaluating her context as ‘serious’ an awareness that transpired after she was practicing a maladaptive coping strategy, triggering her help-seeking:

For chemistry, it was actually not that difficult. I definitely knew that I needed help after I kind of realized that an academic subject could make me stop eating for 48 hours. I'm thinking wow I actually need to talk about this to someone because that's further than just watching what you eat, that's like really, really weird. (Teddy)

For those where this theme emerged, the results of the evaluation triggered whether a participant sought help or not. The levels required to trigger help-seeking remained unclear from the data.

Factors That Deter Help-Seeking

The second superordinate theme for the help-seeking domain, and final superordinate them in this study, was factors that deter help-seeking. This theme represents factors that emerged from participants' experiences that acted as barriers or prevented them from seeking help. Five subordinate themes emerged under this superordinate them: fear of other's evaluation, fear of being treated differently, fear of other exposing flawed self, internal attitudes towards help-seeking, and internal perceptions of *self*.

Fear of other's evaluation. When relating their experiences around help-seeking, all participants described fearing others' potential judgement if they were to seek help. Interestingly, the ambivalence around knowing where others would attribute blame within their situations deterred help-seeking. For example, in the case of the sexual misconduct incident, the lack of clarity regarding roles and accountabilities in the misconduct acted as a barrier to seeking support:

For the incident in first year, that was really difficult to chat with people, but especially because it wasn't a cut and dry thing of I was at a party and was raped, or something like that which is as much as it's probably – actually I'm sure, more traumatizing than what actually happened to me – at least it's a story everyone understands. (Teddy)

Similar to Teddy's experience, Karev described his struggles with the ambiguity of his evaluation of the events. Karev reported his struggles both with not being able to assess people's

immediate attitudes towards his shame object and his concern of how people would evaluate him:

Yeah I think that would be the biggest difference between those two situations. The math one all parties knew kind of immediately the stance on it...

So I would say from there it really spiraled to an avoidance of once there was no contact or minimal contact of maintaining that in that the closer people looked at the situation then how would they think of me or how would that go? (Karev)

Olivia's experience related more around an academic dynamic between Olivia and her instructor.

In Olivia's case, she described her fear for her instructors' evaluation of her *self* and her intelligence:

I guess to start, I did not want to ask for help because I felt that I would look like I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing –like I was afraid to ask questions because I didn't – yeah, I was afraid to ask questions because what if it's something dumb? What if she views me negatively again because of that?

Yeah, whereas with the first instructor like it felt like each question or asked or unanswered kind of ticked up or down on like the overall rating of me. So it really felt like each thing was impacting my grade points – that's kind of how it felt. Yeah, each thing had an impact on the overall evaluation. (Olivia)

Olivia's case, for example, demonstrates shame and fearing other's evaluation is not only a barrier to seek help, but also deterred Olivia from asking questions, preventing her from clarifying misinformation.

Fear of being treated differently. While the previous theme was concerned with others' perception of their *self*, this theme relates to the fear of people's actions towards the individual changing. For Richard, his fear was associated with other's actions imposing their standards on him, and eliciting shame:

Because if I showed up in their office and it became really obvious that I really don't know what I'm talking about and did you even listen in the lecture? I'm just really afraid of them projecting shame on me but also I'm really afraid that any support that I get from the college or from them individually will be pulled because that's just not something that I think justifies an investment of their time and effort and money. (Richard)

Izzie's accounted multiple concerns regarding seeking help. A primary concern was the risk associated with others treatment towards her changing when accessing help, stemming from previous negative childhood experiences:

Very negatively. I truly thought if I asked for help that I was just dumb and that I couldn't do it if I had to ask for help and that other people would make me feel terrible for asking for help. (Izzie)

Amelia described her perceptions around how the dynamics shifted between her and the instructor after a negative interaction regarding her academic accommodations for her disability, which ultimately lead to distrust that prevented help-seeking:

But I felt so ashamed and she never really treated me the same after that she was just so judgmental of me and I was like well why? You have documentation – it's not like anyone can get DSS. (Amelia)

It is important to note that in some participants' experiences they would project fear from previous negative experiences on to prospective help sources. Even without previous negative interactions with the prospective help source, these individuals were assessed against the participants' previous interactions with other sources.

Fear of other exposing flawed self. The other two themes related to discouraging help-seeking were associated with the fear of being treated differently or being judged by others. This theme relates to the social exchange between the participant and another, where the other person is exposing an element that participants identified as flawed or undesirable, triggering their shame response. Richard discussed how when his care team would start to make progress, a defense reaction would become triggered, resulting in him ending their relationship:

Which I hadn't been doing since I was twelvish, doctors, counsellors, you name it. But any time we started to get somewhere I would tell them that they were wrong and leave and never come back. (Richard)

The same participant also acknowledged his intentional acts to prevent a person of authority from placing shame on them:

I've never experienced shame in person in university. I've felt ashamed of myself, but I've never even been physically present for anyone else to make me feel ashamed or project shame or judgement on me at all. (Richard)

Of a similar vein, Olivia described the email interactions with her professor created distance between them, deterring Olivia from wanting to seek help from them. Olivia identified the instructor's approach of outlining Olivia's shortcoming, exposing the parts Olivia identified as flawed, resulted in her strong attitudes against seeking help from the instructor:

Because she started off by saying "This is unacceptable, like it is not acceptable for these reasons."... I'm like obviously not, I'm not going to talk to you after you just like laid out all these things – these horrible things that I did. (Olivia)

Karev's account was related to the emotional impact of his partner's judgment of his program, reinforcing his own negative attitudes of 'not being good enough':

To be going into the last year of my program and to have the person who supported you through all of that say "I couldn't settle for what you've been pushing to do" was crushing. (Karev)

Some participants described previous experiences of the individual exposing their flawed self, which further deterred them from seeking support. Whereas other participants assumed that the individuals would expose their flawed self with no previous history of such acts occurring.

Internal attitudes towards help-seeking. Many participants described strong negative attitudes towards seeking help and their dislike of accessing help. In particular, Richard related how accessing help is something he does not prefer doing and he is uncomfortable with talking about his feelings:

If it's something that I think would be uncomfortable, one of my biggest points is like the asking for help, I don't share, I don't like sharing. I'm very uncomfortable talking to people about my feelings or my personal life. (Richard)

Izzie explained how her online community, one of her support systems, encouraged her help-seeking. Previously Izzie described how she felt shameful to even think about asking for help.

However, the support of her online community led to accessing counselling, and ultimately shifted her attitudes towards help-seeking and supports:

So just that too really helped. The community helped me see that I could seek help and that I wasn't weak for going to see the therapist and that it wasn't something that I should be ashamed of...

Then when I learned about those resources later on I felt ashamed for thinking of trying out the resources, but now they're great. They are a great help. (Izzie)

In Izzie's experience, it appears that support systems have the potential to help shift individuals' attitudes towards seeking help, providing support and encouragement along the way.

Internal attitudes towards self. The last theme related to the superordinate theme, factors that deter help-seeking, is how participants saw themselves. While the previous theme related to participants' general attitudes towards help-seeking, this theme relates to how the participants saw themselves (for example, being a burden) or their double standards (such as, 'I help others and don't receive help'). In both Teddy and Karev's cases, they described their perception of themselves as being the people that help others, not ones that receive help:

And so that definitely – there was definitely shame leading up to failing the class because usually I'm – usually I'm the type of person that people ask questions to and I was not that at all, like I didn't know anything, I didn't know what was going on at all. So that was definitely embarrassing to not be on top of my studies. (Teddy)

I would be the one people would kind of come for help with and it definitely never really dawned for a while the kind of double standard (Karev)

In Amelia's case, it was not how she saw herself in the role of a helpee or helper, but how she saw herself as a burden, negatively impacting others:

When on the inside I was like "This is so not true" I'm just so full of anxiety and anxious and like I'm sad a lot and I just figured that I can't show that because I don't want to be the third burden on my dad. (Amelia)

Richard's experience relates to how he viewed his performance compared to his speculations of other students' efforts. Richard perceived himself as undeserving of support based on his behaviours towards his studies; this notion prevented help-seeking:

It's even harder for me when I'm feeling ashamed because then I have to admit that I made a mistake or admit that it just demonstrates that I'm unprepared, that I didn't study, that I didn't put the work into the course or the work into the program that the average student or that even the very minimum pass student did.

Someone who doesn't prepare or someone who doesn't happen to buy in so to speak through studying and preparation and stuff. Personally I wouldn't want to support someone who was like me so I try to hide that I am like me. You know? (Richard)

These identified internal attitudes towards *self* are potentially driven by shame. These *self*-attitudes relate to the standards of which participants are measuring themselves against, which as earlier described elicited shame.

Summary

The research project collected the lived experiences of seven undergraduate, university students through semi-structured interviews. All participants had the option to participate in the journaling activity, of which three individuals participated. Through the data analysis, six superordinate themes emerged: processing shame, impact on *self*, motivation, belonging, factors that promote help-seeking, and factors that deter help-seeking. Participants described substantial difficulties towards their academics when experiencing shame. Shame created feelings of isolation and disconnection from others, creating difficulties for them to reach out for support. Ultimately, participants reported shame reinforcing negative internal dialogues that lowered their self-efficacy and motivations towards the task.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter provided insight into the demographics and background of the participants as well as the results that emerged from the data analysis. The goal of the present chapter is to connect the findings from Chapter Four to the larger body of literature. The overall purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to explore seven students' lived experiences of shame in university. The research was carefully guided by the main research question, how do shame-prone students (SPS) identify these experiences of shame influencing their persistence in university? The study was also directed by three sub-research questions: 1) How do SPS experiencing shame perceive their help-seeking behaviour? 2) How do SPS view their self-efficacy and sense of belonging in university when experiencing shame? and 3) How do SPS describe their motivation when experiencing shame? Based on the results of the data, the second research question was separated into two distinct questions to allow for proper spaces for the topics of shame and self-efficacy and belonging to be discussed. In addition, the research questions have been arranged to allow for a logical discussion to occur throughout this chapter. Through the data analysis, six superordinate themes emerged: Processing Shame, Impact on *self*, Motivation, Belonging, Factors That Promote Help-Seeking, and Factors That Deter Help-Seeking, and an additional 32 subordinate themes falling underneath their respective superordinate themes. The last section in this chapter will discuss the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice and theory.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question One - How do shame-prone students' (SPS) identify their experiences of shame influencing their persistence in university?

One of the main goals of the present study was to understand the role which shame played in factors that were associated with student persistence. Overall this study found that students reported shame impeding factors theorized to support student persistence [such as, motivation, self-efficacy, belonging – see Tinto (2018)]. It is important to note that the background of participants were assumed students who lived as non-visible minorities operating within heteronormative relationships, which means that Indigenous, queer, and students of colour may have similar experiences that were not able to be captured in this study. An interesting observation occurred during the analysis regarding the study's research questions and participants. As this study sought out to investigate student persistence, participants within this study in fact persisted despite facing significant issues or barriers. Two of the participants within the study were *stopouts*, having left the institution to later return. Providing credibility that persistence was accurately being investigated by those who experienced events that impacted their persistence. Teddy described the way shame impacted their wellness and success in future compared to the actual events that transpired:

*Like failing chemistry, I just took other classes the next semester, it wasn't that big of a deal. But it was the health ramifications that really messed up the motivation and so it was more kind of that middle piece **which I guess it was more of the shame than the actual incident itself**. The way I phrased it was, imagine your right arm gets cut off. While that directly impacts you taking notes that [not taking notes] wouldn't directly harm you. While failing O-chem doesn't impede your ability to do well in your classes next semester, **but the shame surrounding it kind of did** because then I was not in a healthy head space... And so it was kind of the ramifications of that, not the direct incident that caused the problem. (Teddy)*

While shame and the factors theorized by Tinto (2018) to support student persistence are explored in detail via the below sub-research questions, Teddy's quote provides an exceptional

summary that captured and summarized the experiences across all the participants within the study related to shame and their persistence.

Research Question Two - How do SPS describe their motivation when experiencing shame?

One of the research questions guiding this project was looking at participants' experiences of shame and how they understand their motivations in those moments. Participants described low levels of motivation during their initial experiences of shame, and how this affect lingered even after the initial event. There was one exception to this, which was one participant who after the initial impact of shame was motivated through competition. These conflicting findings around specific contexts associated with shame as motivating or demotivating, are reflective of the conflicts within the literature (Lickel, Kushlev, Savalei, Matta, & Schmader, 2014; Pekrun, 1992; Turner & Schallert, 2001)

Participants' responses focused intensely on their desires and motivation to create distance between themselves and their shame objects in moments where their flawed *self* was exposed. For example, one way participants were driven to create distance between themselves and their shame objects was by escaping, and after the event avoiding spaces where these potential interactions with their shame object could further occur. Fee and Tangney (2000) presented similar findings where shame-prone students were motivated to delay or avoid evaluation. Other literature demonstrated similar findings regarding participants' drive to disappear or escape from spaces that elicit shame (Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Tangney, 1995).

Participants were also motivated to keep their shame objects hidden from others. Keeping one's shame object hidden not only takes away cognitive capacity that would be best spent towards one's academics but also acts as a barrier from one seeking support. In order for one to seek support towards their shame object, they must first be able to confront their shame to move

forwards. These findings suggest that participants were strongly averse to facing their shame objects in their initial moments of shame. This tendency to hide from the shame object is consistent with other findings in the literature, such as Nathanson (1992) who identified that shame is exposing parts of ourselves that individuals prefer to keep hidden. Other researchers have also described the way shame drives individuals to hide their *self* from the judgments of others (Mascolo & Fischer, 1995; Thrane, 1979).

Not only did participants describe their experiences of avoiding their shame object, but some participants also described withdrawing from social supports regardless of their association with the shame object. Withdrawing seemed to be a way for individuals to protect their social bonds and their self-image from others' rejection regarding their shame object (Scheff, 2007, 2014). Individuals' motivations to withdraw or avoid in the face of shame has been previously established within the literature (Mascolo & Fischer, 1995; Nathanson, 1992). Participant withdrawal is concerning as these individuals are withdrawing from important external supports that can aid individuals through navigating this emotion (Nils & Rimé, 2012). Being motivated to create distance from their shame objects helped provide a temporary, affect relief, escaping the discomfort of shame. By not engaging or confronting their shame object their sense of *self* remains intact (Fee & Tangney, 2000), but these behaviours are ultimately only a delaying tactic until contexts force the participants to engage with the shame object within a post-secondary context.

As participants shared their struggles with re-engaging with their respective shame objects, they described behaviours of procrastination or putting off engaging with the shame object. This delay in engagement would continue until engagement with their shame objects was forced (such as a scheduled lab, deadline). Having to face their objects again resulted in further

negative evaluation, driving further avoidance, resulting in a shame procrastination cycle. Other research has found that shame-proneness was correlated with procrastination tendencies (Fee & Tangney, 2000; Lutwak & Ferrari, 1996). Fee and Tangney (2000) argued that by delaying completion of tasks, individuals were delaying any evaluation from another individual; therefore, one's *self* remains intact. This finding is supported by the work of Lutwak and Ferrari (1996) who found avoidance tendencies were significant predictors of shame-proneness. Weaving the present study's findings and key literature, it appears that shame-proneness and avoidance tendencies can create a cycle that perpetuates avoidance and further shame until an event breaks the cycle.

When struggling through their shame experiences, participants reported questioning their goals, motives, and intentions towards trying; ultimately, they experienced a loss in purpose towards their academics which negatively impacted their motivation. Weiner's (1985) theory suggested that if students attribute their failure, or undesirable performance, towards internal, uncontrollable, and stable causes, shame will be triggered, and the student will lose motivation to devote efforts towards the task. Other research has found that having a goal is a contributor towards shame resiliency and recovery (Turner et al., 2002). Students losing or questioning their purpose is problematic as having a goal, or purpose is one of the factors theorized to support student persistence and shame resilience (Tinto, 2018; Turner et al., 2002). As such, if students lose their purpose, or are conflicted regarding their purpose in university, shame may be ultimately harming motivation, a factor theorized to support student persistence.

In the initial triggers of their emotional response, participants described an intense affect feeling accompanied by a loss of control associated with experiencing the emotion. Participants described the affect happening 'without their consent' and their struggles with controlling

themselves during their intense experiences. The intense experience of shame has been noted by other researchers where the affect can become so intense individuals become overwhelmed and stuck, losing their abilities to cope (Shreve & Kunkel, 1991; Van Vliet, 2008). These findings bring to light that in moments of shame, students may be too overwhelmed to reach out for support reinforcing the need for systems that support students during these affective experiences.

Research Question Three - How do SPS view their self-efficacy in university?

While the initial research question sought to understand students' perceptions of self-efficacy, a broader theme around the impact of shame on *self* emerged, with self-efficacy being a sub-theme under this broader umbrella. The first significant sub-theme concerns the standards, or expectations, against which participants measured themselves. Individuals experiencing shame based on negative evaluations against their internal standards have been long theorized within the literature (Lewis, 1971). Participants often held high standards and expectation of themselves, sometimes to an unrealistic point. These unrealistic standards and expectations led to self-attack behaviours when failure to meet said standards occurred. These results are comparative to other research that found shame-prone individuals assume others have unrealistic expectations of them (Fee & Tangney, 2000; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Hewitt and Flett (1991) identified three dimensions of perfectionism: self-oriented (self-expectations), other-oriented (expectations of others), and socially-prescribed (perception of others imposed expectations on self). Throughout the interviews, socially prescribed perfectionism was often described where participants assumed others' expectations of them, and these assumed standards would act as the bar against which participants would measure themselves.

When participants described experiencing shame, they also commented on their self-efficacy during these times being challenged. Participants identified the more shame fueled their

self-doubt, the more struggles they had regarding their task. In those moments of shame, low self-efficacy was described, which has also been found in other studies (Baldwin et al., 2006; Turner & Schallert, 2001). Turner and Schallert (2001) identified that lower reported levels of self-efficacy were predictors of shame, whereas Baldwin et al., (2006) discovered there was a correlation between participants with high shame and low levels of self-efficacy. The researchers argued that interconnection between these two constructs make sense as they both originate from the self. Both of these studies support the current findings that shame and self-efficacy are interconnected and impact students' abilities and beliefs towards their studies.

Shame not only influenced participants' beliefs towards their abilities, but also caused participants concern regarding how they and others saw themselves. During these moments of shame, participants recalled their identities being challenged, questioning their self and if they 'have what it takes'. As cited in the literature, university is a prime developmental time for students' identities (Arnett 2015; Chickering, 1969; Upcraft et al., 2005). While challenging one's identity can help stimulate individual growth, numerous publications have identified the adverse effects that consistent shame experiences can have on an individual's identity and personality development (Scheff, 2003; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Another interesting perspective to view these findings around shame, failure, and identity is through a developmental lens. An increasingly popular developmental perspective is the concept of emerging adult; a developmental stages for individuals between 18 to 29 years of age, specifically viewed through an American context (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adulthood describes the shift in behaviour associated with major life events related to adulthood compared to previous generations, such as, longer pursuits of education or delaying marriage and child conception. One of the five features' associated with emerging adulthood is identity exploration,

where Arnett identified college as a ‘Safe Haven’ for students to explore identity possibilities, specifically around the areas of “love, work, and worldview” (p. 167). It is important to note Arnett’s developmental framework best applies to traditional college students, and not students who choose to pursue university later in life, though such individuals may still develop in some of the features identified in emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood also defines other areas of development such as individuals’ values, beliefs, and goals. All elements that contribute to aspects of the *self* that participants within this study measured themselves against. For example, as seen in George’s case, he explored pursuing pharmacy and then after his experiences with failure and struggling in the course reevaluated his goals and altered his degree path. Alternatively, Teddy’s experiences of failure challenged her STEM identity, which was later reaffirmed as she adjusted her approach to achieve her academic and career goals.

So, what role do institutions have in supporting students to prevent such identify challenges from overwhelming an individual and pushing them to their breaking point, driving students away from their ideal goals? Outside of how participants viewed themselves and their identities, participants were also highly concerned with the way others’ images of themselves would change when becoming aware of their shame object, leading to a strong desire to control their social image. Comparable to Fee and Tangney’s (2000) conclusions that found shame-prone individuals were more likely to perceive and assume others’ expectations of themselves as being perfect; these findings also suggest participants had internalized, perfectionistic expectations from others, and devoted intentional efforts to maintain these social images others’ held of them. Institutions can develop orientation and bridging programs to communicate and normalize these experiences of failure and identify formation. This approach could increase students’ awareness in the event they begin to challenge their identify when faced with failure

and or shame. Hearing the experiences of others' struggles early on in their post-secondary journey could help trigger students' help-seeking later, based on the findings from this research.

Research Question Four - How do SPS view their sense of belonging in university?

When looking at participants' sense of belonging when experiencing shame, they described their belonging being profoundly challenged. In these moments, participants identified feeling isolated in their experience, as if they were the only ones experiencing their specific struggles. In addition to feeling isolated, participants also shared their levels of disconnections towards other individuals and that they were at risk of being discovered as an imposter or fraud. Shame has been found to be a barrier to individuals' levels of community and belonging (Vidourek & King, 2010). This finding is concerning as social integration and connection to others is a predictor for student retention (Tinto, 1993). Both of these findings related to Johnson's (2010) study which found that shame negatively impacted students' feelings and sense of community. In these moments of shame, it appears this affect creates distance between the social bond of themselves and others, making the experiencer feel alone in their struggles.

There were times of shame where participants described feeling connected to others, which occurred when participants were struggling with others, such as a lab, class, or university help-center; this shared struggle led to an improvement in the participants' affect. Finding comfort in struggling with others aligns with the study's other findings that hearing others' struggles promoted help-seeking. In addition, socially comparing ourselves to others acts as a way for individuals to make sense of ambiguous affect experiences (Festinger, 1954). Scheff (2000) provided insight into the social nature of shame and the social bonds that are called into question when experiencing shame, and how sharing our shame can actually strengthen social bonds. In addition, as shame places the focus of attention on the self (Barrett, 1995), when

struggling with others individuals are able to recognize that the issue was not themselves, taking the focus off the *self* and onto other attributing factors.

These findings suggest that shame does create a lack of belonging within the participants' minds and acts as a barrier to seeking support when they need it. These findings are concerning for two reasons. First social integration is an important component of student retention, meaning that if students are experiencing shame in isolation, they may struggle with integrating into their institution, and this integration is a strong predictor of retention, according to Tinto (1993). Secondly, shame creates disconnection between students and their supports who can provide help during difficulties, meaning when students are in the most need of support, they are driven away from seeking help.

Research Question Five - How do SPS experiencing shame perceive their help-seeking behaviour?

Participants described experiences that disallowed help-seeking to occur, often leaving them to suffer in silence. All participants described at least two separate encounters of shame during their duration in universities. There was no consistency between cases that allowed for patterns of whether a participant would reach out for help or not. In some context, participants pursued seeking help, and in others, participants avoided seeking support. The results of this study identified two patterns from participants' experiences when accessing support: factors that promote help-seeking and factors that deter help-seeking.

Factors That Promote Help-Seeking. As demonstrated in the results section, if participants were to seek support regarding a shame eliciting event, the source of the support would not be associated with the shame object. This finding relates to other results within the present study as students identified strong motives to avoid and escape spaces where the shame

objects were anticipated to exist. As previously noted, shame has been mentioned in regard to help-seeking across studies (Gould, Greenberg, & Munfakh, 2006; Stamp et al., 2014; Symond, et al., 2008). While these studies described students' shame towards reaching out for support, the studies fail to address why. Vogel, Wester, and Boysen (2005) found that participants' outcome expectations are predictors for seeking help. Comparing these findings to the present study shed light that participants may attempt to control outcome expectations by seeking help from those who have the least impact towards their shame object. In addition, Vogel et al. found that anticipated risks associated with distressing events predicted the probability of help-seeking. These findings inform leaders creating these systems to ensure policies and program are designed to engage students in an appropriate way, knowing that students experiencing shame are less likely to seek help from sources associated with their shame object.

Two other consistent patterns across participants that seemed to promote help-seeking were participants having individuals they could identify as a support and the trust they were able to identify with their said support. Support systems seemed to have varying roles across participants; a common theme across cases was that identified supports were able to provide participants with what they needed in those moments. Support ranged from active listening and providing empathy to offering solutions and giving space for participants to experience this affect. Trust was associated with their belief that the other would not view them or treat them differently when becoming aware of their shame object. These finds are similar to other studies that have found the positive role that family and friends, or supports, can have in providing students emotional supports and belonging (Allendoerfer et al., 2012). Having social support was identified as one of five psychological factors that predicted help-seeking (Vogel et al., 2005). Gross and John (2003) found that individuals who apply a suppression, emotional regulation

approach, where one inhibits their emotional expression, are reluctant to share with others and avoid close relationships. Essentially meaning individuals who apply this emotional regulation approach are less likely to form the necessary bonds with individuals they could identify as a support system. The findings reinforce the concern university administrators should have regarding the potential lack of supports students possess when coming into university. Not everyone entering the institution will have the necessary support systems for students to be successful while they navigate the university landscape. For example, first generational learners, international students, LGBTQ2S+ students are examples of populations that may or may not have the necessary supports that help them during university. This finding reinforces the potential need for institutions to revisit their previous philosophy of *in loco parentis*, where institutions filled the role of parents while students were enrolled in university (Rudolph, 1990).

Participants' awareness of others with similar experiences was a factor that promoted students seeking support. Being aware of others' experiences helps remove the isolation participants were experiencing. By becoming aware of others' experience, the listeners shatter the mental image that they are the only ones who are struggling with their predicament and this realization takes the focus off the *self*. By individuals sharing their experiences of shame they are able to stimulate emotional recovery and shatter assumptions (Nils & Rimé, 2012). Additionally, individuals use social comparison in order to make sense of ambiguous experiences (Festinger, 1954). The social exchange between the participants and the other with similar experiences could be a way that promotes emotional recovery and breaks negative, cognitive distortions one has of oneself based on the shame object; through these exchanges, participants are able to make sense of their experiences.

The results of participants' evaluation of their struggles also was a pattern that emerged when looking at students seeking supports. Participants would reach a certain level where their shame object was causing a significant impact on their well-being, or was evaluated as urgent (such as a deadline), and from this evaluation participants were likely to seek help. This evaluation also seemed to be the cognitive process that could disrupt participants' shame procrastination cycle. This result is contrary to Vogel et al.'s (2005) findings that participants' level of psychological distress was not a contributor to seeking support. In Vogel et al.'s second study, they noted that rather than the psychological distress associated being the contributor towards help-seeking, it is in fact the anticipated outcomes of seeking support that influence help-seeking behavior. The present findings suggest that there may be interaction between the psychological pain associated with the shame experience and the individual evaluation of seriousness that contributes to help-seeking.

Factors That Deter Help-Seeking. In contrast, when looking at factors that deterred help-seeking, students were profoundly concerned with keeping the *self* safe by avoiding potential situations where others could judge or treat the participants negatively based on the shame object. Alternatively, participants were deterred from help-seeking based on personal attitudes towards help-seeking and themselves. These findings are supported by Fee and Tangney (2000) who found that fear of negative evaluation from others and shame were correlated. Ferrari, Johnson, and McCown (1995) found that individuals procrastinated when fearing the possibility of a negative evaluation from others or the self; this interaction seems to be a way of delaying, or avoiding, engagement with the shame object. Other research found that 40% of participants' fears of being labelled the reason for not attending their first therapy session

(Anderson & White, 1994). Participants' avoidance towards help-seeking may be an act to protect their social images and others' potentially negative treatment towards themselves.

Negative attitudes towards help-seeking and *self* emerged as patterns that deterred help-seeking. Some participants held beliefs that seeking help reflected their inability to accomplish the task or communicated their levels of intelligence. Participants also identified internal attitudes towards themselves that deterred help-seeking. For example, believing asking for help reflected they were a burden on their family or there were double standards (e.g., others seek help from them but they do not seek help from others). Negative attitudes and shame have been identified as barriers towards seeking help that have been found in several studies (Dunford & Granger, 2017; Saunders & Bowersox, 2007; Stamp et al., 2014; Symond et al., 2008). These studies are reflective of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of attitudes being predicted by the individual's outcome expectations. For the case of Amelia, who had the attitude that seeking help meant she was a burden, this negative attitude decreased the likelihood of help-seeking behaviour. In addition, Ciscell (2018) identified students' stigma towards help-seeking came from internalized attitudes, and not from external sources.

Additional Findings

Not anticipated to emerge from the data were experiences that related to participants processing and working through their shame. All participants described the act of socially comparing themselves to others' performance or their desired *self*. In contrast, hearing other people's experiences of shame seemed to minimize the affect's impact on the individuals. As shame is a social emotion, the way socially comparing can either trigger or reduce shame makes sense, as both are associated with the standards against which one is evaluating themselves. Festinger's (1954) Theory of Social Comparison predicts that when confronted with ambiguous

sensations, people look for clarifying information in their social environment. As individuals look to their social surrounding, the experiences of their peers help elevate any ambiguity related to their personal situations. Hearing another's situation that applies to the experiencer's context allows comparing how one sees themselves against another. The awareness of others within our context helping us not feel alone takes the spotlight off our *self*. Social sharing has been found to improve one's closeness to the listener, reduce loneliness, and improve affect experience (Nils & Rimé, 2012), providing further insight into the cathartic effect hearing about others' struggles had on the participants of this study.

As participants were processing their shame, they identified acts of searching to identify the causal source associated with the moral digression or achievement failure. All participants at one point would self-blame, attributing the causal source to the self, with a few participants also describing moments where they attributed blame on the instructor following with attributing blame towards themselves. It seems the shame-prone students in this study fell victim to the fundamental attribution error, where participants assigned the failures to failed personality traits (Ross, 1977), being blinded from other situational factors that could be attributed to the failure. After locating the assumed casual object, nearly all participants were found to place judgments towards their shame objects. For example, if a student failed an exam, they would evaluate the questions as *easy*, something everyone should know, assumingly placing the blame internally on their *self*. This finding is comparable to Clore and Husting's (2009) argument that the emotional-affective state influences an individual's positive or negative valence towards an object. This finding emphasizes that the negative state shame has placed the individual in will influence the positive or negative valence judgment towards their shame object. How participants attribute blame on themselves or the instructors is a distractive activity, pulling

individuals' focus towards placing blame rather than trying to locate the source of the issue to identify helpful solutions and move forward.

When describing working through shame, participants identified speaking about their shame, or getting their shame out, was a beneficial and necessary task in processing the emotion. Participants noted that, while difficult, externalizing their shame minimized the impact of the affect; they felt less isolated, and it was a necessary step towards healing from the shame. In a study by Nils and Rimé (2012) they found that social sharing can soften the impact of negative experiences, but only when others respond supportively. Alternatively, Gross and John's (2003) previously mentioned research, found participants avoided sharing within their close relationship when applying an specific emotional regulation strategies. In the present study, participants varied in their experiences and decision to share with others. However, participants who did share described the cathartic effect of sharing with others. For those participants who struggled or avoided socially sharing their experience, their reaction may be a result from the participant's emotional regulation strategy. In addition, Nils and Rimé (2012) found that social sharing has improved emotional recovery benefits, reaffirming the importance for students to have access to the necessary social and university supports available in university to allow the student to successful process and move past negative, harmful emotions.

Limitations

As in every research project, there are limitations associated with the findings of this study. First, this study focuses exclusively on the lived experiences of the participants, paying nominal attention to whether participants' experiences and recollections were factual. The study focuses on the way in which participants make sense regarding the transpired events in the participants' experiences. This limitation means the participant recollections could be skewed.

However, participants described the ways in which these experiences still impact their behaviours today. As such, the factual nature of these experiences is less important to the way participants recall these experiences and to identify how they continually impact their *self* to date. In addition, this study exclusively looked at shame-prone students and students who persisted. Looking specifically at shame-prone students does not mean to say these findings are not applicable to students with low levels of shame-proneness; however, the way these findings would transfer or appear in low shame-prone students is unclear. As well, the study focused specifically on students that are in fact persisting despite encounter negative experiences during their post-secondary studies. Meaning that the experiences from students who did not persist were not captured in this study. Finally, the student researcher has personal lived experience with the emotion. While the researcher's personal experiences with the emotion inspired the motivation to conduct this study, with lived experiences comes the potential for bias. As the researcher, I argue that bias should not necessarily always be seen exclusively as negative, as lived experiences provide meaningful insights into the specific phenomenon under investigation and inform the study. To approach the researcher's bias in a meaningful way the researcher assured the data collection and analysis was rigorous, conducting member checking and creating a data audit trail, as well as practicing valuable mental orientations during these processes (such as bracketing, reflexivity, phenomenological attitude). Lastly, part of IPA methods is to ensure that all themes are grounded in the data and voice of participants. Participant quotes assist readers in identifying the credibility when interpreting the research findings.

Implications for Future Research

As the present research demonstrates, institutional policies and process can elicit shame in its students (i.e., learning contracts, promotion standards). These approaches place the focus

entirely on students for not achieving standards but fails to acknowledge the institution's role that may lead to unsatisfactory student performance (such as, negative faculty interactions, inflexible policies, inadequate access to mental health supports). One avenue for future research could be to look specifically at the impacts of institutional policies and processes that can elicit shame in students. In addition, research should look to understand the motivation behind these policies and how adherence to these policies lead to desired outcomes. For example, a study could seek to understand the motivations of a department's learning contract policy for students who demonstrated poor performance and see to what extent do students overcome these issues because of the or are they driven to leave the institution. Essentially this study could attempt to understand if policies and process designed to support students overcome their challenges achieve their goals or do they serve or as a way to trigger shame and change within students, through a 'weeding out' mentality?

Emergent throughout the research were the standards and expectations against which students evaluated themselves. These standards acted as measuring sticks individuals compared themselves against, where failing to meet said standard elicited shame. Future research may want to look into shame-prone students' resilience and abilities to recover from shame based on their mindset (i.e., fixed, growth) and psychological flexibility. In addition, it has been found in the present study, and the literature, that hearing others with similar experiences of shame minimizes one's level of shame. Future research may want to investigate if this social exchange not only provides a source of connection through the interaction but also provides a script towards help-seeking that the individual listening is not able to activate when initially crippled by their shame. As such, through this social exchange, the listener is learning ways in which they can navigate their current circumstances.

Implications for Practice

The current findings dismiss institutional arguments driving student retention initiatives arguing ‘build it and they will come.’ This present research provides evidence that students not achieving their desired performance levels are unlikely to instinctively reach out to university supports; in practice the reverse is true where students are more likely to suffer and struggle in silence. Instead, institutions should devote intentional initiatives, policies, process, and structures that are student-focused and engage students who are at risk of struggling throughout their formative post-secondary years. For example, intrusive advising practices are “a deliberate structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate a student to seek help” (Earl, 1988, p. 28); such approaches are a way that helps instill help-seeking in students. Alternatively, institutions can work to create early alert systems, which is a “... formal, proactive, feedback system through which students and student-support agents are alerted to early ‘red flags’” (Cuseo, 2006, pg. 1). Such systems place the responsibilities on the institution to connect with students who are at risk, as institutions are more likely to identify ‘red flags’ or worrisome behaviours. It is illogical for institution to place the responsibility on students to reach out when they are displaying worrisome behaviours, as students have minimal frames of references to what is ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ of a university student’s experience. Such practices help ensure students who have the potential to graduate are not failing when it is within the realm of reasonable control for the institution to support the student to graduation.

These findings are also applicable to student support staff and faculty. Through understanding how participants process and are impacted by shame, relevant personnel can create space within their roles that allows for participants to externalize their shame. In doing so, we can normalize students’ experiences and bring to their awareness other attributing factors,

before directing the student to appropriate and needed supports. In addition, when participants were seeking help, it was often accompanied by factors of having a trusting support system and being aware of others with similar experiences. Institutions can design retention and student success initiatives to allow peer, staff, and faculty relationships to form. These relationships have the potential to transform into a student's support system, which can allow students to learn and tackle difficult experiences together. Hopefully, these actions will promote help-seeking behaviours and reduce the impact of shame.

The researcher challenges institutions to reflect on and evaluate their institutional policies and process to understand the intentions and perception of their policies from a faculty, staff, and student perspective. Are policies in existence to support students towards learning outcomes, or are they a means to 'weed out' ill-prepared students and act as a punitive measure? As the demographics of first-year students are shifting to adults from later in life, institutions need to create systems and policies that account for students at these different life stages. Institutions need to prepare for not only the students' lived wisdom and experiences that the institution benefits from, but also the trauma and negative experiences that are impacting students in and out of the classes.

Implications for Theory

Previous shame research mostly investigated how the emotion impacts students' performance within the classroom, whereas this research situated itself to explore participants' experiences of persistence and help-seeking, seeking to view the dynamics between shame and student persistence from a larger context. To the researcher's knowledge, this project is the first to look at shame and student persistence. In addition, no previous research has exclusively investigated the interaction between shame and student help-seeking within a post-secondary

setting. Other research findings mention shame emerging from their results but did not specifically explore students' experiences of shame and their help-seeking, limiting our understanding of the dynamics between these two constructs.

This study contributed to our growing understanding of shame, student persistence, and help seeking. Looking at shame within the context of higher education creates an interesting setting to explore the emotion, as one of the entire premises of an undergraduate degree is to provide material on which an expert is to evaluate you. I believe these findings provide evidence that administrators should begin to consider emotions and the affect experiences that students face when looking at student persistence and students' decisions to stay within institutions. As Tinto (1993) had previously identified that only 25% of students exit institutions related to poor academic performance and that social integration is an important component in student retention, providing evidence of a large dynamic regarding why students are not returning to their post-secondary studies is beneficial. Taking this perspective and looking at this study's findings, shame impeded students' social integration, making them feel disconnected from others and as though they did not belong. While students in this study have all experienced failure on some level, only one was required to take a break away from campus. This finding supports the contention that emotions, specifically shame, and students' affect during their post-secondary studies may be factors in students' decisions to leave.

While previous studies have referenced shame and student help-seeking, these projects were not directly intended to understand how shame and help-seeking interact with each other. Stamp et al. (2014) reported that shame and stigma were reported barriers in nine out of twelve participants to seek help; I would argue that shame and stigma are two different constructs that were reported together in this study. I conceptualize shame as the affective response from a

negative evaluation, and stigma as the internalized societal standards against which an individual measured themselves. As such, my findings suggest it was often the negative affect that occurred regarding the factors that deterred help-seeking, not only the internalized standards. I believe this research provides a framework to further understand students' internal barriers that deter help-seeking behaviour and provides factors professionals can consider when working with students.

Concluding Thoughts

This research provides insight into the perspective of seven undergraduate students experiences of shame impacting their persistence [i.e., motivation, self-efficacy, belonging – see Tinto (2018)] and help-seeking during their studies. The data analysis identified six superordinate themes – processing shame, impact on *self*, motivation, belonging, factors that promote help-seeking, and factors that deter help-seeking. Overall, the results found that experiencing shame in university negatively influences the aforementioned factors that promote student persistence. When experiencing shame, students are driven away from the object that elicited the emotion and practice self-preservation coping mechanism to keep their *self* safe. Students experiencing extreme isolation and disconnection will experience a negative impact on their identities and various self-concept related components. Patterns associated with promoting and deterring students help-seeking were identified. Institutions should evaluate their policies and procedures to understand in what ways their systems are designed to elicit shame in students, rather than designed to support student-centered practices.

It was extremely fulfilling for me to investigate the phenomenon that had impacted my own journey, and the journey of students I have supported, through our collective post-secondary journeys. I truly feel I approached the phenomenon with curiosity, knowing the emotion's influence may vary depending on the person and the context. I appreciated how an IPA approach

allowed me to attempt to make sense of individuals' experiences with shame. Reflecting on the thesis process, I was not prepared for how my own development and the way I view the world would shift so drastically. From conceptualizing a research idea, writing the proposal for the project, recruiting and interviewing participants, to analyzing and writing the findings, being able to enact each piece of the research process helped me grow as a researcher. I also believe I was overly ambitious in the project's scope, looking at both student persistence and student help-seeking. In practice, either of these concepts would have sufficed for the scope of a master's thesis. Narrowing my focus would have allowed a deeper understanding of either construct investigated within this project to occur: persistence or help seeking.

When I began recruiting participants I was surprised at the level of interest in the study, in addition to the quality and openness of my participants. As shame often leads people wanting to hide the objects they experience shame about, I was concerned this would prevent participants from coming forward to participate. In actuality, within a month I completed my data collection and continued to receive inquiries, requiring me to turn away participants as I had already achieved the appropriate sample size for my project. Another reason participants may have emerged to participate in the study was the perspective of time; specifically, the experiences shared by participants existed in the past. Based on the data, these experiences seemed to be viewed as previous shame objects with lower intensity because they occurred in the past. Within this study I did not review participants' current shame object, only those experiences a participant identified as being impactful during their undergraduate post-secondary studies. Furthermore, looking back, I do regret the way I constructed one part of the research process, specifically in how I required participants to approve and adjust their interview transcripts. The one participant's data who did not complete the member check was not used within this study,

resulting in wasting time and resources from both the participant and researcher's perspective. It is unclear whether the participant intended to withdraw or viewed the member check as an inconvenience. In future studies, I would still allow participants the option to withdraw, but I would construct the member checking somewhat differently. Potentially I would include in the consent form that after three attempts to have the transcript release form signed, I would assume consent if the participant had not explicitly withdrawn their data. Member checking and transcript release forms are still important for ensuring the research's trustworthiness and accurate capturing of the participant's experiences; however, I would explore the option of implicit consent.

Regarding the data analysis, there were a few false starts, where I started analyzing my first case and stopped to readjust the interview transcripts templates or my color scheme used for comments. The ambiguity around how to start and the desire to create 'good' research acted as a barrier to the project's progress. This internal barrier could have been avoided by mentally walking through my data analysis process and gaining insight from my supervisor. Reflecting back, having an engaged, supportive and approachable supervisor, I wish I had initiated more conversations to talk through ways I could approach my data analysis. Without communicating this to one's supervisor they would have no way of knowing, which is an interesting parallel to my thesis findings. I also regret not conducting more active journaling, not just relating to recording decisions made within the research, but also just actively journaling my thoughts around the research topic. Lastly, with more time and resources, I would have designed this study to allow reconnecting with participants after data analysis. These interviews could capture further insight from the participants that would contribute to the sense making of the research

conducted, where participants could confirm their experiences were accurately analyzed, so essentially bringing participants into the sense making process.

Reflecting on these findings and my participants' experiences, my beliefs are reaffirmed: if institutions are to employ faculty and staff, and engage in practices that emotionally harm students within the system, such systems should be also designed to care for the individuals who exist within it. If private sector workplaces do not tolerate such harm from occurring within their spaces, it reinforces that students, who are vulnerable and subject to drastic power dynamics, should have the same right to exist within safe and supportive spaces. If institutions are as truly student success oriented as they claim to be, I challenge such institutions to improve their systems that allow students to not only survive but also thrive.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Internalized Shame Scale (Cook, 1996)

DIRECTIONS: Below is a list of statements describing feelings or experiences that you may have from time to time or that are familiar to you because you have had these feelings and experiences for a long time. These are all statements of feelings and experiences that are generally painful or negative in some way. Some people will seldom or never have had many at these feelings and experiences. Everyone has had some of these feelings at one time, but if you find that these statements describe the way you feel a good deal of the time, it can be painful just reading them. Try to be as honest as you can in responding.

Read each statement carefully and mark the number in the space to the left of the item that indicates the frequency with which you find yourself feeling or experiencing what is described in the statement. Use the scale below. **DO NOT OMIT ANY ITEM.**

Scale

Never - 0 Seldom - 1 Sometimes - 2 Frequently - 3 Almost Always - 4

- ___ 1. I feel like I am never quite good enough
- ___ 2. I feel somehow left out.
- ___ 3. I think that people look down on me.
- ___ 4. Compared to other people I feel like I somehow never measure up.
- ___ 5. I scold myself and put myself down.
- ___ 6. I feel insecure about others' opinions of me.
- ___ 7. I see myself as being very small and insignificant.
- ___ 8. I feel intensely inadequate and full of self doubt.
- ___ 9. I feel as if I am somehow defective as a person, like there is something basically wrong with me.
- ___ 10. I have an overpowering fear that my faults will be revealed in front of others.
- ___ 11. I have this painful gap within me that I have not been able to fill.
- ___ 12. There are different parts of me that I try to keep secret from others.
- ___ 13. I feel empty and unfulfilled.
- ___ 14. When I compare myself to other I am just not as important.
- ___ 15. My loneliness is more like emptiness.
- ___ 16. I always feel like there is something missing.
- ___ 17. I really do not know who I am.
- ___ 18. I replay painful events over and over in my mind until I feel overwhelmed.
- ___ 19. At times I feel like I will break into a thousand pieces.
- ___ 20. I feel as if I have lost control over my body functions and my feelings.
- ___ 21. Sometimes I feel no bigger than a pea.
- ___ 22. At times I feel so exposed that I wish the earth would open up and swallow me.

Appendix B: Eligibility Survey

Survey Page 1

Code:

Program of Study:

Number of Credit Units Completed:

Number of Months in Post-Secondary:

Survey Page 2

Internalized Shame Scale (Cook, 1996)

Below is a list of statements describing feelings or experiences that you may have from time to time or that are familiar to you because you have had these feelings and experiences for a long time. These are all statements of feelings and experiences that are generally painful or negative in some way. Some people will seldom or never have had many at these feelings and experiences. Everyone has had some of these feelings at one time, but if you find that these statements describe the way you feel a good deal of the time, it can be painful just reading them. Try to be as honest as you can in responding.

Read each statement carefully and mark the number in the space to the left of the item that indicates the frequency with which you find yourself feeling or experiencing what is described in the statement. Use the scale below. DO NOT OMIT ANY ITEM.

Scale

Never - 0 Seldom - 1 Sometimes - 2 Frequently - 3 Almost Always - 4

- ___ 1. I feel like I am never quite good enough
- ___ 2. I feel somehow left out.
- ___ 3. I think that people look down on me.
- ___ 4. Compared to other people I feel like I somehow never measure up.
- ___ 5. I scold myself and put myself down.
- ___ 6. I feel insecure about others' opinions of me.
- ___ 7. I see myself as being very small and insignificant.
- ___ 8. I feel intensely inadequate and full of self doubt.

- ___ 9. I feel as if I am somehow defective as a person, like there is something basically wrong with me.
- ___ 10. I have an overpowering fear that my faults will be revealed in front of others.
- ___ 11. I have this painful gap within me that I have not been able to fill.
- ___ 12. There are different parts of me that I try to keep secret from others.
- ___ 13. I feel empty and unfulfilled.
- ___ 14. When I compare myself to other I am just not as important.
- ___ 15. My loneliness is more like emptiness.
- ___ 16. I always feel like there is something missing.
- ___ 17. I really do not know who I am.
- ___ 18. I replay painful events over and over in my mind until I feel overwhelmed.
- ___ 19. At times I feel like I will break into a thousand pieces.
- ___ 20. I feel as if I have lost control over my body functions and my feelings.
- ___ 21. Sometimes I feel no bigger than a pea.
- ___ 22. At times I feel so exposed that I wish the earth would open up and swallow me.

Final Survey Page

Thank you for your interest in the research study *The Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help Seeking*. Andrew Hartman will be reaching out to you soon. If you meet the criteria for the study an interview will be scheduled with you pending your availability. In the event you feel any discomfort from completing the questionnaire please do not hesitate to access the below supports.

Available Supports

- U of S Wellness Centre (Counselling) call 306-966-5786
- Mental Health and Addictions (Counselling) call 306-655-7777
- Mobile Crisis Saskatoon call 306-933-6200 (24/7 Crisis/Support Line)
- Emergency, call 911(24/7 Emergency Line)

Andrew Hartman
Graduate Student
Educational Administration
Ph: 306-966-1681
Email: andrew.hartman@usask.ca

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Remind participants when providing their experiences to include not only details about the event, but also about what they were thinking and feeling.

To start off we will go over some demographic questions (Est. 5 Minutes):

- Where do you come from?
- What are you studying and for how long?
- What studying in university been like for you?

Personal Shame Definition (Est. 10 Minutes)

- Before we go over how shame is defined in the context of this research study, how would you define shame?
- How do you find shame and guilt different?
- How did you come to this definition of shame?

For the duration of the interview we are going to define shame as a global, negative evaluation of oneself (Lewis, 2003) (Est. 15 Minutes).

- Tell me about what behaviours you find to be shameful in yourself.
 - What about in others?
 - How does what you find shameful in yourself and others compare?
- Think of a time where you experienced shame in university, this could be a situation, person, or event, explore and describe the whole experience to the fullest.

Potential prompts:

How did you feel after experiencing shame?

How did this impact you?

How did you respond after experiencing shame?

How do you find meaning in or make sense of your shame experiences?

What other times have you felt shame in university?

Help Seeking Behaviour – Tell me about asking for help during these moments? (Est. 15 Minutes)

Potential prompts:

Did you reach out for help? Why or why not?

What were you thinking?

How did you feel?

What role did experiencing shame play in reaching out for support?

**Motivation – Tell me about your motivation in these moments.
(Est. 15 Minutes)**

Potential prompts:

What were you thinking?

How did you feel?

What role did experiencing shame play in your motivation?

Self-Efficacy – Tell me about your beliefs in your capabilities to accomplish the task(s) in these moments? (Est. 15 Minutes)

Potential prompts:

What were you thinking?

How did you feel?

What role did experiencing shame play in the beliefs of your capabilities?

Sense of Belonging – Tell me about how connected/disconnected you felt in these moments to others? (Est. 15 Minutes)

Potential prompts:

What were you thinking?

How did you feel?

What role did experiencing shame play in feeling like you belonged?

Appendix D: Protocol Writing Guide

Hello,

Thank you again for your continued participation in the research study the *Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help-Seeking*. Below you will find instructions on how to best use the provided journal to record your experiences of shame throughout the next ten days.

There are two points you will need to record your experiences of shame. The first point is every time you experience shame throughout the next week and half. The second time will be at the end of every day. Below you will find questions to answer either after every shame event, or questions to complete at the end of every evening. Remember shame can be defined as, a global, negative evaluation of oneself (Lewis, 2003).

Each time you experience shame please record the experience in the provided diary.

Elements to document are:

- Provide context to the event: What happened? Where were you? Who were you talking to? How did you react?
- What were you thinking in the moment? Describe your thoughts.
- How did you feel in that moment? Describe your feelings in detail.
- How long did this feeling last? When did you notice you no longer felt the initial shame experience?
- Why do think you experienced shame in this moment?
- Any other information you feel like sharing.

At the end of each evening please provide an overall reflection of your day:

- How many times did you experience shame today?
- What were the contexts and situations when you experienced shame?
- Elements to explore and record were your reactions, feelings, mood, thoughts, and bodily sensations.
- How did these experiences impact you?
- What your thoughts, comments, observations, or reflections of these experiences?

If you will no longer be able to or are no longer interested, please let Andrew know. Additionally, if you have any questions please feel free to reach out at andrew.hartman@usask.ca or 306-966-1681.

Appendix E: PAWS Announcement (Initial and Reminder)

Subject: Let's talk about shame!

Bulletin Research Studies Posted [Insert Date Posted Here]

We are looking for U of S undergraduate students to participate in a qualitative research study exploring students' experiences of shame in their post-secondary studies.

As a participant you will be invited to discuss your experiences of shame with the researcher in a 60-90 minute interview. Students who indicate interest in the study will need to complete a short eligibility survey to ensure they meet the studies criteria.

Participants can withdraw from the study at anytime without any explanation, or consequences. Individuals who choose to participate in an interview will receive a \$10 Tim Hortons' gift card as compensation for their time.

Participants must:

1. Be a current University of Saskatchewan undergraduate student
2. Completed at least 18 credit units (6 half year classes) over 8 months
3. Be born and raised in Canada
4. Complete an online eligibility survey

This research received approval from the Behavioural Ethics Board on [Insert date here]

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, contact Andrew Hartman at andrew.hartman@usask.ca or 306-966-1681.

Bulletin content is U of S-related but not endorsed by the university. You may choose which bulletin board categories appear in PAWS and iUsask by clicking the gear icon at the top of the feed in PAWS.

Appendix F: Recruitment Poster



Let's talk about shame!

We are looking for participants to talk about their experiences of shame in university to better understand the role this emotion plays in student persistence and help seeking

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to: participate in a 60- 90-minute interview around your experiences of shame in university.

Participants must meet the following criteria:

1. Be a current University of Saskatchewan undergraduate student
2. Completed at least 18 credit units (6 half-year classes) over 8 months
3. Born and raised in Canada
4. Complete an online eligibility survey

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$10 Tim Hortons' Gift Card.

For more information about this study,
or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Andrew Hartman
College of Education

at

Ph: 306-966-1341 or

Email: andrew.hartman@usask.ca

This study has been reviewed by, and received approval through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan

Appendix G: Undergraduate Students Email Announcement (Initial and Reminder)

Subject: Let's talk about shame!

Undergraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan are invited to participate in a research study exploring the role of shame in student persistence and help-seeking.

This study involves a 60-90 minute semi-structured interview with the researcher. In the interview, the researcher will ask questions about the students' experiences of shame in university. Individuals who participate in this research study will receive a \$10 gift card to Tim Hortons to compensate them for their time.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Consent can be withdrawn from the study at any time. Individuals who wish to withdraw do not need to provide any rationale or explanation, and their data will be destroyed and not used in the study. Individuals who consent to participate in the study will be provided a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the participant.

Participants must:

1. Be a current University of Saskatchewan undergraduate student
2. Completed at least 18 credit units (6 half year classes) over 8 months
3. Be born and raised in Canada
4. Complete an online eligibility survey

To participate in this study please email andrew.hartman@usask.ca to arrange an interview time.

For more information about this study, please contact:

Andrew Hartman
Graduate Student
Educational Administration
Ph: 306-966-1681
Email: andrew.hartman@usask.ca

Dr. Vicki Squires
Assistant Professor
Educational Administration
Ph: 306-966-7622
Email vicki.squires@usask.ca

Appendix H: Email Response to Interested Students

Hello <Insert Student Name>,

Thank you very much for showing interest in participating in the research project *The Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help-Seeking*.

I am Andrew Hartman, and I am a graduate student in the College of Education's Educational Administration program here at the U of S. As part of my Masters requirement I am conducting research study around how shame impacts student success.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the role shame experiences have on student persistence and their help seeking behaviour. By exploring this issue we hope to better understand students' experiences in post-secondary education, which may provide insight into how institutions should shape their supports and programs.

To participate in this study you would need to join me in a one-on-one interview, lasting roughly 60-90 minutes. You will receive a \$10 Tim Hortons gift card to compensate for your time. In this interview we will go over what shame is and then you will be asked to share with me your experiences with this emotion. This interview will be conducted in < location> at the U of S.

In order to be eligible for this study you need to be a current University of Saskatchewan student who has completed at least 18 credit units over 8 months, and was born and raised in Canada.

In order to participate in this study I need to ensure you meet the eligibility of the study. Can you please complete the following survey - <survey link here>, and use the code <code number here>. This will ensure that your data is confidential as only I will know your survey code that matches with your survey results.

The survey goes over:

- Your current institution and program of study
- Your place of birth and where you grew up
- Your current level of post-secondary attainment
- Your rating on the Internalized Shame Scale

Results of the study will be reported as aggregate data (themes) and pseudonyms will be used when quoting individual's comments. If you are willing to be interviewed in the study, please complete the eligibility survey in the link above. Once completed respond to this email and we can schedule a time to meet if you meet the studies criteria. Thank you once again for your interested in participating in this study.

Best,
Andrew Hartman

Appendix I: Consent Forms



Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: The Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help-Seeking.

Researcher(s): ANDREW HARTMAN, GRADUATE STUDENT, EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, 306-966-1681, ANDREW.HARTMAN@USASK.CA

Supervisor: DR. VICKI SQUIRES, EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, 306-966-7622, VICKI.SQUIRES@USASK.CA

Purposes and Objectives of the study:

- The purposes of this research project is to increase our understanding around the role shame plays in university students' persistence and help seeking behaviour. Additionally, this study completes one of the requirements for the researcher's masters program.
- The results of this study may be published or presented to increase the awareness of shame in student persistence and help-seeking. Participants' answers will be kept confidential and identifying information will be removed

Procedures:

- Participants will meet the researcher at the agreed upon time and location agreed upon, to participate in the 60-90-minute interview.
- Upon meeting, the participant and researcher will review and sign the Participant Consent Form.
- The researcher will start the audio recording and begin to ask the participant about their experiences.
- Please feel free to ask questions at any time regarding your role, the procedures, and the goal of the research.
- The current study aims to interview 6-8 university students.

Potential Risks:

- There is the possibility participants **may experience emotional or psychological distress** when sharing their experiences.
- Please only address the questions you feel comfortable answering.

To mitigate these potential risks:

- Outlined on the last page of this consent form are helplines and contact information for supports if you feel distressed after participating in the study.

Potential Benefits:

- Participants may feel cathartic after sharing their experiences, as discussing one’s experiences of shame has been found to increase their shame resilience (Van Vliet, 2008)
- Participants may benefit from understanding how this emotions plays a role in their life.
- Findings will help institutions better understand the role shame plays in student persistence and help seeking.
- Results may have implications in how universities’ structure their programs and/or approaches in connecting with students.

Compensation:

- Individuals who participate in an interview will receive a \$10 Tim Hortons’ Gift Card to show appreciation for their time.

Confidentiality:

- The results of this research may be published and presented at conferences. However, the researchers will strive to keep your identity confidential. When any reporting of direct quotations from an interview happen, the participant will be provided a pseudonym, and all identifying information (other names mentioned, school names, workplace etc.) will be removed from the quotations.
- Participants have the option to indicate their preferred pseudonym below. If left blank, the research will create a random pseudonym on their behalf
- Confidentiality means that I (the researcher) will ensure that identifiable information about participants is not disclosed in the reporting or dissemination of the research findings.
- If you decide to participate in this research project please place a check mark on the corresponding lines to grants me permission to record the interview and that you prefer to stay anonymous.

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: _____

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: _____

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

- You may request that the recording device is turned off any time.
- After your interview, you will be provided the opportunity to review your interview transcript to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts that will provide further clarity around your experiences.
- The results of this research will be used to complete the requirement for a Master’s thesis and may be presented at a conference and/or submitted for journal publication.

Storage of Data:

- Data will be stored with Dr. Vicki Squires at the University of Saskatchewan for five years. After this time the data will be destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary. You have the choice to answer only those questions that you are comfortable answering. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Whether you choose to participate and/or withdraw will **not affect** your university status at the University of Saskatchewan.
- Should you wish to withdraw, please contact me and identify you are retracting your participant from the study.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data analysis has begun. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:

- To obtain results from the study, please email the researcher at andrew.hartman@usask.ca and indicate you would like to receive information about the results of this study. You will be email a link to the thesis when the research has been completed.

Questions or Concerns:

- For any questions or concerns contact me using the information at the top of page 1.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Available Supports

Please note the below supports are available to you if you experience any discomfort from participating in this interview:

- U of S Wellness Centre (Counselling) call 306-966-5786
- Mental Health and Addictions (Counselling) call 306-655-7777
- Mobile Crisis Saskatoon call 306-933-6200 (24/7 Crisis/Support Line)
- Emergency, call 911(24/7 Emergency Line)

Signed Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>		<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix J: Interview Transcript Consent Form



Research Ethics Boards Behavioural INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Title: The Role of Shame in Student Persistence and Help-Seeking.

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Andrew Hartman. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Andrew Hartman to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of researcher