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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
A SELECTED GROUP OF STUDENTS WHO ENTERED
A NORTH LOUISIANA COLLEGE IN 1963 AND GRADUATED IN 1967

by

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

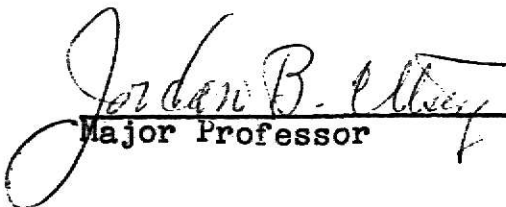
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of educating the young adults in the sixties was a challenge at all levels of instruction. This was an era of rapid advances in knowledge and technology. The young adults often found themselves in a dilemma. An intellectual revolution was taking place and it aroused the concern of parents, educators, counselors, and the like. Students often found that their performance in academic subjects was not satisfactory.

These young adults who had previously attended both urban and rural high schools were confronted with a new system whereby students who fail to meet certain academic standards are placed on probation; and if their grades fail to increase to a "C" average the following semester, they will be suspended from the institution. The criteria for probation are that any full-time student who has attained the level of sophomore or above and fails to make a "C" average on all courses pursued is subject to the rules of the university. The purpose of this report is to determine if those students who were at the borderline of success and placed on probation would excel those borderline students who just escaped probation.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The present study was designed to investigate the academic performance of a selected group of sophomores at a north Louisiana college over a two year period 1964-1966 in order to determine their scholastic performance during three semesters immediately following probation. Additional characteristics of the students to be considered were the location of the high school (rural or urban) they graduated from and the cumulative averages of the students for the semesters following probation.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were:

1. Students who are placed on academic probation will improve their GPA significantly the following three consecutive semesters.
2. There is no difference between the academic status of students from urban high schools and those from rural high schools.
3. There is no difference between the GPA's of females as compared to males during three consecutive semesters following academic probation.

Procedures

The author obtained permission from the registrar to use the transcripts of students who had graduated from the college in north Louisiana within the last 10 years. Permission was granted and a course of action was worked out. The registrar suggested the use of a graduating class rather than the use of a freshman class for the starting point because one would have fewer names to delete from the study. The registrar pointed out the fact that about 20 per cent of the freshman students at this college generally do not return the following year; therefore, by beginning with graduates, the researcher would not have as many transcripts to look up and then discard. The researcher chose to use the college log of graduates for the spring of 1967.

The total number of graduates was 198. The researcher could obtain only 150 transcripts because 48 female students had married and the log did not have the married names of these females. After several days, copies of the transcripts were available for the researcher. The next step was to find the cumulative averages of the graduates for each semester of work. The researcher worked along with the director of computing center to compile this information.

The data collected from the transcripts consisted of each student's GPA for the semester in question, the high school attended, and his cumulative average. The GPA was computed on the basis of A=4 quality points, B=3 quality

points, C=2 quality points, D=1 quality point, and no quality points for a grade of F.

The subjects were divided into four groups for comparative purposes: sophomore males on probation (N=15), sophomore males not on probation (N=15), sophomore females on probation (N=20), and female sophomore students not on probation (N=20).

Population and Sample

The transcripts of all graduates of the spring semester of 1967 were reviewed. The researcher excluded the transcripts of all students who earned credits before the fall of 1963. The transcripts of all transfer students were excluded from the study. The remaining 130 transcripts were divided into categories as indicated below:

1. All transcripts of persons who at the end of their first semester sophomore year had a GPA of 1.699 to 1.999 were analyzed. Although these students had attained probationary status they were borderline. This group included 15 males and 20 females.

3. All transcripts of persons who at the end of their first semester had a GPA of 2.000 to 2.300 were analyzed. Students of this group, referred to as non-probationary, were borderline in that they barely escaped probation. Three females and four males were eliminated at random to equalize the groups and simplify statistical tests, and 15 males and 20 females constituted this sample.

3. The remaining 60 transcripts were eliminated because the GPA's did not meet the criteria that were set up in numbers one and two.

Analysis of Data

The mean and cumulative GPA's were determined and compared for Probationary and Non-probationary groups, both males and females, for the fall semester of 1964. The mean and cumulative GPA's were also compared for these groups for the following three consecutive semesters. Comparisons were made between the male and female probates, male and female non-probates, probates and non-probates, males who attended both rural and urban high schools - probates and non-probates, females who attended both rural and urban high schools - probates and non-probates.

Delimitations

1. All graduates of the spring semester of 1967 were considered for the study except those persons who had earned credits before September, 1963.

2. GPA is the only factor that was used in assigning students to probationary status. Grades are assigned by teachers and not normally distributed from A to F. This limits the statistical procedures in this study which are based upon assumptions of normally distributed measures.¹

¹Norman M. Chansky, "Grade-Point Average in Research," Educational and Psychological Measurements, XXIV (Spring, 1964), pp. 95-99.

3. No information was available on teachers who assigned the grades nor was any allowance made for possible differences within the nature of the courses for which grades were given.

4. No descriptive data were available on the high school GPA, intelligence test results, or standardized test results.

Definitions of Terms

To clarify the meaning of certain terms and expressions as they were used in this study, the following explanatory statements and definitions are submitted.

Academic probation. Any full-time student who made a GPA of less than 2.000 on all hours pursued during a semester.

Probationary group. Those students who earned the status of probation during their first semester sophomore year are referred to throughout the study as the Probationary group.

Non-probationary group. Those students who barely escaped probation their first semester sophomore year are referred to throughout the study as the Non-probationary group.

GPA. Initials for grade point average.

Borderline students. Any full-time student who had a GPA of 1.699 to 1.999 or 2.000 to 2.300.

Full-time student. Any student who took at least twelve semester hours of scheduled work during a semester.

Grading system. The grading symbols and their quality points per semester hour are:

<u>Grading Symbols</u>	<u>Quality Points Per Semester Hours</u>
A - Superior.....	4
B - Above average.....	3
C - Average.....	2
D - Below average.....	1
F - Failing.....	0

Rural high school. Any school that is located in a city that has a population of less than 9,000.

Urban high school. Any school that is located in a city that has a population of 9,000 or more.

Motivation. An increase in grade point average.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This introductory chapter has presented the purpose of the study and a complete statement of the specific problem with which it was concerned. In addition, it has given an account of the analysis of data and submitted a definition of terms.

Chapter Two contains a review of the related research and literature.

Chapter Three gives a detailed description of the instrument used, the sample from which the data were secured, and the procedures. The results are analyzed and interpreted.

Chapter Four is a summary chapter. It presents a review of the study which includes the more important findings. Finally, the chapter states the conclusions drawn from the

investigation and cautions the future researchers about the limitations which characterize the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Educators and parents alike have been concerned for many years regarding the ability of young adults to achieve in institutions of higher learning. Considerable criticism was voiced in regard to achievement of students in American colleges and universities following the successful launching of Sputnik I by Russia in 1957. In the ensuing years, many investigations have been made of the performance of college students. Lagemann² reported that educators have been examining the concepts of individual differences, inheritance of ability, and other facts that have long been part of the educational training.

William J. Crane did research to answer the following questions, "What purpose does a system of scholastic probation serve? Does it motivate toward greater achievement or does it serve as a final hurdle that usually results in dismissal?"³ Crane made a survey of 15 institutions to find out these answers. In the findings he pointed out that at only one university 57 per cent of the students failed to

²J.K. Lagemann, "Your Child's Intelligence is not Fixed," Reader's Digest (May, 1960), pp. 100-103.

³William J. Crane, "Scholastic Probation: Motivation or Weeding Out," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 42:8 (April, 1961), pp. 811-814.

benefit from the probational period. Probation at this institution and others served as a "weeding out" process. Probation was a motivational tool for the majority of the students.⁴

Sheets and Hahn⁵ examined scholastic probation as a motivational tool for academic success. As members of the Scholastic Standards Committee of the University of Utah, they had the responsibility of administering scholastic probation. One of their functions was to determine if probation, motivated the students the following semesters. They also attempted to discover the causes of failure of the students. It was found that there are several reasons for failure. The GPA is most often affected by class attendance, which may be due to a number of causes.

The Scholastic Standards Committee collected all available data, from the academic department, parents, counseling services, and the like to help the student to discover his points of weakness. According to Sheets and Hahn a program of this nature helps to guide the students to success.⁶ After four consecutive semesters following probation these researchers found that the GPA of the students on probation had increased significantly.

⁴Crane, p. 814.

⁵Boyd V. Sheets and Walter Hahn, "Scholastic Probation as a Tool in Raising Academic Standards," Educational Record (January, 1954), pp. 150-156.

⁶Sheets and Hahn, pp. 155.

Robert Fischer has done several studies in the area of academic probation. His work has been done with full-time freshmen at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. His major objective was to determine the effect of academic probation on the scholastic performance of borderline students who had missed the "C" average by a single point. He found that probation tends to motivate most students.⁷

In a second study Fischer attempted to find out if similar results would be found if the GPA of the borderline students was lower than it had been the previous semester. Fischer also wanted to find out if these students that had been on probation their freshman year continued to make higher grades in the coming semesters.⁸ The findings of this study were in agreement with the previous investigation that had been done by Fischer. After seven consecutive semesters the GPA of the Probation group was higher than the Non-probation group.⁹

In a third study Fischer considered the results of his two previous studies and attempted to determine to what extent performance in various subjects has influenced on

⁷Robert Fischer, "Effect of Academic Probation on the Scholastic Performance of College Freshmen," Journal of College Student Personnel, 8:3 (May, 1967), pp. 176-180.

⁸Robert Fischer, "Effect of First Year Academic Probation on the Scholastic Performance of College Students," Journal of College Student Personnel 8:4 (July, 1967), pp. 270-273.

⁹Fischer, p. 271.

the GPA. The major contributing factor to females on probation was courses in the natural sciences. They made their gains the following semesters in this area and this was the reason for their apparent success. Males experienced their greatest difficulty in English, and they made subsequent improvements in this area which was responsible in part for their probationary status.¹⁰

Robert Schmelzee did a follow-up study of the freshmen at the University of Portland who had been placed on probation. His objective was to determine if probationary status had served as a motivational factor in increasing the GPA of students.

It seems evident that students progress academically after acquiring probationary status in the first semester. By an extensive follow-up study at the University of Portland... over one-half or 68 per cent improved their cumulative GPA's ... after being placed on probation following their first semester.¹¹

Reed M. Merrill's investigation at the University of Washington supported the research findings of Fischer and Schmelzee. The GPA of probationary students showed a significant increase the two quarters following probation. The GPA of the non-probationary students did increase slightly.

¹⁰Fischer, p. 273.

¹¹Robert Schmelzee, "What is the Progress of College Freshmen after Acquiring Probationary Status?" The Journal of Educational Research, 57:7 (March, 1964), pp. 374-375.

The results indicate that probation is an effective motivational tool for borderline students.¹²

Grant Wirthlin investigated the academic performance of freshmen entering the University of Utah from the area high schools. Their major objective was to determine if high schools attended were good predictors of college success. This study included eighty-five per cent of the 2,800 freshmen entering the university in the fall of 1968, who had attended school in the Salt Lake Valley. It was found that the mean GPA was different for each school. This may be attributed to the fact that the schools were located in different geographical areas of different socio-economic groups.¹³

Briggs, Tosi, and Morley¹⁴ examined the effects of the Robinson SQ3R technique on the academic performance of probationary students. The investigators assessed the observed differences in the academic performance of the experimental as well as the controlled group. The experimental group

¹²Reed Merrill, "An Evaluative Study of Probation Students' Academic Performance in a University," The Journal of Educational Research, XLVII (September, 1954), pp. 37-45.

¹³Claude Grant and Kathleen Wirthlin, "Academic Achievement of Entering Freshmen from Different High Schools," Journal of College Student Personnel, 11:4 (July, 1970), pp. 288-290.

¹⁴Richard Briggs, Donald Tosi, and Rosemary Morley, "Study Habits, Modification and its Effect on Academic Performance: A Behavioral Approach," Journal of Educational Research, 64:8 (April, 1971), pp. 347-350.

attended a summer orientation program. The findings supported the hypothesis that the experimental group who had been exposed to the Robinson SQ3R technique demonstrated higher GPA's than the control group.

According to the findings presented in this review of literature and research, probationary status appears to help many students achieve their immediate goals despite any stigmatizations that students suffer in varying degrees when on probation.

CHAPTER III

THE PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data used in this analysis were obtained from the transcripts of a selected group of male and female first-semester sophomores. The results of the first analysis are presented in Table 1. For the second-semester the mean GPA for the female Probation group was higher than the Non-probation group; however, the male Non-probation group had a slightly higher GPA than the male Probation group. These differences were not statistically significant. In the third-semester the mean GPA for both sexes of probation students was the same. The mean GPA was higher for the probation students than for the non-probation students, but the differences were not statistically significant. In this semester the females on probation showed a decrease in GPA from the second semester. Males on probation showed an increase in GPA. Females not on probation in this category showed no appreciable change. Males not on probation showed no appreciable change. Males not on probation showed a decrease in GPA from the second semester.

Table 1
Semester GPA's of Probation and Non-probation
Students Near the Borderline of Academic Success

Fall Semester 1964	N	1st. Sem. GPA Range	Semester Mean GPA's		
			1st.	2nd.	3rd.
					4th.
Male					
Probation	15	1.699-1.999	1.766	2.184	2.353
Non-probation	15	2.000-2.300	2.096	2.191	2.121
Female					
Probation	20	1.699-1.999	1.763	2.374	2.353
Non-probation	20	2.000-2.300	2.143	2.237	2.204
					2.391

The fourth semester results point out a slight mean increase in GPA of both sexes who were on probation. Because of this slight difference in the mean GPA, no statistical tests of significance of differences were applied to the scores. The writer concluded from the evidence available that Probation and Non-probation groups were reasonably matched in terms of GPA.

The results shown in Table 1 do not support the hypothesis that there is no difference in the GPA of males and females the three consecutive semesters following probation. The effect of probation seemed to motivate females more than males and the effect seemed to be longer for the former than the latter. The writer feels that females are more likely to be under parental influences than are males and will adhere to the wishes of their parents and attempt to increase their GPA to please them.

Table 2 shows mean cumulative GPA's at the end of each semester for the Probation and Non-probation groups. In the second semester the mean cumulative GPA for both sexes of the Non-probation group was higher than for the Probation group. In the third semester the mean cumulative GPA for the Non-probation group was higher than for the Probation group. The results for the females pointed out that the probates had a slightly higher cumulative mean GPA than the non-probates. The fourth semester mean cumulative GPA's was higher for both sexes of the Probation group than for the

Non-probation group. The female Probation group overtook the female Non-probation group in the third semester and continued to show higher grades the following semesters. It was not until the fourth semester that the male Probation group showed an increase over the Non-probation.

The difference between the mean cumulative GPA of the Probation and Non-probation groups was not statistically significant. The results of this investigation tend to point out that the effect of probation seems to motivate females more than males to achieve higher grades. This seems not to support the hypothesis stated previously.

Table 2

Cumulative Mean GPA's of Probation and Non-probation Students for Four Semesters

1st. Semester Academic Status 1964	N	Mean Cumulative GPA's by Semesters			
		1	2	3	4
Male					
Probation	15	1.766	1.875	2.100	2.155
Non-probation	15	2.096	2.143	2.136	2.112
Female					
Probation	20	1.763	2.068	2.163	2.284
Non-probation	20	2.143	2.190	2.161	2.243

Table 3 shows the mean semester GPA's of the Probation and Non-probation students from rural and urban high schools. The results of the table disprove the basic assumption that there is no difference between probationary status of students from urban high schools and those from rural high schools. Both sexes of the Probation group from rural and urban high schools showed an increase for the second, third, and fourth semesters. Males on probation from rural high schools had a mean GPA higher than males from high schools located in urban areas. Non-probation males from urban high schools had a mean GPA higher than the male students from rural high schools. The non-probation males from the rural high schools showed a consistent decrease in mean GPA from the second, third, and fourth semesters. These students obtained probationary status for the third and fourth semesters.

The writer feels that this is convincing evidence that borderline male Non-probation students from urban high schools are less likely to succeed in college than male borderline students who were on probation. Females on probation from rural and urban high schools maintained a higher mean GPA for the second, third, and fourth semesters than females not on probation. Females from the rural high school who were on probation maintained a higher mean GPA than the Probation group from the urban high schools.

Table 3

Mean Semester GPA's of Probation and Non-probation
Students from Rural and Urban High Schools

Status 1964 Fall Semester	Rural High School Mean GPA's				Urban High School Mean GPA's			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Male								
Probation	1.809	2.555	2.509	2.506	1.724	2.013	2.195	2.276
Non-probation	2.173	2.308	2.266	2.433	2.019	2.074	1.976	1.749
Female								
Probation	1.704	2.444	2.409	2.817	1.822	2.137	2.065	2.141
Non-probation	2.192	2.301	2.343	2.408	2.094	2.304	2.295	2.374

The probation females from both rural and urban high schools maintained consistently higher mean GPA's than the males on probation. These findings tend not to support the hypothesis that there was no difference between the GPA of the males and females on probation. Probation seemed to motivate both male and females from rural high schools more than those from urban high schools. The effect seemed to be greater for females than for males. The findings point out the same results for males from rural high schools when compared with males from urban high schools. The writer feels secure in concluding from the evidence presented in the tables that for this sample probation seems to motivate students from rural high schools more than students from urban high schools, and females more than males.

Transcript on the following page is identical to those that were used in this investigation to abstract data on a selected group of sophomores.

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PRINTING ON
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GRAMBLING COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA - PERMANENT RECORD

UDENT NO.	STUDENT NAME		ADDRESS OF STUDENT		PARISH	SEX
DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	RELIGION	PARENT OR GUARDIAN		ADDRESS OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN	
NAME AND ADDRESS OF HIGH SCHOOL				Year Graduated	UNITS	Date Admitted To College
Course and No.	DESCRIPTIVE TITLE	Sem. Grade	Hours Attempted	Hours Earned	Quality Points	Course and No.
						DESCRIPTIVE TITLE
						Sem. Grade
						Hours Attempted
						Hours Earned
						Quality Points
						Transfer Credits
						PHONE NO.

101

RADING SYSTEM: A-Excellent; B-Good; C-Average; D-Lowest Passing Grade; F-Failure; I-Incomplete; W-Withdrawn	MAJOR	MINOR	DEGREE	Date Conferred	Total Sem. Hrs.	Student Entitled To Honorable Dismissal Unless Otherwise Noted.
Signed: _____ Registrar						Date _____

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Transcripts of 30 males and 40 females were analyzed. One half of these students in each group had been assigned probationary status based on their GPA for the fall semester of 1964 and the other group was assigned the non-probationary status. The latter group had barely escaped academic probation. For three consecutive semesters following the fall of 1964 the mean GPA's for males and females on probation and those not on probation were analyzed. The probation group consisted of borderline students who had GPA's of 1.699 to 1.999. The non-probation group consisted of borderline students who had GPA's of 2.000 to 2.300. For females the mean GPA for the probation group was higher the following three consecutive semester than for the Non-probation group. The males on probation had a slightly lower mean GPA for the first semester following probation but increased their GPA the next semester and later maintained a higher mean GPA for subsequent semesters. From the evidence presented in this study it seems that probationary status motivates students to achieve.

The location of the high school attended seems to have an effect on the mean GPA of students who were at the borderline of academic success. Both males and females who were

on probation and had attended rural high school had higher mean GPA's than those who had attended urban high schools. Non-probation males from rural high schools had a slightly lower mean GPA than males who attended urban high schools. Non-probation females who attended rural high schools showed a slight increase of mean GPA over Non-probation females from urban high schools.

The writer is aware of the many limitations which characterize this study and cautions the reader that these results were obtained from a small sample of borderline students.

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B. UNPUBLISHED WORKS

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Billups, Ruby. Personal interview. February 8, 1972.

Shertzer, Bruce. Personal interview. March 29, 1972.

2. Public Speech

Goldman, Leo. "International Visitors Meet the Experts." Group Leader at American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, March 29, 1972.

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to determine the performance of male and female first semester sophomores at a North Louisiana college who had earned borderline grades. The first group consisted of a sample of 35 males and females who had a GPA of 1.699 to 1.999. This group was referred to as the Probation group. The second group consisted of an equal number of males and females who had a GPA of 2.000 to 2.300. These were the Non-probationary students. The main focus of this investigation was to determine if probation is a motivational tool for students, when motivation is defined as an increase in grade point average.

The study was developed through the use of college transcripts. An analysis was made of the records of 30 males and 40 females who were borderline students and were below the "C" average by no more than .300 points or who had barely made the "C" average by no more than .300 points. All of these students enrolled in college in the fall semester of 1963 and graduated in the spring semester of 1967.

The mean and cumulative GPA's were determined and compared for Probationary and Non-probationary groups, both males and females, for the fall semester of 1964. The mean and cumulative GPA's were also compared for these groups for the three semesters following probation. Comparisons were made between

the male and female probates, male and female non-probates, probates and non-probates, males who attended rural high schools - probates and non-probates, males who attended urban high schools - probates and non-probates, females who attended rural high schools - probates and non-probates, females who attended urban high schools - probates and non-probates.

For females the mean GPA for the Probation group was higher for the three semesters following probation than for the Non-probation group. The males on probation had a slightly lower mean GPA for the first semester following probation but increased their GPA the next semester and later maintained a higher mean GPA for subsequent semesters.